

**A Qualitative Exploration of the Career Narratives of Six South African
Black Social Workers**

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Master of Social Science in Industrial Psychology in the School of Applied
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Declaration

I, Mlondi Myeza, hereby declare that this thesis entitled: A Qualitative Exploration of the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers is my own work and all the sources I have used have been acknowledged accordingly by means of a complete reference list.

Signature

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Abstract

The study explored the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers in the selected public hospitals. It explored their career development by having them narrate stories of how they came into the profession of Social workers. The study explored the contextual factors that influenced their career development. It attempted to understand the meanings South African Black Social workers attach to their career development process. The researcher has used Black to refer to Black Africans.

A qualitative research study was used to discover the career narratives of the South African Black Social workers who were research participants. Purposive sampling was used to locate and identify the six Social workers from Durban (KwaZulu-Natal). The participant's narratives were explored using an interview schedule adapted from Frizelle (2002). The method of data analysis employed in the research study was Voice-centred relational method and Thematic Analysis to fully comprehend and appreciate the career development of these Social workers. Four major themes emerged during analysis and interpretation; 1) contextual factors that influence career narratives, 2) narratives on the contextual challenges to career development, 3) narratives on contextual factors that propel career development. Several recommendations for research and practice were put forward.

CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
CONTENTS	v
1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3 Brief Summary of the Methodology	7
1.4 Research Objectives.....	9
1.5. Chapter Outline.....	10
2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Historical Perspective	14
2.3 John Holland’s Theory of Vocational Choice.....	18
2.4 Super’s Life Span, Life Space Approach Theory	23
2.5 Indigenous Career Theory.....	28
2.6 Narrative Research Paradigm as a New Approach	31
2.7 The Role of Gender and Culture on Career Development.....	32
2.8 The Impact of Political Factors on Career Development.....	35
2.9 Theoretical Framework of the Study	37
2.10 Conclusion	40
3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	41
3.1 Introduction.....	41
3.2 Objectives of the Study.....	41
3.3 Research Design.....	41
3.4 Research Participants	44
3.5 Type of Sampling.....	45
3.6 Data Collection	46

3.7 Instruments Used	47
3.7 Data Analysis	48
3.8 Validity and Rigour.....	50
3.9 Ethical Considerations	50
3.10 Research Methodology Summary	52
4. CHAPTER FOUR: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION.....	55
4.1 Introduction.....	55
4.2 Contextual Factors that Influence Career Narratives	56
4.3 Narratives on the Contextual Challenges to Career Development.....	74
4.4 Narratives on Contextual Factors that Propel Career Development	82
4.5 Narratives on the Meaning Attached to Career Development	85
4.6 Summary	90
5. CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	92
5.1 Overview of the Study	92
5.2 Conclusion about Research Findings.....	92
5.3 Recommendations for Research and Practice.....	97
5.4 Limitations	100
5.5 Conclusion	100
REFERENCES	102

APPENDICES

Appendix a: The Interview guide	106
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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Social work provides essential health services to a wide range of people in need. Examples of these services include HIV/AIDS services, disease management, psychological services, and care such as health care for the senior or elderly (Kim & Lee, 2009). Social Workers play important supporting roles in the community in the above mentioned fields which, according to Mkhize and Frizelle (2000), fulfils the desire of many Black South Africans who enter Social occupations to be of service to their communities.

However, there is no widely available research that explores the career development of Black Social Workers in South Africa. There is a need for a type of research that fully considers context within South Africa and how it impacts on career development for South Africans. John Holland (1992, as cited in Brown), 2003 and Donald Super (1957, as cited in Brown, 2003), are two examples of traditional theories which are widely used in South Africa. These theories are however inappropriate, as they do not take into account the impact and significance of interpersonal and wider contextual factors on careers that are chosen and how these career are developed. Given this, we therefore need an approach that considers the importance of contextual factors. The following literature review thus presents some comment on the inapplicability of western career theories.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1.2.1 Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

As Stead and Watson (1999a) discuss, John Holland's theory (1992, as cited in Stead & Watson, 1999a) is built on a premise of six personality types and any individual has traits that correspond with one of these personality types. These personality types are conventional, realistic, artistic, social, enterprising and investigative type.

These character types also correspond to an occupational environment and persons seek occupational settings which correspond with their personality dimensions. According to Holland's theory, an occupational choice is an extension of a preferred person's character in the occupational or work environment and this relates to how a person identifies with certain stereotypes about work environments (Zunker, 2006). This implies that a person prefers a particular work environment based on what they know about that work environment and whether that occupational environment corresponds with their personality.

Zunker (2006) expanded and stated that a career choice is ultimately informed by a person's comparison of their personality and the occupational environment and whether a person agrees or does not accept this comparison. This theory further states that a key factor in a person's occupation choice is a person's character or personality and the stereotypes that a person holds about an occupation (Brown, 2003). These both have psychological relevance in their career choice. Holland's Theory (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003), also states that to be successful and satisfied in one's career individuals must choose a career that is congruent with one of these six types of personalities.

As such, for there to be congruence, individuals must choose careers with matching environments to their personalities. According to Holland's theory (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003), a Social worker must have a social personality, which corresponds to a Social environment, for there to be congruence. A key feature in Holland's theory is the hexagonal model. The hexagonal model offers a pictorial demonstration of how the personality styles interact with occupational environment. An example of the interaction is the adjacent categories on the hexagon, the Realistic personality and the Investigative personality, which are most alike.

The opposite categories such as Artistic personality and Enterprising personality are highly different (Brown, 2003; Zunker, 2006). According to Campbell and Borgen (1999), the hexagon model is popular for how it provides a visual representation of how a personality interacts with a work environment. Holland's approach assumes that one's personality and occupational choice remains the same over time, yet personalities change over time and career choices are also often dictated by environmental factors. This is especially relevant in South Africa where it is common occurrence for people to face high unemployment and poverty (Stead & Watson, 1999b). People's career choices are thus dictated by these factors. Many South African's who received poor education due to the apartheid conditions have fewer skills, as they did not have opportunities to access higher education and ultimately have to do whatever work they can find (Stead & Watson, 1999b).

Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) argued that Holland's theory fails to take into account the various socioeconomic conditions in South Africa because it was founded on privileged western conditions, and thus does not understand or accommodate the limitations that people who come from disadvantaged backgrounds face in their career development. The factors that drive people into occupations are not the same across cultural contexts.

Campbell and MacPhail (2002) maintain that within the South African context, poverty and unemployment are the key driving factors that force many people into various occupations, and not their interests. Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) and Watson (2009) all expressed the opinion that this Holland's hexagonal model, and others similar to it, largely ignore do not take into account socio-economic and socio-political factors that inform a person's career choice and career development in a context such as that of South Africa. According to Watson (2009), the Apartheid era played a critical role in what types of occupations were available to Black Africans and as such, occupational interests such as those which Holland proposes played a very small role in Black Africans' career choices.

Holland's model does not take into account how careers are socially constructed. Within the South African context, careers were historically constructed by the contextual factors such as the Apartheid policies that prevented Black people from certain occupations and certain educational opportunities (Stead & Watson, 1999a; Watson, 2009). As a result, it was not because of occupational interest that many Black people got into certain occupations, but rather the Apartheid legislation that influenced what occupations were done by certain races.

1.2.1 Super's Life Span, Life Space Approach Theory

Donald Super argued that a person's career development is a progression which develops steadily throughout a person's life (Zunker, 2006). Super presented this theory as a multi-coloured model displaying a person's career development evolution throughout their life.

Stead and Watson (1999a) and Zunker (2006) agree that the core idea in Donald Super's Life span, life space approach theory is the self-concept. The theory was supported by empirical research which supported that a person's vocational self-concept evolves from a multitude of experiences. These experiences ranged from physical and psychological growth, what

occupations they have been exposed to, exposure to individuals who are occupying certain occupations and wide-ranging exposure to vocations. Super's development approach identified developmental stages and tasks during which career choices and identifications emerge. The first stage is the Growth developmental stage which is of ages ranging from birth to age 14- 15. This stage is regarded as a period whereby a person develops abilities, an outlook on life, interests as well any desire that contributes to a self-concept.

Super's second stage is the exploratory stage which ranges from age 15 up to and including age 44. During this period a person evaluates available choices and this helps them narrow down all the various options available to them but no definitive choices are made as yet. The third developmental stage is the Establishment stage with ages ranging from ages 25 to age 44. During this stage a person tries out different work experiences and settles on one more favoured career option. The Maintenance developmental stage is ages ranging from 45 to age 64. The Maintenance stage is considered a period whereby a person focuses on becoming an expert in their chosen career. The last developmental stage is the Decline stage with ages ranging from age 65 and this stage is categorised as a period preretirement where a person considers how much life savings will be available to them after retirement and they also start slowing down their pace at work (Stead & Watson, 1999a; Zunker, 2006).

Stead and Watson (1998a) argued against the appropriateness of Super's Life span, life space approach theory as the theory was validated on a sample which varied from Black South Africans. Stead and Watson instead suggested that the meanings of core concepts in Super's theory such as self-concept should be re-evaluated to more relevant to Black South Africans. After which they could be more appropriate for use by career counsellors and researchers from South Africa (Stead & Watson, 1998a).

Super's theory was validated on White Americans and thus focuses on White Americans and their life perspective and experiences during development. The application of such a theory, with such clear western principles is that it becomes inapplicable in a context different to the western context. Ultimately, such a theory cannot be generalised to other contexts that are different to the western context as the contextual factors such as culture, language and psycho-socio factors differ (Stead & Watson, 1998a). Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) provided a similar critique of Holland's theory (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003).

Various South African contextual issues make the application of this theory problematic for individuals making career choices. Holland's theory conceptualisation of life stages as a sequential flow from one stage to another is impractical for the majority of South African who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. These individuals are often confronted with socio-political and socio-economic conditions such as unemployment, poor quality of education which stifles their Growth or Exploratory stages resulting in their self-concept failing to develop fully at each stage proposed by Holland. As a result, many individuals continue to seek employment at Establishment stage where according to Holland they should be stabilising their work experiences.

Furthermore, these individuals continue to seek understanding of their self-concept at stages where the self-concept according to Holland should be fully developed. Holland's theory is thus more suitable for contexts where individuals are confronted with less socio economic challenges which may stifle their career development as well as the development of their self-concept. The theory is more suitable to contexts where individuals have wider career options. Stead and Watson (1998b) referred to Holland's stages as artificial in the South African context because of the socioeconomic conditions such as unemployment which require individuals to be constantly

learning new skills. The process of learning new skills necessitates a return to earlier developmental stages and interrupts the flow offered by Holland's theory.

Therefore in summary, traditional theories, particularly those of John Holland (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003) and Donald Super (1982, as cited in Zunker, 2006) are inappropriate, as they do not consider the influences of contexts on career development. Given this, we therefore need an approach that takes cognisance of the importance of context. For this study, the two theories that will be able to explore the impact of wider contextual factors are Social constructionism and Systems theory.

1.3 Brief Summary of the Methodology

The study used a qualitative approach to explore the narratives of six South African Black Social workers. A qualitative approach is defined by Neuman (2011) as an approach that emphasizes meaningful social action and socially constructed meaning. In particular, this design was informed by the theories of Social constructionism and Systems theory. This was because the objective of this study was to attain a rich and detailed account of participants' career development and therefore the qualitative approach best explored such dynamic and complex issues.

Within the South African context, the majority of studies that examine career development have previously employed a more quantitative approach based on quantitative surveys instead of a qualitative approach (Chinyamurindi, 2012). Therefore it was important to explore the career development of Black professionals from a qualitative paradigm. The positivist approach to career development research and practise has been widely used within South Africa (Watson, 2013). Thus a qualitative approach was essential for the current study.

Six Black African Social workers were interviewed for the current study. These Social workers were based in Durban and the researcher sampled them for convenience since the researcher lived in Durban. The six Black African Social workers came from different backgrounds and their narratives of their career development were different, however they were expected to share some commonalities in the socio-political and cultural contextual factors that have influenced their career development. All the six participants were born and raised in various rural settlements and townships around South Africa. The six participants of the current study all experienced the political system of Apartheid because their ages ranged between 34 and 60 years. This was important because the socio-political contextual influences were essential to the participants' narratives.

The participants consisted of Black African females (n=3) and Black African males (n=3) Social workers because, according to Bruin and Nel (as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998) the primary focus for career research during the apartheid period was on White population as samples. Therefore it was important for this study to explore career development employing Black South Africans as a sample. Furthermore, according to Mkhize and Frizelle (2000), Black South Africans enter Social occupations such as Social Work because of their desire to be of help to their communities as a result of their belonging to a collectivist culture.

As such, the current study was interested in exploring the career narratives of Social workers because there seems to be a need for more research on the career narratives of Black African Social workers. Inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were that they should have been Social workers for a minimum of five years, because the study was interested in the career development over a period of time, and they had to be Black South Africans. Regarding work experience, five years or more of experience also ensured that the participants were not new

entry Social workers who had not experienced fully the various pitfalls of the profession. 'Professional' refers to Black African Social workers with University qualifications, and who were currently working as Social workers.

The current study thus used a non-probability sampling technique to provide cases that provided clarity and insight about the issues that the current study aimed to explore, and a generalizable study was not an objective. Purposive sampling was used as it allowed the researcher to employ several options in discovering precise samples for the study (Neuman, 2011). The purposive sampling technique thus enabled the study to locate and identify Social workers who were Black Africans and who met all the specifications. A snowballing sampling method was later used to identify male Social workers. The snowballing sampling method is a method that employs the services of participants to identify more participants with the same inclusion criteria as them (Neuman, 2011).

The study selected a hospital in Durban using purposive sampling. The hospital in Durban was approached and Black African Social workers who met the selection criteria were requested to volunteer to be interviewed. The Black African Social workers interviewed at this hospital recommended other Male Black African Social workers from around Durban who met the inclusion criteria, as the study needed three male Social workers and this was a challenge to find.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research study explored the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers by identifying contextual factors (for example gender, culture and socio-political factors) that influenced the career development of Black African Social workers. The research study further

intended to discover the role of interpersonal factors affecting the career development of Black African Social workers and to explore what meanings Black African Social workers attached to their career development process.

1.4.1 Research Questions

1. What contextual factors (for example gender, culture and socio-political) influenced the career development of Black African Social workers in South Africa?
2. How did these contextual factors present as challenges in Black African Social workers' career development?
3. What contextual factors promoted career development for Black African Social workers in South Africa?
4. What role did interpersonal factors play in the career development of Black African Social workers ?
5. What meanings did Black African Social workers attach to their career development process?

1.5. Chapter Outline

1.5.1 Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter one will provide an outline of the qualitative exploration of the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers. It will outline the objectives of the current study, the problem statement, and the research questions and lastly the research methodology employed.

1.5.2 Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Chapter two will provide literature on research studies, both past and current studies conducted to discover the occupation development of Black South African professionals. The theoretical foundation and framework for the study will be provided by two theories, namely the Social Constructivism and The systems theory framework which will be used to provide a theoretical understanding of the six South African Black Social workers and their career development.

1.5.3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Chapter three will discuss the qualitative research design as this is the design employed in this study. This chapter will also discuss the data collection methods this study used, the various data analysis methods used and the ethical considerations of the study as well as the issues of the validity of the study.

1.5.4 Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

This chapter will present the results and discussion of the study. This chapter will present all the themes that developed from the Social workers' narratives; these themes will be interpreted while also drawing from the literature review and theoretical framework to help understand the narratives of the six South African Black Social workers. These themes will be discussed to identify contextual factors for example socio-political factors and, interpersonal factors as these impacts on and influence the career development of South African Black Social workers. The meanings that Black African Social workers attach to their career development process will be presented, discussed and interpreted.

