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Exit level female students: Career aspirations and attainment strategies

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A research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by coursework and Research report (in the field of Organisational Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 3 August 2018.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Kirstie Lee Meehan

Date:

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ABSTRACT

The World Bank asserts that South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world (Government report, 2015). In particular, females are still being treated unfairly even though the government has put policies, such as employment equity, in place. As this inequality increases, so does female graduate unemployment (StatsSA, 2016). This is only one of the barriers that exit level female students face. Against this background, this study explored exit level female humanities students' career aspirations and attainment strategies. This study focused on the application of Schlossberg's (1981) Transition theory to exit level female students' anticipated transition into the world of work. A qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm was used. The sample consisted of eight third year participants from the humanities faculty, specifically studying psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. Thematic content analysis was used. The results obtained indicate that due to the economic instability in South Africa, the main career aspirations encompassed factors such as completing one's degree and obtaining employment. Furthermore, Schlossberg's model provided insight into the various perceived barriers and enablers to help students cope and achieve the anticipated transition into the job market. Some of these perceived barriers were issues related to gender and concurrent stressors such as workload and approaching exams. However, the participants also demonstrated enablers that could help the students cope, such as a positive self-belief and various support structures for example; parents and friends. Additionally, the participants reflected on the job strategies that they would utilise in order to find a job, the most frequent being networking.

Keywords: Career aspirations, graduate unemployment, perceived barriers and enablers, Schlossberg's Transition theory.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This introductory chapter presents a brief discussion of the various components of the research project. It commences with an introduction into the background of the study in order to provide the context in which the study is immersed. Subsequently, this chapter demonstrates the problem statement and the research aims of the current study. A brief discussion of the theoretical paradigm in which this study is located follows. In addition, a brief summary of the research design and method used to understand the research topic is provided. Lastly, this chapter presents a brief outline of the structure of the research report.

1.2. Background

A popular belief in the 21st century, specifically among the youth of South Africa, is that obtaining a university degree allows students to acquire employment faster and leads to a higher earning potential (Hendricks, 2014). Thus, universities across the country have experienced an influx of student registrations (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001). As new and increased numbers of students begin entering the university, exit level students' are planning their exit out of university and into the world of work. For many students, this movement occurs within their last year of studies and is considered a complex process as students begin to think about their future (Lane, 2016). According to Schlossberg (1981, 2011), this step within a student's life is classified as an anticipated transition. This anticipated transition can elicit fear, anxiety, and happiness in terms of financial success and independence (Dahlgren, Handal, Szkudlarek, & Bayer, 2007). The success of the anticipated transition leads to a maintenance of life goals, and economic stability (Halman & Müller, 2006). However, research has demonstrated that if the transition fails, numerous problems may arise both for the individual and the community within which they reside (Halman & Müller, 2006).

The phrase 'from backpack to briefcase' is taking on a new meaning in the twenty-first century where the working environment is discernibly changing with a new generation of graduates entering the labour market (Finn, 2017; McIlveen & Pensiero, 2008). This is relevant to both males and females, however, it could be

argued that some of the challenges faced by men and women are different. This is based on the fact that traditionally, obtaining a career was typically a male concern, whereas female's focal point was on homemaking and childbearing (Reyes, Kobus, & Gillock, 1999). This situation has been changing for many decades, but certain legacy issues are likely to remain.

Presently, regardless of gender, obtaining a career is of foremost concern to ensure the avoidance of unemployment, which could lead to social exclusion (Thomas, 2003). The South African economy is experiencing an uncertain and volatile state where the rates of graduate unemployment are currently high and are gradually increasing (StatsSa, 2016). For the duration of January to March 2016, research found that 24 thousand graduates were unemployed in South Africa (StatsSa, 2016). Furthermore, current research has exposed the various factors that may prevent students from entering into the job market, such as the type of degree obtained and the faculty in which that degree is obtained, which could lead to a decrease in employability (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001).

Internationally, many researchers have examined various ways to reduce unemployment rates and increase economic growth (Co & Mitchell, 2006). Research has shown that entrepreneurship helps reduce societal issues and promotes economic growth and stability within numerous countries (Co & Mitchell, 2006). South Africa is currently adopting the same approach, and recognising the benefits of entrepreneurship as a tool to create employment and help ensure economic stability for the future (Co & Mitchell, 2006). The South African government is encouraging many young South Africans to become entrepreneurs (Urban, 2010). However, a bleak picture exists; firstly previous research has demonstrated that females demonstrate lower levels of entrepreneurial activity as compared to males (Urban, 2010). These females tend to partake in entrepreneurial activity that remains and is limited to the traditional domestic realm (Urban, 2010). The above represents a pressing issue in South Africa that labour is still divided along gender lines (Urban, 2010).

Secondly, research has discovered that due to the high levels of crime individuals are less likely to become involved in entrepreneurial activities (Co & Mitchell, 2006). Studies conducted in a township in Cape Town, specifically in Khayelitsha found that

crime directly prevented individuals from entering into self-employment opportunities (Cichello, Almeleh, Ncube, & Oosthuizen, 2006). Present entrepreneurs found that crime led to various problems such as monetary losses due to theft and increased overhead expenses to pay for security, such as security fences, guards, or alarm systems. The increases in expenses led to the failure and closure of many self-employed businesses (Gough, Tipple, & Napier, 2003).

1.3. Purpose of study

The above background information demonstrates that students anticipation into the job market is perceived as a complex process. This study focuses on female students as there could be differences in the manner in which the anticipated transition is perceived, as well as, the various barriers or enablers experienced during this period. These differences that may exist, could be due to issues related to the legacy of women traditionally being mainly in the home. Furthermore, employment equity legislation treats previously disadvantaged females differently than men.

Therefore, more knowledge is needed to be obtained in order to better understand the numerous factors that either enable or thwart the process of moving through this anticipated transition in order to ensure a successful transition into the world of work (Peila-Shuster, 2016; Schlossberg, 2011). Hence, this study is adopting a theoretical transition theory by Schlossberg to examine this complex anticipated transition that affects numerous students every year and will continue to affect them in various ways.

This current study will shed light on the current generation of university students who are experiencing an anticipated transition into the world of work in order to obtain their personal accounts around the barriers and enablers to achieve a successful transition. Furthermore, this study intends to add value to the organisational and industrial community as there seems to be a gap in the current literature (Seekings, 2006). Studies on the anticipated transition of exit level students within the South African context are sparse (Seekings, 2006). This study intends to make a contribution to help understand the experience of this anticipated transition.

1.4. Aim

The primary aim of the research is to explore the experiences and perceptions of exit level female students' anticipated transition into the world of work. Additionally, to explore the strategies that the research participants utilise in order to achieve their career aspirations.This current study intends to apply Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, which includes anticipated transitions, as many final year students are expecting and preparing to move into the world of work. This study delves into the following aspects:

- The application of Schlossberg's Transition model in order to better understand the anticipated transition into the world of work.
- The experiences and perceptions of the anticipated transition into the world of work from a female perspective.
- The perceptions regarding the resources and processes utilised to enable the student to cope with the anticipated transition, specifically exploring support structures and job search strategies.
- The perceived barriers that may prevent the student from achieving the anticipated transition.

This research aims to provide valuable information to the Industrial psychology domain, organisations and students who will one day be anticipating a transition into the world of work. Students will gain insight into the various support structures and job search strategies that are the most productive and successful, to ensure that unemployment decreases every year.

1.5. Research paradigm

Several researchers have emphasised the importance of understanding the different types of paradigms that inform research (Kuhn, 1962; Wahyuni, 2012). A paradigm is "a set of fundamental assumptions and beliefs as to how the world is perceived which then serves as a thinking framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher" (Wahyuni, 2012, p.69). A paradigm is understood within a philosophical framework which refers to three aspects, namely; ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ontology refers to how human beings perceive reality, for example, an objective or subjective view (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, & Snape, 2014; Wahyuni, 2012). Epistemology refers to the "the view on what

constitutes acceptable knowledge" (Wahyuni, 2012, p.70). Methodology refers to the research process adopted such as quantitative or qualitative in order to obtain knowledge (Ormston et al., 2014; Wahyuni, 2012).

Numerous theorists have suggested that there are various paradigms that correspond to specific research designs (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The current study is located within the interpretivist paradigm and the aim of this approach is to understand human beings experiences, perceptions and feelings (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Furthermore, researchers have highlighted that adopting an interpretivist approach allows them to interact and discuss information in detail with the participant about the phenomenon being studied directly (Wahyuni, 2012).

This approach suggests that a qualitative design be utilised because it allows the researcher to acquire naturalistic observation of the participants (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). By implementing a qualitative approach it enables the researcher to gain rich detail and the ability to fully understand the research phenomenon being studied (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). An interpretivist approach highlights the value of subjectivity and expresses that when studying human beings an objective approach is not possible because human beings are diverse, with different experiences, perceptions and feelings (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Additionally, the researcher is a subjective contributor within the study as the researcher conducts the interviews, transcribes the interviews and analyses the data in order to demonstrate the results (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

1.6. Research Design and data collection

Rowlands (2005) stressed that "what one wants to learn determines how one should go about learning it" (p.82). This study wants to learn about the experiences and feelings of exit level female students' about their anticipated transition into the world of work. Hence a qualitative research design was utilised to explore the experiences and feelings of the research participants to better understand first-person accounts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Wilson & MacLean, 2011). This design will allow the researcher to delve into a deep exploration of the participants subjective world in an open-ended manner (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010: Willig, 2001). Data collection involved interviewing eight female final year students at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Semi-structured interviews are designed to draw on the lived experiences of the research participants by avoiding leading questions and allow individuals to answer openly and honestly (Madill & Gough, 2008).

In general, the majority of the students interviewed were in their early twenties. The interviewing process lasted between half an hour to an hour and were conducted in a secure and comfortable room on the university campus to encourage conversation between the researcher and the participant. The interview schedule was developed by the researcher based on multiple literature searches and themes that emerged. Lastly, the researcher obtained consent from all the participants to record the interviews.

1.7. Outline of the study

The next chapter commences with a detailed discussion and a review of the relevant literature corresponding to the research topic (Chapter 2). This chapter will explore the anticipated transition of students into the world of work. Additionally, the current issues plaguing many South African soon to be graduates, how they deal with the anticipated transition given the unstable economic conditions in South Africa will be presented. Lastly, this chapter will demonstrate the enablers that students rely on to help achieve and cope with the anticipated transition.

Chapter three describes the methodological approach that was utilised in order to conduct the current research project. This section discusses aspects such as the research design that was implemented, the sample chosen, the instruments and procedures utilised to obtain data. Additionally, this chapter provides a discussion on the ethical clearance steps that were taken in order to conduct the current research. Furthermore, a description of the data analysis technique that was used to examine the data obtained will be shown.

Chapter four focuses on demonstrating the results and discussion related to the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews. This chapter will demonstrate the various themes that emerged from the data and examine whether the findings are supported or in opposition to the current literature.

Chapter five commences with a brief summary of the findings of the current study. It relates the results to previous research. Additionally, a discussion is provided

regarding the limitations found during the study, including recommendations in order to improve the study in the future.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the conceptual and theoretical framework regarding the research topic. Firstly, a framework will be established which traces the phenomenon of graduate unemployment within the South African context. Secondly, a discussion will take place regarding the anticipated transition from university to the world of work, by focusing specifically on Schlossberg's (1981) Transition model. Thirdly, a discussion regarding career aspirations, as well as, enablers and barriers that can either inhibit or assist during this anticipated transition period. In addition, this chapter will provide theoretical knowledge regarding the various strategies that are implemented in order to ensure the success of the anticipated transition. Lastly, this chapter will demonstrate the research aims and questions for this specific study.

Society has taken various positive steps towards removing the legacy and impact of the apartheid system. For example, government bodies introduced policies and legislation to ensure equal employment opportunities for all individuals (Tomu, 2013; Government report, 2015). These policies and legislation range from Affirmative action to ensure those who were previously disadvantaged, such as females are now given an equal opportunity (Mathur-Helm, 2005). Additionally, the South African government implemented the Employment Equity Act (1998) to ensure equity in the workplace which has resulted in the increase of women in the workplace within South Africa (Chinyamurindi, 2016; MacEwen, Dupper, & Louw, 2004). Despite this progress, the World Bank has indicated that South Africa still "remains one of the most unequal societies in the world" (Government report, 2015, p.21). A large amount of research has highlighted the crucial issue of high unemployment rates in South Africa (Baragwanath, 2016; Bernstein, 2014). In addition, females are still being treated unequally due to being under-represented in many organisations (Chinyamurindi, 2016). Additionally, Plattner and Mzingwane (2008) reinforced the notion that females are still currently experiencing difficulties entering the workplace, resulting in high female unemployment rates. In terms of the broader concept of unemployment, this rate seems to be rising every year. For example, according to

Statistics South Africa between 2015 and 2016 unemployment increased by 521 000 people (StatsSA, 2016a). Furthermore, based on research conducted by Statistics South Africa it was demonstrated that the unemployment increase from 2015 to 2016 was seen as the largest unemployment increase since 2010 (Government report, 2015).

2.2. Causes of unemployment in South Africa

Various scholars have debated the various causes surrounding the high unemployment rates in South Africa (Malakwane, 2012). One of the greatest contributors is the former system of apartheid, where separate educational systems were created which differed in quality (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010). Furthermore, as more students' graduate from tertiary institutions and wish to find a job, they are faced with the fact that there is a lack of jobs available (Tomu, 2013). In addition, South Africa is experiencing slow economic growth over the years and is now in recession, which means that the opportunities for job creation are small (Government report, 2015). Unemployment is a problem that affects various stakeholders; it affects the individual seeking employment in terms of psychological symptoms such as increased anxiety and decreased levels of self-confidence (De Witte, Rothmann, & Jackson, 2012).

Society is affected negatively as unemployment leads to increases in crime and poverty levels, which then destabilises society (Cloete, 2015). In addition, unemployment negatively influences the economy as human beings become desperate to provide for themselves and their families to ensure that they do not fall further into poverty, which leads to an increase in crime (De Witte et al., 2012).

There are also additional elements that need to be examined in terms of unemployment, such as: tertiary education, type of degree obtained, age and gender to fully understand the complexities of unemployment in South Africa.

2.3. Tertiary education

There seems to be a perception among the South African youth that advancing into tertiary education and studying through a prestigious university will better their chances of gaining employment (Abrahams, Jano, & Van Lill, 2015). Based on this perception within South African society, it has led to increased rates of student enrolment into tertiary institutions (Abrahams et al., 2015; Stead, 1996). On a larger

scale, universities and labour markets are now dealing with an influx of students graduating at the end of each year, who then believe that their investment in studying is going to be rewarded with employment opportunities (Nabi, Holden, & Walmsley, 2010).

However, the opposite seems to be case as newly graduated students are considered to be the “most vulnerable group with regards to unemployment” (Cloete, 2015, p.513). Statistics South Africa reported that between January and March 2016, 24 000 graduates were unemployed (StatsSA, 2016a). In addition, this level of graduate unemployment is believed to increase further each year (Van Schalkwyk, Niyimbanira, & Surujlal, 2012).

Previous research has demonstrated that obtaining a tertiary education is seen to be a strategic move in order to gain employment in a country with high unemployment rates (Steur, Jansen, & Hofman, 2012). According to Schomburg (2007) obtaining a university degree is seen as an investment because students spend a great deal of time, energy and money into obtaining a tertiary qualification. A tertiary qualification can be viewed as a means of obtaining employment and therefore leads to an income, which, according to DeVilbiss (2014) is the main concern for many students. However, the opposite seems to be the case in that due to the unstable labour market, employment is scarce for many, including individuals who possess a tertiary education (Tomlinson, 2008). Furthermore, students may become discouraged and disheartened if obtaining a degree does not lead to a better chance of obtaining employment (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). Additionally, Pauw, Oosthuizen, and Westhuizen (2008) emphasised that obtaining a tertiary education no longer guarantees employment within the South African context.

On the other hand, researchers started to examine the relationship between the type of degree obtained and gaining employment.

The labour market is complex and at times unstable, and there seems to be an accurate perception that the type of degree obtained at university can either inhibit or assist students in entering the labour market (Yu & Pillay, 2011). The students themselves possess a perception that the type of degree a graduate has obtained is crucial in obtaining employment (Tomu, 2013).

For example, an international study found that graduates who obtained degrees in social sciences and in the arts experienced higher levels of unemployment because of “job opportunities [being so] scarce” (Tomu, 2013, p.36). Furthermore, Moleke (2005) (as cited in Tomu, 2013) conducted a study within South Africa and found that students’ with a degree that had a professional focus found employment faster, compared to the students’ who possessed a general degree (Tomu, 2013). A study conducted in Ghana found that certain degrees are associated with greater financial success, for instance; studying science and engineering seems to pay better than other degrees (Andoh, Bosiakoh, & Afranie, 2012). However, societal expectations emphasise that science and engineering is a male orientated career, resulting in less females applying for these types of degrees (Andoh et al., 2012). It is believed that females tend to apply within the humanities faculty (Mann & DiPrete, 2013; Ransom, 1990).

Furthermore, research conducted by Maharasoa and Hay (2001) within South Africa emphasised that the humanities field is the most popular degree. However, the study failed to provide information as to whether this popularity existed among specific genders. Research has found that a degree in the field of humanities possesses a low market value (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001). Therefore, students who are situated within the humanities faculty face the greatest disappointment in terms of gaining employment (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001). Studies have shown that after graduating, humanities students were less successful in finding and obtaining employment relative to the business and science faculties (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001; Mann & DiPrete, 2013). In contrast, Baldry (2016) conducted a study in South Africa and found that a students’ field of study was not linked to employment opportunities.

