

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF INDIGENT
CULTURALLY DIVERSE URBAN ADOLESCENTS.

DEBRA LORNA SHELLEY

STUDENT NO: 31579426

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SUPERVISOR: DR S JACOBS

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DECLARATION

I declare that AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF INDIGENT, CULTURALLY DIVERSE, URBAN ADOLESCENTS is my own work and that all of the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.

Mrs DL Shelley

Student Number: 3157-9426

Date

Psalm 121 (New International Version)

A song of ascents

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip—
He who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, He who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all harm—
He will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.*

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF INDIGENT CULTURALLY DIVERSE URBAN ADOLESCENTS.

South Africa is currently experiencing rapid social change with socio-economic deprivation, influencing the future orientation of adolescents. Research indicates that a lack of future expectations affects present behaviour—diminishing the possibility of socialisation and productivity in adulthood. The objective of this study is to assess the future perceptions of indigent adolescents. The Gestalt paradigm provided the framework for defining the study. This empirical study uses a mixed methodology design combining both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches. A cross-sectional survey provided the groundwork in terms of ascertaining the degree of awareness in respect of the future orientation of indigent, urban adolescents whilst a qualitative, semi-structured, one-on-one interview provided an in-depth contextualisation of the problem.

The empirical study demonstrated that, although socio-economic deprivations and pervasive social issues do influence the future orientation of adolescents in South Africa, these influences have not eradicated the indigent adolescents' motivational striving toward a positive and productive future.

Key Terms: Future orientation; indigent adolescent; culturally diverse; Gestalt theory; Lewinian-Gestalt developmental theory

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite the fact that post-apartheid South Africa is a modernised constitutional democracy, a large proportion of the population lives in abject poverty (Drass-Brailsford, 2005:276). Socio-economic deprivation correlates with numerous mental health and social problems such as teenage pregnancy and HIV, substance abuse and impaired family relationships (Hallman & Diers, 2004:3). Studies indicate that future orientation may serve as a protective factor among indigent adolescents as a positive view of the future may cause the adolescent to adjust his/her current behaviour so as to become goal directed and future oriented.

1.2 RATIONALE

Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000:492) regard future orientation as a compilation of schemata based on previous experience combined with the current information emanating from the environment. Together these factors create expectations for the future. Future orientation provides the foundation for goals, planning, the exploration of options and the making of commitments (Bandura, 2001:24; Seginer, 2003:5). In view of the fact that adolescents are often at the stage of advanced cognitive abilities (Piaget, 1955, in Berk, 2006:345) and are in the process of forming their identities – identities that include the integration of past, present, and future – (Erikson, 1968, in Berk, 2006:300) they are psycho-socially capable of considering the future. According to Cauffman and Steinberg (2000:745) adolescents who are fifteen and older tend to consider the future more than do adolescents between the ages of eleven and thirteen. Mello (2009:540) believes that future orientation is multidimensional and that adolescents are primarily concerned with the following four domains pertaining to their futures – education; occupation; family and community. Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000:493) focus on an additional domain, namely, that of interpersonal and romantic relationships.

Future orientation may be regarded as a predictor of psychosocial outcomes in low-income youth (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:464). According to Lewin future orientation

dictates present choices (Lewin, 1939) and delays the tendency of the adolescent to respond in terms of instant gratification (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:492). Several studies show that indigent adolescents who have positive expectations of the future are less likely to engage in substance abuse or to experience psychological distress, teenage pregnancies or delinquency (McLoyd cited in Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:63). It would, thus, appear that future orientation is a protective factor amongst low-income, at risk, urban adolescents as a future orientation enables them to link current choices and behaviour to future goals (Mello, 2009:539).

The predicament facing indigent adolescents in South Africa is that they are confronting both a myriad of demographic changes as well as numerous socio-economic challenges including high mortality rates, poverty, single parenthood and rapid urbanisation (Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007:775). These factors make it difficult for them to envisage future roles in a society which is in constant flux (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005:398). The difficult socio-economic conditions experienced by these adolescents (Cluver *et al.*, 2007:775) form a temporal backdrop against which they perceive both the present and the future (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:64). The intention of the researcher is both to explore and to describe the way in which the adolescent's present circumstances impact on and influence his/her future expectations.