1.5.5 Chapter Five: Summary, Recommendation and Conclusion

Chapter five will present a summary of the research study, from the objectives of the research study to the outcomes of the study. Recommendations will be put forward for the career

counsellors and career researchers. A conclusion will be presented, founded on the research findings.

2. CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Social work provides essential health services to a wide range of people in need of, services such as HIV/AIDS care, disease management among other services (Kim & Lee, 2009). Social workers play important roles in these areas for the community. According to Mkhize and Frizelle (2000), their roles fulfil the desire of many Black South Africans who enter Social occupations to be of help or of service to their communities. However, there could be more research into the career development of Black South African Social workers, and therefore this chapter will review the South African history of career development, as well as recent developments.

The chapter will proceed to critically review traditional theories namely, John Holland (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003) and Donald Super (1957, as cited in Brown, 2003) that are widely used in South Africa, and argue that these theories are inappropriate as they do not consider South African context which influences how careers are chosen, and how they are developed within this unique context. The following literature review thus presents some comment on the inapplicability in South African context of Western career theories. Given this, there is therefore a need for an approach that considers the importance of contextual influences on vocation development. The review will thus propose two approaches; the indigenous psychology and the narrative research paradigm. It will also present some comments on the role of gender and culture, as well as the impact of political and economic factors on career development.

2.2 Historical Perspective

Career development of the majority of Black South Africans was largely influenced by South Africa's Apartheid era, and that era continues to influence both current and future directions for career development (Watson, 2009). This is evident in the unpreparedness of learners from rural schools for tertiary education, as those learners have not received career counselling to facilitate their career choices. Watts (2009) expanded further, stating that South Africa's Apartheid practices restricted the career development of the majority of Black individuals, due to the inactive role that career psychologists played during that time, as career counselling and career education both concentrated on a White population and a trait-factor methodology.

The Apartheid practices continue to restrict career development in the democratic South Africa as there are present realities which are informed by the past such as poor quality of education and no career counselling for rural schools. The gap remains wide between the career counselling services offered in cities, townships and in rural schools. "It is generally acknowledged that South African career counselling, career assessment, and career research has, by and large, reflected international theories, models and measures, the appropriateness of which has been consistently challenged" (Watson, 2009, p. 3). The importing of this foreign career counselling framework, which was common practise during the Apartheid era, has been condemned for being contextually unsuitable (Stead & Watson, 2002).

An example of how the Apartheid era continues to impact the present is in how there was inadequate education provided to the majority of Black students during Apartheid, and this has provided a large pool of unskilled labour and a high poverty rate which South Africa is presently still experiencing (Stead, 1996). This has resulted in many Black South Africans with a lack of

computer skills, poor command of English, and no matric or tertiary education as not benefiting from the use of career counselling. More recently, according to Pauw, Oosthuizen and Van Der Westhuizen (2008) Black South African's continue to face the challenge of unemployment however the challenge is now for the labour market to absorb recent graduates.

The issue of unemployment of graduates is attributed to many school leavers pursuing careers where there are not many employment opportunities in the labour market, which is ultimately as a result of no proper career counselling and guidance for learners especially as they enter tertiary institutions. Career development in South Africa still has much to offer the labour market; the imbalance and misfit between the supply of graduates and the market demands remains wide.

Ultimately poverty persists as more graduates cannot find employment; others go on to change their careers due to not finding employment in their current fields which has seen many graduates pursuing Post Graduate Certificates of Education (PGCE) (Watson, Samuels & Flederman, 2014). The absence of career counselling at both school level and tertiary level is evident by the misfit in the demand and supply of graduates for the labour market. And when career counselling is offered, unsuitable instruments are employed yielding results that fail to serve the school learners as these instruments do not take into account many contextual factors mentioned before.

During the Apartheid era, the western theoretical frameworks used for career counselling were imported without any major modification to suit the South African context; this continues to persist as many career counsellors continue to use instruments such as Self Directed Questionnaire (SDS) which was founded by John Holland (1992, as cited in Watts, 2009). A problematic assumption from the adoption of these contextually blind counselling frameworks

and instruments is that career counsellors were the experts, while the passive roles were prescribed to the career clients (Watson & Stead, 2002).

These frameworks did not allow for the clients to voice their preferred careers, but instead imposed the traditional trait and factor approach. Another problem with importing a Western traditional approach has been that it perpetuated the idea that the individual was the unit of study, instead of the community (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The main problem with the individuals being the unit of analysis was the disregarding of their context, which inevitably influenced their career identities, especially in the Black South African context of a collectivist culture.

According to Watson (2009), literature has focused on the historical restrictions imposed by the political system on career development, and has not paid much attention on present issues to give allowance to the new political dispensation to give effect to new policies that are aimed at re-addressing inequities. The majority of Black people, however, presently experience limited options for their career development as a result of the under-resourced contextual environments they inhabit. According to Watson (2009), many Black learners still attend under resourced schools, where not only is there no career counselling but also no facilities such as a school library, science laboratory and sometimes not enough adequately trained teachers.

Watson (2009) attributed under-resourced contextual environments to the “dysfunctional administration at the policy implementation level” (p. 3). There should have been change, considering how long ago the Apartheid system was abolished, however change has been slow. Change has particularly been slow in career counselling at the school level for Black learners who attend rural and township schools.

During the Apartheid era, there were numerous career centres situated in disadvantaged communities, which aimed to address the nonexistence of career education in schools within those communities, but that those career centres had unfortunately not been incorporated into the current prescribed career education in the democratic era (Watts, 1996).

The current realities affecting career counselling and career development in South Africa demand that numerous concerns be addressed and remedied in the future. Some of the concerns are the unsuitability of the career counselling instruments and career counselling theories employed by career counsellors on Black South Africans who come from contexts of collectivist cultures where an individual cannot be the unit of study but should be understood in relation to his wider community.

Watson (2009) offers a remedy for career counsellors that even though “macro systemic factors can create an environment of career oppression, career practitioners need to challenge these factors and work within their profession” (p. 3). In section 2.9 a comprehensive discussion of theory will explore some of the more appropriate theoretical frameworks for career counselling that practitioners can use particularly for Black South Africans to offer a relevant and suitable service. These frameworks enable the career counsellor to be competent in dealing with the micro factors that influence Black individuals in their career development.

The fundamental challenge confronting career counselling in South Africa is that it is founded on largely Westernised theory and research, and thus the appropriateness of the profession in the South African context remains questionable. There is a requirement for career counselling to redefine itself and adopt both assessment and counselling methods that are context appropriate. These could include an indigenous career theory and the narrative research paradigm which will

be explored in detail later in the review. However, for there to be a transformation within career counselling, there needs to be a shift in perspective among career counsellors and career psychologists, who need to adopt these new approaches with as much vigour as they did the traditional approaches of John Holland (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003) and Donald Super (1957, as cited in Brown, 2003).

2.3 John Holland's Theory of Vocational Choice

As reported by Stead and Watson (1999a), John Holland's theory is built on a premise of six personality types and any individual has traits that correspond with one of these personality types. These personality types are conventional, realistic, artistic, social, enterprising and investigative type.

These character types also correspond to an occupational environment and persons seek occupational settings which correspond with their personality dimensions. According to Holland's theory, an occupational choice is an extension of a preferred person's character in the occupational or work environment and this relates to how a person identifies with certain stereotypes about work environments (Zunker, 2006). This implies that a person prefers a particular work environment based on what they know about that work environment and whether that occupational environment corresponds with their personality.

Zunker (2006) expanded and stated that a career choice is ultimately informed by a person's comparison of their personality and the occupational environment and whether a person agrees or does not accept this comparison. This theory further states that a key factor in a person's occupation choice is a person's character or personality and the stereotypes that a person holds about an occupation (Brown, 2003). These both have psychological relevance in their career

choice. Holland's Theory (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003), also states that to be successful and satisfied in one's career individuals must choose a career that is congruent with one of these six types of personalities.

As such, for there to be congruence, individuals must choose careers with matching environments to their personalities. According to Holland's theory (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003), a Social worker must have a social personality, which corresponds with a Social environment, for there to be congruence. However, Stead and Watson (1999a) critiqued this assumption, citing South Africa's high unemployment and poverty as a reason that directs many Black South Africans to enter careers in environments that are not necessarily suitable for their personalities. Therefore poverty and high unemployment eliminate the luxury of choice for many Black South Africans.

A key feature in Holland's theory is the hexagonal model. The hexagonal model offers a pictorial demonstration of how the personality styles interact with occupational environment. An example of the interaction is the adjacent categories on the hexagon, the Realistic personality and the Investigative personality, which are most alike.

The opposite categories such as Artistic personality and Enterprising personality are highly different (Brown, 2003; Zunker, 2006). According to Campbell and Borgen (1999) the hexagon model is popular for how it provides a visual representation of how a personality interacts with a work environment. Holland's approach assumes that one's personality and occupational choice remains the same over time, yet personalities change over time and career choices are also often dictated by environmental factors. This is especially relevant in South Africa where it is common occurrence for people to face high unemployment and poverty (Stead & Watson, 1999a).

People's career choices are thus dictated by these factors. Many South African's who received poor education due to the apartheid conditions have fewer skills, as they did not have opportunities to access higher education and ultimately have to settle for whatever work they can find (Stead & Watson, 1999a). These conditions are the realities of many Black South Africans and any career counselling framework needs to be sensitive to these factors.

The core idea that informs Holland's environmental model and environmental influences is that there is an interface between the occupational environment demands and a person's general interests and their desired occupational environment and thus being part of a favourable work environment is fulfilling to a person (Zunker, 2006). In accordance with this theory, Social workers would need to have a social personality and work in a social environment where they could use their interactive skills to communicate with people and their need for social interaction would be met. They would see themselves as friendly, jovial, conventional and accountable (Brown, 2003).

An environment that is suitable for these personalities demands from them the ability to care for others, and also demands interacting with other people (Brown, 2003). According to this model, Social Work requires recurrent and lengthy individual interactions (Brown, 2003). It can be expected though, due to the conditions explained by Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) and Watson (2009) that people who end up in social occupations are not necessarily sociable, but are doing this occupation because of limited choices.

Holland's theory highlights that a person needs to have full self- awareness and have sufficient career orientation to be in a position to make an informed career decision (Zunker, 2006). Gelso and Fretz (2001) however, warned that the instruments that are based on Holland's codes should

be used with caution when testing culturally diverse populations. In fact, career counselling needs to be informed by people's cultural needs instead of imposing meanings onto people (Leong & Blustein, 2000). According to Greenfield (as cited in Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000), tests that are developed and validated in a particular cultural setting cannot be blindly applied in another cultural setting as the assumptions that inform that test will not be similar across cultures but instead will be unique to the culture the test was developed in. Thus the reliability of the findings is questionable.

While this theory offers a good theoretical background for exploring occupational development as well as the development of interests for career paths, it has several limitations for the South African context. It was developed in a context which is extremely different to that of South Africa, where a select few South Africans grow up in middle class conditions (Akhurst & Mkhize, 1999). There are numerous socioeconomic factors that influence people to pursue careers in environments that are not exactly suited for their personality types, as discussed above.

For any career theory to be applicable to the occupational development of a Black South African, it needs to take into account the unique contextual context of Black South Africans. Holland's theory operates on the presumption that individuals have enough self-knowledge, a fully developed self-concept and an understanding of their interests. However, Watson (2009) suggests that this assumption is inaccurate in the South African context of Black South Africans, where many individuals may not have been exposed to opportunities that allowed them to explore their self-concepts, due to the African culture emphasizing a more collective existence as opposed to the Western individualistic culture.

This is critical to career development because individuals from a collectivist culture seek belonging and acceptance from their wider community, this longing informs their career choices as they seek to bring meaning to their community and go into careers which their families approve of. Their understanding of themselves is from how they are viewed and understood by their wider community. This is different to individuals from a Western culture who have a sense of autonomy in their career decisions. Individuals from a western culture thus may have a clearer self-concept because their environment allows them to explore and develop an individualistic identity.

To quote Watson, Foxcroft, Horn and Stead (1997), it is common for Black African learners to prefer Social occupations as well as Investigative occupations, contrary to their personality dispositions or labour demands in the environment. Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) agreed, adding that this could be because the majority of them do not have Maths and Science from the high school level, they are limited to only the Social and Investigative. The majority who do not learn mathematics in school are left with limited options at university level, and ultimately study social occupations such as teaching and Social Work (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The occupational choices of the majority of South Africans cannot be examined in isolation from the socio-political history of the people (Watson, 2009). Besides these historical conditions, Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) avowed that many Black Africans choose social occupations out of a desire to be of some service to the community reflecting a heartfelt sense of connection to the community, all of which are factors that are not within the model of Holland's theory of vocational choice.

Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) argued that Holland's theory fails to take into account the various socioeconomic conditions of South Africa because it was founded on privileged western conditions, and thus does not understand or accommodate for the limitations that people who

come from disadvantaged backgrounds face in their career development. The factors that drive people into occupations are not the same across cultural contexts. Within the South African context, poverty and unemployment are the key driving factors that force many people into various occupations, and not their interests (Campbell & MacPhail, 2002; Stead & Watson, 1999b).

This model and others similar to it largely ignore the context which influences a person's occupational choice (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson, 2009). Watson (2009) went further to say that the Apartheid era played a critical role in what types of occupations were available to Black Africans, as previously mentioned, and as such, occupational interests such as those which Holland proposes played a very small role in Black Africans' career choices.

Holland's model does not take into account how careers are socially constructed. Within the South African context, careers were historically constructed by the contextual factors such as Apartheid policies that prevented Black people from certain occupations and certain educational opportunities (Stead & Watson, 1999a; Watson, 2009). As a result, it was not because of occupational interest that many Black people got into certain occupations, but rather Apartheid legislation that influenced what occupations were done by certain races.

2.4 Super's Life Span, Life Space Approach Theory

Donald Super argued that a person's career development is a progression which develops steadily throughout a person's life (Zunker, 2006). Super presented this theory as a multi-coloured model displaying a person's career development evolution throughout their life.

Stead and Watson (1999a) and Zunker (2006) agreed that the core idea in Donald Super's Life span, life space approach theory is the self-concept. The theory was supported by empirical research which supported that a person's vocational self-concept evolves from a multitude of experiences. These experiences ranged from physical and psychological growth, what occupations they have been exposed to, exposure to individuals who are occupying certain occupations and wide-ranging exposure to vocations. Super's development approach identified developmental stages and tasks during which career choices and identifications emerge. The first stage is the Growth developmental stage which is of ages ranging from birth to age 14- 15. This stage is regarded as a period whereby a person develops abilities, an outlook on life, interests as well any desire that contributes to a self-concept.

Super's second stage is the exploratory stage which ranges from age 15 up to and including age 44. During this period a person evaluates available choices and this helps them narrow down all the various options available to them but no definitive choices are made as yet. The third developmental stage is the Establishment stage with ages ranging from ages 25 to age 44. During this stage a person tries out different work experiences and settles on one more favoured career option. The Maintenance developmental stage is ages ranging from 45 to age 64. The Maintenance stage is considered a period whereby a person focuses on becoming an expert in their chosen career. The last developmental stage is the Decline stage with ages ranging from age 65 and this stage is categorised as a period preretirement where a person considers how much life savings will be available to them after retirement and they also start slowing down their pace at work (Stead & Watson, 1999b; Zunker, 2006).