Research conducted in South Africa by Yu and Pillay (2011) have established the benefits of possessing a degree within the humanities field. These benefits include good interpersonal skills, effective communication skills, and the ability to think critically, which is seen as a vital component within the workplace, which is achieved through studying a humanities degree. However, this positive movement has not been established as yet, as numerous researchers are asking questions such as “[are the] lights out for the humanities?” (Nicholson, 1989, p.1). The humanities field is perceived as an unnecessary indulgence that does not lead to employment opportunities (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001).

One of the most popular courses within the humanities field is psychology (Rajecki & Borden, 2011). Statistics South Africa released a document in 2016 that examined the percentage of students' and the type of the degree (StatsSA, 2016b). This study found that an education degree had the highest number of students' of 503 096 compared to a psychology degree with 52 007 students' within this field. However, the second highest humanities degree was journalism and communication studies with 57 065 students enrolled in this field of study. It could be argued that psychology as a potential career may be decreasing in terms of its relevance to the world of work. It is important to note that the psychology field and the humanities field are relatively dominated by female students' (Skinner & Louw. 2009). Female students' experience two challenges in obtaining employment. Firstly, based on the above most females study within the humanities field, and therefore classed as less employable (Rajecki & Borden, 2011). Secondly, possessing the characteristic of being female possess further problems such as gender stereotypes, which can affect one's obtainment of employment (Geyer, 2010; Plattner & Mzingwane, 2008).

In general, research conducted among various South African universities discovered that 56% of soon to be graduates felt that their degree and university courses were broad and general (Smith & Krüger, 2005). Due to this lack of specificity, the students felt that they lacked the skills and knowledge to ensure adequate preparedness and readiness to move into the world of work (Smith & Krüger, 2005). However, this study was conducted on business management students and this may not be reflective of the humanities population and this current study's sample.

2.4. Gender and employment

Gender is seen to play a significant role in employment, for example Banerjee, Galiani, Levinsohn, McLaren, and Woolard (2008) established that in South Africa, females are more likely to be unemployed, and receive lower income compared to males (Banerjee et al., 2008). This inequality is due to gendered norms and stereotypes that further perpetuate this issue (Government report, 2015). Previous research found that children within South Africa are taught at a young age that one's occupation type is attached to a gender stereotype (Geyer, 2010; Watson & McMahon, 2005). This implies that individuals are choosing jobs that are seen as socially correct based on their gender composition (Geyer, 2010; Watson & McMahon, 2005). These gender stereotypes can have a negative impact on the

individual, as they may decide to choose a career path based on societal pressure instead of choosing a career based on interest and drive (Geyer, 2010).

Due to age-related stereotypes, young adults are likely to “experience barriers to employment based on their age” (Lyons, Wessel, Tai, & Ryan, 2014, p.1009). This barrier can cause both psychological and physiological effects (Schomburg, 2007). In contrast, it seems that some students are not worried about this issue and enter the workforce with a tertiary degree possess high expectations of moving straight into a position of management (DeVilbiss, 2014; Pauw et al., 2008). Within the current study, the participants possess a tertiary background and therefore may have high expectations, these expectations are formed due to the time and money placed into their education (Schomburg, 2007).

Based on the context described above, it is likely that exit level female students’ face various challenges in finding employment and attaining their career aspirations, especially if they have taken general degrees such as a Bachelor of Arts. The process of formulating career aspirations, identifying and implementing strategies to attain employment or other ways of entering the world of work, is likely to occur during the students final year of study. During this time, students are likely to begin to anticipate how they will move from studying into the world of work. During this period they are likely to be anticipating the approaching transition. Exit level male students’ who have a general degree also face challenges regarding employment. However, the challenge may be greater for female graduates how face gender-related stereotypes. In addition, as more females tend to apply for jobs in fields with low market value, and there is still gender inequality in terms of who jobs are offered to (Lyons et al., 2014).

Successful transitioning out of university and into the world of work is important, as this transition plays an important role in the labour market, and is needed for economic growth and success (Government report, 2015). This study explores exit level female students’ perceptions of their career aspirations, and the perceived facilitators and barriers to achieving their aspirations. Additionally, an exploration into the various strategies employed to ensure a successful transition from university into the world of work is provided.

2.5. Transitions

Throughout life, every individual experiences transitions as they move in and out of various life events (Hettich & Landrum, 2014). According to Graham and Mckenzie (1995) the transition from tertiary education into full time employment is an important transition within a young adult's life. Many students are likely to be employed part-time, and that this could influence their experiences of the transition, as well as, the strategies used to find employment (Carney, McNeish, & McColl, 2005).

Both authors acknowledge that all transitions in one's life are important milestones, but the movement into the workplace is one of particular importance (Graham & Mckenzie, 1995). This movement is considered to "represent the threshold between adolescence and adulthood" (Graham & Mckenzie, 1995, p.5). However, within the South African context with high levels of unemployment this theory implies that if one does not move into the workplace, is therefore not considered to be an adult. The reason behind this could be that this theory was established within a western framework and therefore may not be applicable within the South African context

University graduates spend a minimum of three to four years studying for an undergraduate degree (Lane, 2016). In the last year of study students are now faced with an anticipated transition where they move into the world of work, which involves breaking away from non-adult behaviours towards socially acceptable adult roles and responsibilities (Hunter, Keup, Kinzie, & Maietta, 2012; Lane, 2016). The anticipated transition from university into the workplace is viewed as an age-appropriate transition (Neubert & Leconte, 2013). This anticipated transition is filled with excitement due to financial independence. However, this movement also leads to increased uncertainty, as students' are moving into an unfamiliar environment (Neubert & Leconte, 2013).

Buhl (2007) suggested that within the anticipated transition from university into the workplace, there are multiple transitions taking place at the same time. For example, the relationship between the child and their parents is expected to change with decreased financial dependence and an increase in terms of spatial distance due to moving out their childhood home (Buhl, 2007). However, this study was conducted in Germany and may not be reflective of the South African context where many of the university students are living at residences on campus (Botha, Snowball, de Klerk, & Radloff, 2013). Furthermore, this change in the relationship mentioned above

indicates the movement of completing the process of becoming an adult (Buhl, 2007; Arnett, 2001).Successful completion of this anticipated transition possesses benefits for both the individual and society (Brzinsky-Fay, 2014). A successful transition will allow for the preservation of human capital and labour market supply (Brzinsy-Fay, 2014; Burns, 2015). Within the South African context being cognisant of the issues such as a shortage of low cost housing and many graduates coming from rural areas, and South Africa's high poverty levels this transition may not be as easy as the Western and European countries suggest (Cloete, 2015). In South Africa, the transition into the wokplace is crucial. Prospective employees possess skills that are needed in the workplace, and as these individuals move into the workplace, the current skills shortage that the country is experiencing is likely to decrease (Cloete, 2015). Additionally, it helps reduce levels of poverty and helps contribute to economic growth (Van der Berg, 2002). As more students' turn to education and move from tertiary education into employment, it "enhances the earning potential of the poor, both in competing for jobs and earnings and as a source of growth and employment in itself" (Van der Berg, 2002, p.1).

2.5. Career aspirations

Historically, a career referred to an individual's working life and activities that are conducted to create a product or service encapsulated within the manufacturing sphere (Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004). Recently, research has shown a greater focus on the importance of choosing a career or occupation (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014). This is due to the changing labour market with a greater focus on the global economy, moving away from the traditional manufacturing sphere towards increased "knowledge society permeated by communication technology" (Kim, 2014, p.4). This is further supported by a study conducted by Burns (2015) that emphasised that due to the changing labour market the work environment has experienced various changes such as corporate restructuring and downsizing. Therefore, the importance of choosing an occupation is seen to be crucial and is associated with multiple benefits for one's future career, such as increased success and satisfaction (Olaosebikan & Olusakin, 2014).

Various researchers have debated about the term career, according to Inkson, Gunz, Ganesh, and Roper (2012) a career is seen as the "ongoing relationship between people and their work" (p.324). Furthermore, some researchers have examined the

difference between a career and a job (Arnold, 2011). A career refers to aspects such as intrinsic awards, advancement and growth, whilst a job is seen as a requirement for earning a living (Arnold, 2011). However, due to unstable economic labour markets across the world, both prospective employees and current employees focus more on the term career and cannot simply focus on doing a job for the sake of money, there is a need for long term thinking and planning. Instead, Arnold (2011) has argued that a career is a lifelong journey undertaken by an individual through the labour market (Arnold, 2011).

Scott (2002) added to the literature surrounding the term 'career' and highlighted a complex dynamic surrounding one's career. A career is no longer viewed as simply possessing a career that is separate from one's life, but rather the two are intertwined as one's career becomes part of one's life and requires a lot of time and effort (Scott, 2002). In recent literature a career is seen as an aspect that belongs to the individual and not the organisation, therefore the individual is responsible for their own career and whether or not they wish to progress and partake in lifelong learning (Savickas et al., 2009). A protean career is a career that is self-directed and value driven, it emphasises that individuals play a large role in shaping their careers (Arnold, 2011). Value driven means that individuals focus on the attainment of work values that are important to them, such as growth and development (Arnold, 2011). It is clear that in order to understand the term career, close examination needs to be taken into the various career aspirations and work values that individuals' consider to be important. Mayrhofer, Steyrer, Meyer, Strunk, and Schiffinger (2005) emphasise that career aspirations refer to an "individual's intention to be active in a particular field" (p.40).

For the purpose of this study, the term career aspiration will refer to the individuals actual goals and needs regarding they type of work an individual wishes to have, and the work environment they hope to achieve (Domenico & Jones, 2006). In addition, the term career in relation to this study relates to a protean approach that focuses on value driven and self-directed aspects.

A study conducted in South Africa by Shumba and Naong (2012) found that female students tended to choose social type of occupations, such as traditional feminine roles, namely, teaching or nursing (Shumba & Naong, 2012). However, a study

conducted in Kenya by Migunde, Agak, and Odiwuor (2012) found that males and females aspire to similar careers, which is in opposition to the traditional gendered career norms.

A study conducted in Canada by Ng and Burke (2006) who examined students' aspirations among business students' found that they had various aspirations that were related to the nature of work such as opportunities for growth, challenging work, and job security. Students emphasised aspirations to work for an organisation that cared for the community, and was ethically responsible (Ng & Burke, 2006). On the other hand, a study conducted in the United Kingdom by Atfield and Purcell (2010) found that students favoured job attributes such as the opportunity to work abroad, flexibility in order to ensure a work-life balance, and long term job security .

A study conducted in Australia by McKeown and Lindorff (2011) found that the main career aspiration graduates possessed was to obtain a good salary, and that the job content and nature was considered as a secondary aspiration (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). A possible reason for these differences in career aspirations could be that some students in the sample had partaken in part time or vacation work, and therefore possessed varying degrees of knowledge about the working environment (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). Whereas, individuals who did not gain employment experience while at university might have lacked awareness of the working environment (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). This links to Schlossberg's situation strategy because having an awareness of the working environment may make the transition into the workplace easier (Schlossberg, 1981).

Numerous studies have also understood the concept of work values as being part of one's career aspirations (D' Silva & Hamid, 2014; Halman & Müller, 2006). Work values refer to the factors that individuals believe are important within an organisational framework (Saleh, Chuikova, & Kuizin, 2016). Furthermore, Jonck, Van der Walt, and Sobayeni (2017) conducted a study in South Africa and highlighted that the term work values refer to the goals and objectives that current and prospective employees wish to obtain.

South African organisations are changing through technological advances and the intake of a new generation of employees (Jonck et al., 2017). The new generation has become known as 'generation X' or 'generation me' (Jonck et al., 2017; Twenge,

Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Numerous studies have found that generation Y possesses different work values compared to generation X (Jonck et al., 2017). Research conducted in the South African context highlighted the importance of understanding the work values of this new generation to better attract and manage this generation as they are currently transitioning into the world of work (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). If organisations wish to remain effective and survive in the future they need to better understand the new generation that is going to be entering the workforce in the upcoming months (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002).

There are multiple generations of employees within organisations ranging from baby boomers to generation X, and most recently the entry of generation Y employees (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Various studies have compared the most recent generational cohorts of X and Y to demonstrate the differences in work values (Krahn & Galambos, 2014). For example, generation X have been found to value more individualistic values that focus on benefiting themselves (Twenge et al., 2010). Additionally, the above statement was supported by a study conducted by Gursoy, Maier and Chi (2008) found that this generational cohort placed a great emphasis on instant gratification and seek employment as simply a means of living. Whereas, generation Y differs in this regard, they wish to obtain a work-life balance (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Smola & Sutton, 2002). Furthermore, this generational cohort place great importance on personal development and continuous learning throughout their lives (Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007). The above is supported by a study conducted Steyn and Kotze (2004) which focused on the new generation entering the labour market who demonstrated a decrease in valuing material rewards and status. Consequently, there is a movement towards adopting work values such as personal development, growth and increased autonomy (Steyn & Kotze, 2004).

On the other hand, an argument has been made by Halman and Müller (2006) that the focus of all employees is to ensure that they meet the needs for maintaining of life, providing for themselves and their families. Therefore, regardless of whether an employee is generation X and generation Y, both show a greater focus on income and job security in order to survive and provide for themselves and others (Halman & Müller, 2006). Individuals need to know that their job is stable and predictable, which

they rely heavily on in order to obtain an income (D' Silva & Hamid, 2014). This research was extended to the South African context where job security and generous holiday time was seen to be of importance, the reason behind the need for holiday time is due to fast paced environment where many employees are forced to work long hours (Halman & Müller, 2006). There is also an increase in dual income family households, if both individuals work there is less time to spend together and therefore holidays are needed (Halman & Müller, 2006).

Moreover, several theorists have classified work values into two different categories, namely; intrinsic and extrinsic values (D' Silva & Hamid, 2014; Wijesekera, Jayantha, & Ramanayaka, 2016). Intrinsic work values represent elements intangible rewards, which allow for self-actualisation, growth and development, and opportunities to be creative and involved in the organisational processes (Twenge et al., 2010; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007). Additionally, intrinsic work values comprises of the process of work such as one's learning potential and the freedom to be creative within one's job (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Research has demonstrated that generation Y will "actively seek out jobs that provide training" (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008, p.369). In Addition, generation Y wish to work in a career that allows them to be autonomous and at the same time, want to be part of the decision making process within the organisation (Twenge et al., 2010).

Extrinsic work values represent a greater focus on tangible rewards that arise from either the consequences or various outcomes of employment (Twenge et al., 2010; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007). For instance, job security, material rewards such as income, and increased opportunities in order to move up the organisational hierarchy (Twenge et al., 2010; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007).

However, a different approach to work values was adopted by Meyer, Irving and Allen (1998) who explored work values via three dimensions, namely; comfort and security, competence and growth, and lastly status and independence. Conversely, a recent study has suggested that female's tend to possess a greater interest in contributing towards their community (Saleh et al., 2016). Therefore, the model introduced by Meyer et al. (1998) does not include altruistic work values which are a significant factor for the new generation entering the job market (Hurst & Good, 2009).

Subsequently, researchers have similarly established the significance of examining altruistic work values (Borg, 1990; Kuron, Lyons, Schweitzer, & Ng, 2015) Altruistic work values signify behaviours that help others in need, such as making a contribution to one's society and community (Borg, 1990; Twenge et al., 2010). Recently, a study conducted by Hurst and Good (2009) discovered that generation Y demonstrated a great interest in altruistic work values, specifically striving to make a difference within their society and community. Furthermore, generation Y emphasised that they were patriotic and were willing to help improve and enhance their communities (Hurst & Good, 2009).

Various studies have been conducted to examine the link between work values and gender. For example, it was found that male Chinese students placed more emphasis on extrinsic values specifically, salary and advancement opportunities (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). In contrast, female Chinese students placed a greater emphasis on obtaining a good working environment and giving back to their community (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Opposing the argument above, a study conducted by Aygun et al. (2008) on American and Turkish students found that there was no link between gender and work values. However, many have acknowledged that the world of work is showing an increase in female employees, resulting in an increase in dual income families (Steyn & Kotze 2004). Therefore, the importance of understanding the work values of female employees are crucial.

Current literature is examining generational differences on work values and this shift in focus is due to a new generation moving into the world of work (Jonck et al, 2017; Twenge et al., 2010). The new generation is categorised as a highly technological orientated population (Prensky, 2001; Reis & Braga, 2016). A study conducted by Jonck et al. (2017) utilised a South African sample, which demonstrated the various work values of the new generation. These work values include; opportunity to move up the organisational ranks in a relatively quick process and an appropriate salary to ensure financial stability (Jonck et al., 2017).

Previous researchers have extended the literature surrounding work values and focused on Western and non-Western countries varying in terms of the values individuals' aspire towards (Halman & Müller, 2006). Studies conducted on Western societies found that values such as; better working conditions, a good salary and

preferably low levels of stress are important to possess (Halman & Müller, 2006). In contrast, Non-Western countries such as Africa value job security as the most important factor, because the country has high levels of poverty and many people struggle to survive and make a living (Halman & Müller, 2006). However, it has been established that in many countries, both Western and non-Western countries job security and good pay are generally valued the most (Halman & Müller, 2006). Understanding work values is important as it provides insight into the mind frame of the new generation planning to enter into the workplace in 2018 (Saleh et al., 2016). The work values provide valuable information on student's career choice, goals, and the elements that will create satisfaction for the individual (Saleh et al., 2016). Work values form part of one's career aspirations and will be included within the current study.

Researchers are also starting to examine careers that are entrepreneurial in nature and establishing if the new generation considered entrepreneurial activity as a major career aspiration.