There has been extensive international research conducted using quantitative methodology and assessing the time perspective in adolescents (Nurmi, Poole & Seginer, 1995; Mello, 2009; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000) are of the opinion that there has been considerable research in America into the future orientation of the middle class, Caucasian adolescent but there is a deficiency of studies into low-income, African American adolescents. The researcher contends that there has been little research conducted into the indigent, culturally diverse, urban adolescent, and specifically in South Africa. Furthermore, the researcher has noted a lack of research studies that encompass the Gestalt perspective and, thus, she contends that there is scope for a research study of this nature.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Problem formulation and focus refer to the problem-definition phase (Graziano & Raulin, in Fouché & De Vos, 2005:100).

South Africa is in the midst of rapid social change with socio-economic deprivation having a pervasive influence. This, in turn, has consequences for the future orientation of adolescents (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005:395). Future orientation is considered to be a major protective factor amongst indigent, urban adolescents (Mello, 2009:541) it follows that a lack of future expectations would impact on present behaviour (Mello, 2009:541), thus decreasing the possibility of socialisation and productivity in adulthood (Clausen, 1991:841).

In this study the focus is on the future orientation of indigent, urban adolescents between the ages of fifteen and seventeen in Eastern Gauteng. In addition, the study focuses specifically on future aspirations in the following domains – education, occupation/career, family of origin and interpersonal relationships

1.4 THE AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Research question

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Painter research is equally concerned with asking and refining questions as it is with relating answers (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006:361). The research question will direct the progress of this study as the researcher explores and describes future orientation using the Gestalt paradigm as a framework.

How do culturally diverse, indigent adolescents in South Africa orientate themselves towards their futures?

1.4.2 Goals of the research

It is the researcher's intention (De Vos, 2005:361) both to understand and to explain the way in which indigent adolescents in South Africa orientate themselves toward their futures within their current life space.

1.4.3 Research objectives

The function of research objectives is to highlight the steps required in order to accomplish the goals of the research (Fouche, 2005:107).

The objectives of this study include:

- Conducting a literature study on the psychosocial development of the adolescent, future orientation as a protective factor, the context of socio-economic deprivation in South Africa and the Gestalt paradigm as well as Lewinian–Gestalt developmental theory.
- Administering a demographic questionnaire as well as a standardised Future Orientation Scale which was compiled and pilot tested by Steinberg, Graham, O'Brien, Woolard, Cauffman and Banich (in Steinberg; Graham, O'Brien; Woolard; Cauffman & Banich, 2009:44). Accordingly, the quantitative aspect of the study will measure three related, but not identical, subscales of the future orientation (time perspective; anticipation of future consequences and planning) of thirty participants from an indigent, urban, senior school.
- Scoring the Future Orientation Scale using the designated schedule and analysing the data.
- Conducting semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interviews with eight of the above-mentioned participants of whom four had scored a high rating and four a low rating on the Future Orientation Scale. The future orientation of the adolescent with regard to the domains of education, occupation, family of origin and interpersonal relationships were explored, compared and described in a qualitative way.
- Analysing the qualitative data collected in the one-on-one interviews using the six steps delineated by Terre Blanche *et al.*(2006:328) and guidelines as explained by Nieuwenhuis (2007:109 &110).
- Providing a detailed description of the phenomenological data using both quantitative and qualitative methodology that succeeds in describing the research findings appropriately against the backdrop of the literature study.

- Presenting the conclusions based on the research findings regarding the current future orientation of indigent adolescents in South Africa to the teachers and therapists who work with these indigent adolescents.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PARADIGM

1.5.1 Theoretical framework

Babbie (2010:33) suggests that paradigms are frameworks that provide ways of looking at life. The Gestalt paradigm, as described in the classical work of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1951), will be the framework used in this study. This paradigmic approach is fundamentally phenomenological and, as such, seeks to highlight subjectivity – the meaning which each individual attributes to a situation rather than the situation itself (Clarkson, 2004:15; Crocker, 2008:139). Field-theoretical and phenomenological tenets, as well as the principle of holism, provide the researcher with the opportunity to describe the respondent's world in its entirety using both verbal and non-verbal cues (Brown, 1997:73; Crocker, 2005:67).

The researcher utilised the Gestalt theory of self in terms of which the individual is described as embodied and fluid rather than static with the self both making contact with the environment and adjusting to environmental changes. According to Kepner (1987:11) the 'self regulates'.