Stead and Watson (1998a) argued against the appropriateness of Super's Life span, life space approach theory as the theory was validated on a sample which varied from Black South

Africans. Stead and Watson instead suggested that the meanings of core concepts in Super's theory such as self-concept should be re-evaluated to more relevant to Black South Africans. After which they could be more appropriate for use by career counsellors and researchers from South Africa (Stead & Watson, 1998a).

Super's theory was validated on White Americans and thus focuses on White Americans and their life perspective and experiences during development. The application of such a theory, with such clear western principles is that it becomes inapplicable in a context different to the western context. Ultimately, such a theory cannot be generalized to other contexts that are different to the western context as the contextual factors such as culture, language and psycho-socio factors differ (Stead & Watson, 1998a). Akhurst and Mkhize (1999) provided a similar critique of Holland's theory.

Super (1957, as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998a) presented his developmental stages as unfolding in stages from Growth stage through to retirement, each developmental stage coming into completion before the following stage begins, elaborated Stead and Watson (1998a). However, the sample on which the theory was validated on was from a privileged socio-economic background and thus was not exposed to the same socio-economic factors that the majority of Black South African is exposed to. Black South Africans are exposed to contextual factors such as high unemployment and instability which negatively impact on their career development and often interrupts a linear flow that Super proposed in his theory (Stead & Watson, 1998b). Various South African contextual issues make the application of this theory difficult for individuals making career choices. It is more suited for individuals who have a wide choice or various careers options to choose from. Stead and Watson (1998a) thus argued that the instability of unemployment necessitates persons to constantly develop new skills to be

employable. This frequent return to previous developmental stages prevents the career development process from flowing in the order which Super proposes in his theory thus making his theory inapplicable to the disadvantaged Black majority of South Africans

Furthermore, the discussion of the construct of self-concept and the applicability of it to Black South Africans becomes questionable when this construct does not take into account how contextual factors such as socio-economic and socio-political (Stead & Watson, 1998a). The construct of self-concept as it is presented by Super's theory is thus inapplicable to the majority of Black South Africans whose self-concept is shaped by contextual factors. Freemans (as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998b) further stated that identity formation is largely influenced by socio-political historical events, and for South Africans these include Apartheid.

The high conditions of unemployment and poverty experienced by many Black South Africans have necessitated a constant need to find employment. Stead and Watson (1998a) argued that the expectation that these individuals could explore their self-concepts, discover their occupational interests and only pursue these interests is not realistic. Super's theory (1957) conceptualised Career maturity as a person's natural inclination to manage the career demands they face in their career development in pursuit of career stabilisation. This natural inclination is in line with a person's psychological and social development (Stead & Watson, 1998b). However when we consider how the psychological and social development of persons in differing contexts is in itself varied, we can begin to understand that persons from different contextual backgrounds could not have the same experience of career maturity. For example South Africa has many AIDS orphans who have had to leave school to find employment so they can be able to provide for their siblings (Richter & Desmond, 2008). Within these homes these children are seen as the breadwinner, and thus the theory of role maturity does not account for these contextual factors.

Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) suggest that we reflect, for example on the research that has found Black learners to not have adequate career information when compared to their White counterparts. This research is supported by empirical findings which find Black learners to perform far poorer on measures that measure career knowledge while White learners perform exceptionally well on the same instruments. The poor performance by Black learners could be attributed to the fact that the instruments are not contextually valid and thus fail to elicit accurate results (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The meaning of career maturity could be different for Black Africans from what it means to White learners (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). Super (1957 as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998b) suggests that career maturity is related to specific features attached to a specific life role.

Super (1980, as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998a) finally identifies decision making points that occur through a maxi cycle before and after a role is assumed. This provides an explanation on how the various roles an individual plays, together with the personal and environmental factors that affect them, influences and are influenced by the individuals' decisions. Within the South African context this takes into account various personal, traditional, and economic circumstances that influence the decisions that South Africans have to make. Super's model on Decision-making suggests that the individual may be the prime mover, but their environment remains static as well the career information they are exposed to remain stable (Stead & Watson, 1998a). Information around careers constantly grows to accommodate such changes in the environment; therefore an individual's decision can constantly change so as to accommodate their circumstances.

For this study, the two theories that will provide a theoretical framework which takes into account wider contextual factors are Social constructionism and Systems theory. "Career

practitioners themselves, however need to critically deconstruct and reconstruct the career theories that may inform their practice” (Watson *et al.*, 2014, p. 15). There are two theories that the review will now explore which take cognizance of the context, the Indigenous career theory and the Narrative research approach.

2.5 Indigenous Career Theory

According to Watson and Stead (2002), there is an evident demand for the Western theories to be evaluated for their suitability, appropriateness and relevance by South African career counsellors and researchers alike. These demands have led to debates around an introduction of new approaches that are more culture appropriate and relevant. One such approach has been the Indigenous Career Theory.

“Indigenous psychology can be defined as those elements of knowledge that have been generated in a country or a culture, as opposed to those that are imported or brought from elsewhere” (Stead & Watson, 1999a, p. 215). From this definition, the suggestion is that every culture ought to explore its very own approach to career development, an approach founded on each culture’s understanding of career development; ultimately this ensures that career researchers and practitioners preserve unique meanings of career development for every culture not only the Western approach (Stead & Watson, 1999b).

“From an indigenous psychology perspective, psychological processes are generated from a particular culture, rather than being imposed from external factors” (Frizelle, 2002, p. 21). Frizelle (2002) identified that there is a difference between indigenous psychology and indigenisation, which tries to adopt theories, ideas and instruments such as assessments developed in another culture and make them suitable for the target culture. In fact, according to

Watson (2013), the inclination to rely on psychometric testing in career guidance has adversely impacted Black South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds. Indigenous psychologies look within a culture for psychological concepts and generate theories from within, instead of without (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

However, Watson (2009) warned that, while there is a demand for such a theory, “Such attempts would be wise to consider universal principles that might underlie any career theory” (p. 5). The central concept and perception of indigenous psychology is culture, which from a South African perspective, does not have a singular definition or meaning as there are eleven official languages and as such many distinct cultures.

A sentiment which was echoed by Stead and Watson (1999a) , where they argued that since the new democratic dispensation, cultures are redefining themselves since there is an increased inter-racial mixing, and there are more inter-culture interactions, all making it challenging for social scientists to quantify the meanings of these cultures. As a result, Frizelle (2002) proposed that social researchers should not blindly emphasise the “dichotomy between Western/ Non-Western and individualistic/ collectivism” (p. 22), as cultural differences still remain between the western worldview and the African worldview.

The dichotomy often stems from the misinformed assumption that the African culture is homogenous. Stead and Watson (as cited in Frizelle, 2002) explain the necessity for career researchers to be aware of the changes that South African cultures are undergoing in the new democratic environment, which further moderates cultures from becoming identical. ”Homogenising cultures runs the risk of overlooking the impact that cultures in transition may have on an individual as they negotiate their career development” (Frizelle, 2002, p. 22).

An advantage of Indigenous psychology is that it compels career counsellors and researchers to explore more qualitative research (Stead & Watson, 1999a). Indigenous psychology does in addition to qualitative methods also employ research assessments and methods that have roots in quantitative research (McMahon, Patton & Watson, 2003). However, Stead and Watson (1998a) recommend the use of qualitative research in the South African environment. A qualitative research methodology negates any use of pre-set questionnaires that clients may not understand.

Career assessments that are rooted in qualitative methodology require the career psychologist to create suitable evaluations, to work together with the client, listening attentively to advice with informed and appropriate recommendations and conclusions regarding the best career path for the client (Frizelle, 2002). The most suitable research methodology for this type of interaction is the qualitative research methodology, as it uses interviews and focus groups as approaches of data collection (Neuman, 2011). Qualitative approaches such as interviews would allow for the clients to open up about their perspectives in a language of their choice. Black South African clients who come from under-privileged backgrounds may prefer interviews or focus groups as it allows for the use of interpreters etc., as opposed to assessments presented in a language candidates are not too familiar with.

There is limited literature on indigenous career theory and practise but there is, however, evidence of more career professionals using the qualitative and narrative approaches which take into account the unique South African environment (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). According to Watson (2013), “the development of career theories and counselling models that reflect the tenets of constructivist and narrative approaches is in part a response to the need for career psychology to adapt to an increasingly diverse clientele both in terms of cultural and contextual

variables” (p. 4). Thus a narrative research approach is suitable for a culturally diverse context like South Africa.

2.6 Narrative Research Paradigm as a New Approach

Narrative is the main means through which individuals are able to make sense of their career history and tell their career story to the researcher, allowing the researcher to learn the actual, authentic understanding of an individual’s career history, which the researcher then interprets (Frizelle, 2002). A narrator’s story is entrenched in their beliefs, language, culture and life history. Laubscher and Klinger (as cited in Frizelle, 2002) “describe narratives of the self as being populated with images that are collected through one's engagement with family and culture” (p. 29). They propose that these images provide an understanding into the conditions, values, cultures and experiences, which would have otherwise continued to be unknown to anyone with different experiences, Frizelle (2002) makes an example of Black South Africans who told of their stories of “forced removals and migrant labour laws” (p. 30).

According to Bruner (1991), the narratives are socio-culturally rooted and are concerned with the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences. Through the sharing of the experiences in storytelling, the researcher can understand historically significant stories because there are cultural meanings that individuals carry with them, which were shared with them by their elders. Storytelling can access people’s knowledge of the past, stories that were passed on to them from past generations through language, histories and myths (Bruner, 1991). Thus, the study of career development through narratives allows the researchers to understand people’s narratives and in the process of interpreting them, the researchers must practise caution to ensure they present the

stories people told about their careers as they were told, to capture their cultural meanings and authenticity.

2.7 The Role of Gender and Culture on Career Development

This conversation about the role of gender in South African career development is both general and contextual. The ideas of feminine and masculine, and how they influence career choices for individuals are not specific to South Africa, Frizelle (2002) described how “this dualistic myth is integral to informal ideas of career development in many cultures where women’s biological role as bearer and nurturer of children is said to tie her to earth’s activities, while men, as bearers of culture, are seen to be involved in the creation of symbols and artefacts” (p. 32). The current study thus aims to understand the role of gender on the career development of the Black African Social workers, because even with equity in the educational opportunities and employment opportunities, there remain dissimilarities in how men and women individually experience their career development.

Career research, career guidance and career counselling in South Africa have been largely influenced by the Western principles of individualism, where the individual is the unit of study and the contextual factors that influence the South African individual are ignored. There are socio- cultural factors that inform how an individual understands himself which cannot be disregarded when analysing an individual’s career development. This has resulted in what Mkhize and Frizelle (2000, p. 1) criticised as “rather than assisting individuals to be better able to participate meaningfully in social life, much of the concern of career guidance has been slotting individuals into various categories in a rational and predictable manner”.

This reflected that career counselling should be understood from within a cultural and contextual perspective. Within South Africa, there are multiple levels on which culture impacts on an individual's career development. These include multicultural, socio-political and economic contexts, none of which have received sufficient acknowledgement (Stead & Watson, 1998a).

There has been a pre-occupation with understanding the individual as a unit of analysis, with very little investigation or even consideration of the contextual factors that negatively impact the career development of Black South African's. Career counselling needs to understand the individual as he understands himself, according to Watson (2009). The process of capturing this first-hand experience will translate in a future of career counselling and career guidance that is both well informed and suitable for the client at which it is aimed to serve.

Career counselling should consider not only the impact of structural social and political factors, but factors such as culture and historical context, as they too have a profound impact on individual career development and Watson (2013) described how career development constructs and their meanings are embedded in the cultural use of language. An example of this is how, in certain African cultures, the language of "I" is the language of "we" speaking to the sense of interconnectedness among the people from one culture.

Historically, when various career counselling tests were used to discover career information from Black samples, those tests used had been developed in another culture (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000), but with the various new approaches such as Narratives Research Methods and Indigenous Psychology, that take into account cultural meanings and individual experiences of career development, a more accurate career information can be elicited from clients. Watson (2013) argued that "there is a real problem with the generalization of career constructs developed

within more individualistic societies to more collectivist societies” (p. 6). This is a problem South Africa is well familiar with, as previously discussed.

In that same line of thinking, Frizelle (2002) extensively criticised career psychologists who administer career tests developed in another culture, as they may lose reliability due to the values, understandings and information implicit in the test being different. The significance of understanding South African cultural understandings of personhood is best exemplified in how, according to Mkhize and Frizelle (2000), Black learners are particularly interested in the social relevance or rather usefulness of their careers as a means of locating themselves in the community. These cultural meanings of careers should be understood by career counsellors and during the process of gathering career information from Black South African clients.

Markus and Kitayama (1994) describe four processes for an individual’s self-understanding. Firstly, they describe communal reality which is the fundamental cultural, value belief systems that are reflected in fundamental philosophical texts. Second are the sociological as well as psychological processes, these customs inform shared lived experiences such as how in traditional African cultures, a child is raised by the entire community, not just the household where he/she resides. Thirdly are the local worlds which refer to everyday life.

Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) gave an example of how, in traditional African cultures, there are practises that promote the idea that one is connected to the rest of the community. An example of this would be how families promote that children eat out of one bowl, thereby reinforcing the values of communal living.

Fourth is the “habitual psychological tendencies which are ways of thinking, feeling and coping, which reflect the group’s core ideas and cultural practices” (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000, p. 3). The

fourth process explains how an individual's career development is influenced by collective values and morals, which must be accounted for in career studies and career counselling in the South African environment. An example is how, within some cultural groups, career development is understood to be for the empowerment of others (Frizelle, 2002). According to Watson (2013), for a traditional Xhosa-speaking household, work can mean the cultural duties around the home, while the meaning of work for the western culture is a job (Watson & Stead, 2002). This illustrates how different cultures can view the meaning of work very differently and thus career development should seek to capture each cultural meaning of career development.

2.8 The Impact of Political Factors on Career Development

The discussion of career development cannot be concluded without a discussion of how the Apartheid system singlehandedly impacted on the career development of Black South Africans. The impact is both in terms of the opportunities available to Black South Africans and the type of education they received, which ultimately determined what career opportunities were available to them. The best example of how the political agenda influenced career development is how, before the 1990s, the White community provided samples for career development research (Stead & Watson, 1998a).

During this time, the Black community was ignored and according to Frizelle and Mkhize (2000), when research was conducted on the Black samples, the interpretation was a misrepresentative due to concepts around careers being understood differently by the Black samples as compared to the White researchers.

Nzimande (1984) wrote extensively about how career researchers would write about how a Black person does not think in terms of a career and thus is incapable of strategically thinking

about a future and planning for the educational future of their children. Nzimande (1984) continued to say that Black people were understood as only being concerned about putting their children through school, but had no plans far beyond school. Such research was deemed apolitical, yet it is evident how politically inclined it was. There were policies which made it impossible for Black people to plan for a career since both the quality of education they received, as well as the opportunities available to them were constrained by separatist policies. The career development of most Black South Africans has largely been impacted by the racist ideology that was pervasive during the Apartheid era.

Naicker (1994) demonstrated in what way political policies impacted on the career development of Black South Africans in his discussion of how there was no career counselling or career guidance in their schools but that it was present in White, Coloured and Indian departments. When career guidance was present, Black people were directed to certain jobs, mainly in the service department or manual jobs and thus career guidance in schools was thought to promote this trend. As a result, when career counselling was offered, Black learners received it with apprehension as it was thought of as politically motivated (Naicker, 1994).