2.6. Entrepreneurship

In the South African context, there are numerous difficulties such as high levels of crime, corruption, poverty and unemployment is rife (Co & Mitchell, 2006; North, 2002). Entrepreneurship has been the proposed solution to overcome these difficulties facing countless individuals within South Africa (Koloba, 2017). Entrepreneurship refers to the "capacity and willingness [of an individual] to undertake conception, organisation, and management of a productive venture with all attendant risks, while seeking profit as a reward" (Fatoki, 2010, p.88). Furthermore, it involves examining and understanding an individual's self-reflection process regarding their level of motivation and capacity to identify and pursue an opportunity to produce success (Fatoki, 2010).

Traditionally, entrepreneurship has been linked to one's personality traits (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). According to Lumpkin and Dess (1996) in order for an individual to become an entrepreneur they need to be aggressive, proactive, competitive and risk takers. The above implies that if one does not possess these characteristics they are unable to be entrepreneurs (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Co and Mitchell (2006) highlighted that the South African population possesses little experience regarding

entrepreneurship and therefore are reluctant to choose this as a career type. This reluctance has led to decreased opinions and involvement in entrepreneurial activity (Co & Mitchell, 2006; Davies, 2001). The South African government encourages students' to become entrepreneurs as it is seen to alleviate the issues that the South African economy is currently facing (Briere, Tremblay, & Daou, 2014; Co & Mitchell, 2006). Nelson Mandela once stated that the youth of South Africa are valuable assets to the country and they are the future (Oseifuah, 2010). According to Oseifuah (2010) Nelson Mandela was trying to demonstrate the importance of the youth and saw the value of entrepreneurship for the country.

International studies have also highlighted the benefits of entrepreneurship, a study conducted by Dabic, Daim, Bayraktaroglu, Novak, and Basic (2012) foregrounds the advantages such as employment creation and poverty reduction. Gorgievski and Stephan (2016) supported the above by demonstrating that partaking in entrepreneurial activity leads to job creation and encourages individuals to work hard leading to increased productivity, which leads to economic growth. In recent literature, researchers have started to call on universities to play a larger role in promoting entrepreneurship (Nabi & Linan, 2011). Previous studies have shown a weak relationship in terms of promoting entrepreneurial activity at university level (Galloway & Brown, 2002). In the United Kingdom, various bodies such as the government and universities are playing a greater role in promoting graduate entrepreneurship (Nabi et al., 2010).

Previous research conducted by Canizares and Garcia (2010) found a link between entrepreneurial activity and gender. Females were shown to be less interested, as well as, less entrepreneurial orientated than males (Canizares & Garcia, 2010). In addition, Arenius, and Kovalainen (2006) have acknowledged that females are increasing their involvement in entrepreneurial activity. However, males are still the dominant figures in terms on becoming an entrepreneur (Tegtmeier & Mitra, 2015). The statement above is reflected in the South African context, according to Littlewood and Holt (2015) South Africa is one of the most unequal countries. Entrepreneurship was seen as a male orientated career that resulted in less females engaging in entrepreneurial activity (Herrington, Kew, & Kew, 2010).

However, based on the 2014 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report conducted in South Africa the opposite is taking place where females were shown to be 1.8 times more likely to participate in various entrepreneurial tasks and activities as opposed to males (Herrington et al.,2010). Global research has demonstrated that females are slowly seeing the importance of becoming an entrepreneur (Herrington et al., 2010; Meyer & Mostert, 2016).

Even though there is an increasing trend in females partaking in entrepreneurial activity, in order to keep this trend increasing universities in South Africa need to play a larger role in promoting entrepreneurial activity. It should not be limited to the male profession (Ndedi, 2009). Research has found that in many South African universities the programmes in entrepreneurship are limited as they are geared towards the business students. The general trend is that business students tend to be male as female students study programmes within the humanities faculty (Mann & DiPrete, 2013; Ndebi, 2009; Ransom, 1990). Therefore, South African universities should play a larger role of fostering entrepreneurship across the different faculties to help increase employment (Viviers, Solomon, & Venter, 2013).

A study conducted in South Africa by Meyer and Mostert (2016) found that female entrepreneurship has decreased, in 2014, for every 10 males there were 8 females involved in entrepreneurial activity. In 2015, the female ratio decreased to 6 females (Meyer & Mostert, 2016). Based on the above the declining rate of female entrepreneurs was due to various barriers such as; the lack of entrepreneurships skills and knowledge, and insufficient funds to open up their own business ventures (Meyer & Mostert, 2016). Furthermore, a study conducted at the University of Fort hare and Walter Sisulu found that students' were hesitant to open their own business due to fear of crime (Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011). The students also emphasised a lack of support ranging from financial support, and a lack of government support (Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011).

Previous research has highlighted the need to better understand the experiences and feelings of students who are faced with the reality of moving from university into full time employment (Lane, 2016). Lane (2016) emphasised that an extensive amount of research has focused on students first year experience and therefore have neglected the experience of students during their final year at university.

Brzinsky-Fay (2014) emphasises that extended research needs to be conducted to better understand the complexity of transitioning from university into the world of work.

2.7. Schlossberg's (1981) Transition Theory

Schlossberg introduced a transition model in order to understand the type of transition an individual experiences, and the strategies used to cope with the transition (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). A transition is defined as a "transaction between individuals and their environment" (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012, p.41). Transitions are important because life is full of transitions and requires individuals' to change their current behaviours to correspond with the transition taking place (Schlossberg, 1981). Transitions are important because they elicit positive aspects such as growth. However, transitions can also lead to psychological deterioration (Schlossberg, 1981).

Schlossberg emphasised that there are different types of transitions; for example an unanticipated transition that involves an event that occurs unexpectedly (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). Additionally, a non-event transition refers to a life event that is supposed to occur but fails (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). However, this study will focus solely on the anticipated transition (Schlossberg, 2011). An anticipated transition refers to a change in our lives that we expect to occur, and one of these anticipated transitions involves students preparing to move out of university and into the job market (Peila-Shuster, 2016; Schlossberg, 2011). This anticipated transition is said to represent a crucial moment in a young adult's life and is viewed as a drastic change (Hettich & Landrum, 2014).

Schlossberg (1981, 1984) introduced three steps that are followed in order to successfully navigate through a transition. The current research will apply the theory of Schlossberg towards an anticipated transition. Schlossberg (1981, 2011) noted that the first element that needs to be examined is how the individual approaches the anticipated transition. Implicit in this aspect is a sense of how positively or negatively the person appraises the transition, which can cause fear, stress, or excitement. This step involves identifying the transition, and examining the elements that will change due to this transition (DeVilbiss, 2014; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). This appraisal will be linked to the next aspect that focuses on coping with the transition. Students are

in a situation where they have identified the transition, as this is their last year of education and therefore have to prepare for the following year otherwise they will be unemployed (Polach, 2004). Research conducted by Graham and Mckenzie (1995) emphasised that students are aware that entry into employment will lead to cultural changes. These cultural changes involve a movement from a structured environment, where students are provided with course outlines demonstrating specific objectives. Whereas, in the work place there is limited guidance and a lack of structure (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008).

Students' are aware that they will be moving from a stable environment in which they have become accustomed to, into an unfamiliar environment. Additionally, most students' feared that they did not know what to expect in terms of finding employment and uncertainty in terms of elements within the workplace (Trevor-Roberts, 2006; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). This anticipated transition is often viewed as a difficult process that can lead to increased stress and frustration (Polach, 2004). The next step involves an understanding of the strategies that are utilised by students in order to cope with the anticipated transition into the world of work (Schlossberg, 1981).

The four coping strategies include:

2.7.1. Situation.

This refers to the "characteristics of the transition" (Peila-Shuster, 2016, p.56) specifically, the manner in which the individual perceives the anticipated transition (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). Additionally, this factor examines the various stressors, which could have a negative impact on the success of the transition (Peila-Shuster, 2016; Schlossberg, 2011). However, these aspects could also allow the individual to approach the situation within a positive manner. For example, previous experiences with transitions may help the student cope with the current anticipated transition (Peila-Shuster, 2016).

Schlossberg (1981, 1984) highlighted that in order to understand the situation, the following factors need to be examined:

Trigger	This factor examines the reasons behind transitioning.
Timing	This factor examines the timing of the anticipated transition.
The source or level of control	This factor examines the amount of control the individual as over the anticipated transition.
Role change	This factor focuses on the various role changes that may occur during the anticipated transition and once the transition has been completed.
Duration	This refers to how long the transition will take to complete.
Previous experience	This factor is used to explore the individual's experiences with previous transitions.
Concurrent stress	This factor examines whether the individual is experiencing stress from multiple factors.
Appraisal of the transition	This involves an element of self-reflection on how the individual views the anticipated transition, ie. in a negative or positive manner.

Adapted from *Counselling Adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world*. (Mary L. Anderson, Jane Goodman, Nancy K. Schlossberg, fourth edition, 2012).

2.7.2. Self.

The 'self' element focuses on a "person's inner strength for coping with the situation… [and refers to the individuals optimism, resilience and the ability] to deal with ambiguity" (Schlossberg, 2011, p.160). However, the self could also be a barrier that may prevent an individual from completing the transition. This element also included various other contributing factors such as:

Coping Assets	This element focuses on the assets that individuals possess to help them during this anticipated transition period
Psychological resources	This element examines the psychological resources that the individual possesses, which either inhibits or provides assistance during this process.
Gender	This feature focuses on gender, and whether or not this has an impact on the success of the anticipated transition.
Age and stage of life	This feature focuses on the individuals' age in relation to the anticipated transition, which may affect the success or failure of the anticipated transition.
Self-efficacy	This feature examines the individuals' belief about themselves with regards to the anticipated transition.

Adapted from *Counselling Adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world*. (Mary L. Anderson, Jane Goodman, Nancy K. Schlossberg, fourth edition, 2012).

2.7.3. Support.

This element focuses on the support systems available to the individual in order to provide help during the preparation for the anticipated transition (Schlossberg, 2011). Anderson et al. (2012) highlighted that social support is crucial in handling the stress and anxiety caused by the transition. Individuals can rely on social support systems such as their family unit or friendships in order to assist with the change from one life event into another (Anderson et al., 2012).

2.7.4. Strategies.

The last factor refers to the components employed by individuals' to help ensure the anticipated transition is successful (Goodman & Pappas, 2000). This factor refers to

coping strategies that are utilised in order to avoid harm, such strategy could be gaining information or direction to assit an individuals transition in a prosperous manner (Anderson et al., 2012). This process involves employing strategies to help reduce the stress, seeking guidance and receiving help from friends or family. This process involves the individual taking control of the situation by focusing on the outcome rewards (Anderson et al., 2012).

As a whole, throughout this process the individual will weigh up the assets and liabilities to determine where they are in the process and if they are able to make this transition successful (Schlossberg, 1984). The last step involves strengthening the resources the individual possesses to ensure a successful transition (DeVilbiss, 2014; Schlossberg, 1981, 2011).

The current study involves participants who are now thinking about moving into a new environment, specifically the world of work where there is uncertainty (Lane, 2014). This study intends to focus on the anticipated transition of exit level female students by using Schlossberg's 4S's framework in relation to career aspirations and attainment strategies.

2.8. Strategies for achieving career aspirations

Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998) focus on the specific strategies students' use to help them transition out of university and into the world of work. One of these strategies could include job searching strategies. This can be linked to Schlossberg's Transition model, specifically the strategy factor, as this tool can be used during the anticipated transition to try ensure a successful transition into the labour market.

Job search strategies are used to gain information about employment opportunities that are available (Van Hoye, Van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009). Commonly, individuals seeking employment will calculate the various benefits and losses of utilising job search strategies (Manroop & Richardson, 2016) Based on this calculation the individual will choose the job searching strategy that will lead to the most benefits (Manroop & Richardson, 2016). Furthermore, if the individual expects positive results out of this job search process, they are more willing to invest time into the process (Manroop & Richardson, 2016).

Previous research conducted in this domain has differentiated between two different types of job search strategies, namely formal and informal strategies (Van Hoye et al., 2009). Formal job search strategies involve using employment agencies and campus recruitment agencies such as career service facilities (Van Hoye et al., 2009). However, research into career services at a university in the United Kingdom demonstrated that most students were unaware that universities offered career guidance (Brewer, 2009). A study conducted in the United States of America found that a "student's resume was the most often reported method for obtaining a job" (Mau & Kopischke, 2001, p.145). This study found that formal job searching methods were the most favoured methods, including searching for wanted advertisements (Mau & Kopischke, 2001; Try, 2005).

In contrast, prospective employees could also make use of informal strategies, which involve a process of planning, and managing social contacts, where students seek employment guidance via networking with friends and family (Baldry, 2016). An international study conducted by Villar, Juan, Corominas, and Capell (2000) found that students rely heavily of social networking, in addition students are turning to social networking via their online presence on internet platforms such as Facebook or LinkedIn (Wiese, Lauer, Pantazis, & Samuels, 2014).

Society has changed over time and has become known as the "internet age" (Fountain, 2005, p.1235), which allows individuals to access the internet through various electronic devices at any given time. Students are relying less on traditional forms of search job strategies and tools, and instead relying more on the internet to find employment opportunities (Fountain, 2005; Ng & Burke, 2006). A study conducted in Australia found that students' relied heavily on the internet and avoided using aspects such as campus career offices (Ng & Burke, 2006). This reliance on the internet has led to the formation of online social networking, which is seen as a member-based community, where students can communicate with others in order to obtain employment opportunities (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). To further support this argument, a study conducted by Atfield and Purcell (2010) indicated that the internet has become the favoured method in finding a job because it is convenient and easily accessible.

Facebook has allowed people to communicate and accumulate friends without face-to-face interaction (Wiese et al., 2014). A study conducted by Wiese et al., (2014) examined the use of Facebook among undergraduates' in South Africa and found that students tended to access this platform between one to three times a day (Wiese et al., 2014). This study discovered that female university students' spent more time on Facebook, and found that through this platform, it allowed them direct contact with university alumni who could possibly provide employment guidance and opportunities (Wiese et al., 2014).

Social networking platforms allow students to set up personal profiles and demonstrate one's personal identity (Pempek et al., 2009). In addition, LinkedIn is also seen as a social networking site that is useful in helping students' access employment information and employment opportunities (Peterson & Dover, 2014). A study conducted by Peterson and Dover (2014) found that "60 percent of [their sample] obtained their last job by networking" (p.15).

Furthermore, some studies have examined gender differences in job search strategies (Atfield & Purcell, 2010). One study found that female applicants tended to use more informal job searching strategies than men (Atfield & Purcell, 2010). For example, females tended to approach family and friends to gain employment opportunities (Atfield & Purcell, 2010). In contrast, Try (2005) established that soon to be Norwegian graduates' relied heavily on formal job searching methods (Try, 2005). Within this study, graduates tended to gain employment through advertisements, employment services and avoided contacting friends or family (Atfield & Purcell, 2010; Try, 2005). However, a study conducted in South Africa found that students under-utilise the various career facilities provided by their university (Baldry, 2016).

On the other hand, some studies have found that students' tend to avoid being proactive in searching for jobs because of various pressures such as deadlines and exams (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). This can affect the students' anticipated transition as it may prevent students from gaining employment in the short term (McKeown & Lindorff, 2011). Therefore, students' need to remain motivated and be proactive in applying for many jobs, and not limit themselves (Mau & Kopischke, 2001; McKeown & Lindorff, 2011).

Even though individuals have various strategies to help gain employment, sometimes there are aspects that can either assist or prevent an individual from gaining employment.

2.9. Perceived barriers and enablers

The term career barriers refer to obstacles that may prevent students from obtaining their career aspirations (Creed, Patton, & Bartrum, 2004). A perceived occupational or career barrier alludes to an issue that many final year students struggle with during their anticipated transition into the workplace (Creed et al., 2004). These barriers are seen as obstacles that may prevent or stunt the process of achieving the anticipated transition with various career goals that are included in this anticipated transition period (Mejia-Smith & Gushue, 2017). Swanson and Tokar (1991) introduced three types of career barriers; social or interpersonal, attitudinal and interactional barriers.

2.9.1. Social and interpersonal barriers.

Social or interpersonal barriers occur when an individual has plans to marry, have children or are currently pregnant, which could possibly become a barrier during the anticipated transition period (Lee, Yu, & Lee, 2008; Swanson & Tokar, 1991).

A study conducted in Kenya found that financial issues seem to be one of the major barriers that prevent students' from reaching their career aspirations (Migunde et al., 2012). In some cases, the family structure may prevent individuals' reaching their career aspiration because living in a household where traditional roles are present, females are forced to remain within the domestic realm (Stad, Els, & Fouad, 2004). The barriers experienced by individuals can be linked to Schlossberg's 'self' strategy because it may affect the individuals "inner strength for coping with the situation" (Schlossberg, 2011, p.160).

2.9.2. Attitudinal barriers.

Attitudinal barriers refer to the attitude the individual possesses, do they possess positive or negative attitudes towards the anticipated transition (Swanson & Tokar, 1991). Previous research has examined self-efficacy as a crucial factor in understanding students' perceived career barrier (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015). A

student's self-efficacy involves a self-reflective process where the individual examines their ability in achieving the anticipated transition into the workplace (Novakovic & Gnilka, 2015). The anticipated transition can be a stressful time for many students, and this can become even more stressful when a student experiences high levels of uncertainty regarding their future leading to decreases in one's self-efficacy (Gnilka & Novakovic, 2015; Lopez & Ann-Yi, 2006).

Parents can impact on their children's attitudes of the anticipated transition, parents' can create confusion or force students to pick a particular career trajectory (Kantamneni et al., 2016). Parents current career and opinions can have a direct impact on their child's choice of degree and the type of career or occupation they wish their child to possess (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). The parents wishes may not be in line with the students want.