Perls is of the opinion that 'no individual is self-sufficient' (1976:16). This statement encapsulates field theory with its presupposition that individuals are part of the environmental context in which they find themselves (Joyce & Sills, 2001:24; McConville, 2001:30; Parlett, 2005:4). Lewin, on the other hand, viewed the individual as having a 'life space'/field that both encapsulates a predominance of present space but also comprises representations of past experiences and future expectations. He applied this theory to adolescents and postulated that the individual adolescent's life space is dependent on the internalisation of external stimuli from both the physical and the social world (Lewin, 1939; 1952).

The premises that underpin the Gestalt paradigm directly influenced developmental theory which, in turn, includes holism, field orientation, phenomenology as well as dialogic existentialism. These premises will be utilised in the description of the

adolescent in terms of the Lewinian–Gestalt developmental paradigm (Yontef, 1993:200; Reynolds, 2005:155).

1.6 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts will be defined in this section: future orientation; indigent adolescent; culturally diverse; Gestalt theory; Lewinian-Gestalt developmental paradigm.

1.6.1 Future orientation

According to Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000), Nurmi (1995) and Seginer (2003) future orientation refers to the autobiographical image an individual has regarding the future. As the adolescent progresses toward autonomy he/she becomes cognitively able to anticipate his/her futures. Mello (2009:540) emphasises that adolescents are primarily concerned with four domains in respect of their futures, namely, education, occupation, family and community. Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000:493) focus on the additional domain of interpersonal and romantic relationships.

1.6.2 Indigent adolescent

Atkinson (2006:1) describes adolescence as a “psycho-social-biological stage of development” that begins with puberty and ends once the adolescent has achieved autonomy. Pubertal change is dependent on gender, heredity, body type, nutrition and health (Atkinson, 2006:4; Santrock, 2006:365).

According to Pinquart and Silbereisen (2005:396), social change is a pervasive feature of adolescent development. Disparities in post apartheid South Africa have resulted in both the impoverishment of several communities and in numerous, indigent adolescents. Indigence is often associated with mental ill health as a result of the constant exposure to stressful life events including, *inter alia*, crime, violence, inadequate housing and unemployment. The numerous risk factors experienced by indigent adolescents are simultaneous, with poverty and socio-economic deprivation forming the basis of those stressors that collectively contribute to feelings of disempowerment and social isolation (Chisholm *et al.*, 2007:1).

1.6.3 Culturally diverse

Culture is subjective in its orientation and is an extremely difficult concept to define. According to Smith and Bond (in Chrysochoou, 2004:66) a culture is a relatively organised system of shared meanings. South Africa represents a paradigm of cultural diversity with different genders, races and socio-economic groups all sharing a single social context.

1.6.4 Gestalt theory

The overarching conceptual framework of this study is that of Gestalt theory. Field theory, which underpins this overarching conceptual framework, emphasises that all organisms exist within a specific context and reciprocally influence each other (Kirchner, 2000:2). Organisms, including bodily processes, are viewed holistically (Kepner, 1987:1) and they make contact their environment in order to meet their needs whilst simultaneously modifying and self regulating according to environmental conditions. The statement of Perls to the effect that organisms are not “self-sufficient” (Perls,1976:16) encapsulates field theory which, in turn, presupposes that the individual may be seen only as part of the environmental context in which he/she finds him/herself (Joyce & Sills, 2001:24; McConville, 2001:30; Parlett, 2005:4).

In this study the indigent adolescents are described holistically with the emphasis on the reciprocal effects they experience as part of the broader socio-economically deprived environment in which they find themselves. The adolescents field is characterised by a temporal quality and it includes elements of the past, present, and future which are all considered as being within the “here and now”. In this study the researcher describes the current field influences on the ability of indigent adolescents both to visualise and to predict their futures. The premises that underpin the Gestalt paradigm directly influence developmental theory which, in turn, includes holism, field orientation, phenomenology as well as dialogic existentialism (Yontef, 1993:200; Reynolds, 2005:155;).