Black people during this time faced both political oppression as well as economic oppression. Black people were limited to working as employees, where there were laws in place that prevented them from participating and from working in leadership positions (Frizelle, 2002). Furthermore, according to (Frizelle, 2002), White people have traditionally had access to middle-class opportunities while Black people experienced “extreme poverty, unemployment, inadequate or crowded housing, poor or non-existent health and welfare facilities and grossly inadequate provision of educational resources which have all contributed to on-going economic distress” (p. 40). These unequal opportunities resulted in many Black South Africans not

affording tertiary education and having limited job opportunities. While there are more career opportunities open to the younger generation of Black South African's since the abolition of racist ideology, career development for many Black South African's was largely influenced by these historic, political factors.

According to Watson (2013, p. 5), "the labour market has only 40.4% of the working age population (defined as between the ages of 15 and 64 years) economically active and employed, with Black South Africans representing 30.1%, and White South Africans only 5% of the unemployed population" . This unemployment rate reveals the present repercussions of the country's political past. In fact, according to Watson *et al.* (2014), South Africa has a skills shortage and high unemployment, with 36.7 per cent of the 53 million South Africans unemployed in 2013.

These facts further illustrated the significant need of an approach that takes in to full account individual career development, together with the macro- systemic factors such as culture and historical context. Frizelle (2002) therefore argued that in the new political dispensation "in the process of career development, an individual needs to manage their own developmental process and also with a dynamic environment that is likely to make career exploration a complicated activity" (p. 39).

2.9 Theoretical Framework of the Study

2.9.1 Social Constructivism

Social Constructivism posits that the construction of meaning is through relationships, that information and how it is understood is directly linked to historical information that each culture holds. Knowledge is thus an accumulation of experiences, experiences which are traditionally

and culturally constructed through collective processes and action, and further asserts that knowledge is an outcome of our collective behaviours, social interrelations and discussions amongst applicable social groups (Blustein, Palladino Schultheiss & Flum, 2004; Cohen, Duberley & Mallon, 2004; Young & Collin, 2004).

According to Young and Collin (2004), the historical construction of knowledge, and concern with language, action, and process problematize traditional understandings of career. Social Constructivism raises an opportunity to have discussions about the common knowledge people have, focus on social environment, shared values and the environmental interactions people have. Social Constructionism argues that the world people inhabit does not exist in isolation but rather there is a continual interaction between the environment and the people living in that environment. The meaning of the social work is created by people who live in that environment (Blustein *et al.*, 2004).

Consistent with the social constructionist view, a career can be understood from a contextual perspective. From this perspective, career development can be understood as a process whereby individuals interact with their context to develop their occupational narratives. Career does not happen to them but they are active in the process of engaging their social environment, evaluate economic opportunities and other contextual factors that potentially influence a career development. Any society has an existing discourse built on history, educational, job status, language and cultural practises, career development is thus influenced by this discourse (Blustein *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, career development within the South African context cannot be fully understood if it is explored in isolation from the language South African people construct about their occupations.

Thus a social constructionist approach is a move away from the traditional view of career theory, this approach enables the individual to engage their environment and articulate for themselves what their occupational development has been and should be (Bujold, 2004). Individuals are enabled to narrate their experiences and impressions of the world of work and this discourse informs theory. As a result, Blustein *et al.* (2004) adopted a definition of career that is more subjective allowing an individual to use their own language, experience, socio- economic conditions in defining career.

2.9.2 Systems Theory

The systems theory framework, according to Patton and McMahon (1999; 2006), is able to illustrate how interconnected to contextual influences career development can be, this framework allows for two approaches to be employed during career counselling and research. The systems theory framework takes into account the predictive approach of western theories in combination with a more subjective constructivist approach to career counselling. As such, systems theory offers a solution to challenges and limitations presented by the western theories and allow contextual factors to inform how career development is theorised and understood. Systems theory framework offers an innovative approach that can help redefine the process of career counselling and career research (Patton & McMahon, 2006). The systems theory framework encompasses two perspectives, the individual system and the subsystem being the environment in which the individual interacts with. In understanding career development of an individual both systems need to be explored for a holistic approach.

The social system refers to influences such as family, educational institutions, peers and the media. The individual and the social systems occur within the environmental-societal system,

which includes influences such as geographic location, socioeconomic circumstances, political decisions and globalization (Patton & McMahon, 2006).

2.10 Conclusion

Current theories, such as John Holland's theory (1992, as cited in Brown, 2003) and Donald Super's Theory (1980, as cited in Brown, 2003) that is widely used in South Africa are inappropriate, as they neglect to consider contextual factors on how careers are chosen and how they are developed. These Western theories are founded on western principles which view individuals as individualistic and autonomous beings, whose career development is an individual choice. This is clearly not relevant for the majority of South Africans who view themselves from a more collectivist and shared perspective (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The continued use of these theories thus marginalizes the large majority of South African's who do not share this Western perspective. Given this, we therefore need an approach that takes into account the importance of context.

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will offer the framework of the methodology for the current study. It includes the research approach that was used to explore the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers. It includes the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research participants. The sampling method that was adopted to identify the Black African Social workers who told their stories of career development will be discussed. This chapter will discuss the process and procedure followed when data was collected and analysed, as well as other issues in research methodology such as validity and ethical considerations.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

The research study was aimed at identifying contextual factors (for example gender, culture and socio-political factors) that influence the career development of Black African Social workers in South Africa. How these contextual factors presented as challenges, and which of these promoted career development for Black African Social workers in South Africa will be determined. The study also aimed to explore the role of interpersonal factors that affect the career development of Black African Social workers and lastly explored what meanings Black African Social workers attach to their career development process.

3.3 Research Design

The study used a Qualitative approach to explore the narratives of six South African Black Social workers. A Qualitative approach is defined by Neuman (2011) as an approach that

emphasizes meaningful social action and socially constructed meaning. In particular, this design was informed by the theories of Social constructionism and Systems theory.

This was because the objective of this study was to attain a rich and detailed account of the participant's career development, and therefore the qualitative approach best explored such dynamics and complex issues. The majority of studies that examined career development in the South African context have previously employed an approach based on quantitative surveys, stated Chinyamurindi (2012). It was thus important to explore the career development of Black professionals from a qualitative paradigm.

Career theory and practice have predominantly been conducted from a logical positivist approach and thus a qualitative approach was essential for the current study. Stead and Watson (1999a) argued that in the South African context, prominence should be given to Qualitative research methodology, as oral tradition is central for many of its cultures. Stead and Watson (1999b) suggested that African research participants might favor interviews and focus group discussions instead of the Quantitative data collection methodologies such as surveys and questionnaires, which are usually in a foreign language.

Hence the current study used a Qualitative research methodology to explore the narratives of South African Black Social workers and their career development. The Qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to relate and interact with the participants, as a way to appreciate and understand their career development, and it further allowed for the researcher to seek further clarification when the narratives necessitated it.

Furthermore, Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained that the Qualitative research methodology enables the researcher to better comprehend a phenomenon for which there is not much available

research or information. Thus the Qualitative research approach was suitable for the current study which explored the narratives of South African Black Social workers and their career development. According to Watson (2009), the Quantitative research approach has widely been used for similar studies aimed at career development. Thus it was essential to adopt the Qualitative research method.

According to Bogdan and Taylor (1976), Qualitative research methods are particularly humanistic, which is reflected by how a participant in their natural setting is given a sense of validation and, in a sense, made to feel they are equal to any other participant by being studied from their own setting. The humanistic element to qualitative research methods is further highlighted by the mere fact that each participant's voice is taken as it is and not silenced, side-lined or marginalised in any way. Creswell (1998) echoed these sentiments of research participants not being marginalized when Qualitative studies are adopted.

Considering how career development research has in the past focused on the White South Africans (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Stead & Watson, 1999) the voices of Black South Africans have been side-lined and such a study enables the previously ignored voices to be heard. The current study allowed for some level of emancipation of Black South African Social Workers. There are numerous shortcomings to the Qualitative research approach, namely the researcher's bias during data collection and data analysis, and the inability to generalize the findings from a Qualitative study.

According to Bogdan and Taylor (1976), a shortcoming of the Qualitative methodology lies in how the researcher's bias can affect the process of data collection and interpretation. The researcher in the current study was very critical of their own bias and influence when collecting

data and during interpretation of the data. The researcher thus provided all the details regarding the research procedures in Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) to ensure transparency, and for the readers to assess the researcher's impact.

The second criticism levelled at the Qualitative approach by Bogdan and Taylor (1976) is the fact that Qualitative studies do not aim to generalize their findings to the rest of the population. The researcher of the current study did not seek to generalize the findings; the objective was rather to deepen the understanding of the career development of six Black South African Social workers using their narratives.

3.4 Research Participants

Six Black African Social workers were interviewed for the current study. These Social workers were based in Durban and the researcher sampled them for convenience, since the researcher lived in Durban. The six Black African Social workers came from different backgrounds and although their narratives of their career development were different, they were expected to share some commonalities in the socio-political and cultural contextual factors that had influenced their career development. All of the six participants were born and raised in various rural settlements and townships around South Africa. The six participants of the current study had all experienced the political system of Apartheid because their ages ranged between 30 and 50 years. This was important because the socio-political contextual influences were essential to the participants' narratives.

The participants consisted of Black African female (n=3) and Black African male (n=3) Social workers because according to Bruin & Nel (as cited in Stead & Watson, 1998), much of the career research prior to 1990 has focused on White samples. Furthermore, according to Mkhize

and Frizelle (2000), Black South Africans enter Social occupations such as Social Work because of their desire to be of help to their communities, as a result of their belonging to a collectivist culture.

As such, the current study was interested in exploring career narratives of Social workers because there appears to be limited research on career narratives of Black African Social workers . Inclusion criteria for the selection of participants was that participants should had to have been Social workers for a minimum of five years, because the study was interested in a career development over a period of time, and they had to be Black South Africans. Regarding work experience, five years or more of experience also ensured that the participants were not new entry Social workers who had not experienced fully the various pitfalls of the profession. 'Professional' referred to Black African Social workers with a University qualification and who were currently working as Social workers .

3.5 Type of Sampling

Firstly, sample is “a small set of cases a researcher selects from a large pool and generalizes to the population” (Neuman, 2011, p. 240). In Qualitative studies sampling is used to collect a minor set of cases that are not a statistically representative of their population, instead sampling is used to recognize applicable groups to the study in progress (Neuman, 2011).

The current study thus used non-probability sampling to provide cases that provided clarity and insight about the issues that the current study aimed to explore. The study thus used a non-probability sampling technique because the objective of the study was not to create a representative sample. Purposive sampling was used as it allowed the researcher to identify applicable and relevant samples for the current study (Neuman, 2011).

The purposive sampling technique thus enabled the study to locate and identify Social workers who were Black Africans, and who met all the specifications for a profound inquiry to gain a profounder understanding of their career development. The study selected two hospitals in Durban using purposive sampling. The snowballing sampling method was also used to identify more male participants. The snowballing sampling method is a method that employs the services of participants to identify more participants with the same inclusion criteria as them (Neuman, 2011). The hospital in Durban was approached and Black African Social workers who met the selection criteria were requested to volunteer to be interviewed. More Social workers were identified from around Durban through snowballing sampling.

3.6 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through conducting narrative interviews with the six Black African Social workers, to explore their career development. The participants were interviewed without any judgment, they were given a chance to tell their career development narrative without interruption, unless to probe for clarity or to validate data given. Participants were allowed to think and then narrate their career development, with further questions for clarity following after they had finished their narrative. Privacy and confidentiality was reiterated to all the participants and was ensured during the interviews.

Narrative is a type of Qualitative data, a form of enquiry or data collection that tells a story. It allows participants to present a story of unfolding events from their point of view (Neuman, 2011). Narratives are how people organize their everyday practices and subjective understandings, and can express understandings and the quality of lived experiences. Narratives as a type of qualitative data are essential when the objective is to have an understanding of lived

experiences of occupational development, an individual deals with many difficulties and trials (Bujold, 2004).

Narratives thus enabled the researcher to explore the process of career development from the participant's perspective. A career may be an envisioned journey, or an individual may decide along the way to change direction and explore another career when they lose interest in the original career. Traditionally the career development journey was understood from the trait and factor approach, and other widely used research methods; however the contradictions encountered along the career process might be better explored and ultimately understood from the narratives approach (Bujold, 2004). Narratives were therefore befitting for the current study as participants were able to present their career development stories from their own subjective voice, from late adolescence up to their present age.

3.7 Instruments Used

An interview schedule adapted from Frizelle (2002) was used to interview the research participants (see Appendix B). The interview schedule had open-ended questions which enabled the participants of the study to narrate their stories undisturbed. The first question on the interview schedule was asking the Black Social workers to narrate a tale about their career development, from as early as they could recall until their current professions. A voice recorder was used, with the participant's consent, to record the interviews and according to Maynard (2004), using recorders is normal practice when conducting interviews for a Qualitative study as a researcher cannot rely on their recollection of the interview alone. The researcher also made note of the body language during the interviews with the participants.

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to code the narrative data, organizing it according to the events that were discovered using narrative analysis (Neuman, 2011). “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Thematic content analysis allows for common patterns and themes to emerge, patterns that are common throughout the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, thematic analysis can be used within a social constructionist framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher has the critical responsibility of reading through interviews and identifying which themes are important and relevant to the research topic, asserted Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) expanded further by stating that a theme represents a subheading or a question under study, and thus represents a patterned response within the data. Neuman (2011) explained that thematic content analysis organizes findings in manageable sets. Reading these narratives enabled the stories to be analyzed accordingly, looking to discover the respondent’s interpersonal relationships and their influence on their career development. The study aimed to explore contextual factors that influenced the career narrative.

The study also used the Voice-Centred Relational Method of data analysis. Mauthner and Doucet (1998) conceptualized a method of reading interviews that requires transcribed interviews to be read a total of four times, for a profounder understanding of the narratives. According to Mauthner and Doucet (1998), this method of data analysis ensures that the participants are understood from within their societal context. This method also acknowledges that the researcher is a co-constructor of the narratives and informs the method of transforming personal narratives

into public dialogues. The Voice-Centred Relational Method involves four separate readings of the transcribed interviews.

Mauthner and Doucet (1998) explained that “the first reading is for the plot and for our responses to the narrative” (p. 126). The researcher read the interview to look for the overall themes and the plots in the Social workers’ responses. The researcher was looking for their own responses to the Social workers’ narratives, reflecting on how their own assumptions and views may have influenced the Social workers’ telling of their stories.

“The second reading is reading for the voice, ‘I’” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 128). On this second reading, the researcher paid attention to how the Social workers’ felt about their career development. The researcher read the interview to look for indications of how Social workers’ felt about the contextual factors of their career development, and the meaning they attached to their career development.

“The third reading is ‘a reading for relationships’”, stated Mauthner and Doucet (1998, p. 131). On this reading, the researcher focused on the social context, how the Social workers’ talked about how they related to others, and how the Social workers’ spoke about their interpersonal relationships such as those with their colleagues, family, friends, etc. “The fourth reading is for placing people within cultural contexts and social structures” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 132). On this reading, the researcher looked for the Social workers’ stories of how they related to the wider contexts of cultural settings. After all four readings the researcher integrated the findings into a comprehensible and logical discussion.

Some participants responded to some questions in isiZulu because they were more comfortable speaking isiZulu. Those transcripts have been translated to English by the researcher during the

process of transcribing the interviews. An attempt was made to translate word for word in isiZulu and the participants were consulted to read and review the translated transcripts and they maintained that these transcripts were accurately translated.