A study conducted in South Africa examined the one of the major perceived career barriers that students' are faced with (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001). It found that females' possessed a poor self-image and lacked confidence (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001). This poor self-image has surfaced due to past and current gender inequality (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001). An argument has been made that education is seen as a liberating element, however the opposite has occurred, societal conventions are simply reinforced during educational studies (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001).

2.9.3. Interactional barriers.

Interactional barriers examine various barriers relating to demographic variables such as age and gender, work experience, and the perceived work environment in which the individual will one-day experience (Lee et al., 2008; Swanson & Tokar, 1991). For example, university students' experience little to none work experience while studying and therefore are uncertain about their career, the roles and duties they would be required to do (Lopez & Ann-Yi, 2006). This can become a barrier in terms of obtaining employment and completing the anticipated transition into the world of work. If students' do not possess work experience, organisations would need to spend money in training needs (Pauw et al., 2008). In addition, due to the lack of work experience has led to a lack of various skills such as interviewing technique, job searching skills, and the skills and knowledge to create a professional curriculum vitae (Mlatsheni, 2005; Pauw et al., 2008).

Phillips and Imhoff (1997) revealed that the females' first experience from university into the workplace is a complex process where they have to negotiate various life factors such as multiple roles to help ensure work-family life balance. Furthermore, female students indicated that gender discrimination and stereotyping are additional barriers that females' experience (Phillips & Imhoff, 1997). An argument could be made that the Phillips and Imhoff (1997) article is an old reference and it is possible that the influence of these factors has changed. However, Murtagh, Lopes, and Lyons (2007) emphasised that gender discrimination and stereotypes are still prevalent are reinforced by societal conventions. Furthermore, the researchers highlighted that females are more constricted in terms of gaining employment. In addition, there is a perception that entrepreneurial activities are male orientated, and therefore less females are likely to move into this career (Murtagh et al., 2007). Furthermore, Watts et al. (2015) found that female students tended to have higher perceived barriers such as sex discrimination, and conflict between traditional female roles and career demands.

South Africa is experiencing an unstable work environment, which raises concern as a potential barrier, this may affect students attitudes and prevent the student from achieving the anticipated transition (Maree, 2013). The uncertainty can also be a direct barrier in obtaining employment and career goals (Maree, 2013). The above can have a crippling effect on one's level of confidence, students may start to lack the will to achieve their aspirations and career goals (Maree, 2013).

Previous research career indecision can also be classified as a barrier, which can occur due to the lack of availability in obtaining career advice or uncertainty as to the appropriate individual to provide guidance (Creed et al., 2004). The above was supported by Goliath (2012) that indecision arises due to the students' lack of appropriate knowledge of how and where to obtain career opportunities.

2.9.4. Enablers.

Schlossberg (2011) highlighted that individuals can implement support strategies because it is "critical to one's sense of well-being" (p.160). Previous research has indicated various factors that enable and influences students' career aspirations; namely support from parents, and role models (Shumba & Naong, 2012; Metz,

Fouad, & Ihle-Helledy, 2009). However, most of these studies focus on students at school (Migunde et al., 2012; Shumba & Naong, 2012).

Research has demonstrated that students rely on numerous support systems ranging from family support, peer support and university support (Tomlinson, 2008; Mickelson & Velasco, 1998). Numerous studies have examined familial support and established that a student's family provide encouragement and support both psychologically and financially (Almquist & Angrist, 1971). Students' parents provide numerous knowledge, resources and opportunities that help students' cope with the various barriers they may face (Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2014). However, within South Africa this may not occur, as many parents are unable to support their children financially due to the high levels of poverty (Van der Berg, 2002). A study conducted by Almquist and Angrist (1971) found that students observe their mothers balancing work and life. This observation allows students to believe that they are able to do the same, and therefore their mothers act as role models. This observational role is crucial and supported by Metheny and McWhirter, (2013) where family members work roles, values and various expectations are transferred to the children.

In addition, peer support is an element that provides learning among each other, help motivate each other and help develop each other's skills which may be useful in the future (Touré-Tillery & Fishbach, 2014). Both family and peers can provide networking avenues to help students provide potential employment (Jones, Torezani, & Luca, 2012). An argument has also been made that universities can provide support to their students by providing them with the appropriate labour knowledge and skills needed to gain employment (Tomlinson, 2008).

2.10. The research aims

This research project explores the experiences and perceptions of exit level female students', career aspirations and the strategies utilised in order to achieve those aspirations. This project utilises Schlossberg's Transition theory as the overarching theory, specifically the anticipated phase, as many final year students are expecting and preparing to move into the world of work. This study interviewed eight final year B.A. students' who are in their last year of studies and are planning to move into the world of work. This study explores the students' expectations and hopes for the

future and discovers the strategies implemented in order to enter the job market in the following year.

2.11. Research questions

1.) How do exit level female students perceive their career aspirations.

2.) With regards to the anticipated transition from university to the world of work, what enablers and barriers do exit level female students anticipate in reaching their career aspirations?

3.) What strategies are utilised or intend to be utilised in order to achieve the students career aspirations?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter demonstrates the methodological aspects that underpin the current study. A qualitative research design was utilised to explore the research questions. Additionally, this chapter demonstrates the sample composition, the procedures and instruments, data analysis and ethical considerations of the current study.

3.2. Research Design

The term research design allows researchers to employ a specific method such as quantitative or qualitative methods in order to collect, and analyse data which provides valuable insight into a particular phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A quantitative study focuses on quantification and measurement (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Wilson & MacLean, 2011). Whereas, a qualitative study focuses less on statistical analyses and rather places a larger focus on understanding the complex interactions and experiences of the human participants (Wolgemuth et al., 2015).

Various research studies have demonstrated the merits of both quantitative and qualitative designs. However, for the purpose of this study, a qualitative research design was utilised. This design focused on exploring human beings experiences and the “meanings that [were] attached to [their] experiences” (Wilson & MacLean, 2011, p.188). By using a qualitative design, the researcher intended to gather rich descriptions of human beings experiences (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Wilson & MacLean, 2011). This design was beneficial because it allowed the researcher to gain insight into the students first-person experiences and feelings about the research area.

In addition, the researcher was concerned with “understanding the world of human experiences” (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.3), which locates this specific study within the interpretivist paradigm. In order to understand the participants experiences, and feelings during the anticipated transition into the world of work, importance needs to be placed on the interaction between the researcher and the participants. This interaction provides meaning and understanding, and both latent and manifest feelings and thoughts (Ponterotto, 2005). Therefore, the researcher made the

decision to interview participants and explore their personal experiences, with no manipulation of variables.

3.3. Sample

The sample consisted of eight female university students who were in their third year of study for a Bachelor of Arts degree. The sample consisted of 1 White student, 2 Indian, and 5 Black African students, and all students were 22 years old. The inclusion criteria were that participants should be in their final year of study and were intending to enter the job market in the following year. Furthermore, previous research has demonstrated that students who are completing a Bachelor of Arts degree tend to experience low levels of employment (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012) and this might influence their job search strategies. Regarding the sample size, the researcher had initially intended to obtain 10 participants, or to continue sampling until saturation had been reached, but there was a low response rate and only 8 people volunteered to participate. In spite of this, the researcher believes that saturation was achieved.

Research conducted by Marshall (1996) found that samples obtained for qualitative research tend to be small, but because of the in-depth interaction between the researcher and participant, rich information is obtained regardless of the sample size. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) stated that sampling involves the researcher selecting an appropriate sample, which will provide rich data on the phenomenon that is being researched. It is important to choose the most appropriate sampling strategy (Elliot & Timulak, 2005; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

This current study employed a non-probability sampling technique which involves obtaining participants in a non-random manner in that not everyone one in the population has an equal chance to be selected to participate (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Brown, Cozby, Kee, & Worden, 1999). This technique is seen to be effective in that it is cheap and convenient (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Brown et al., 1999). There are numerous non-probability techniques including convenience, quota and purposive (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

For the purpose of this study, a purposive non-probability sampling technique was utilised. A purposive sampling strategy allowed the researcher to obtain participants who "belong[ed] to a predefined group" (Wilson & MacLean, 2011, p.165). In this study, the pre-defined group was final year female Bachelor of Arts students at the University of the Witwatersrand. Additionally, snowball sampling was implemented which attempts to find potential participants through asking individuals to recommend people they know who meet the inclusion criteria (Browne, 2005).

3.4. Instruments

The instrument that was utilised for data collection was face-to-face semi-structured interviews. During this interaction, the researcher posed multiple questions from a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix A) (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Wilson & MacLean, 2011). The interview schedule was developed by the researcher and focused on females' anticipated transitions into the job market, specifically their career aspirations, the strategies used to achieve those aspirations, and the perceived enablers and barriers they could face in terms of this anticipated transition (Appendix A). In order to answer the research questions, the researcher based the interview questions on Schlossberg's '4S' framework (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). The questions that were established focused on the 'situation', 'self', 'support', and 'strategies' in order to understand and explore the research topic (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). (This framework was discussed in chapter 2, section 2.7).

The questions posed were open-ended, which allowed each participant to adequately respond and reflect on their experiences (Barriball & While, 1994). Semi-structured interviews are beneficial because they allow the researcher to observe important non-verbal cues that may have arisen during the interview process (Barriball & While, 1994) and allow flexibility in the order in which questions are asked, and the types of follow-up questions posed. The interviews were expected to last between half an hour and an hour. However, each participant differed in terms of the length and depth of their responses and ranged between 30 to 45 minutes. Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury (2012) highlighted the importance of interview duration, in that the researcher needs to be aware of the human beings external environment which may affect their responses. In terms of the current research study, the

difference in the length of time varying between participants may have arisen because of approaching examinations or more pressing external situations.

Even though an interview schedule was pre-established, the interaction between the researcher and the participants remained flexible, as recommended by Edwards and Holland (2013), Wilson and MacLean (2011). Semi-structured interviews allowed the conversation to flow more naturally, as the researcher probed certain areas or topics that did arise during the interviews. Ultimately, this interaction was crucial for the researcher as it provides meaning and understanding of the research topic. Furthermore, it allowed the participants the opportunity for self-reflection.

3.5. Procedure

The researcher approached the third year psychology course coordinators via email to ask for permission to invite the third year students to participate in the study. The participant information sheet (Appendix C) was posted on the university's E-learning portal to invite students to participate in the study. In addition, the researcher spoke to specific lecturers and asked for permission to attend a class to tell students about the study and invite them to participate. The researcher gave a brief synopsis of the context of the study, and the specific criteria that were needed. The researcher handed out participant information sheets directly to those who showed an interest in the topic.

Once participants emailed the researcher, this email served as confirmation, and interest to be involved in the current study. Both parties arranged a specific venue and time that was suitable for both parties. Research has shown the importance of ensuring a suitable venue to ensure that the participant feels safe and comfortable (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The researcher conducted the interviews in the organisational psychology Master's room on the university campus. Additionally, to ensure no interruptions took place the researcher booked the venue three days in advance and sent out a reminder on the day.

Each interview began with a brief introduction regarding the purpose of the study and then all participants signed the various consent forms, namely; consent for participation and for using direct quotes in the report and any publications, and giving consent for their interview to be recorded via an electronic voice recorder

(Appendices D and E). In addition, each participant completed a demographic questionnaire consisting of the participant's age, race, home language, this was only used for descriptive purposes (Appendix B). The appendices have been explained further in the section regarding ethical considerations.

In order to build a rapport with the participants, the researcher began with basic questions relating to their university experience before going onto the deeper questions. Once all the interview questions were completed, each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions or provide further information if they wished. The researcher thanked each participant for participating in the study, and they were asked if they had friends who met the studies requirements to please encourage them to participate as well.

The completed interviews were then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The researcher chose to self-transcribe because this process allowed the researcher to immerse herself in the data to establish suitable themes (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). This process will be explained in more depth in the data analysis section.

3.6. Reflexivity

Reflexivity has become an integral part of qualitative research (Haynes, 2012), where the researcher needed to reflect on the process in order to "identify subjective and contextual factors that may have influenced the outcome" (Wilson & MacLean, 2011, p.191). The primary research instrument was the interviewer who brings in her own personal experiences, biases, and beliefs (Berger, 2015). The researcher needed to acknowledge that she is in the same position as the participants, completing a Master's degree, she is in the position of trying to find employment for 2018.

In order to move towards this process, the researcher kept a journal where she wrote down her thoughts during the process of discovering the research topic, including during the review of the available literature. Furthermore, after each interview the researcher sat down and reflected on her feelings and thoughts throughout the interview process that unfolded. By keeping a journal, the researcher tried to ensure an element of quality control (Berger, 2015). In addition, the researcher received interview training during her Honours course which has allowed her to be aware of

the factors that could influence the interview process. The journal played a major role in making the researcher aware of the role she played within the research process (Berger, 2015; Stige, Malterud, & Midtgarden, 2009).

3.7. Data Analysis

The last step involved the researcher transcribing all the interviews. The process of transcription is considered to be useful, in that the researcher actively listens to each interview and writes down every interaction between the participant and the researcher (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Wilson & MacLean, 2011). As mentioned before, the researcher took notes during the interview to account for non-verbal cues that may add value to the data analysis (Opdenakker, 2006).

In addition, the researcher went through all the interviews and transcripts in order to analyse the data through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is described by Clarke and Braun (2013) as the process of examining the findings in order to identify patterns and themes that "capture something important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.82). Thematic analysis is considered to be a useful analysis tool because it is very flexible (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also allowed the researcher the opportunity to describe the data in rich detail about the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In order for the data to be analysed thematically, the following steps introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) were applied:

1.) Interviews were transcribed and examined multiple times.

2.) Grouping of similar information, subsequently codes were established based on the similarities that emerged.

3.) All the codes were gathered and placed into major themes.

4.) A review of the themes led to an establishment of links between the codes and the themes, which resulted in the formation of a thematic map.

5.) A process of creating overarching names for the emergent themes was formed.

6.) All the steps above were utilised to create a report which described the findings, and allowed the researcher to link those findings back to the research topic.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethics is an essential component in conducting research as it highlights the role of the researcher to ensure that the participants are protected from harm (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Shaw, 2003). Before the interviews were conducted, the researcher submitted a research proposal to gain ethical clearance. Ethical clearance was then obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand and the faculty of Humanities. In addition, the researcher submitted the appropriate ethical forms to the Human Research Ethics Committee and obtained an ethics clearance certificate (Appendix F).

Once ethical approval was obtained, the researcher notified the registrars of the Humanities Faculty and the university that the research intended to use students as the sample. In order to ensure that the researcher followed ethical guidelines before the interviews were conducted the researcher informed each of the participants about the study. The researcher explained that there were no risks associated with participation. However, as an incentive to attract participants the researcher stated that if they wished, they would receive a general feedback sheet outlining job search strategies that may help them in future career prospects. All of the above information was provided on the participant information sheet (Appendix C). The participants who showed interest in the study emailed the researcher and a suitable time and venue was agreed upon.

The next step involved the researcher gaining informed consent from the participant who signed an agreement in which they acknowledged that participation was voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time (Appendix D). In addition, consent was obtained which allowed the researcher to audio-record each interview and to use direct quotes in the research report and any other publications and presentations that may draw on this study (Appendix E). Lastly, the participants also completed a demographic questionnaire which was only used for descriptive purposes (Appendix B). Furthermore, the researcher ensured that each participant's confidentiality was protected, by ensuring that the "research data about the individual [throughout the interview process, data analysis and report remained] private" (Wilson & MacLean, 2011, p.600). Confidentiality was established by providing each participant with a pseudonym instead of using their names, to

ensure that they are not identifiable (Edwards & Holland, 2013). In addition, throughout the duration of the study, the researcher ensured that every interview that was conducted as well as the data gathered was placed in a secure place where no one but the researcher and supervisor had access to.

Subsequently, once the data analysis was completed, each participant would be provided with the opportunity to request feedback. The one page feedback sheet demonstrates the findings of the research and provides information about job search strategies which may be useful for the participants. The researchers email address was made available on the participant information sheet.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the key findings that emerged through multiple thematic analyses. This chapter will begin by demonstrating the students career aspirations, and following this the structure of this chapter will be guided by Schlossberg's (1981) 4'S Transition theory and the themes will be organised according to the framework of the 'situation', 'self', 'support', and the 'strategies' and supported by direct quotes. This research intends to better understand the anticipated transition of female exit level students. The participant's names have been removed for confidentiality purposes and will be referred to using participant numbers (IV1-IV8). Furthermore, this study also focuses on career aspirations and will also be included as a theme. All of the participants indicated that they are studying within the humanities faculty, and most of them indicated that psychology was one of their majors.

4.2. Career aspirations

Each participant was asked about their career aspirations, plans and goals for the upcoming year. Based on the literature review given in chapter two, another manner in which to understand career aspirations is through aspiring to obtain various work values and therefore has been included as a theme.

4.2.1. Obtaining a degree and employment.

Many of the participants stated that at the time their interviews were being conducted their greatest aspiration was to receive their degree and move into the world of work.

> *To get a degree [then] hopefully I can get [an] internship (IV2)*
>
> *Try and get a job… I want to see myself, myself having a stable career. I just want a stable career uhm and think it's everyone's aspiration to be able to find employment [and] build themselves a name (IV2).*
>
> *I'm going to [try] do my Honours…it's just pointless having a degree nowadays…best to also get your Honours to like increase your chances like in the job market (IV7).*
>
> *My hopes and dreams [is] to get a good job…where I enjoy and where I like I want to work at (IV8).*

The participants indicated that they aspired to complete their degree and obtain employment. This finding may suggest that students view their degree as providing more job opportunities in the labour market. During the interviews, all the participants emphasised a strong desire to find a job, but very few had a clear idea of the type of job, or field they wished to work in. Additionally, a few of the participants highlighted the aim of possessing a stable career, which goes against the stereotype of this generation. The stereotype emphasises that generation Y are prone to move in and out of organisations resulting in less stability in terms of their careers.