1.6.5 Lewinian–Gestalt developmental paradigm

The Gestalt perspective on development focuses on the process of the developing self in relation to the field (McConville & Wheeler, 2001:10). Lewinian field theory, on the other hand, maintains that there is an integration of the biological, psychological

and social aspects of adolescent development referring to a holistic self (Woldt & Toman, 2005:180). The external field (environment) includes the familial, social, cultural, political and geographical aspects that impact on the adolescent's development. In addition, neither self-support nor self-reliance occur in isolation but rather within a mutual interdependency between the adolescent and significant others such as parents and other adult family members.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW AND VIABILITY OF THE STUDY

There already exists extensive, international research which has been conducted using quantitative methodology and which assesses the time perspective in adolescents (Nurmi *et al.*, 1995:335; Mello, 2009:200; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999:1272). Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000:64) assert that, while adolescent studies include considerable bodies of research in America with regard to middle class, Caucasian future orientation there is a deficit in studies in respect of the low-income, African-American adolescent. The researcher contends that there has been little research into indigent, culturally diverse, urban adolescents, particularly in South Africa. Furthermore, the researcher has noted a deficit in research studies that encompass the Gestalt perspective.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

1.8.1 Research approach

An explanatory, mixed methodology design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches (De Vos, 2005:361) was used sequentially in this study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003:11). Initially, a quantitative-descriptive survey design was utilised in the format of a cross-sectional survey (Babbie, 2010:106; Fouche & De Vos, 2005:137). A Future Orientation Scale (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009:44).was utilised, the purpose of this scale was to ascertain the degree of awareness of future orientation in the specified sample of indigent, urban adolescents within a particular period. The survey was followed by qualitative, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews which were conducted with eight participants. The qualitative data gathered was utilised in order both to clarify and to explain the quantitative findings (Maree, 2007:266). The quantitative aspects of the explanatory mixed methods design increased the construct validity of the study as the study had been conducted

using a representative sample (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:277; Babbie, 2010:106;). The qualitative, one-on-one interviews (Rubin & Rubin, in Mouton, 2008:196) provided a rich, in-depth contextualisation of the research problem (Creswell, in De Vos, 2005b:361) and supplemented the current understanding of the future orientation of adolescents in South Africa (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:277).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research procedure

The focus in chapter 1 was on an overall review of the research problem. Chapter 1 also presented a discussion on the ethical aspects pertinent to the study. Chapter 2 provides a contextual overview of adolescent development and future orientation while chapter 3 describes both the Gestalt paradigmatic framework as well as the Lewinian–Gestalt developmental perspective. The researcher approached a culturally diverse, socio-economically deprived secondary school in order to find suitable for the study and obtained the consent of both the parents of the as well as the headmaster before commencing with the study.

The qualitative aspect of the study comprises a Future Orientation Scale together with a biographical information document which was completed by 31 adolescents. This was followed by one-on-one interviews with eight participants who were drawn from the original group of 31 adolescents. Once scored, the survey data was depicted graphically. Video recordings of the interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed with the literature review as a backdrop. Chapter 4 and 5 contains a comprehensive discussion of the above process while chapter 6 presents a discussion of both the recommendations that resulted from the findings (see chapter 4) as well as the implications of the findings and possible future research initiatives.

1.9.2 Preparation for data collection

A comprehensive literature review contextualises the research which is to be conducted (Hofstee, 2006:91). The literature review in this study included research on Gestalt therapy theory and the development of the adolescent according to the Lewinian-Gestalt developmental theory (Wheeler, 2002:50). A pilot study was conducted in order to assess the appropriateness of the measuring instrument (Future Orientation Scale) and its suitability for use in respect of the sample of

culturally diverse adolescents for whom English was not their first language (Strydom in De Vos, 2005:206).

1.9.3 Research strategy

According to Fouche and Delport (2005b:80), the choice of topic determines the research strategy selected. This study will use the simplest of the mixed methods designs, specifically the sequential, explanatory, mixed methods design. The choice of the mixed methods design allowed the researcher the opportunity to observe the phenomenon of future orientation amongst indigent adolescents from different perspectives. The sequence of the research began with a survey design (quantitative) followed by a case study design (qualitative) with the qualitative data being utilised in order to explain the quantitative data which had been collected.

1.9.3.1 Quantitative aspect: survey design

The quantitative approach aims to evaluate the social world objectively. This study made use of a Future Orientation Scale (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009:44). A class of 31 indigent ,urban adolescents completed the Future Orientation Scale which assessed future orientation according to three key factors namely, planning ahead, time perspective and anticipation of future consequences. The overall future orientation of the adolescents comprised the average score of the 15-item scale. Eight participants were then selected from the initial group of 31. Of these eight participants four scored in the high range whilst the remaining four had scores in the lower range according to the Scale. These eight adolescents constituted the in the case study design.