3.8 Validity and Rigour

Credibility and confirmability was used to ensure a quality study. Credibility was ensured by cross-checking the various themes in the narratives with the participants. This ensured that these themes used by the researcher were accurate. Confirmability can be defined as an understanding that from the perspective of the researcher, they maintained reflective and refrained from imposing any bias during all the stages of conducting the research study (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002). The researcher was reflexive; as reflexivity ensures that the researcher maintains their role as a researcher and is aware of their own biases and assumptions that might influence the collection and interpretation of data (Neuman, 2011). Reflexivity had to be an on-going feature during the process of analyzing the various issues and themes that were brought up during interviews, according to (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study could not be generalized because of the nature of the study, that being a qualitative study with only six participants, three males and three females. However the study did not seek to be generalizable.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The research study addressed the ethical concerns which are pertinent to conducting research on people. Each participant was handed an information letter as a request letter (Appendix B), outlining who the researcher was, what the topic and the nature of the study was, as well as what the objectives of the study were. It was explained that a narrative approach would be used which would require them to tell their stories of their career development as Black African Social

workers working in South Africa. They were told that they would be required to tell the story of how contextual factors (for example gender, culture and socio-political factors) had influenced their career development as Black African Social workers , and what meanings they attached to their career development process. This preamble information was critical to support the participants in making an informed decision to partake in the research study.

They were informed that they would personally benefit from participating in the study in any way, but that their participation would assist in developing of new knowledge around career development of Black African Social workers . They were informed that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time, without any negative or undesirable consequences to them.

They were informed that their participation would be unpaid and that they would be unidentified at any stage of the study. It was explained that anonymity would be ensured by omitting any identifying characteristics, such as their names or their place of work. It was explained to the participants that data collected would not be shared with anybody outside the research team, but that the completed research study might be used for publications.

Before the interviews commenced, the participants were handed a consent form (see Appendix C) to sign as a written agreement that they were well informed of the nature of the study and were agreeing to participate. During the process of collecting data and data analysis, the recorders were kept at the premises of the University with only the researcher having access to them. The recording tapes were destroyed immediately after the completion of the research study to prevent any potential harm to the participants. The researcher maintained confidentiality throughout the conducting of the study with only the supervisor having access to it should the

need arise. Transparency with regard to the objectives and aims of the research study was communicated in detail to the participants, they were made to understand that the study was being conducted in partial fulfilment of the researchers Masters degree. The objectives and aims of the study were explained to the participants as part of obtaining their informed consent. Privacy was ensured by conducting interviews in closed rooms with only the participant and the researcher present. The data was coded using interview 1 to 6 and not actual names of participants.

3.10 Research Methodology Summary

The study used a qualitative approach to explore the narratives of six South African Black Social workers. It was critical that this study employs a qualitative paradigm because the majority of previous studies that explored career development within the South African context employed the quantitative approach. The two theories that provided a theoretical foundation for this study are the Social constructionism and Systems theory.

The researcher interviewed six Durban based Social workers with convenient sampling since the researcher lived in Durban. The purposive sampling technique was employed to locate and identify Social workers who were Black Africans and who met all the specifications. A snowballing sampling method was later used to identify male Social workers. The participants consisted of Black African females (n=3) and Black African males (n=3) Social workers. Inclusion criteria for the selection of participants were that they should have been Social workers for a minimum of five years, because the study was interested in the career development over a period of time, and they had to be Black South Africans. Regarding work experience, five years

or more of experience also ensured that the participants were not new entry Social workers who had not experienced fully the various pitfalls of the profession.

The study selected a hospital in Durban using purposive sampling. The hospital in Durban was approached and Black African Social workers who met the selection criteria were requested to volunteer to be interviewed. The Black African Social workers interviewed at this hospital recommended other Male Black African Social workers from around Durban who met the inclusion criteria, as the study needed three male social workers and this was a challenge to find.

Data collection was conducted through conducting narrative interviews with the six Black African Social workers using an interview schedule. The interview schedule had open-ended questions which enabled the participants of the study to narrate their stories undisturbed. Participants were allowed to think and then narrate their career development, with the researcher only asking probing questions for clarity after they had finished their narrative. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured by interviews being conducted in private rooms with only the researcher and the participant were present. The use of recorders was done with full written consent from each participant. The interviews were renamed interview 1 up to 6 without using any real life identifiers such as real names.

Thematic content analysis was used for coding and analysing the various themes that emerged from the narratives. The study also used the Voice-Centered Relational Method of data analysis by Mauthner and Doucet (1998) which requires the transcribed interviews to be read a total of four times. The first reading is for the plot and for our responses to the narrative, the second reading is looking for the “I” while the third reading is a reading for relationships and the final

and fourth reading is for placing people within cultural contexts and social structures (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

4. CHAPTER FOUR: INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The research study explored the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers . The aim of the research study was to identify contextual factors (for example culture and socio political factors) that influenced the career development of Black African Social workers in South Africa. The study aimed to explore the role of interpersonal factors affecting the career development of Black African Social workers and explored what meanings Black African Social workers attached to their career development process.

The sample of the research study comprised of three female and three male South African Social workers . The literature review and theoretical framework will be used in the discussion and interpretation of the various themes that emerged during analysis. Respondent's responses (verbal) will be presented as quotes, where necessary, to support the various themes. The relational analysis that was used in the analysis however will not be presented as a separate discussion as it was a symbiotic process. The themes that emerged from the interpretation are presented below.

4.1 Contextual factors that influence career narratives

4.2 Narratives on the contextual challenges to career development

4.3 Narratives on contextual factors that propel career development

4.4 Narratives on the meaning attached to career development

4.2 Contextual Factors that Influence Career Narratives

Research question: *What contextual factors influence the career development of Black African Social workers in South Africa?*

All six participants indicated how contextual factors such as South Africa's historical political landscape as well as socio-economic factors have influenced their career development (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson, 2009). Various studies such as Bujold (2004) and Young and Collin (2004) claim that career development is constructed and reconstructed through the continued engagement by the individual with their environment. The findings of this study are consistent with these claims.

The following discussion show how several contextual factors such as South Africa's Apartheid era, economic issues and social factors have influenced the career development of the six Black Africans, and further disprove the applicability of the theories by John Holland (1992, as cited in Watson, 2009) and Donald Super (1957, as cited in Watson, 2009), as these theories do not recognise the significance or influence of wider contextual factors on career development. Instead, both theories are conceptualised as focusing on the individual as the unit of study, and his career development as influenced by his traits. The following quotes from the narratives of these six Black African Social workers show that contextual factors such as economic and socio-political factors have highly influenced the career development of many Black African professionals.

4.2.1 No Career Guidance

All six participant's narratives show the impact of South Africa's Apartheid era and how Apartheid policies determined their career development. None of the six participants ever

received any form of career counselling, and the extracts below tell of how they had to choose from the few options they had knowledge of. In fact, according to Watts (1996), many disadvantaged schools did not have career counselling offered to their students. The following five extracts from the participants' narratives highlighted this:

P1: *"When I finished matric I stayed home for a year while looking for my options. At that time we didn't have anyone telling us about careers. Career guidance was not there so I didn't know what I was going to do or what I was interested in. all my sisters are nurses and I didn't want to go to nursing I didn't want to be a teacher. Those were my options. Those were basically our options as women at the time, you either be a teacher, be a nurse or social worker and I didn't want teaching and I didn't want to be a nurse. So I thought no, let me explore the option of being a social worker"*.

P2: *"We didn't have that career guidance in our schools so even that radiographer needed maths and I didn't know and I didn't have maths"*.

P3: *"No, what career counselling. (Giggling) I knew it was either nursing like my parents wanted or something else that I could see myself do and when I heard of social work at Ongoye I just left nursing and went to apply for it"*.

P4: *"No there was never career guidance, I finished school in 1996 then 1997 I stayed home until 1998 when a friend of mine who was at varsity told me that I can come and try because I had good results so I went there"*.

P5: *"In terms of information regarding hmmm what do you after matric those kind of things, at that time I will say so, we were not provided, So in terms of career direction or*

career guidance it wasn't clear as a result I finished matric in 2000 and I worked in Mbilo for 2 years in a factory”.

Watts (1996) argues that were career counselling centres during the Apartheid era, these were present in many rural communities which were aimed to address the needs of learners who were not receiving any career counselling at their schools. However, none of the six Social workers interviewed for this study received career counselling from such counselling centres. Perhaps the unpopularity of the career counselling centres could be attributed to what Naicker (1994) regarded as politically motivated career centres. The career counselling centres introduced by the Apartheid government for many Black communities were thought of as politically motivated as they directed Black learners towards the service sectors and did not promote science and Maths among Black learners (Naicker, 1994).

P1, P2 and P3 all attended schooling during the Apartheid era and never received any career counselling. They attended Ongoye University which was specifically for Black people, these participants told of how there was no career guidance offered to them and in fact it was their families and friends who influenced which careers they pursued. P4 was influenced by her friend to pursue Social work as a profession; she had not undergone any counselling to inform her decision. While P3's career choice was initially influenced by her parents who pushed her to pursue nursing because it was offered for free at Ongoye University. When she learnt of social work from a friend she decided to not pursue nursing but instead study Social work like her friend. Again it becomes evident how the lack of career counselling leaves individuals going for career options that will give them employment not necessarily career options that are in line with their interests and aptitude.

Watson (2009) condemns how literature has focused on historical restrictions on career development and not on how the democratic government continues to not offer comprehensive career counselling to learners at school level. This argument is consistent with the findings of this study as P4, P5 and P6 all attended high school during the new democracy and they all never received career counselling or guidance. Their narratives illustrate how the democratic government has not offered comprehensive career counselling or guidance to many rural and township schools.

P5 completed Matric in year 2000 and had never received any career counselling as it was not offered at her school. P5 finished matric and went to work in a factory for two years until he learnt of Social work and only then did he apply for tertiary. P5 explained how the lack of any career counselling at his school left many learners with no choice but to seek employment immediately after matriculating. P5 states how many learners were not aware that they could study through government loans and only pay when they have completed their studies. Interestingly, P5 only decided on Social work when learnt of a government department that pays for individuals to study Social work and employs them once they complete their studies. Unemployment is one of the factors that drive many Black individuals into social occupations as well as factors such as their need to be of help to their communities (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). This was a common finding from all the participants of this study their need to be of help to their communities.

Coupled with no career guidance for the participants in this study is the poor education that was offered at their schools. P2 could not pursue radiography because she did not have maths which was a pre-requisite for studying Radiography. She was not aware that Mathematics is a requirement for Radiography and she did not have Mathematics. P2 spoke of how teachers did

not teach higher grade Maths, as the teachers themselves often seemed not to know Maths very well. Stead and Watson (1999a) argued that career development for many Black South Africans from rural backgrounds was further constrained by the poor quality of education they received. As a result of receiving poor quality of education and no career guidance, the participants opted to take gap years to explore what they perceived to be limited career options as they did not have science subjects.

4.2.2 Gap Years after Matric

John Holland's theory (1992) states that personality types correspond to a work environment and persons seek occupational environments that they believe will be an extension (Stead & Watson, 1999a). It is evident from the above abstracts that these Black African professionals went into professions that were presented to them as the only options. They did not have the opportunity to first explore their personality traits and compare these with suitable environments for them to work in. According to Super's (1957, as cited in Brown, 2003) theory, a personality is the primary factor in choosing a suitable career (Brown, 2003). Consequently, a Social worker must have a social personality which corresponds with a social environment (Brown, 2003). Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) and Watson (2009) however disagreed, stating that individuals end up in social occupations not necessarily because they are sociable, but because they have limited options.

Super's (1957, as cited in Brown, 2003) developmental stages were offered as a linear development of main life stages, where the Exploratory stage is a stage where an individual explores their career interests, once fully explored and decided on a career choice they move on to the Establishment stage where they focus on growing within the chosen career field. The samples that these developmental stages were founded on were from a western context and

arguably a more privileged context compared to the context of many disadvantaged Black South Africans. Super's theory was validated on a sample whose demographics and contextual factors differ from the majority of the Black South Africans population which is exposed to poverty and unemployment (Stead & Watson, 1998b). This was evident from three narratives of the Black African professionals in the study who, after matric, worked for a few years during which time they did not know what they could study or how they could finance their studies.

P1: *"When I finished matric I stayed home for a year while looking for my options"*.

P4: *"I finished school in 1996 then 1997 I stayed home until 1998 when a friend of mine who was at varsity told me that I can come and try because I had good results so..."*.

P5: *"I finished matric in 2000 and I worked in Mbilo for 2 years in a factory, then 2002 that's when I started enquiring about studying"*.

P6: *"I worked a few year in a casino for 5 years and only years later I went to do Social Work"*.

The participants offered two main reasons for taking gap years, these are not having finances to finance tertiary education and no knowledge of what to pursue at tertiary. P5 and P6 did not know what where their interest lie in terms of a career. P5 worked in a factory while P6 worked in a casino. These multiple career narratives for these participants could mean several things. Firstly they could mean that the lack of career counselling at high school leaves many Black South Africans unclear with regard to which career option to pursue after Matric. Secondly they could illustrate how poverty has meant that many Black South Africans have to seek employment after Matric instead of pursuing tertiary education. After matriculating, P4 stayed home until a friend informed him that he could study further. He was unaware of the

opportunities available for him at tertiary institutions such as Ongoye University because such information was unavailable at his school. While P5 and P6 had to seek employment after matriculating because not only did they not have funds to pursue tertiary education, but they also did not have a clear idea of their career interests. It was only after they learned that there were funding options available to them to study Social work at Ongoye University that they left their jobs and pursued a career in Social work.

4.2.3 Limited Tertiary Options for Black South Africans during Apartheid

The Apartheid government had put into practice separatist policies aimed at separating Black Africans from the White population, and this was no less evident in the education system where Black Africans could not attend the same universities as White people (Case & Deaton, 1999). All the Social workers in this study attended Ongoye University, which was for Black Africans during the Apartheid era. The Social workers related their difficulties attending a university that was situated outside of Durban, their hometown. P1, P2, P3 spoke of having to leave res on some weekends because they missed their homes and facing food security at times. P3's parents had wanted her to pursue nursing because it was offered for free at Ongoye but she went for Social work which meant she wouldn't always have pocket money as her parents had to struggle to finance her studies as well as res because Ongoye was far from her home.

P1: *"We couldn't go study anywhere it was Ungoye and we couldn't go to University of Natal".*

P1, a Social worker at a public hospital, told of how her career choice was influenced by the political climate of the time she grew up. P1 told the story of how she could not study at the University of Natal, even though it was the closest to her home, because Black people were not

allowed to study there by the Apartheid policies. She had to go and study at Ongoye, which was far from her home.

P2: *“Opportunities were not the same for everyone, I couldn’t just study at any university easily because I stayed in Durban so my choices were Ongoye or Fort Hare and I went to Ongoye”.*

Black South African’s career experiences were largely shaped by the social conditions they grew up in, acknowledged Frizelle (2002). P2 above tells of how the political climate also influenced her tertiary experience as she was limited to the Ongoye University. The political climate at the time also influenced the number of career opportunities available for Black South Africans as the following extracts will illustrate.