As demonstrated above most of the participants highlighted that their career aspirations revolved around obtaining employment. However, it is important to note that many demonstrated the need to study further, and the benefits attached to furthering one's studies in order to better their chances of gaining employment.

4.2.2. Organisational image.

A few of the participants indicated that they valued organisations that had a good image, which ranged from consistency, honesty and demonstrated transparency.

> *Integrity of course, [and] uhm loyalty (IV2).*
>
> *… it helps if the organisation has been around for a long time because they you know that there is consistency… [If] the organisation has some sort of consistency (IV3).*
>
> *… honesty [and] transparency(IV6).*

In summary, many of the participants reflected on the types of organisations they aspired to work for and demonstrated that they wished to work for organisations that value high ethical standards. This is an important notion as South Africa has been experiencing high levels of unethical behaviour in government and in various organisations.

4.2.3. Entrepreneurship.

The researcher probed into this area as most of the participants did not mention entrepreneurship as a main career aspiration. The participants spoke about various

elements such as; field being dominated by White individuals, specific personality traits, and crime.

> *… I've always felt like [entrepreneurship within] South Africa [has] been so white.. monopolised in terms of uh uh in terms of business. I think [and] would appreciate the opportunity or would love to change that dynamic in saying that black women can actually also own companies… It's definitely one of my goals (IV1).*

Participants highlighted that a perception exists within society that entrepreneurship is seen as a business venture that is dominated by white people. The participants aspired to change this dynamic and show the world that Black females have the capability of owning their own businesses.

Additionally, some of the participants alluded to specific personality traits that are needed in order to become an entrepreneur. The way in which participants explained these traits came across as an element they lacked in a very subtle way and therefore tended to distance themselves from becoming entrepreneurs. Some of the excerpts are shown below:

> *I Think I'm still in that process where I'm actually starting, you know my entrepreneurship [journey] (IV1).*

> *…entrepreneurs I feel like are hell of risk-takers, but I respect them for that. You know like they trust themselves well enough (IV7).*

> *… I feel like it needs persistence [and] I'm not patient… but I have thought about one day opening a company (IV2).*

Even though most of the participants highlighted that entrepreneurs need to be risk takers and at this point were not thinking about becoming an entrepreneur, but most of the participants emphasised that becoming an entrepreneur might be a long-term career goal. This long-term career goal seems to be a positive step in society as research has demonstrated that it may reduce unemployment issues. However, one of the participants were reluctant to become an entrepreneur due to an issue of crime that was experienced first-hand by her father who was an entrepreneur.

My father] had like a family business one of those convenient stores in Johannesburg and then 2015… he sold [the business] because he was just tired of like the, there was a lot of robberies and break-ins (IV4).

This issue of crime is a pertinent issue within South Africa as individuals are constantly exposed to high levels of crime such as on the radio, newspapers, and the internet, as well as, personal experiences with crime. Based on the various mediums demonstrated above, students are aware that small businesses are targets of crime and this would potentially prevent students from becoming an entrepreneur.

4.2.4. Work values.

Each participant was asked about the work values they aspire towards possessing. The two main themes that emerged was; growth and development, and the opportunity to make various contributions.

4.2.4.1. Growth and development.

Many of the research participants emphasised that growth and development was a very important factor in terms of the work values that they aspire towards possessing. Some of the excerpts are shown below:

… reach a level it's not just going to be the same level. You are going to be improving year after year and recognise okay this person has potential lets upgrade them… you are not just working, you are also travelling [and] you are going to progress (IV4).

Participant four indicated that she valued the opportunity for career trajectory in that she wanted to be able to move up the organisational hierarchy, and valued prospective companies that provide employees with various opportunities for promotion.

So I'm not one of those people that are like stagnant where I just can't move… definitely respect like going both ways… also an organisation where I can grow. They support my development and they like, ey I mustn't remain stagnant (IV5).

…self-actualising… that is where everyone should be… one of my life's philosophy is… grow through what you go through… you need to grow in a company… self-development is key… you can only fully help the next person if you yourself is at a certain level to actually help someone (IV7).

The quotes above indicate that growth and development are a priority for most of the participants. The participants also tend to imply that they would ideally like to grow and develop within an organisation, and have not mentioned moving between different organisations. This seems to be consistent with the argument made above that this finding goes against the stereotype of this generation of wanting to constantly move around and work at many different organisations.

4.2.4.2. The opportunity to contribute.

Many of the participants emphasised that they valued the opportunity to make a contribution in various ways, such as contributing towards the psychology profession, helping individuals in need, and value making a contribution to the organisation.

One participant aspired to changing the dynamic of the psychology profession, highlighting that this profession within South Africa was not reflective of the black South African population within the country.

I feel like… there is not enough like black psychologists.. I think that a lot of changes that need to happen… people of the context or who share the same background can actually give back in a way that is effective for change (V1).

Participant one emphasised that within South Africa there is a lack of Black psychologists, which is a big problem for the majority of the population. Due to the lack of Black psychologists the student is alluding to a lack of support for many South Africans as the current psychology population tends to be White, and therefore lacks the appropriate knowledge regarding the indigenous knowledge, language, and culture of the Black population.

The second theme that emerged alluded to aspiring to be role models and speak for the people in need.

I've been a spokesperson, uhm for activate… a society here at Wits… one of the things that I learnt there, uhm is to speak…to speak for the people (IV1).

…I was a peer counsellor so it's like[I was] a mini consulting person.. a lot of my friends used to come to me for advice and I thought I could make a career out of this and just put the two together [because] I love business and I love helping people (IV2).

The above quotes demonstrated that the participants are currently involved in behaviours where they are helping others.

… as long as we can help each other, it does not have to be big just as long as the next person is able to move forward...I like the concept of helping people where I can (IV3).

All of the participants valued an opportunity to contribute and help those in need. A few indicated that they appreciate and enjoy helping others and this led them to incorporate this aspect into a potential career. This view of helping others and giving back to the community may be related to the fact that they are psychology and humanities students. This trend might not apply to certain other faculties, as the humanities field tends to be people orientated and other faculties might be less people orientated.

4.3. Schlossberg's Transition theory

The following section will be guided by Schlossberg's (1981, 1984) 4'S transition framework**,** namely the situation, self, support, and strategies**.**

4.3.1. Situation.

The following themes emerged concerning the 'situation' factor according to Schlossberg's transition theory. The themes are organised as follows: trigger, role change, previous experience, concurrent stress, and an appraisal of the situation.

4.3.1.1. Trigger.

The trigger factor focuses on the elements that lead to the anticipated transition into the world of work (Schlossberg, 2011). The students aspired to move into the working world for three main reasons, namely, the desire to obtain income, the

opportunity to gain work experience, and the opportunity to pay back ones parents for funding their university studies.

> *I don't have any work experience, so I'm hoping that I gain that working experience next year [and] that is why I want to go into the work place next year (IV1).*

> … I'm at the point where I feel like I want [to] put my theoretical knowledge to like practical skills and get that experience (IV5).

> *… But like life in Joburg, like it's expensive here so I'm thinking to myself… I need to get an apartment, I need to get like car like it's expensive. I'm like I obviously I've got to work (IV6).*

> *… I don't know if you've heard the phrase like the whole black tax [which involves] giving back… you should give back because it's the right thing to do (IV3).*

The students emphasised that the reason for wanting to move into the working world was the opportunity to use the theoretical knowledge obtained during their studies and gain practical experience. Additionally, one of the main themes that emerged that best explain the reasons for partaking in the anticipated transition into the world of work was because the participants wanted to start earning their own income and become independent. Participant three highlighted that the reason for partaking in the anticipated transition was to ensure movement into the world of work revolved around a concept called black tax, where she needs to pay back her parents for paying for her studies.

4.3.1.4. Previous experience and role change.

The researcher has combined these two themes because students reflected on previous transitions, which then lead to a discussion regarding the role changes that would occur. Some of the participants reflected on their experience of moving from school into university.

> *I mean varsity, the jump from high school and varsity, I feel like it's not that different. But then the jump from varsity to the workplace is different, it's like*

you have to make your own choices [and] no one is going to tell you what to do (IV2).

… the gap between varsity and the workplace [because] there is longer hours, you don't get vacation…totally different [environment] at workplace (IV8).

I mean to some extent I think it's because now you're like your own person because now you actually [have] literally no structure. So to speak because with varsity, you have a timetable, you have lecture (IV3).

Some of the participants believed that the movement from university to the workplace would be a greater challenge than previous transitions that they had experienced. Additionally, participants acknowledged that role changes would occur because the university environment is very structured, whereas the work environment is less structured and less guidance is provided. This led to feelings of intimidation due to the large change in the environment.

4.3.1.5. Concurrent stress.

This theme focuses on the various stressors that students experience during the anticipated transition, which may affect the outcome and completion of the transition (Schlossberg, 2011). The following stressors were emphasised; graduate unemployment, exam and workload stress, and the tertiary institution.

[I am] so focused on course work, it's not the biggest priority right now [looking for employment] (IV8).

I'm just like what is [going to] happen next year? (IV3).

How do you know what you like. From first year [you] are only [given] these little groups, but you don't know what it's about, like what it entails (IV4).

I feel like there's a lack of representation when it comes to [the] humanities [field], especially like psychology (IV1).

In summary, participants indicated that it was difficult to focus and prepare for the anticipated transition as she was trying to concentrate on exams and obtaining her degree. Therefore, her attention had to be divided and led to greater concern for the current university situation she was experiencing during the time of the interview.

However, this lack of attention on the anticipated transition might also be because of high levels of uncertainty. Students possess confusion due to a lack of information regarding what their degree entails, what jobs are available and just basic information about your degree and the specific area of study. The last quote highlights a crucial barrier that may directly have an impact on the success of the anticipated transition. A psychology degree was perceived as a barrier, as it may prevent individuals from gaining employment. Furthermore, some participants suggest that obtaining a degree in the humanities field can be considered as a barrier that may prevent an individual from moving into the labour market. This may be due to an influx of humanities students into the labour market and not enough jobs available.

4.3.1.6. Appraisal.

This feature examines the way in which the students view the anticipated transition into the world of work, such as in a positive or negative manner (Schlossberg, 1981). However, the participants reflected mixed feelings and emphasised both positive and negative feelings towards the anticipated transition.

The positive feelings experienced were due to feelings of excitement towards a new journey within the participants lives. This excitement was also due to the benefits that participants would gain such as financial independence. However, the participants also expressed negative feelings, which was due to high levels of unemployment. This issue of unemployment overlaps with the concurrent stressors that students face

> *it's a balance between [being] anxious and [my] excitement (IV3).*
>
> *I'm so ready to get out there [and] like honestly I cannot wait for this chapter of my life to begin (IV5).*
>
> *I fear unemployment…graduates who are unemployed at the moment (IV1).*
>
> *Uhm well I think it's difficult [because] I mean jobs are so scarce at the moment… [due to] the poor economy… [one of the barriers is] there is not a lot of jobs right now (IV8).*

In summary, the participants were excited about the anticipated transition, but expressed some feelings of anxiety and uncertainty due to graduate unemployment and a poor economy, which makes job opportunities scarce within South Africa.

4.3.2. Self.

This factor focuses on the strengths and weaknesses that students believe that they possess that can either facilitate or prevent the completing of the anticipated transition into the world of work (Schlossberg, 1981).

4.3.2.1. Coping assets, psychological resources and self-efficacy.

The students demonstrated strengths that they possessed that would help students cope with the anticipated transition.

> *I do believe in myself… I believe in the things that I've taught myself so far (IV1)*
>
> *I feel like I put a lot of time into making sure that the output of what I produce is of high quality (IV5).*
>
> *I know that I'm willing to put in effort and the time needed to become good at my job… I think I'm very determined (IV8).*
>
> *I think people skills can render as a skill. I converse well with people, people of different background, people of different walks of life (IV7).*

The students emphasised positive self-beliefs in terms of their capabilities and skills. Additionally, participants highlighted that they were driven and were willing to work hard to reach their career aspirations. Furthermore, a few of the participants mentioned that they possessed good teamwork skills and were able to work well with others which would be an asset in the workplace.

However, the participants also highlighted some of their weaknesses such as low confidence levels, and is some cases lacked organisational skills.

> *It limits so many things, my confidence (IV1).*
>
> *One of the biggest like personal flaws you know, is like believing in myself more (IV7).*

Maybe because there are some skills that I haven't maybe developed [due to a lack of work experience] (IV4)

In summary, the participants demonstrated mixed feelings regarding their capabilities and skills. This might be due to the fact that some of them may not have had any work experience and therefore lack the knowledge and capabilities required in the work environment.

4.3.2.2. Gender.

This factor examined if gender would be perceived as a potential barrier during the anticipated transition into the world of work (Schlossberg, 1981). Participant two emphasised that that she believed that being a female was not a barrier in terms of completing the anticipated transition.

No, like they are recognising females as being, you know people who also work apart from just males working. They now see… [that] we weren't just born to breed.. uhm we also have aspirations [and] skills to offer (IV2).

The above quote emphasised that society was moving towards greater gender equality and organisations are now seeing the benefits of employing females. This view seems to be consistent with the changes we are slowly starting to observe in organisations, where females are moving into leadership and management positions. However, the majority of the participants did not share the same positive sentiments. Instead, the participants emphasised that being a female was perceived as a potential barrier for the research participants. For example:

You know you have to display qualities that are far more masculine you have to be tough, you have to be meaner you know for, for progression (IV6).

I think in the workforce still being a black women to a certain extent now it still does work against you…It's not overt, it's subtle…through mediums such as your salary (IV7)

In summary, a few of the participants highlighted that being a female may be seen as a barrier due to the fact the masculine traits are favoured in the working world. Even though society has made progress in trying to reach equality in the workplace, an argument could be made that organisations are still dominated by males.

4.3.3. Support.

The support element focuses on the various support structures that students utilise in order to cope and complete the anticipated transition into the labour market. The following support systems will be discussed; the family unit, network of friends, and institutions (Schlossberg, 1981).

4.3.3.1. Family unit.

All the participants mentioned their parents as their primary support givers.

> *I have my parents…like they are my arms, you know, like they've been with me throughout my journey as a student… They've been the biggest support financially for me, and emotionally (IV1).*

> *Well, for like support I would rely on my family… I feel like they will encourage me to uhm reach my goals (IV8)*

All of the participants highlighted that their parents supported them financially by paying for their studies. Additionally, the family unit provided support emotionally through encouragement during difficult times. This may not be reflective of the other students on the university campus, as many students live in the residences on campus or work part time in order to pay for their own accommodation and university fees. Furthermore, some of the students attending university may be international students and therefore may not have the same family support system as these research participants.

4.3.3.2. Network of friends.

Due to attending university, students are likely to interact with various individuals and therefore it is likely that they will develop friendships and see these friendships as sources of support for various reasons.

> *My friends they like tell me to carry on, [they tell me] to make plans if you're not able to study next year you just have [to have] a plan B (IV4).*

> *I love my friends, they are also such a great support structure (IV7).*

> *I also have a good network of friends that can help encourage [me] (IV8).*

In summary, friends provided support in terms of encouragement and guidance. A possible reason for this reliance on friends may be due to the reality that they are most likely all experiencing similar or even the same issues. This could help students feel less anxious by knowing that their friends are experiencing the same issues or concerns.

4.3.3.3. Institutions.

This factor demonstrates the feelings and views of exit level female students' about the support provided by the University of the Witwatersrand. The following excerpts emerged:

> *Support from the institution uhm that recognises psychology… and having those career options or career opportunities within psychology.. it [would] increase my positivity [in terms of] reaching these goals that I see for myself (IV1). [Furthermore, having the knowledge about] internships in psychology.. just like [the] availability (IV1).*
>
> *I don't know I think even if it's not necessarily finding a job, but just giving you like an idea of like the other possible uhm opportunities (IV6).*
>
> *WITS doesn't do enough… Wits could do a lot more to help you get a job... [the main university] goal [is] to get everyone employed and everybody knowledgeable. [The university] needs to go further and need to put people in jobs because we already have an unemployment problem that will develop further if the universities don't change (IV8).*

In summary, the participants highlighted that they felt the institution lacked support and therefore greater support is needed in terms of support for psychology students. This could be tied back to the issue of studying within the humanities field that could be seen as less marketable, or possibly due to the influx of psychology students into the job market and not enough job positions available. A few of the participants indicated that they wished the institution would help them find employment. However, students need to keep in mind the role that the university plays and that the institution's role is not to find employment for students, but instead ensure that all students are equipped with the appropriate skills that will help them within the labour market.

4.3.4. Strategies.

This theme focuses on the strategies used by participants to cope with the anticipated transition into the world of work such as job searching strategies. Based on the findings made earlier that students did not have a clear idea of what sort of work and organisations they would like to apply to, they are unlikely to find employment, or have a strategy to find employment. Regardless, the students did mention the strategies that they would utilise in order to try find employment for example, networking, career fairs, and obtaining an education.

4.3.4.1. Networking.

One of the major strategies that were spoken about was networking, various methods of networking arose such as through the internet, family and friends.