1.9.3.2 Qualitative aspect: case study design

In view of the fact that case studies are descriptive in nature they offer a powerful technique for gaining insight into human affairs (Babbie, 2010:309; Durrheim, 2006:460 & 446). Within this case study design the researcher used semi-structured, one-on-one interviews in order to gain an insight into the eight participants' perceptions of their futures. In the interviews the participants shared detailed individual information (Greeff, 2005:296) with reference to their perceptions of their future careers, education, family life and intimate relationships.

1.9.3.2.1 One-on-one semi-structured interview

The researcher compiled an interview schedule with pre-existing domains in mind which defined the line of enquiry (Maree, 2007:87). These domains were taken from contemporary research and were deemed applicable to the study. The researcher used Mello's research (2009:54) in which four domains in respect of adolescent future, namely, education; occupation, family and community, are emphasised. McCabe and Barnett's (2000:493) additional domain – that of interpersonal and romantic relationships – was also included. Maree (2007: 87-88) stresses that questions that are more personal in nature should be left to the end of the interview and should, thus, be asked only once a relationship between the researcher and the participant has been established. Accordingly, all questions regarding familial and interpersonal relationships were left until the end of the interview. The focus of a questionnaire is to ascertain the participants' own perceptions and, therefore, according to Maree (2007:88), it is recommended that the questionnaire take the form of a "conversation with intention" with the researcher as an attentive listener and the researcher not leading the responses. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:300) emphasise the importance of exploring rather than probing, but without pressurising the participants. The researcher was careful to keep this in mind during the interview, especially in view of the fact that the participants were adolescent learners.

In accordance with the recommendations of Maree (2007:88) the researcher used a variety of questions, specifically questions which focused on both experience and behaviour as well as questions dealing with opinions, values and feelings. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:300) maintain that interviews should last between 20 minutes and one and a half hours. The researcher bore the age of the participants in mind and ensured that the interviews lasted between thirty and fifty minutes. The researcher kept process notes during the interviews and wrote down any perceptions or non-verbal cues which she had noted during the course of the interviews.

1.9.4 Data collection

Explanatory mixed method data collection implies the use of more than one source of data (De Vos, 2005:362) and sequentially using both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques (Kelly, in Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:287). Using this method of data collection, the researcher was able to obtain a comprehensive

understanding of the phenomenon. In addition, the researcher was able to view the problem from different angles (Kelly in Terre Blanche, 2006:287), thus neutralising potential bias (De Vos, 2005:361).

The researcher utilised a standardised 15-item Future Orientation Scale (Steinberg *et al*, 2009:44) in order to assess the future orientation of 31 adolescents who were all in a single class at the school selected (quantitative). In addition, with the aim of increasing the validity of the study, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews (Greeff, 2005: 292 & 296) were conducted with the respondent adolescents (qualitative). After obtaining the consent of the parents of the participants as well as the headmaster of the school the research commenced with the administration of the Future Orientation Scale. All the videotaped interviews were stored in a locked cabinet.

1.9.4.1 Criteria for inclusion in the research study

According to Strydom and Delpont (2005b:328) it is essential that research be conducted against a background of universal social experiences. The universe in this study refers to indigent adolescents in Gauteng between the ages of fifteen and seventeen while the population comprised all adolescents between the ages of fifteen and seventeen in a particular school in eastern Gauteng. The individual sample comprised a subset of the population. In this study the sample was both representative and homogenous as it was relevant to the research question and it manifested the same characteristics as the population (Strydom, 2005b:196).

The researcher had specific sample criterion (Strydom, 2005b:202; Babbie, 2010:193) as she selected the purposive sample. For this research the criteria for the sample selection included:

- A group of 31 adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17 for the quantitative phase of the study
- A subset of the above group for the qualitative phase (one-on-one interviews). This subset included four participants who had scored a high rating and four participants who had scored a low rating with regard to the Future Orientation Scale.

- A sample group from a culturally diverse, underprivileged school east of Johannesburg.
- The voluntary participation of the respondent adolescents
- Both genders were represented within the sample group.

1.9.5 Data analysis and literature control

Reid and Smith (cited in De Vos, 2005:218) maintain that the analysis and interpretation of data is always guided by the study itself. Data analysis in terms of the sequential explanatory strategy (Maree, 2007:297) occurs when the researcher analyses quantitative data in the first phase of the research process so as to assist in the planning of the data collection in the second, qualitative phase. In order to minimise socially desirable responses each statement in the Future Orientation Scale was separated by the word “but” and the participant was asked to select the most appropriate descriptor. The responses were coded on a four-point scale with higher scores indicating a greater future orientation (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009: x). The quantitative aspect of the study comprised the one-on-one semi-structured interviews which were video recorded and then transcribed.