4.2.4 Limited Career Options for a Black African during Apartheid

Contrary to employment demands, Black learners were only limited to a few career options during the Apartheid era, namely teaching, nursing and social work, according to the Social workers in this study. Watson and Stead (1999) had stated that there were limited career options for Black people during Apartheid. Black learners chose social and investigative occupations for many reasons, some of which included not having studied maths and science at school, preferring occupations where they could be of help to their community because they felt connected to their communities, and having had no role models in technical occupations (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson & Stead, 1993; Watson *et al.*, 1997). The Apartheid government had legislated the type of education to be taught to Black Africans to be of poor and lesser quality, which inevitably produced individuals who could only go into a limited number of occupations (Case & Deaton, 1999). In the following narrative, P1 explained

how she had studied commercial subjects at high school but as a Black person, knew she was limited to teaching, nursing and Social Work:

P1: *“All my sisters are nurses and I didn’t want to go to nursing I didn’t want to be a teacher. Those were my options. Those were basically our options as women at the time, you either be a teacher, be a nurse or social worker and I didn’t want teaching and I didn’t want to be a nurse. So I thought no, let me explore the option of being a social worker”.*

P2, like many Black African individuals, had limited career options during the Apartheid era. She explained how getting into Social Work had been accidental. She would have liked to have studied medicine but had poor maths and science marks, so she ended up in Social Work. The following are abstracts from her narrative:

P2: *“I liked being a doctor from early on and so my focus was that I would end up being a medical doctor but subjects I was doing couldn’t have allowed that and maths was not a subject I knew to be honest I didn’t even know I needed maths to be the doctor I wanted to be growing up so I ended up applying for radiographer because I wanted to work in a hospital setting. Radiographer was going to turn me down because I didn’t have Maths and science subjects as the year was going and I was home, I applied for Nursing because it didn’t need maths you had to pass. So it wasn’t that I wanted nursing I just liked working in a hospital, nursing was not a first priority. I feared blood and all of that of that. So during that time waiting for Nursing to get back to me whether I got it or didn’t I thought I won’t cope doing nursing and then when I got accepted I had decided not to go and do nursing, while I was waiting for them I had applied at the university,*

Ongoye university because I already had the matric certificate from last year, the following year I decided to go do social work. My interest is to help by nature, I want to help people where ever I can so when I got the profession I realised that is why I had to stay home for a year so I could get into social work, it was a right decision...if I knew maths I could have been a medical doctor because my interest was in that like I said. But I also couldn't just study anywhere because we didn't have as many opportunities as black people in early (19)70s unlike now".

The limited career options were also the case for P3, P4 and P5, as illustrated by the following abstracts:

P3: "I applied at Marcot and Ongoye to do Nursing with my twin sister but it was not my intention to do nursing it was my parents because of money. We got accepted Ongoye for nursing. When I got to Ongoye I changed to social work and never went to do nursing. I liked Social work than nursing".

P4: "I wanted to do Psychology but back in the years it was not easy to be accepted in the department of psychology if you were Black. So I was going to do Social work and I was going to do Psychology as well and I chose to do Social work and just major in Psychology".

P5: "There was medicine hmmm I think Psychology I don't remember the rest but a lot of stuff from Humanities and then Medicine".

The above narratives illustrated that Black South Africans who went to school during the Apartheid era and the early years of democracy were not in a position where they could pick a

career according to their personality or aptitude, due to the absence of career counselling. This echoed the findings of Frizelle (2002), Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) and Watson and Stead (1999).

4.2.5 Political Strike during Career Development

Four participants told stories of how there were often protest actions that hindered their schooling, and also exposed them to brutal, horrific violence which ultimately directed them to occupations where they could empower and help their fellow Africans. South Africa's Apartheid system presented numerous challenges for Black Africans. These narratives illustrated how Narrative research allowed the use of storytelling to tap into people's knowledge of the past and how it influenced their career development (Bruner, 1991). P2, who was a student at Ongoye during the infamous 1976 riots where students were striking against being taught in Afrikaans, tells of how this strike which began in Soweto, Gauteng (Ndlovu, 1998), affected her academic career at KwaZulu-Natal's Ongoye university.

P2: "At that time a social work degree was 3 years but for me it wasn't 3 years because in between there were strikes in 1976 so the university I attended had to close because of the student unrest boycotting Afrikaans so at that stage I was doing my 2nd year and at the time of the strike social workers , not social workers but the university participated in the strike as a form of solidarity and so as a result the university was burnt down so we had to close the whole year and start afresh the following year in 1977. So I had to continue then and could only finish in 1978 because in 1976 I couldn't finish on time because of the unrest".

P3: "Well there were strikes, in 1976 there was a strike and they burnt down the library Ongoye just had to shut down that year, we all came back the following year. We stayed home the whole year at home and went back in 1977".

P6: *“Yes like strikes. Students wanted funding or accommodation, and not to share rooms in their residences. There were lot of student strikes for issues like that”.*

Political protest actions also played a positive role in the career development of Black African professionals, as illustrated by the following extracts:

4.2.6 Politics Played a Positive Role in Career Development

The systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999; 2006) can offer a suitable framework for career counselling as it takes into account many issues that affect career development, as individuals are both a system and a subsystem. They are a system of personality, aptitude, capability and gender while they are also a subsystem of wider social contexts i.e. political, social and economic systems (Patton & McMahon, 2006; 2009). The Social workers in the study and their career development were affected by many issues, both intrapersonal and larger contextual issues such as politics. The following narrative is an illustration of how wider contextual influences such as politics can influence career development. Here an extract from P5’s narrative illustrates how a student association for Black South African students at Ongoye University namely SASCO assisted him to obtain funding on two occasions to finance the completion of his studies.

P5: *“I will look at the small scale of internal political affiliation SASCO at that time on campus. To me they played a big role because I didn’t have financial aid so I had to appeal to them and give them my appeal to forward to the relevant structures then eventually I ended up getting financial aid you see, and the following res I didn’t have res I utilised the same route and then I got res so they played a role and on a larger role for there to be a financial aid to assist people like myself I think politics played a big role”.*

P5 was a Social worker who almost did not graduate, had it not been for a student's political society called SASCO at the Ongoye university. He was from Eshowe and had gone to a rural school called Embungulwane High School. He had worked at a factory for two years and had given up on ever studying. It wasn't until his brother resigned from the factory and went to study at the Ongoye University that he considered this a possibility for himself too. He explained how his brother had told him of financial aid available at Ongoye that he could apply for. He subsequently applied but did not get funding at this time. As he had already paid for his own registration, he started studying and lived at his brother's residence.

4.2.7 Discrimination at Tertiary Level

Black South Africans who studied during the apartheid era often experienced what they called discrimination during their time at tertiary institution level. The following is an abstract from P5's narrative:

P1: Everything went well until I got to 3rd year where there was a round table discussion with each social work student by the lecturers where they decided who goes to 3rd year, even if you had 70s or 80s but in that round table if they decide you don't go through to the final year then you didn't go through and graduate. It all depended on what they discussed about you as a student... I had to repeat the course, the 3rd year. I didn't even tell my parents... Because my father was also involved in politics a little and during that time we were taught by amabhunu (Afrikaners). Jah we were taught by amabhunu (Afrikaner) and they had their own ways of treating us and we never knew what they thought of us, I don't know how to put it but there was that thing they were amabhunu (Afrikaners). We were taught mainly by amabhunu (Afrikaners) in fact during the round

table selections, the person who was in charge was an Afrikaner it wasn't that they was only them, there were other races but they were in charge let me put it like that.

P1, a Social worker at a public hospital, studied at Ongoye in the 1970s. To illustrate the impact the Apartheid era and the wider political climate had on Black African individuals, she told of how the political climate at the time often made the experience of studying very unpleasant. She had to repeat her third and final year after a round table discussion between the lecturers and the students. She was not given any explanation as to why she was made to repeat the year, leaving her feeling that it had to do with her race and that her English was not up to their standards.

4.2.8 Unemployment for Graduates

Many Social workers in this study experienced difficulties finding employment after graduating. Four of the six Social workers in this study did not find employment after completing their qualification and P3 even had multiple career narratives, where she was compelled into employment dissimilar to what she was qualified to do because she needed to make a living. Frizelle (2002) had alluded to this. Post-graduation work history of P3:

P3: "After I finished at Ongoye there was no job so I applied at the Standard Bank so I could be a teller instead of staying at home and then I got a job at medical school to do research about maternal birth. I would go to different places including Northern Zululand I worked for a year and then I got a job here and I've been at this hospital ever since. I didn't have a job for 4 months after I completed my degree, and then I got a job at medical school. When I got a job here, my contract for a year with Medical school was not finished so I had to finish a year with them before I could come start here.

P3 was not the only Social worker in this study to have to wait before finding a job after completing their qualification. This is a common problem in South Africa for graduates, clearly showing a need to encourage young people to get into fields that have gaps in order to eradicate graduate unemployment (Mlatsheni & Rospabé, 2002; Pauw *et al.*, 2008). According to Frizelle (2002), many Black South African graduates often have multiple career narratives as a result of difficulties finding employment in the fields they are qualified in. This is attributed to many Black South African students having limited options at tertiary institutions because of either no science subjects or poor marks in Mathematics (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Pauw *et al.*, 2008). The following extracts of narratives are of Social workers who had to stay home for months before finding employment:

P4: *“After I finished my degree I stayed for 7 months”.*

P5: *“After I completed Social work I was home for a period of 6 months not doing anything so that’s a big frustrating”.*

Despite this, social occupations are a popular choice for many Black South Africans from disadvantaged schools, as they are not required to have studied maths and science at high school (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). Many studies show that the quality of science subjects offered at rural schools is of poor quality and often leaves learners unequipped to enrol for tertiary courses that require science subjects (Stead & Watson, 2002; Watson *et al.*, 1997). The following extracts illustrate this challenge.

P2: *“Radiographer needed Maths and I didn’t have Maths so after completing matric I stayed for a year. Radiographer was going to turn me down because I didn’t have Maths”.*

and science subjects as the year was going and I was home, I applied for nursing because it didn't need maths you had to pass”.

P5: *“In Medicine I couldn't get in but under Humanities I could so I had to choose so I chose Social work, Psychology and other I can't even remember”.*

P2 was an example of how poor maths at high school limited her career development. She explained how she had wished to be a medical doctor or a radiographer, and had even applied at university to study radiography, but was informed that she could not study in this field without having studied maths. She then applied to study nursing because maths was not a requirement for that course and the students were getting paid while studying. She eventually switched over to Social Work because she liked the idea of helping people. P5 was another case in point. He had a desire to be a medical doctor but had also not studied maths and science at school. He could therefore only choose from the degrees offered in Humanities. He subsequently applied to study Psychology, Social Work, and one other Humanities degree he could not even recall.

4.2.9 Economic Challenges during an Academic Career

Economic issues and challenges influenced all six Social workers and their career development; it affected and influenced them in numerous ways. The economic challenges of Black Africans during the Apartheid era have been widely documented in career research as having influenced many individuals' career development (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Stead, 1996; Stead & Watson, 1998b; 1999a; Watson *et al.*, 2014). All of the participants in this study were confronted by economic challenges when they completed their matric year, and this directed them towards social occupations such as Social Work, which would offer them immediate economic freedom. The following extracts of narratives contest the traditional trait and factor approach offered by Holland (1992, as cited in Zunker, 2006) or the career development showing

a progression of stages across a lifespan postulated by Super (1957, as cited in Zunker, 2006). Instead, these narratives present career development as being contextually bound and not a well thought out process.

P1, a Social worker at a public hospital, when asked to tell the story of how she reached her current position in terms of her career as a Black African Social worker, told the following story:

P1: “At home there wasn’t a lot of money, my father was a priest, at the time he had retired from teaching. But then not that he wasn’t getting paid just that priests didn’t make much money just that we had farms so he had fields of sugar cane. So basically it was just a family that I don’t whether to say poor, poor but my father always preached that his children must get education because there was a lot of us and all of us got education. He used to say the skies is the limit my children even if we have pap for supper as long as you are getting education that’s all. So that was it. jah. Because in fact both my parents were teachers until my father decided to be a priest so education was what was the thing....”

Researcher: *“So who financed your education”?*

P1: “My parents initially paid and then I got a loan later and I was able to finish”.

P2: “After completing matric I stayed for a year”.

Another Social worker, P3, told the story of how she had to apply for nursing at Marcot and Ongoye University because students would get paid while studying nursing. Her parents wanted her and her twin sister to study nursing, but after she was accepted she changed to Social Work.

P3: *"I applied at Marcot and Ongoye to do nursing with my twin sister but it was not my intention to do nursing it was my parents because of money. They could afford because they paid for my fees when I went to Ongoye to do social work even though they wanted something else, they wanted nursing. My dad complained because he thought since we were going to do nursing and get paid they were not going to pay. My mom tried"*.

Contrary to the expectation that when an individual completes matric they soon go on to tertiary education, this was not the case for three of the Social workers in the study. They were forced to work after completing matric. P4's narrative on staying home for a year before going to study follows:

Researcher: *"Why did you stay home in 1997"?*

P4: *"I didn't have money and I didn't know I could study for free and there was some funding I could use until that friend told me"*.

Researcher: *"Who funded your studies at Unizulu? Did your parents work"?*

P4: *"No I taught myself, I used Tefsa, I don't know you call it NESFAS"?*

Researcher: *Yes, Nsfas?*

P4: *"Yes for us at varsity if you went with good results, you passed then you will get TEFSA because my brother paid registration fee because I was told because I played football, there was a friend who had gone to tertiary who told me that come to varsity and you will stay with me and you will see whether you can make it then I went there and I told my brother and he gave me registration it was 1600 those days , (laughs) it was a lot of money, it was a lot of money so I had money to register and I passed and I got*

TEFSA and they paid you see. Those were the days there were lots of strike at schools which made a difference because we were striking so that people who could not register be given a chance to study until TEFSA was able to pay. Yeah cause my mother was a housewife my father was a farm worker that's why I grew up and became a communist (laughs) no that's what we used to say that my mom is a is a housewife and my father works in a farm I will grow up to be a communist".

P4 was not the only participant who had to work after matric.

P6: "I finished matric in 1995 and because there was no money at home I went to look for a job. I worked a few year in a casino, for 5 years and only years later I went to do Social work because it is something I liked to do".

P5's narrative demonstrated how career development was not always a linear process, despite the argument by Super (1957, as cited in Zunker, 2006) to that effect. P5 matriculated in 1995 but there was no money to finance higher education, as both his parents did menial work that paid very little. He had to go and look for a job, which he subsequently found at a casino. He then worked there for five years. His decision to look for a job was not because he did not want to study; instead it was due to the conditions of poverty at home. It was only when she learnt that she could get funding to finance her studies, and had secured employment afterwards as a Social worker, that she considered leaving her job of five years at a casino.

4.3 Narratives on the Contextual Challenges to Career Development

- How did these contextual factors present as challenges in Black African Social workers ' career development? What challenges have you experienced in your career as a Black

African Social worker? Tell me about how you overcame those challenges? Did you experience any struggles with your decision to be a Social worker, and if you did, then what were they?