> *Internet… I think, I mean the world is like uhm operating or [functioning] through social media … start networking and linking myself to uhm people in the career… I don't think I'll every stop looking till, until I get something (IV1).*
>
> *… So I guess if you network with people who you already know, they'll be able to network or connect you to people (IV2).*
>
> *I signed up onto like the career portals… I normally also go onto uhm okay LinkedIn definitely, but then I also go to like career sites… I just go to see the careers (IV6).*

In summary, throughout the interviews it seemed as if many of the participants had not yet started looking for a job, which may be due to the concurrent stressors expressed under chapter (4.3.1.5). During the time that the interviews were conducted most of the participants were trying to finish their assignments and studying for approaching tests. Therefore, many of the participants spoke about the strategies that they would rely on in the future. The findings demonstrate that the participants would turn to the internet in order to find employment, which seems to reflect the stereotype that generation Y are technologically orientated and choose to find employment using this method. However, some participants also emphasised that they would network with friends and family in order to try find employment.

4.3.4.2. Career fairs.

Many universities display career fairs, which allow the students the opportunity to meet with various companies in order to find about the company and potential job opportunities. The following excerpts demonstrate the findings within this study:

> *I felt like [the career fairs] weren't really focusing on BA students and most of the times it would be like accounting, science and all these maths things… I don't think the career fair helped me (IV3).*
>
> *[The career fairs are] useless because I mean all you get is like a free pen… it's not individualistic (IV5).*
>
> *Career fairs…I did go and then you get the various companies (IV7).*
>
> *…with regards to the career fairs] they need a wider range of people [and companies [attending the career fairs] (IV8).*

In summary, the participants demonstrated mixed feelings regarding the use of career fairs that the university provided. Some demonstrated that the career fairs gave them the opportunity to find out about new companies that they had not known about and then would go and find out more about these companies. On the other hand, most of the participants viewed this facility as lacking in terms of providing opportunities for humanities students. This seems to correspond with the view that a humanities degree possesses a low market value. Therefore, career fairs may target the greater market value subjects such as science, engineering, and business students.

4.3.4.3. Education.

Education is a crucial component for both aspiring towards a career in the labour market, as well as, the aspiration of becoming an entrepreneurship. It can be seen as a critical strategy used by students to obtain employment and complete the anticipated transition into the world of work.

> *I think the first step is studying, you know, even studying in humanities.. gaining that knowledge of understanding society and from different perspectives. [Education leads to the attainment of] expertise that you need to have (IV1).*

Society that's like after matric you have to go to varsity in order to get a job… it's difficult to find a job when you just have a matric whilst when you have a varsity degree or diploma it's , it's a bit easier to try and find a job and your chances of getting a job are much higher (IV2).

…I know in today's age you need to further your education to be somewhere, to get a good position and to have a matriculation isn't good enough these days (IV8).

In summary, all the participants emphasised the need to obtain a university degree, and this was a strategic strategy utilised in order to find employment. Possessing a tertiary education would lead to the attainment of valuable skills and would help individuals obtain an employment. The participants emphasised that due to a university education they would gain more opportunities, as opposed to individuals with only a secondary education. However, this view held by the participants may be incorrect as graduate unemployment is an issue that South Africa is currently experiencing.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the results demonstrated in the previous chapter. This chapter relates the themes obtained to previous research and to the overarching theory of Schlossberg's transition model. The framing of this chapter will be guided by Schlossberg's theory in order to answer the research questions, namely; how do exit level female students perceive their career aspirations? Secondly, regarding the anticipated transition from university to the world of work, what enablers and barriers do exit level female students anticipate in reaching their career aspirations?

5.2. Career aspirations

The following section provides the career aspirations and the work values that the participants aspired to achieve.

5.2.1. Obtaining a degree and employment.

The core theme that emerged regarding the participants career aspirations was to aspire to complete their degree and subsequently obtain full-time employment. The participants emphasised the issue of graduate unemployment, and therefore believed that they would struggle to find a job in the future. The view held by the research participants is supported by previous research in South Africa where students acknowledged that many graduates are struggling to find employment (Helyer & Lee, 2014; Maharasoa & Hay, 2001: Oluwajodu, Blaauw, Greyling, & Kleynhans, 2015). South Africa is experiencing high levels of poverty and paying for basic necessities can be a major struggle (Halman & Müller, 2006). Students do not want to become part of the poverty-stricken community and therefore their greatest concern is to obtain and secure employment (Halman & Müller, 2006).

During the interviews, several students reflected on the trajectory of their future studies and indicated that they aspired to study at a postgraduate level. The research participants highlighted the benefits of studying at a postgraduate level, they highlighted that it would make an individual more marketable which could provide career stability and greater job security. These findings are consistent with a previous study conducted in the United Kingdom, which showed that students

consider postgraduate studies to increase their skills and knowledge (Smith, 2016). This expansion of one's skills provides a pathway towards gaining a successful job and retaining that job (Smith, 2016). Many of the participants did not mention the sorts of jobs or fields they would like to work in, as they may not have been certain about their careers. Additionally, no medium or long-term career goals were reported, suggesting that the participants had not given this much thought. However, it may be suggested that the researcher did not enquire enough into this area.

5.2.2. Organisational image.

When asked about the types of organisations they would like to work for, participants mentioned organisations who are loyal to their employees, promote honesty through transparency, and high levels of consistency across the various sectors of the business. Former research has stressed that a company's image was seen to be a crucial element that impacts on whether or not prospective employees view an organisation as being attractive (Turban, 2001). If an organisation is viewed in a favourable manner, prospective employees are more likely to apply for a job at that company (Turban, 2001; Jonck et al., 2017). Turban (2001) suggests that prospective employees will avoid working for organisations that lack transparency and ethical standards. Graduates are more likely to seek and obtain employment with a company that possesses a positive image. In this current study, the participants indicated the same sentiments and stated that they aspired to work for an organisation that possessed a positive image where they value transparency and honesty.

5.2.3. Entrepreneurship.

During the interviews entrepreneurship as a career aspiration only arose when the researcher probed into this area. The participants indicated that they were open to becoming entrepreneurs in the future, nevertheless they expressed some reservations regarding this career path. Some of these reservations included risk-taking behavior, crime and the field itself being monopolised by White males.

Previous research conducted in South Africa discovered that females are less likely to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011). Furthermore, Conizares and Garcia (2010) found that a perception exists in numerous societies

that females are less entrepreneurially inclined than males. One of the reasons for this perception may be due to females wanting to focus on household responsibilities such as child rearing and are therefore less likely to participate in entrepreneurial activities (Conizares & Garcia, 2010). Conversely, the research participants within the current study present a positive outlook towards entrepreneurship and are considering this career trajectory as a long-term goal. However, several participants highlighted a few hesitations in terms of becoming an entrepreneur. Firstly, this career trajectory is seen to be dominated by White males and is therefore seen to be less beneficial for non-white individuals. In contrast, a study conducted within South Africa found that Black individuals perceive entrepreneurship as a potential career more positively than White individuals (Farrington, Gray, & Sharp, 2012). On the other hand, white individuals are seen to be more likely to start their own business ventures due to possessing the funds required (Farrington et al., 2012).

The research participants highlighted that the personality trait of being a risk taker was needed in order to become an entrepreneur. This view is supported by previous research conducted by Chell (2008) which demonstrated that in order for an individual to become an entrepreneur they need to take risks in order to succeed. In terms of the current study, the participants perceived themselves as lacking in terms of possessing this specific personality trait. An examination into this thought pattern exposed two issues, firstly, many South Africans grew up with minimal experience and knowledge about entrepreneurship, and therefore do not consider themselves to be entrepreneurially inclined (Co & Mitchell, 2006). Also, in the past, there were structural constraints against black-owned business, leading to fewer role models for this specific generation (Shane, 2008). In contrast, this view is opposed by two research studies conducted within the South African context. Firstly, a study conducted on generation Y students from two university institutions found that Millennials are entrepreneurially inclined (Koloba, 2017). Secondly, a study conducted on generation Y employees found that they value risk, and therefore do possess the appropriate characteristics for self-employment (Jonck et al., 2017).

Numerous studies have indicated that entrepreneurship could remove social ills such as poverty and unemployment within South Africa (Co & Mitchell, 2006; Koloba, 2017). Furthermore, research conducted within South Africa by Urban (2010) explored gender differences among students at 23 universities, where 28 percent of

the sample was from the humanities field. The study emphasised that students possess entrepreneurial potential, however, the researchers' acknowledged that females demonstrated lower levels compared to males. This gender perspective relating to entrepreneurship could be due to females' perceptions of entrepreneurship as male orientated and this could affect their confidence levels (Urban, 2010). However, this was not supported by the research participants who emphasised that becoming an entrepreneur was a potential long-term career. Juxtaposed to this view is the finding obtained within the current study where the issue of crime was raised and could prevent them from participating in entrepreneurial activities. The issue of crime is supported by a study conducted by Fatoki and Chindoga (2011) who found that numerous South Africans' emphasised reluctance in terms of starting business ventures due to the fear of becoming a victim of crime. Specific fears included greater overhead and risk costs in terms of replacing stolen goods and increasing security to minimize criminal activities, therefore, entrepreneurs are opening themselves up to greater risk (Cichello et al., 2006; Gough et al., 2003).

5.2.4. Work values.

Researchers have recently treated the work values of prospective employees as part of career aspirations (D' Silva & Hamid, 2014; Halman & Müller, 2006). The following section discusses the most common potential work values students aspired to gain and believed are needed within the organisation they wish to work for. The following work values were displayed: making a contribution to society, as well as, growth and development. Several participants aspired to make various contributions, namely; aspired to become a role model and speak for individuals' in need. Firstly, one of the participants highlighted that she aspired to become a role model and help those in need as she believed that psychologists tend to be White and therefore are less likely to understand the various issues, beliefs, and cultural practices needed to provide help to Black individuals. These findings are consistent with previous research by Bantjes, Kagee, and Young (2016) emphasised that many psychologists lack the ability to speak various indigenous languages of the Black majority of the South African population. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that White psychologists lack the appropriate knowledge about black communities to provide

effective assistance leading to a greater need for Black psychologists within South Africa (Ruane, 2010).

In relation to this study, the participant stated that most the South African population do not have access to psychologists or the resources to gain psychological services in times of need. These findings are consistent with previous research studies that found that numerous Black individuals within South Africa lack the access and resources to obtain psychological services (Bantjes et al., 2016; Ruane, 2010). The issues demonstrated above could be the main reason behind the research participant's aspiration to become a role model to promote psychology as a profession for Black individuals. In summary, Black psychologists are valuable within South Africa due to a greater awareness of indigenous knowledge and language and are therefore the most suitable to provide assistance to the majority of the population.

The research participants aspired to help those in need, ranging from speaking for individuals' in need, volunteering, and helping to achieve equality. Evidently, many of the research participants' displayed high levels of altruistic work values relating to a great desire to help others. The following studies provide support for the current research findings, these studies found that generation Y values the opportunity of being able to contribute to society and help others in need (Hurst & Good, 2009; Jonck et al., 2017). Contrastingly, a study conducted by Kuron et al. (2015) found that generation Y ranked altruistic work values as their lowest concern. Furthermore, the new generations are seen to be individualistic and have a greater concern for themselves (Twenge et al., 2010). However, the research participants within the current study displayed greater concern for helping others than this prior study. Given the small sample size, however, this finding cannot be generalised to other students.

An additional work value that students aspired to was the opportunity for growth and development. Previous research has demonstrated that generation Y or Millennials are demonstrating changes in the work values they aspire towards compared to those of former generations (Steyn & Kotze, 2004). The research participants within the current study valued the opportunity for growth and development. Related to this,

participants wanted support from their employers and wanted to feel valued by their organisations.

Previous studies were conducted on intrinsic and extrinsic work values, with the need for growth and development being an intrinsic value (Kuron et al., 2015). The findings regarding the work values of generation Y are mixed. Some researchers have found that generation Y generally demonstrate increased concern with gaining extrinsic work values, and a decrease in valuing of intrinsic work values (Kuron et al., 2015). In relation to the current study, the opposite occurred as the participants' displayed greater concern for intrinsic work values rather than extrinsic. The research participants favoured organisations that provide opportunities for development, growth and ensure training needs are met. This view is supported by numerous studies conducted on the new generation, specifically, generation Y have demonstrated that the need to work towards personal development through constant learning is crucial (Al-Zoubi, 2016; Kuron et al., 2015; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2007).

Research conducted within South Africa found that generation Y value generous holiday time to spend with their families due to an increase in dual-income families (Halman & Müller, 2006). The interviewee's within this study did not mention vacation time; instead, there was a larger focus on constantly developing and growing. This may be due to an unpredictable labour market and the need to constantly upskill one's self to ensure employment (Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Furthermore, generation Y value job security to sustain and provide for themselves and their families (Halman & Müller, 2006). Participants within the current study did not explicitly state that they valued job security, however, emphasised that through growth and development they would obtain increased job security. Also, the participants displayed concern about unemployment and the risks involved in entrepreneurial activity suggest that they valued job security. However, the need for job security tends to be contrary to the realities of the changing world, where it is envisaged that there will be more automation and robotics in the workplace (Frey & Osborne, 2017).

The following sections will focus specifically on applying Schlossberg's (1981, 1984) transition model to explore the various barriers and enablers utilised to achieve the

participants' career aspirations. In addition, examining the strategies utilised to cope with the anticipated transition into the world of work.

5.3. Schlossberg's 4S framework

5.3.1. Situation.

The following section provides an exploration of Schlossberg's situation element regarding the anticipated transition into the job market.

5.3.1.1. Trigger.

The following factors explore the reasons behind embarking on the anticipated transition (Peila-Shuster, 2016). These factors include the need for income, the need to obtain work experience, and the need to repay parents who have financed their children's studies.

One of the main reasons for participating in the anticipated transition into the job market was the necessity to obtain an income. Participants highlighted that living in Johannesburg is expensive and embarked upon in order to pay for necessities such as food and accommodation and therefore income is treated as a requirement. In support of the views expressed above research has demonstrated that generation Y wish to obtain a good salary or income (Kuron et al., 2015). Furthermore, Halman and Müller (2006) maintain that work is embarked on due to the maintenance of life. This is further supported by a study conducted in South Africa, that found that generation Y value financial stability and independence and therefore wish to complete the anticipated transition into the job market (Jonck et al., 2017). Furthermore, research has suggested that some students may live along individualistic lines and therefore favour independence (Kamper & Badenhorst, 2010). The majority of the participants within the current study seemed to suggest that they wish to obtain financial independence.

An additional theme that emerged was the need to gain work experience because the participants' believed that they lacked the appropriate skills. Therefore, the participants wish to move into the labour market to gain work experience. It was found that a lack of work experience can simultaneously be considered as a trigger and a perceived barrier to achieving the anticipated transition into the world of work. Research has demonstrated that obtaining work experience is vital because it

provides the students' with a basic knowledge of the working world and the types of skills that are utilised (Adams, 2014). Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) found that the skills obtained during tertiary education are different from those required in the job market. Participants within the current study stated that the skills they had obtained from a tertiary education would be different to the skills needed in the workplace. Therefore, the participants' believed that they were unaware of the skills that were needed in the workplace and obtaining work experience would be an asset in obtaining the required organisational skills.

Lastly, one of the participants highlighted that she embarked on the anticipated transition in order to pay back her parents who had supported her financially during her studies. This reciprocal support system maintained by the participant is supported by a study conducted by Kamper and Badenhorst (2010) that found that black children grow up within a collectivistic culture and are taught to think about supporting one's family once they start earning an income (Kamper & Badenhorst, 2010). Students may wish to be financially independent, but could also be facing situations where they need to pay families back for their studies or support their family members financially. A recent newspaper article demonstrated that students possess high levels of debt because of applying for various loans in order to pay for their university fees, but are unable to pay for the loan and the interest that is attached to that loan (Motsai, 2018). Students are falling deeper into debt as a means to gain an education (Motsai, 2018).

5.3.1.2. Timing.

Research has demonstrated that when students enter their third year of studies they begin to plan for the following year and decide if employment is the next step (Lane, 2016). The participants' within the current study seemed to believe that the timing of the anticipated transition was the next logical progression within their lives. However, the timing of the anticipated transition may be negatively affected due to the various barriers that one could experience.

5.3.1.3. Level of control.

In relation to this study, the participants' did not state that their parents were forcing them to gain employment and emphasised that they decided to move into the world

of work due to wanting more control within their own lives such as gaining financial independence. This corresponds with a previous study conducted by DeVilbiss (2014) that found that most students valued possessing control over their lives, which was obtained through independence and the ability to make their own choices.

5.3.1.4. Role change.

The research participants indicated that the movement from the university environment into the world of work would bring about a change in roles. Participants' indicated that entering into the work environment would result in less structure compared to the university environment. This is consistent with prior research, which found that during the anticipated transition role changes would take place and elicit stress due to the movement into an unfamiliar environment (Lenz, 2001).

The research participants indicated that the movement from the university environment into the world of work would bring about a change in roles. Participants indicated that entering into the work environment would result in less structure compared to the university environment. This is consistent with prior research, which found that during the anticipated transition role changes would take place and elicit stress due to the movement into an unfamiliar environment (Lenz, 2001).

One of the large demarcations of this anticipated transition into the world of work is the change of roles, students are moving away from the delights of the university that is marked by freedom and experimentation with minimal consequences (Le Maistre & Paré, 2004; Polach, 2004). However, within the South African context this may not be the reality of student life. Many students have to take out loans in order to pay for their fees and then pay back the loans that develop interest every year (Motsai, 2018). In addition, South Africa has a very high level of poverty that affects many university students and their families (Van der Berg & Van Broekhuizen, 2012). This issue of poverty can negatively affect students as they are often concerned about how they are going to pay for their university fees, as well as the necessities to survive (Halman & Müller, 2006).

5.3.1.5. Previous experience.

During the interviews, a few of the participants' made a comparison between a previous transition and the currently anticipated transition. The participants' indicated

the movement into the labour market would be more difficult compared to the movement from secondary education into tertiary education. A few participants' stressed feeling intimidated due to the radical changes that would occur once they entered the workplace. Former studies have demonstrated that the transition into the workplace is a drastic change (Hettich & Landrum, 2013; Le Maistre & Paré, 2004). In addition, this transition into the labour market is a more complex process than the transition from secondary education into tertiary education (Hettich & Landrum, 2013).

5.3.1.6. Concurrent stress.

This section examines the barriers that may plague students during their anticipated transition into the job market, and may potentially prevent the success of the transition. The two most common stressors are graduate unemployment, which leads to uncertainty. In addition, the participants also indicated various barriers such as financial problems, confusion, exam and workload stress.

South Africa is currently experiencing high levels of unemployment among graduates (Helyer & Lee, 2014; Kamper & Badenhorst, 2010). Research conducted in South Africa found that due to the economic instability within the country various negative feelings emerge, such as feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and a decrease in one's confidence levels (Maree, 2013). In terms of the current study, the research participants emphasised high levels of uncertainty, which directly had a negative impact on the students' confidence levels and self-belief, which may prevent or delay the students from completing the anticipated transition. The current study is further supported by a study conducted in China found that 70 percent of their sample showed that due to the unreliable economic environment they were uncertain about obtaining a job and the career trajectory for the future (Sun & Wang, 2009).

In addition, various concurrent stressors arose during the interviews namely financial issues, exams, and workload stress. In terms of exam stress and workload, previous research conducted by Seabi, Seedat, Khoze-Shangase, and Sullivan (2014) found that students from psychology, social work and speech audiology and pathology emphasised that they struggled with the volume of work, as they have to complete two or more modules at the same time. This means multiple assignments and exams for each of those subjects (Seabi et al., 2014). Participants within the current study

expressed the same sentiments and highlighted that they struggled to focus on obtaining employment due to increased concentration on upcoming assignments and exams that were imminently approaching. In summary, there is a link between the perceived barriers and the strategies that the students adopt in order to find work, in that the workload for their studies prevented them from starting to search for jobs.

An additional concurrent stressor that was perceived as a major barrier was the tertiary institution. The barriers that were expressed were a lack of opportunities for students studying within the humanities field, specifically within the psychological domain. This view held by the participants is supported by previous studies, particularly within the humanities field. Through in-depth exploration, a study conducted by Maharasoa and Hay (2001) found that the humanities field of study seems to be one of the most popular study areas, particularly psychology courses. In spite of this, obtaining a humanities degree is comprehended as possessing a very low market value (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001). Furthermore, prior research has revealed that females are more likely to study within the humanities field, adding to the issue of female unemployment (Almquist & Angrist, 1971).

Likewise, a study has shown that obtaining a psychology degree resulted in lower salaries as opposed to students who have studied within the finance and science fields (Rajecki & Borden, 2011). Similarly, participants in the current study emphasised that as humanities students there are minimal job opportunities available for them. However, in order to practice as a psychologist in South Africa, a bachelor's degree is inadequate, and further education and other professional training is required (Cornell, 2012). Many undergraduate students may not be fully aware of this reality when they apply for a degree in the faculty of humanities (Cornell, 2012). Students might choose to study psychology in the mistaken belief that a major in psychology will benefit them in finding a job, and the reality may not match this belief.

5.3.1.7. Appraisal.

The research participants demonstrated deep reflection on the anticipated transition out of the university environment and into the world of work. This deeper reflection process was observed under Schlossberg's appraisal theme, which focuses on how individuals perceive or view the anticipated transition (Anderson et al., 2012).

One of the key findings of the current study was the manner in which the anticipated transition was regarded in both a negative and positive manner. The positive appraisal involved excitement due to the benefits associated with completing the transition. The student's excitement could be due to a movement into financial independence, and this movement into the world of work was seen to be a normative trend based on their age. This view is supported by a study conducted by Buhl (2007) that the movement into the labour market demonstrates a "normative biographical transition" (p.551) and is marked by economic and psychological independence from their parents. The current study supports the previous research highlighting the excitement to obtain independence, both socially and financially. This was discussed in great detail under the trigger factor (5.3.1.1.), however, it directly impacts on the manner in which the students' assess the situation.

Overall, Schlossberg's 4'S overlap each other, the various factors are intertwined, and there is a need to understand the multiple factors and how they work together. For example, the concurrent stressors discussed above affected the way the participants' assessed the anticipated transition into the job market. The concurrent stressors such as graduate unemployment, uncertainty in the job market, exam and workload stress, and the lack of opportunities for psychology students made the participants feel that they were insufficiently prepared for the transition.

It is important to note that this study chose to exclude the duration factor as it was unclear when the anticipated transition would be complete and this would also involve a follow interview to establish whether or not the participants obtained employment.

5.3.2. Self.

The following section refers to the elements the individual brings into the anticipated transition (Anderson et al., 2012). These elements include various strengths such as a positive self-belief about oneself. The weaknesses include aspects such as gender, which could be seen as a barrier during the anticipated transition into the world of work.

5.3.2.1. Coping assets, psychological resources and self-efficacy.

Lazarus and Folkman (1987) wrote about transitions and stated that the manner in which an individual perceives and understands the anticipated transition will determine the level to which the individual cope's with that transition. A positive self-belief is crucial in understanding how students cope with the anticipated transition (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010). This is related to the theory termed as cognitive resources that refers to the level of positive self-belief and demonstrating an optimistic manner (Coetzee & Esterhuizen, 2010). In the current study, the research participants demonstrated positive self- beliefs about themselves in order to cope and succeed with the anticipated transition into the world of work. However, the participants' also explained that the university did not prepare them adequately for the workplace. Therefore, the participants' demonstrated mixed feelings regarding their capabilities and skills.

Four out of the eight participants' highlighted possessing good teamwork skills such as being able to work with others and engage with various people with different backgrounds and opinions. Within the working world, interpersonal skills such as teamwork skills and the ability to communicate with others are considered to be a crucial employability factor and are seen to be a valued skill in the workplace (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013). Based on these findings, the research participants believe that they possess good team working skills that are valued by many organisations and this may benefit them in gaining employment. In summary, these positive self-beliefs may facilitate or contribute towards coping with the anticipated transition into the world of work.

5.3.2.2. Gender.

One of the barriers presented relates to Schlossberg's transitional theory, namely the self (Peila-Shuster, 2016; Schlossberg, 2011). Research participants reflected on the personal characteristics with which they were born with, such as their gender and race, and how these characteristics affect the anticipated transition from university into employment. Even though only a few participants' mentioned race and gender as a barrier, it is an important factor specifically within the South African context. Research conducted by Banerjee et al. (2008) highlighted that females are still being treated unequally in the workplace and are prone to receiving a lower income compared to male employees. This view was supported by one of the participants'

who indicated that she believed gender inequality does still exist and it involves subtle strategies such as manipulating income ratios along gender lines.

Furthermore, a participant raised the issue of organisations being masculine and if they wish to succeed in the anticipated transition they need to adopt these masculine traits. Previous research has demonstrated that the above is true that organisations operate along masculine lines such as being competitive, aggressive and tough (Bierema, 2009). In summary, gender could be a perceived barrier that inhibits students' from coping and achieving the anticipated transition.

5.3.2.3. Age.

Neubert and Leconte (2013) speak about age-appropriate transitions, and the participants' believe that this anticipated transition into the world of work is an age-appropriate transition.

5.3.3. Support.

Research has demonstrated that the manner in which people respond to the anticipated transition will depend heavily on the support structures that are available and utilised by those experiencing the anticipated transition (Pendleton, 2007). This discussion is framed according to Schlossberg's transition elements of support, namely the family unit, a network of friends, and institutional support.

5.3.3.1. Family unit.

One of the key findings that were highlighted by all the participants was that of support. Throughout every interview the participants emphasised that they rely on their family for either emotional or financial support, or both of these factors. In terms of financial support, students emphasised that their parents paid for their university education. The current sample was predominantly Black, but this parental financial support may not be experienced by the majority of the students at the university. Many students within the institution receive funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in order to pay for their university fees. However, it is likely that students still require additional support for their other financial needs, and usually rely on their parents for this.

Additionally, the participants highlighted that they obtained emotional support from family through words of encouragement. In support of these findings, previous research has demonstrated that students rely on their families for both psychological support and emotional support (Almquist & Angrist, 1971). A study conducted by Touré-Tillery and Fishbach (2014) found that parents are crucial elements to help students cope with various barriers by providing resources and opportunities. Additionally, parents are understood to provide encouragement and reinforcement (Almquist & Angrist, 1971; Farmer, 1985; Uka, 2015). This previous research is supported by the current findings, it was found that parents provide resources such as finances, encouragement and emotional support to help them cope with the anticipated transition into the world of work. In summary, students' rely on their families for emotional and other forms of support, and that they still play an important role in the students development and success at university, and probably in the transition to work.

5.3.3.2. Network of friends.

All the participants highlighted that they rely heavily on their friends and in a few cases were sources of encouragement during times of difficulty. This view is consistent with the research conducted by Padilla-Carmona and Martinez- Garcia (2013) who found that friends provide support and encouragement as they could be experiencing similar difficulties. Research has demonstrated the various benefits of peer-to-peer support such as the opportunity to learn from each other and increased networking with others (Jones et al., 2012). In relation to the current study, the participants did not view their friends as an opportunity to learn from them or a possibility for networking. Instead, the research participants highlighted that their friends acted as motivators who encouraged them to persevere during times of hardships. Two of the research participants highlighted that observing friends succeed in the working world was also a source of support and motivation. A study conducted by Metheny and McWhirter (2013) highlighted the importance of observational support. Students observed their parents or friends succeeding in the business world, which then acts as a coping mechanism and motivates the students to complete the anticipated transition into the job market.

5.3.3.3. Institutions.

Recently, research has investigated the role of higher education institutions in terms of helping their students obtain employment opportunities (Maharasoa & Hay, 2001; Monk, Foote, & Schlemper, 2012). Higher education institutions should provide students with job-related knowledge and skills that are required in the workplace (Little, 2001). However, the research participants indicated barriers relating to the university. This lead to the formation of a new theme that focused on the need for greater support from the university in terms of helping to find and secure employment, greater opportunities within the psychology field, and greater implementation of practical skills. However, there was also a plea for government intervention to eradicate high graduate unemployment rates.

In relation to the current study, the research participants highlighted that the university lacked in terms of providing job-related skills and lacked in terms of providing the practical application of the knowledge obtained during their studies. These sentiments are supported by previous studies, specifically, a study conducted by Maharasoa and Hay (2001) found that students stressed that universities play a large role by providing “stronger linkages between universities and the world of work” (p.145). Furthermore, Brewer (2009) found that students stressed that they needed the university to play a greater role by providing them with relevant information regarding the job market, as well as, stressed the need for greater opportunities to develop various skills that are considered to be useful in the workplace. The current study, the participants possessed the same sentiments of providing the appropriate marketable skills and changing the courses to allow for this to take place. It is clear from both the prior literature and this current study that greater support needs to be provided to the students.

As discussed earlier under the barrier section, studying within the humanities field impacts negatively on students obtaining employment, as well as, a good salary (Yu & Pillay, 2011). Greater support needs to be provided by the university institution and government to promote the values of studying within the humanities field, specifically psychology as it is seen to be highly beneficial in the workplace (Yu & Pillay, 2011).

In conclusion, these support structures are seen as enablers during the anticipated transition that would help exit level female students reach their career aspirations. In addition a plea was made for greater support from tertiary institutions during the

anticipated transition. The following theme will focus on the strategies exit level female students intended to use to cope and successfully complete the anticipated transition into the world of work.

In conclusion, these support structures are seen as enablers during the anticipated transition that would help exit level female students reach their career aspirations. In addition, a plea was made for greater support from tertiary institutions during the anticipated transition. The following theme will focus on the strategies exit level female students intended to be used to cope and successfully complete the anticipated transition into the world of work.

5.3.4. Strategies.

Numerous studies have indicated that historically finding employment involved adopting traditional approaches such as employment agencies and newspaper advertisements (Shahiri & Osman, 2015; Van Hoye et al., 2009). Currently, the working world and the labour market is changing due to technological advances resulting in organisations relying on the internet to advertise occupational positions that are available (Fountain, 2005; Shahiri & Osman, 2015). Fountain (2005) stated that both prospective employees and organisations are relying on the internet to both provide job opportunities, and the pertinent information such as a student's resume demonstrating their skills and the value that they could add to a prospective employer. This reliance on the internet was furthered by Chiwara, Chinyamurindi, and Mjoli (2017) who stated that within the South African context, many organisations are establishing the cost effective benefit of relying on the internet as a recruitment tool. Researchers have emphasised that due to the organisational sphere being highly connected to the internet realm that seeking employment through the internet is a realistic decision (Shahiri & Osman, 2015). In terms of the current study, the view above was supported by participant one who indicated that the internet plays a major role in obtaining employment within South Africa and believes that the world operates within a technological realm and therefore would make use of the internet in order to gain employment. The research participants' are considered to be one of the new generations entering the job market, and is seen to be born into an era that values technology, therefore it seems appropriate to obtain employment through technological activities that they have grown up with and rely on for various entities (Reis & Braga, 2016).

Research has demonstrated that students within South Africa experience issues of internet connectivity and the high prices of data inhibits students from finding employment (Chiwara et al., 2017). However, this issue was not mentioned by any of the participants as this may not have been an issue at the time the interviews were being conducted. Most of the research participants indicated that they had not started looking for jobs at the time of the interviews. The following demonstrates the major themes that emerged in terms of the strategies that would be used to achieve the anticipated transition into the world of work.

5.3.4.1. Networking.

Networking was the most prominent theme that emerged as all eight participants regarded networking to be a crucial strategy during the anticipated transition, and could ultimately be utilised in order to transition into the labour market. The participants relied on various entities for networking ranging from their parents, siblings and online platforms such as LinkedIn. Generation Y has adopted the saying “it’s not what you know, but who you know that makes the difference” (Peterson & Dover, 2014, p.15). The research participants in this current study highlighted the same sentiments, they highlighted a reliance on networking with others in order to find employment and obtain a successful transition into the job market. Students have chosen to use this method in order to obtain career advice, information about job opportunities, and lastly the opportunity to complete the anticipated transition by obtaining employment (Marmaros & Sacerdote, 2002). Research has demonstrated that networking is an informal strategy, and based on a study conducted in Spain university students prefer using informal strategies to obtain employment (Villa et al., 2000). The current study shows that students rely heavily on informal job searching strategies.

A study conducted in America suggested that female students tend to avoid using networking strategies (Knouse & Webb, 2001). It is believed that men, specifically white males possess larger networking systems than females' and therefore struggle to find employment using this approach (Knouse & Webb, 2001). However, this issue is not explicitly explored in the current research, the participants seem to believe that networking is highly valuable for them and some indicated that they have obtained job offers through this approach. Furthermore, a study conducted by Peterson and

Dover (2014) highlighted that networking results in job attainment, they found that "60 percent of the people surveyed said they obtained their last job by networking" (p.15).

5.3.4.2. Career fairs.

Numerous universities highlight that they offer career fairs and facilities to help their students cope during the anticipated transition into the labour market ranging from career advice, resume or curriculum vitae workshops, and interviewing skills workshops (Fouad et al., 2006). However, the participants showed divided opinions regarding the benefits of career fairs which ultimately displays a bleak picture of these facilities. The majority of the research participants highlighted that the career fairs were not beneficial, but a few mentioned seeing organisations' names and then going to find out more about them via the internet.

Numerous universities have indicated that they provide career fairs for their students and they widely advertise this event to attract as many students as possible (Baldry, 2016; Fouad et al., 2006). However, research has demonstrated that students do not make use of these career fairs and in some cases are unaware that the university is offering this opportunity to network with various companies (Brewer, 2009). Within the current study students are aware of the career fairs, but choose not to attend due to the lack of job opportunities available for psychology students. This lack of jobs that pertain to the participants' field of study may reflect the reality of the job market.

5.3.4.3. Education.

Four out of the eight participants highlighted that obtaining a university degree would be an asset in terms of coping and succeeding in achieving the anticipated transition into the world of work. Research conducted in South Africa by Archer and Chetty (2013) found that obtaining a tertiary education is beneficial in terms of increasing one's chances of gaining employment. This view is supported by the current research participants who perceived that tertiary education would lead to greater employment opportunities.

Participants perceived that there were fewer job opportunities for people who had only completed secondary education than those with a tertiary education. This view is supported by a substantial amount of research examining the reasons behind

individuals attending university. These studies found that obtaining a tertiary degree offered individuals greater opportunities in obtaining employment (Abrahams et al., 2015; Schomburg, 2007). Students believe that obtaining a university degree is the key to being marketable in the changing and inconsistent labour market (Yu & Pillay, 2011). Similarly, South African students indicated that they entered into university as a means of gaining employment (Abrahams et al., 2015). Additionally, it is important to note that students tend to possess the perception that obtaining a degree will result in increased salary increments (Tomlinson, 2008). In contrast, the participants within the current study did not believe that obtaining a degree would result in higher salary earnings than individuals' who do not possess a degree but did believe that it would lead to greater employment opportunities.

5.4. Conclusion

This discussion has demonstrated the benefits of utilising Schlossberg's Transition theory to understand the career aspirations of exit level female students and the barriers and enablers implemented during the anticipated transition into the world of work. By utilising Schlossberg's model it provided an adequate theoretical framework for the particular anticipated transition examined in this study. It was found that participants' experienced numerous barriers, but also emphasised that they possessed support from their families and friends who currently are helping and possibly continue helping in the future. As a whole, understanding the needs of the participants, and areas where greater support is needed to allow for the institution, career counsellors, and government to implement strategies and policies to help ensure the success of the anticipated transition into the world of work.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on concluding the research project by demonstrating the key findings that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. Additionally, this chapter aims to provide the limitations of the study and the recommendations for further research. Furthermore, the implications for higher education institutions and government will be provided.