4.3.1 Shortage of Resources

P1 explained how she often felt helpless when clients needed services or resources that she was not able to offer. She worked at a 'Place of Safety' where street children came from violent homes, and as a Social worker she could only interview them and offer individualised assistance while she wished she could go to their homes as well. She had this need to offer more help than her profession limited her to at the time. This assertion was supported by literature that suggests that African individuals who enter social occupations have an innate desire to be of assistance to the community (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). When working at the hospital, she experienced a shortage of resources when she needed to be of assistance to the elderly. The following extract illustrates this frustration:

P1: "You can't do anything no matter how much you wish to go to their homes and see what is happening all you can do if the people or parents arrive here and you interview them and so forth you find there is a gap that I see when you are here trying to help people for instance the people who are from the streets and are brought here. you find this person is not an elderly person but they don't have a home because during Apartheid there were wars between parties that caused a lot of people to separate from their families and some ran away during those times and ended up living in the streets not knowing where to go. Some are on the streets because of that, even though there are other reasons. But you find that this person is still young, maybe 45 and they are not disabled and they can go work but there is no work, there are no jobs. You find you can't

help because there is no place there is available that you can say ok, because you are in this situation go live there until you find a job or something. So there are a lot of challenges in the profession..... It's not an easy profession being a social worker, if there was resources then we could be able to do our jobs but there is no resources. It would be better because no matter what the problem is you would know what to do where to send them but it's not at all because you try and try that's all you can do"?

The challenge of limited resources and how that made the Social workers feel was a common narrative and the following extracts illustrate this. They further show why there is a need for indigenous psychologies. There is an evident need to develop a career development theory which takes into account real people's lived experiences and takes cognisance of context, both limiting contextual influences and propelling contextual influences to career development (Stead & Watson, 1999a).

P2: *"The only challenges you face are challenges with regard to the services you give to people, a person is a resource himself. I tell a person that you are not in a good situation doesn't mean you can't do anything to get out of that situation".*

P3: *"When I can't say I'll help you this way that leaves you feeling helpless, just so helpless.*

Most of these Social workers experienced poverty growing up and they drew from this experience when they dealt with clients in the profession.

P5: *"Yeah I think jah I think it does to a certain extent and another thing I see, when I look at the government and the way they do things, in a way it makes things easier because there are resources. If a client comes in here, let's say they don't have food at*

home, we can actually say here are forms, lets fill them out and you can actually get a food voucher. But then there is a contradiction there because people, and we as a structure are supposed to be empowering people to be self-reliant and now there is this government and food vouchers so there's no such thing of self-reliant they become independent so at time I think, others I even sit down with them and ask what are you doing with your life because this food voucher is only for 3 months and then what are you doing afterwards, what are your plans? So there is that... lack of resources to enable us to do our jobs is the main challenge really”.

P5 explained his challenge being that he sympathised with clients who experienced poverty, because he himself had experienced hardships. He admitted that there were sometimes resources to help clients, but what frustrated him more was when clients felt helpless in situations that they could do something about. He explained how he felt frustrated with the government for giving people grants and causing dependency when they as Social workers were trying to teach people to be self-reliant.

4.3.2 No Upward Mobility

All the Social workers in this study had experienced the lack of upward mobility and they explained how, as a Social worker, there were limited management positions. They explained how when they entered the profession they had desires to make a living, afford luxuries such as a car, house etc., but as there were limited positions within management they didn't climb any career ladders. The following extracts illustrate how the research participants have faced difficulties in upward mobility within the profession of Social work:

P1: “In terms of progress, there is no progress. You struggle on your own and make ends meet somehow with your kids and everything”.

P2: *“You talk of climbing a ladder I can’t worry about that ladder if there is not chances of that, I have to do what I can do which is to help people where I can. That’s all you can do as a social worker not to be a manager (laughs)”*.

P3: *“Uhhmmmmmmmm when I started promotions were only for whites but that is not the case anymore, it ended from when ANC came into government now there are Black people who get into management positions. It’s over 30 years but I’m still here, you see. There is Grade 1, there was levels now there is Grade 1, its always changing. There is grade 1, grade 2, grade 3 so we are in grade 3 now”*.

P5: *“No the department as such doesn’t offer many opportunities in terms of growth, self-development as such. Their scales for their ranks they are very limited, you hardly move from the level you are at”*.

P6: *“Yes I want more opportunities not to do the same thing. But even though I do programmes the money is the same so more opportunities with more money, we all want that. It’s just that it takes long, you are supposed to be a Social worker, then a supervisor if you follow the steps in the profession. But it takes too long and there are high chances that you won’t be a supervisor but everyone wants growth in life but there are less chances here. There are people here who have 20 years working as Social workers yet they are still working as Social workers they have not become supervisors or managers”*.

While there is limited research to support the claims that there are limited upward mobility opportunities for Social workers in South Africa, it was nonetheless important to capture these

narratives. Social workers in this study also told of how they earned salaries that were unsatisfactory. The following extracts from the narratives illustrate this:

P1: *“To be honest social workers don’t earn any money...make ends meet somehow with your kids and everything. Not because there is lot of money, you make do until you get somewhere. Not a lot, at least you are able to raise your kids, put them through school, it’s only that”.*

P2: *“I like to help people and my friend was also doing it, not money. I didn’t even think about it I thought it pays enough. I was motivated by seeing people drive cars I wanted that for myself but I don’t drive because I can’t afford it, you cannot afford both a house and a car with our salaries. You have to choose one”.*

P5: *“The other biggest part we go to tertiary to get equipped with these skills so that we can sustain our lives so that we can survive so you look into a career that can provide you, you know...But then when we talk of growth we are not only talking of accumulating certificates, money is involved. Once you start working, responsibilities become more and you have goals so like goals like after I work I want to have a house you see, and after a house I wana get married something like that, I wana have a baby I wana have my own car so it doesn’t become possible in this profession”.*

P6: *“You stay for too long as a Social worker with no progress, and you think if maybe you study something else you would be far in life and have a lot of things. Money can sometimes turn you off”.*

Earning an unsatisfactory salary has left P5 exploring other avenues to make a living. P5 was a male Social worker who came from an impoverished background. He worked at a factory for two

years after matric and went to study Social work after his brother told him that he could apply for financial aid to study at a university. He left work at a factory so that he could study and earn a good living, but felt that his salary as a Social worker was not sufficient to meet all of his necessities as a father.

4.3.3 Lack of Support

Social workers provide an essential service to the community and according to the Social workers in this study; they need support as their profession exposes them to emotionally exhausting issues. Social workers provide essential health services to communities and to people in need. These services include HIV/AIDS services, disease management among other services (Kim & Lee, 2009). The Social workers in this study explained how they often did not have support from anyone to help them deal with the emotional consequences of their profession. P1 has been a Social worker for over thirty years, and works at a public hospital. She explained how there was no emotional support available to her, yet as a Social worker, was required to work with emotionally draining issues.

Researcher: “Is there any support that you get from the structures within the organization and perhaps at home, do you get to vent to someone who hears you”?

P1: “No there is none of that, when you leave here and go home, you go to your kids, they get home from work tired. Even a husband, let’s say you don’t have a husband, you don’t have anyone to talk to. And we need that because carrying people problems every day and yet you don’t have someone to talk too really and there is no money in this profession”.

Researcher: “Is there Employee Wellness Programme here for staff”?

P1: "Yes we have EAP".

Researcher: "What services do they offer, have you ever thought of seeing them"?

P1: "No I have never thought of going to employee wellness. Don't mind me, I have tears that just come".

Researcher: "Do you not think you should explore their services"?

P1: "I have never thought of it, and I don't think there is anyone from here at the department who has ever gone there or thought of going there. And you know sometimes when you work in an organization you don't feel appreciated and you feel demotivated and you see everything with no appeal to you so jah".

Researcher: "And here in the department is there any form of support that you offer each other"?

P1: "Yes (laughs). How many of us are here? 8. We didn't have a manager but now we do so there are 8 of us. Jah sometimes we do that".

P2 was also a Social worker at a public hospital with more than thirty years of experience. She told of the violence she had seen that had taught her that she needed to learn to detach herself from her work and her life.

P2: "I came across a person who was burnt because there was bomb thrown at his home and he couldn't get out and got burnt. But they would tell the story as if they telling a tale something that never happened and I would say maybe it's a coping mechanism because they had cried enough, what was next? If they cry what was going to happen. So they distanced themselves and didn't show or have emotions. That affected me a lot. You see.

People tell a story as if it's something that didn't happen, that person I saw was burnt , a female but she couldn't see because she was burnt and that affects you but you must be able to separate these people's experiences and your own life because if you are going to internalise you will also not be ok. That is how we cope. We debrief we talk about those things, before you are a social worker you learn about these thing such as psychology and things like that. A lot of what we work with is traumatic”.

It is common practise for health service providers such as Social workers to seek emotional support from Employment Assistance Programmes (EAPs) to deal enable them to deal with the demands of their profession (Kim & Lee, 2009). However, none of the participants in this study had sought out the services of EAPs offered at the hospitals where they work. In fact they all spoke of how they rely on their families for such support but often their families are not there for them in this regard. This could be because Social workers are viewed as the providers of support by both their communities and families. P1 spoke of how her family looks to her for guidance, advice and support. She also mentioned how her wider community often comes to her with the assumption that she can help with any kind of social support service. The sentiment was supported by other participants in the study including P3, P4, P5 and P6.

4.4 Narratives on Contextual Factors that Propel Career Development

- What contextual factors propel career development for Black African Social workers in South Africa?

4.4.1 Service to Community

The following narrative extracts from all six Social workers demonstrated their need to help people as a driving motivation to being in the profession. They illustrated how, in spite of

numerous challenges in the profession including low pay and limited resources (which will be presented in a later subsection) the Social workers in this study had an innate desire to help the community. This echoed the statement of Mkhize and Frizelle (2002), where they stated that this longing to be of assistance to the community reveals an intense feeling to feel connected to one's community. This desire to be of service to one's community in some way through one's career has been reported in numerous studies and is true for all six Social workers who took part in this study (Dlamini, 1983; Euvrard, 1996; Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

P1: *"You get that satisfaction that is so delightful. To help someone and they get that help, you get that delightful feeling jah you get that...But you do see when someone is really troubled and you talk to them and you see they get that relief jah some people you are able to help"*.

P2: *"Like I said you help people help themselves, if people can deal with their problems then the social problems we have can be minimised so your contribution to help people know even if a situation is worse there is a way"*.

P3: *"When you do something and it goes well, it's nice when you are able to help someone"*.

P4: *"I know when I see them I am seeing a Black person who has lost hope and I must bring back hope because bringing back hope is a contribution because when a person goes out with hope they contribute to society so you must light a candle that will light others. That was it for me, that is why I didn't do law. Because law is very individualistic, because I was going to protect this one person who has committed a crime or has not committed a crime you see, that is the question that professors asked me, that why*

because at Law they accepted why Social Work and I said there I have to protect one person who has money who doesn't need much but why don't I go and tell the majority who don't have means to make life out of their lives than to protect those who have something already".

P5: *"... knew I would be dealing with people who are similar to me. Who go through things I grew up in and I will be able to help them better because of my own experiences of poverty you see. So I can relate I can share something and maybe I can even empower people, because most people commit suicide in these situations so with sharing my stories with them they can be empowered than they can shift there and see that there is an option. You see".*

P6: *"I liked to help people, to work with people. I liked working with people but Social Work makes you emotional when you hear people's stories but when you have helped a person and they leave with a smile that feels good and you are happy inside because you know you have made a difference in someone's else's life".*

All six Social workers in the study explained how, through their profession, they were able to be of service to their communities and this was what propelled them in spite of the challenges they faced in the profession. This further illustrates the profound influence that a collectivist culture has on career development for the Social workers in this study. This is supported by wider research on the collectivist culture (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson & Stead, 1998b; 1999a).

4.5 Narratives on the Meaning Attached to Career Development

- What meanings do Black African Social workers attach to their career development process? What does your career as a Black African Social worker mean to you personally? What does your career as a Black African Social worker mean to your family? What does your career as a Black African Social worker mean to your community?

4.5.1 Survival

All six Social workers indicated that survival was the reason they have stayed in the profession, even during the challenges presented earlier. Due to having experienced poverty while growing up, they went into the profession looking to make a better life for themselves and their families. According to the narratives of the six Social workers, this drive to succeed in their career had been to support the rest of their family, both immediate and extended, rather than for individualistic reasons. The fact that many had reported supporting their families, both immediate and extended, suggests that the collectivist culture plays a principal role in Africans and their career development (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The following extract was from P1's narrative. She was a mother of five children and explained how having a profession had meant that she had a respectable profession and the economic means to support her family.

P1: "... what must I say, personally what does it mean, uhmmm well I am a professional and someone might see it as something it's not like you don't have anything on hand. You have something that makes you proud even though there is nothing really but you tried (laughs) you went to school and got that profession and you work. It's not like other people; it made me a person who is better off, someone better not that low".

This was a similar to P6's narrative. She had worked at a casino for 5 years after matriculating. She explained how being a Social worker meant that she had a respectable voice in her community, which was important for her. It was a voice she did not have when she worked at the casino, again emphasizing the need to have respect from a wider community. This need for wider respect has been well documented by many researchers (Dlamini, 1983; Euvrard, 1996; Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). The following abstract illustrates this social embeddedness of career narrative.

P6: "I am able to mingle with other people and voice out my opinions about whatever I can stay in a nice place because I am educated and I work. Nothing prevents me from doing something I like I can afford more things than when I was working at the Casino or if I wasn't working".

P6 discussed how she feels empowered now that she has a qualification after years of working at a casino. She spoke of how her father often boasts with pride that his daughter is a Social worker and makes sure that everyone in her community knows of her career. While she is dissatisfied with the financial rewards of the profession, the pride that her family and her wider community feel towards her profession makes her feel as though she has accomplished in life. Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) discuss extensively how the recognition from a family and community for Black South Africans plays a critical role in their career development and P6's narrative illustrates this. The pride her family feels towards her being in a profession where she is able to help her community compels her to remain in the profession of Social work.

Social constructivism enables career counselling to accommodate for cultural meanings to career development whereby an individual is not the only unit of analysis but the individual

engages their culture and wider environment in this case, their family and community to decide what career options are most viable for them (Young & Collin, 2004). This demonstrates how Social constructivism is applicable and suitable for a South African context particularly for Black South Africans. The western developed career counselling frameworks do not allow for the individual together with their wider community to be the units of analysis as the individual and his interests are the only focus during career counselling.

4.5.2 Cope

Among the many meanings that Social workers attached to their careers, coping was a common theme that came up from their narratives. Coping illustrates the social embeddedness of career development for Black South Africans (Frizelle, 2002). P2 explained how her career had helped her to cope with her own personal tribulations because she witnessed harsher realities in her profession. The following is her narrative:

P2: "it makes me able to cope with situations that are bleak because I am being exposed to people who are worse than me and they are still living so that makes me stronger that if that person can cope in those circumstances, not that I am better but my situation is better because I am able to put food on the table, I am not sick even if there is chronic illnesses as you grow older but still I am able to do things for myself".

4.5.3 Empower

A theme that emerged which further illustrates the social embeddedness of career narratives is the need to empower other people through one's career (Frizelle, 2002). P4 is a male Social worker who explained how he believed that his career needed to have a deeper meaning than survival for him. He was inspired by Martin Luther King and South Africa's political history, and thinks that it is his responsibility through his career to empower others.

P4: *“You know like I said about why I decided to be a social worker, I grew up in a political environment the thing that made me want to be a social worker or a psychologist was to liberate people, mentally , physically. Because I thought if I contribute they would take as an expert opinion if I say this is a vulnerable group, these are the recommendations people will listen because it’s an expert opinion”.*

This narrative further supports literature which says that Black Africans have a socially embedded self and the need to have a career that serves as an example and inspiration to others in the community (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

4.5.4 Meaning to the family

The desire to be of assistance to their family was a common theme in this study, as all six Social workers explained what their careers meant to their families. Belonging to a collectivist culture influences the career development of many South Africans. The most common influence is in the type of occupations pursued by Black South community, usually Social occupations as they serve the desire to be of service to one’s community (Frizelle, 2000; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Stead & Watson, 1998a; 1999b). The finding of this study supported this literature. The following extracts from P5 and P6’s narratives illustrate this:

P5: *“(Laughs) hahaha to my family, I think since they know I am a social worker they expect me to assist in anything and everything you see. Ok there is two of us at home with qualifications, it’s my brother who has a degree in medicine and then me others have now gone to enrol at tertiaries because we came back with the information and supplied them. But people who are working right now are me and him and so we have different characters he drinks I don’t. So they become more reliant on me as opposed to him or both of us jah. And if there is something that’s needs to happen at home they approach*

me I think why? Because they understand how Social workers are and they think here is a person who is approachable and who can understand and will help. You see, but it's good I don't have a problem with that".

P6: "Oh they are very proud (laughs). They are very proud, my father likes to say "my son is a social worker" and that is nice. And I was a first person to graduate from a University in my family, both sides maternal and paternal. jah so they are proud. Even when there are family gatherings, at my father's side they say "our Social worker has arrived" jah".

Having a meaningful career in their community was a common theme from the Social workers .

4.5.5 Meeting Expectations of the Community

Having a career that had meaning to their community and being of service to their community has been common to all six Social workers. The following extracts from P4 and P6 perfectly illustrated this:

P4: "For me a community, I always regard back where I was born at eShowe as my community so it helps them because even with my contacts I am like go invest eShowe and I am always close to the younger ones when I am back and I will attend their sports and we have meetings and I give them sort of informal political class that as Blacks this is where we come from, our ideology was to get here so things like this we mustn't promote or do. You see. Justice should be enforced by community that if you allow that there be crime, this community is getting destroyed so it is up to us. So it helps to understand things and be around in the community you see, because you can help to influence a community in the right direction. And I see sometimes they consult me with

issues like you know we have an issue of water you see, then I will come and we go to the right people to sort the issue of the community. Or just to tell them, not the right channel is this one. So jah the community tend to admire you then you can influence the community. I think it helps, and I see by when they call me and I think oh ok they must see I can help and so I contribute”.

P6: “Jah with the community I live this side so when I visit I have of people coming to ask me questions about what we must do in this situation and in that situation”.

The above extracts on the meaning the six Social workers attached to their careers illustrates the social embeddedness of their career narrative. The meaning that these Social Workers attached to their careers was measured by how well it served their family and community. This was supported by a wide range of literature that points to the collectivist culture playing a driving role in which careers Black Africans chose (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson & Stead, 1998b; 1999a).

4.6 Summary

The discussion presented contextual factors that influenced the career development of the six Social workers in this study that either challenged or propelled their career development. Included were the meanings that they, their families and their communities attached to them being Social workers. The social embeddedness, among other common findings, further illustrated how traditional Western career theories such as those of Holland (1992, as cited in Zunker, 2006) and Super (1957, as cited in Zunker, 2006) are inappropriate for the South African context, as they fail to capture these and other socio-political factors which influence the career

development of Black South Africans. These narratives further illustrated the need for narrative research and indigenous career theory as a new approach for career counsellors.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview of the Study

The research study aimed to explore the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers by identifying contextual factors (for socio-political factors) that influenced the career development of Black African Social workers in South Africa. Furthermore, the study aimed to explore the role of interpersonal factors affecting the career development of Black African Social workers and to explore what meanings Black African Social workers attached to their career development process.

A qualitative, narrative approach was employed to explore the career development of six South African Black Social workers. Six Social workers were initially identified using Purposive sampling, and then later by using the Snowballing sampling method. The type of interviews used was semi-structured, and these were recorded using tape recorders and subsequently transcribed by the researcher and interpreted using the Voice-Relational method and Thematic Analysis.

The following discussion will present recommendations for future research, policy and practice.

5.2 Conclusion about Research Findings

The research findings indicated that contextual factors such South Africa's historical political landscape and socio-economic factors have influenced career development, a finding shared by Frizelle (2002), Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) and Watson (2009). These findings are consistent with what Social constructivism posits, which is that career development is constructed and reconstructed through the continued engagement by the individual's engagement with their environment (Bujold, 2004; Young & Collin, 2004).

Social workers who participated in the study all explained how their career development had been influenced by contextual issues such as having received no career guidance while at school. This was consistent with Watts (1996), who discussed how many disadvantaged schools did not have career counselling during Apartheid and continued this trend, even in the years after democratic elections.

Most of the Social workers who participated in this study had to take gap years after completing matric because there were either no funds available to finance their tertiary education or because they were still figuring out what careers they wanted to pursue. These findings illustrated the inapplicability of Super's theory (1957, as cited in Zunker, 2006), where he offered developmental stages as a linear development with each stage having to be complete before an individual moved on to the next stage of development.

The findings of this study were in line with those of Stead and Watson (1998a), who both argued that these developmental stages by Super were identified, using a sample that were from a different context than the South African context. Those individuals in their sample did not experience negative the contextual factors such as poverty, unemployment, and Apartheid's separatist legislations experienced by Black South Africans.

Research findings also disproved John Holland's theory (1992, as cited in Stead & Watson, 1999b), which states that personality types correspond to a work environment and individuals seek environments that match the type of person that they believe themselves to be the Social workers in this study went into this profession because they had limited options as Black people, and matching of their personality types with their environment did not occur.

While Super's theory (1957, as cited in Brown, 2003) argues that Social workers must have social personalities to enter social occupations, the findings of this study supported those of Mkhize and Frizelle (2000) and Watson (2009), who argued that Black South Africans end up in social occupations, not necessarily because they are sociable, but because of their limited career options as a result of the high unemployment rate, among other socio-political contextual factors.

The findings illustrated the extent to which context played a part in shaping the career development of Black South African's and provided the reasons as to why Indigenous Career Theory should be used by career counsellors. The findings further showed how the blind adoptions of Western theories that attempt to understand the individual's career development but ignore the individual's context are unsuitable for the South African context (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2002; Watson & Stead, 2002).

According to the literature by Frizelle (2002), Mkhize and Frizelle (2000), Watson and Stead (1999) and Watson *et al.* (1997), Black learners sought social and investigative occupations for many reasons, including not having studied maths and science in high school). This is supported by findings in this study. The Apartheid government had decisively legislated the type of education to be taught to Black Africans, to be of poor and lesser quality than that of White students, which inevitably produced individuals who could only go into limited occupations (Case & Deaton, 1999).

The participants who could not find employment after graduating with a Social Work degree demonstrated a common problem in South Africa for graduates. Mlatsheni and Rospabé (2002) and Pauw *et al.* (2008) suggested encouraging or promoting, young people to pursue careers in fields where there were better employment opportunities, in order to alleviate and possibly even

eradicate graduate unemployment. The Apartheid government had put into practice separatist policies aimed at separating Black Africans from the White population, and this was just as evident in the education system where Black Africans could not attend the same universities as White people (Case & Deaton, 1999).

All of the Social workers in this study had attended Ongoye University, a separate institution for Black Africans during the Apartheid era. This further supported what Frizelle (2002) argued, which is that South African's career experiences were largely shaped by the social conditions in which they grew up (Frizelle, 2002). These research findings illustrated the need to adopt the systems theory framework proposed by Patton and McMahon (1999; 2006).

The systems theory framework offers a suitable framework for career counselling in the South African context, as it takes into account the many issues that affect the career development of individuals, who are viewed as being both a system and a subsystem. This theory posits that an individual is a system of personality, aptitude, capability and gender while they are also a subsystem of wider social context i.e. political, social and economic systems (Patton & McMahon, 2006; 2009). The Social workers in the study and their career development were affected by many issues, both intrapersonal and by larger contextual issues such as politics.

Upward mobility, satisfactory financial reward and emotional support have been a challenge for the Social workers who participated in this study, yet Social workers provide essential health services to communities and to people in need. These services include HIV/AIDS services, disease management, mental health care, and health care for the elderly, according to Kim and Lee (2009). Participants in the study have each other for support as they often have debriefing sessions with each other. Unfortunately, they do not make use of Employee Wellness

Programmes even when these programmes are in place, which indicates that they are not well marketed as a solution to the emotional distress that these Social workers reported experiencing. This is an area that policy makers should look into.

The findings of this research support the literature which suggests that Black Africans have an innate desire to pursue occupations where they get to help their community or to enter into careers where being of service to their wider community is a primary element. The findings illustrate how, in spite of the numerous challenges explained by the participants, challenges such low pay and little or no opportunity for promotion, the participants continued to stay in the profession because of their innate desire to help the community. Through their careers they are able to fulfil this desire.

This longing to be of assistance to the community reveals an intense feeling of connection to the community, a factor which is at the heart of a collectivist culture, according to Mkhize and Frizelle (2002). This need to help the community in some way through one's career has been reported in numerous studies and is true for the six Social workers in this study (Dlamini, 1981; Euvrard, 1996; Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). Belonging to a collectivist culture, as evidenced by the findings of this study and other previous literature, has a tremendous influence on Black Africans and their career development (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson & Stead, 1998a, 1999a).

These findings further support that career development is socially embedded in the South African context (Frizelle, 2002). All of the participants of this study reported the meaning they attached to their careers as a Black South African Social workers to be that they could help and empower their families and their communities.

They all supported their families and viewed the satisfaction obtained from being able to help their families as the main meaning they derived from their careers. They counted their family's pride in their career choices as Social workers as being a motivator for them to stay in the profession.

These findings also illustrated how socially embeddedness career narratives were for these Social workers in this study, who all counted the ability to empower other people through their career as very important (Frizelle, 2002).

The need for a career theory that takes into account an individual's context is supported by the participants, who spoke of how political figures influenced their career development. The systems theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999; 2006) is appropriate here as it allows the individual, as a system, to explain how his personality and his interests have come to be.

The systems theory framework allows the individual to explain for himself what influences his career development, instead of imposing a Western development tool such as a psychometric test to determine which career is best suited for him. This further supports literature which says that Black Africans have a socially embedded self and need to have a career that serves as an example and inspiration to others in the community (Frizelle, 2002; Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

5.3 Recommendations for Research and Practice

The continued use and relevance of Western traditional trait and factor theories such as John Holland's theory (1992, ac cited in Zunker, 2006) and Donald Super's theory (1957, as cited in Zunker, 2006) in career research needs to be reviewed. These are widely used in South Africa, yet according to the findings of this study, they are inappropriate as they do not recognize the

importance of interpersonal and wider contextual factors which evidently influence how careers are chosen and how they are developed within this unique context (Stead & Watson, 1998b; 1999a).

The instruments used by these approaches are developed using a sample from a different context than that from the South African context (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000). Ultimately what they do quite successfully is that they, and others similar to them, largely ignore the social and institutional influences underlying an individual's career development process (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000; Watson, 2009).

Instead, a narrative research method should be used, as this is the main means by which an individual is able to make sense of their career history. Individuals are able to tell their career development story, allowing the researcher to have an authentic understanding of the individual's career history, which the researcher thereafter interprets, according to Frizelle (2002) and Watson *et al.* (2014). Using narratives in career research allows the researcher to hear stories which would have otherwise been left untold, such as the numerous stories in this study. Storytelling can access people's knowledge of the past, stories that were passed on to them from past generations through language, histories and myths (Bruner, 1991).

Indigenous Psychology is another recommendation for both research and practice. Indigenous Psychology allows a culture to provide its own psychological processes instead of these being imposed from another culture, as stated by Frizelle (2000). In fact, according to Watson (2013), the inclination to rely on psychometric testing in South African career guidance has adversely impacted on the Black African disadvantaged populations. Indigenous Psychologies look within

a culture for psychological concepts and generate theories from within, instead of without (Mkhize & Frizelle, 2000).

The recommendation therefore is that, in the South African context, every culture should have its very own approach to defining and making meaning of career development. Career counsellors should enable all persons to define for themselves what career advancement means to them and instruments employed in the process of gathering career information should enable persons to use a language which is their first language to enable easy expression. Career practitioners ought to objectively and critically deconstruct and reconstruct career theories that may inform their practice, and they ought to make it more contextually relevant and applicable (Watson *et al.*, 2014). According to Watson (2013, p. 4), “the development of career theories and counselling models that reflect the tenets of constructivist and narrative approaches is, in part, a response to the need for career psychology to adapt to an increasingly diverse clientele, both in terms of cultural and contextual variables”.

The use of Indigenous Psychology enable for a qualitative approach to be employed in career counselling and research in a South African context where context plays a critical role in career development (Stead & Watson, 1999b). A qualitative research methodology negates the use of pre-set questionnaires that clients may not understand.

5.4 Limitations

The research participants often responded in isiZulu during the interviews. The interview schedule was in English, research questions were posed in English but when the participants responded, they used isiZulu and the researcher thus had to translate most interviews into English while transcribing. The participants were shown the translated transcripts and they maintained that they were an accurate representation of the interviews.

5.5 Conclusion

The research study aimed to explore the career narratives of six South African Black Social workers by identifying contextual factors that influenced their career development. The contextual factors identified in this study were that there was no career counselling for the participants; they were forced into taking gap years after matric in order to figure out their career choices and to find financing for their tertiary education; they had limited tertiary education options as Black South Africans at the time; their career options were limited to those of Teaching, Nursing and Social Work as Black South Africans at the time; political strikes affected their academic careers; they experienced racial discrimination at the tertiary institution where they studied, they faced unemployment after graduating and experienced various financial difficulties during their academic careers.

In addition, the study aimed to explore the contextual challenges affecting the career development of Black African Social workers. These were a shortage of resources to enable them to do their job; the lack of opportunities for promotion within the profession and a lack of the type of support required by the participants. The study also aimed to explore the factors that

propelled career development for the participants, and they all reported that the ability to be of service to their communities was what propelled their career development.

The aim of the study was to explore what meanings Black African Social workers attached to their career development process, and these included being able to survive financially on their monthly earnings as Social workers, and the profession enabled them to cope with their problems as they are exposed to other people's problems which were usually worse than their own. The participants all reported that they derived meaning from being able to empower people through their profession. The participants' families and communities gave them respect because of their profession. These were all explored and highlighted by the sample of six South African Black Social workers.

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APPENDIX A: The Interview Guide

Interview schedule for Social Workers

Demographics

Age:

Gender:

Years of service:

Opening question:

Please tell me a story about how you reached where you are now in terms of your career as a Black African Social worker?

Probing questions depending on how the career narratives are told:

What contextual factors (for example gender, culture and socio political) influence the career development of Black African Social workers in South Africa?

- When do you think you first considered being a Social workers as a career?
- What other careers did you consider?
- What about other career choices you had considered motivated you to not choose them?
- What was happening around you at the time you started thinking about being a Social worker? (politically, economically, socially in your personal life)

- How do you think that which was happening around you may have influenced your career choice to become a Social worker?

How do these contextual factors present as challenges in Black African Social workers' career development?

- What challenges have you experienced in your career as a Black African Social worker?
- Tell me about how you overcame those challenges?
- Did you experience any struggles in your decision to be a Social worker, if you did what were they?

What contextual factors propel career development for Black African Social workers in South Africa?

- What do you think inspired your career choice?
- What did you feel your career choice as a Social worker would allow you to achieve?
- What about Social work motivated you to choose it?

What role do interpersonal factors play in the career development of Black African Social workers ?

- Who assisted or influenced you in realizing your present career as a Social worker?
- In what way did they influence your career choice?

What meanings do Black African Social workers attach to their career development process?

- What does your career as a Black African Social worker mean to you personally?
- What does your career as a Black African Social worker mean to your family?
- What does your career as a Black African Social worker mean to your community?