6.2. Synthesis of findings

The aim of the study was to explore exit level female students' career aspirations, and the strategies utilised to achieve those aspirations. The research sample has reached an appropriate age where they are considering a move into the world of work. To understand this complex process the current study utilised Schlossberg's transition theory to allow for in-depth exploration into the anticipated transition into the job market, as they have not yet transitioned.

A qualitative research design was implemented which provided insight into the research topic, and the central findings are demonstrated below. Exit level female students' highlighted that due to the unstable economy they aspired towards completing their degree and ultimately aspired towards obtaining employment. In addition, the participants aspired to continue their studies in the future as it would lead to increased marketability in the labour market. The participants also aspired to obtaining various work values such as growth and development, and working for an organisation that possessed a positive image. During the interviews, the researcher probed into entrepreneurship as a career aspiration and found that the participants' spoke about entrepreneurs possessing specific personality traits and tended to distance themselves from these traits. However, the participants' acknowledged that maybe becoming an entrepreneur could be a potential long-term career aspiration.

The following section focuses on the application of Schlossberg's Transition theory to help understand the anticipated transition into the world of work. Schlossberg's theory focused on four elements, namely; the situation, the self, support and the strategies utilised to understand and cope with the anticipated transition (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984).

6.2.1. The 'situation' factor.

Firstly, the participants emphasised that that main trigger for taking part in the anticipated transition into the world of work was due to the need for income and independence. Various themes also emerged related to the triggering of the anticipated transition, such as the need to obtain work experience and the opportunity to give back to one's parents. The next aspect examined role change and only two participants' reflected on the movement into an uncertain environment. In addition, the participants reflected on previous experiences of transitions and a few indicated that their movement from school into the university was difficult, but this process of moving into the world of work was classified as being a greater challenge than previous transitions. The research participants' showed mixed feelings regarding the anticipated transition due to various concurrent stressors such as financial issues, exam and coursework stress and a lack of institutional support in providing employment information, and a lack of employment opportunities for the humanities students. In addition, the participants assessed the transition in a negative manner due to the high levels of graduate unemployment. The concurrent stressors and a negative appraisal could be classified as a barrier in terms of coping and completing the movement into the job market. However, the participants also possessed positive feelings due to the benefits attached to completing the anticipated transition.

6.2.2. The 'self' factor.

This factor examined the strengths and weaknesses that the participants believed they possessed which either inhibited or assisted them in terms of coping with the anticipated transition into the labour market. Most of the participants possessed a positive self-belief, and believed that they possessed the skills needed to cope and complete the anticipated transition. Positive self-beliefs are seen as an enabler to help students cope and complete the movement into the labour market. However, the participants also reflected on the weaknesses that they possessed. One of the main weaknesses was a lack of confidence, which arose due to a lack of work experience. Furthermore, a few of the participants' emphasised that being a female was seen to be a weakness due to the belief that the working world is dominated by males, and therefore being a female would result in unequal treatment in order to

continue with this trend. These weaknesses were considered to be one of the barriers that students face during the anticipated transition.

6.2.3. The 'support' factor.

This factor examined the various types of support structures that the students rely on in order to cope with the anticipated transition. The various types of support were from family, friends, and the institution. The greatest support structure that was utilised was the family unit who provide both financial and emotional support during the anticipated transition. In addition, friendship groups were also considered as a crucial support system as they are experiencing the same anticipated transition into the labour market. These support structures are enablers during the anticipated transition in order to cope and move into the labour market. However, the research participants also indicated that additional support was needed in order to cope with the anticipated transition. Additional support from the university institution was emphasised such as providing practical application of the knowledge obtained, and greater opportunities to network with potential employers was mentioned as this would help students cope during the anticipated transition.

6.2.4. The 'strategies' factor.

The last factor examined the strategies utilised in order to cope with the anticipated transition, such as the implementation of certain job searching strategies. The most common theme that emerged was networking with others via LinkedIn and networking with family and friends. In addition, the research participants indicated that obtaining a tertiary education was a major strategy to achieve transitional success, as the research participants believed that obtaining a university degree made individuals' more employable. These strategies were implemented as a means of enabling the students to move into the world of work.

6.3. Limitations of the study

This research has several limitations ranging from the sample obtained and sample size, the researcher's involvement. One of the limitations of the current study was the implementation of a qualitative research design in that it is limited in making generalised claims to the wider population being studied (Atieno, 2009). The aim was to identify similar contexts to which the findings might apply, qualitative research

is very beneficial for examining human beings' feelings and experiences. The findings might apply to other university contexts and particularly the perceived barriers might be similar to other female students in the various faculties.

Due to time constraints and a lack of responses from prospective participants' the study obtained a small sample size. However, a qualitative research design is celebrated for possessing a small amount of research participants (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). It allows in-depth knowledge to be obtained regarding the participants' feelings and perceptions (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). In order to gain this in-depth knowledge semi-structured interviews were utilised. However, due to the face-to-face interaction during the semi-structured interviews anonymity could not be achieved which may have led the participants to respond in a manner that corresponds to social norms, and may not be reflective of their true feelings or perceptions (Bowling, 2005). However, the researcher tried to ensure social desirability bias did not occur by creating a comfortable interview environment and ensure confidentiality.

Furthermore, the sample obtained was limited to the University of the Witwatersrand, specifically studying psychology within the humanities field. Furthermore, all participants stated that their parents paid for their tertiary education, which may not be reflective of the greater student population at the university. Additionally, the current study is unable to generalise towards students who are supported financially by the institution or other methods of financial support as their experiences may be different to those experienced in this study. In conclusion, due to this specific sample composition it may be suggested that their experiences and feelings about the anticipated transition into the job market may not be reflective of all students at the university and other universities in South Africa.

Lastly, the researcher acknowledged that she herself can be considered as one of the limitations of the current study. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher was involved in every phase of the research from obtaining the sample, conducting the interview, transcribing, and interpreting the data to represent the findings. This process is open to bias because of the subjective nature of a qualitative approach. The researcher was aware of her own ideologies, current situation in that she was also anticipating a transition into the world of work. The

interpretation could be biased by the researcher's own situation and characteristics as she expressed the same anxiety and worry in terms of gaining employment and felt empathetic towards the participants. Many of the participants emphasised low levels of self-confidence and displayed unhappy facial emotions, which then elicited emotions within myself, as I too was experiencing similar feelings. Due to this link between the participants and myself, I struggled to remain neutral. In addition, research topic had a specific focus and due to asking open-ended questions, the participants tended to deviate from the questions and thus the researcher had to ask more leading questions and probe into specific areas to answer the research questions. This could potentially be problematic as students might answer on the spot and which may not reflect their true feelings or opinions. In order to avoid bias and remain true to the study, the researcher demonstrated numerous and exhaustive direct quotes to reflect the true nature of the results obtained.

6.4. Implications for higher education and government

Utilising Schlossberg's Transition theory has provided valuable insight into the barriers that exit level female students face during the anticipated transition into the world of work. These barriers provide a way forward to implement interventions and support structures to help them overcome these barriers to allow for completion of the anticipated transition.

Yu and Pillay (2011) stated that psychology has many benefits in the workplace and emphasised that there is value in studying within the humanities field. However, there may be limited jobs within this field, yet students continue to study within the humanities field. Therefore, a suggestion could be made to further educate students regarding the various degree options such as what occupations are available and the duration of study involved to become qualified in a specific field. Many of the research participants indicated that their courses were broad and the participants lacked the knowledge surrounding the various employment opportunities available to them. Students felt that the career fairs focused on the accounting and science student and thus neglected the humanities fields. The research participants believed that the career fairs catered less for those studying within the humanities faculty. Even though there seems to be relatively few companies that employ people with a

Bachelor of Arts degree students due to the “declining value of [a] humanities education” (Yu & Pillay, 2011, p.1219).

Yu and Pillay (2011) stated that the reduction in employment opportunities is due to a lack of marketing about the benefits of employing students with a humanities degree. The university could provide humanities students’ the opportunity to meet prospective employer and encourage students to do part-time work for various companies to demonstrate their capabilities and skills that they can offer from a humanities field.

One of the main barriers was unemployment and therefore greater effort and intervention is needed by government to try eradicate the high levels of graduate unemployment. Perhaps the government and universities should encourage students to think about becoming an entrepreneur and provide them with the information and assistance to become entrepreneurially orientated. This will also demonstrate to the youth that you do not need to be male in order to be an entrepreneur and that there is support structures from government and the university to rely on. In addition, the university should introduce compulsory courses in order to promote entrepreneurship as a future career. The courses might help reduce the students anxiety around what an entrepreneurship entails and how they can go about becoming entrepreneurs. Greater effort needs to be undertaken in order to create a positive image regarding entrepreneurship as a career path. Students need to unlearn the notion that being an entrepreneur is a male a career (Mann & DiPrete, 2013; Ransom, 1990). Ultimately, these interventions above may close the gap of graduate unemployment, and result in greater entrepreneurial activities that could boost the economy and create more employment opportunities.

The research participants indicated that there was a lack of practical application and therefore were unaware of the skills needed in the job market. Greater encouragement should be provided to students regarding the benefits of participating in part-time work or job shadowing opportunities relating to the students field of study. In addition, there needs to be a greater relationship between the university and prospective employers to establish what skills graduates lack in order for universities to foster the appropriate skills.

6.5. Recommendations for future research

Various debates continue to dominant the current literature regarding the pros and cons of utilising a qualitative research design. To overcome the debated shortfalls of the design utilised in this study future research should either conduct a quantitative study or implement a mixed methods design. In terms of the small sample size obtained during this study, future research should focus on obtaining a larger sample to gain more information regarding the research topic.

Future research should expand beyond the humanities field and compare exit level female career aspirations and the strategies used to achieve those aspirations. Future research should establish if there are differences between males and females career aspirations within the South African context. Additionally, the research participants believed that the career fairs were less beneficial for the humanities students, and therefore future research should evaluate the success of career fairs in terms of aspects such as; informing students about possible job opportunities and whether students obtain employment utilising career fairs.

In addition, future research should examine the numerous support structures that students utilise during the anticipated transition to see if they differ across the various faculties. In terms of the current study the research participants stated that their studies were funded by their parents, and the support structures may be different for students who are not funded by their parents. Therefore, future research should examine students personal and financial circumstances, which could affect the types of support structures that are utilised.

6.6. Conclusion

In conclusion, utilising Schlossberg's Transition theory as an overarching model has allowed the researcher to answer the research questions. Many students enter tertiary education with the view that this is the only path to gain employment. However, current research has demonstrated that graduate unemployment levels are high and continues to increase (StatsSA, 2016). The research participants demonstrated awareness regarding the unstable job market and therefore unemployment was viewed as a barrier in terms of coping and completing the anticipated transition. In addition, various barriers were highlighted such as concurrent stressors and a negative appraisal of the anticipated transition due to the lack of work experience. Contrastingly, positive feelings were also experienced due

to high levels of excitement and the potential benefits such as obtaining income and independence that would be achieved when the anticipated transition was complete. In summary, through utilising Schlossberg's Transition theory, it was found that participants experience mixed feelings regarding the anticipated transition and therefore relied on various support structures such as family and friends. Additionally, the participants relied heavily on networking with others to enable them to cope and succeed with the anticipated transition into the world of work.

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Appendix A: Interview schedule

Introduction: Thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. As mentioned in the participant information sheet the purpose of this study is to examine the career aspirations of final year female students who are hoping to enter the world of work next year. This interview is expected to last between half an hour and an hour. Please answer as openly as possible, and ask questions if you do not understand.

Section A: Career aspirations

1.) What are your hopes and dreams for next year?
2.) What do you like about those hopes and dreams?

Probe areas: what sort of work participant wants to do, does this include entrepreneurship.
what participant would value in a job/self-employment,
what sort of organization participant would like to work in and why,
what sort of lifestyle participant would like to have.
Also, life events such as marriage or children).

2.) How realistic do you think your hopes and dreams are?
3.) Do you have any goals next year? Or, what do you want to achieve next year? Please could you tell me about this/these?
4.) What do you think you will need to be able to achieve your goals (or dreams, if no goals have been set)? (probe for factors in the situation, environment, support structures, self).
5.) To what extent do you think you already have these resources?
6.) How will you get the resources that you don't yet have?
7.) What obstacles do you think you will encounter in reaching your goals (dreams)? (probe for factors in the situation, environment, support structures, self)
8.) If you cannot meet your goals, what will you do?

Section B: Transition from university to world of work

In order to move into the next question, the researcher will state the following: Some people regard the move from university to the workplace as a key transition in life.

9.) In what ways do you feel prepared to enter the world of work? And less prepared?

Section C: Strategies

10.) We've spoken about your dreams and what you hope to achieve next year. Let's focus now on how you are going about achieving your goals/dreams for next year.

11.) Have you taken any steps yet towards [insert goals]. Yes/No. if yes: Please can you tell me about these? If no: how do you think you will go about [insert goal]?

12.) What other things do you think you will need to do in order to achieve [insert goal].

13.) When do you think you will need to start doing these things?

Questions regarding job search strategies:

Probing questions:

Have you started looking for a job? (If not, when do you plan to start looking?)
How have you gone about looking for a job?
What do you feel is the most effective way to look for a job?

Questions regarding preparation:

What do you feel you have done so far in order to be prepared?
What do you still think you have to do to gain a job?

14.) How do you think universities should assist students in making the transition from university to the workplace?

15.) Is there anything you would like to add?

Thank you for participating. Please contact me if you have any concerns, or wish to receive feedback about the study.

Appendix B: Demographic questionnaire

Dear
Participant,

The following information is required for descriptive purposes only.

Age: _____

Gender: Male Female

Race: Asian Black Coloured

Indian White Other: _____

Home Language: _____

If you are currently a student:

University Name: _____

Year Level: _____

Area of study: _____

Appendix C: Participant Information sheet

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Hello

My name is Kirstie Meehan and I am a student registered for the degree of Masters in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for my degree, I am required to conduct a research project. My research focuses on the career aspirations of final year female students who are hoping to enter the world of work next year. It also explores how these students intend to reach their career strategies.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project, If you are currently a final year female student completing a BA and are planning to move into the world of work next year. Participation will involve being interviewed by me at time and place that is convenient to both of us. The interview is expected to last between half an hour and an hour, and will be audio-taped with your consent. You can also choose to answer or not answer any specific questions asked during the interview, or to withdraw from the interview process if you wish to do so. Participation in this research is completely voluntary and you will not be disadvantaged in any way by choosing not to participate. If you choose to participate, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Although your identity will be known to me as the interviewer, I will not disclose your identity to anyone else in the interview transcripts, research report and any publications or presentations that refer to this study, I will use pseudonyms instead of your real name. Although these publications could include direct quotes from the interview, your real name will not be used in any documents or presentations. My supervisor (Prof. Fiona Donald) and I will be the only ones that will have access to the audio-recording of the interviews, and these will be kept securely in a location with limited access (either a locked cupboard or a password-protected computer). Once the research and any subsequent publications are complete, the original recording will be destroyed.

An executive summary of the study findings will be provided to you upon request. You may email me if you would like to receive this – contact details appear below. The feedback sheet will include information on job searching strategies and will be made available around November.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please contact the researcher via email. Before beginning the interview, please read and sign the two consent forms provided. Please also detach and keep this participation information sheet.

Thank you for considering participation in this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Kirstie Meehan
Meehankirstie@gmail.com

Prof. Fiona Donald
Fiona.Donald@wits.ac.za

Appendix D: Consent form for interview

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tell: 011 717 4503 Fax:011 717 4559

I, _____

(full name /s and surname of the potential participant)

Do hereby consent to be interview by Kirstie Meehan as part of the research project supervised by Mrs Fiona Donald regarding anticipated transition of exit level female students: Career aspirations and attainment strategies.

I understand that (please tick each condition in the box provided to indicate agreement):

	My participation in this study is completely voluntary and I will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way by choosing to participate or not
	I may elect to not answer any specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so.
	There are no foreseeable risks or benefits associated with participation in this study
	My identity will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that may directly identify me will be removed from the interview transcript.
	A copy of my interview transcript with all information that may directly identify removed will be stored permanently and may be used for future research.
	I understand that I will be asked for permission to audio-record my interview as per the conditions outlined in the separate consent for recording form

I do hereby consent to be interview for the research project

Yes	**No**

Signed: _____ (Signature of participant)

Date: _____

Appendix E: Consent form for recording interview

Psychology

School of Human & Community Development

University of the Witwatersrand

Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050

Tell: 011 717 4503 Fax:011 717 4559

I, _____

(Full name/s and surname of the potential participant)

Do hereby consent for my interview conducted by Kirstie Meehan as part of the research project supervised by Mrs Fiona Donald regarding anticipated transition of exit level female students: Career aspirations and attainment strategies to be **audio-recorded.**

I understand that (please tick each condition in the box provided to indicate agreement):

	The recording will be stored in a secure location with restricted access (either a locked cupboard or password-protected computer) and will only be accessible to Kirstie Meehan and my supervisor, Fiona Donald.
	The recording will be transcribed and any information that could directly identify me will be removed.
	Once analysis of the data and write-up is complete, the audio-recording of the interview will be destroyed. The transcript with all the information that could directly identify me removed will be stored permanently and may be used for future research.
	Direct quotes from my interview (with any information that could directly identify me removed) may be cited in the research report or other write-ups of the research.

I do hereby consent to be interviewed for the research project and for my interview to be recorded:

Yes	**No**

Signed: _____ (Signature of participant)

Date: _____