1.9.5.1 Management and organisation of the data

The quantitative data which resulted from the Future Orientation Scale was later scored and illustrated by means of a graphic presentation (De Vos, 2005:227). In terms of the qualitative aspect of this research, the analysis and collection of data did not comprise two distinct processes with the data being analysed according to salient, recursive themes and patterns of belief (De Vos, 2005: 335 & 336). Priori-codes (pre-set codes) from previous empirical studies were utilised in the analysis of the data in order to assess existing theories in respect of future orientation. The data analysis (qualitative) was guided by the six steps as described by both Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006:326) and the guidelines of Nieuwenhuis (2007:109 &110). After both sets of data had been collected the data was interpreted with the qualitative data providing an explanation for the quantitative data outcomes. The data was processed and the results condensed (Cresswell, in Maree, 2007:297).

According to Stake (in Maree, 2007:298), triangulation may be regarded as the use of several assessments in order to clarify meaning .In this mixed methods study the

findings of both the quantitative phase (Future Orientation Scale) and the qualitative (one-on-one interviews) were triangulated in order to enhance the validation of both.

1.10 ETHICAL ASPECTS

According to Babbie (2010:62) ethical considerations are relative to the general agreements laid down by researchers in terms of what is regarded as “proper or improper in scientific enquiry”. In order to maintain positive ethical outcomes clearance from an ethics committee is imperative according to Maree (2007:300) as this controls random research. In this study the researcher had received clearance from the panel of Hugenote College in order to conduct this research and there was a responsible and experienced supervisor overseeing the entire research process. During the research process the wellbeing of the participants was paramount. For example, if the questions resulted in any of the participants’ feeling uncomfortable they were debriefed as well as being encouraged to seek additional counselling from the researcher.

The following ethical measures were taken into account throughout the study (Strydom, 2005b:58-67; Maree, 2007:300; Babbie, 2010:63-70).

1.10.1 Informed consent

It is essential that the participants in a study give their informed consent to participate in the study. The researcher is obliged to provide the participants with clear, detailed information regarding the study, its methods, risks as well as assurances that the study is voluntary in nature. In addition, the participants in any study must be offered the freedom to withdraw without any repercussions (Appendix B) (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:72). In view of the fact that the participants in this study were between the ages of 15 and 17, their parents/legal guardians were required to fill in the consent forms. The researcher clearly indicated each aspect of the process as well as stipulating the use of video recordings during the one-on-one interviews. In addition, the researcher stressed that the video recordings were confidential and would not be viewed by anyone outside of the researcher and the supervisor. Both the head of department in charge of Life Orientation as well as with the principal of the school gave their written consent for the research to take place (Appendix A). In addition, the researcher provided a participant assent form that

empowers participants as such a form summarises the research process and allows the participants themselves to give their consent to take part in the research (Appendix C).

1.10.2 Protection from physical or emotional harm

The physical and emotional wellbeing of the participants in a study is paramount with the researcher having both to identify clearly all possible risks and to take appropriate contingency measures to deal with such risks (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006:71). The survey and the one-on-one interviews commenced only after the researcher had explained the process carefully and had ensured that the participants had not experience either embarrassment or stress. Despite the fact that there were no obvious risks or harm related to this research a single debriefing session (Strydom, 2005b:73) was held during which the researcher encouraged the participants to share their personal experiences of the research process.

1.10.3 Anonymity/confidentiality

The respectful treatment of the adolescents remained of primary importance during the entire study with individual information being kept confidential at all times. If community confidentiality is also upheld this helps to guard against discrimination (Terre Blanche *et al.*2006:73; Babbie, 2010:64). The principal and the participants were reassured that the school would remain anonymous. The parents (in the consent form) were also assured of their children's anonymity. The researcher informed the participant adolescents that the information that they gave would be treated as confidential and that identification codes would be used in place of their names in the writing of the research report. The information gathered by the researcher would not be discussed publically except with the researcher's supervisor, when necessary.

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In view of the fact that this is a dissertation of limited scope the following limitations exist:

Sample size: A larger sample with more participants would have resulted in more in depth findings.

Generalisability: This refers to the degree to which generalisations may be constructed with reference to the data and the context of the research. The sample size in this study limits external validity (generalisability). In addition, the specific context of the research precluded the generalising the findings in terms of, for example, rural contexts. The qualitative aspect of this study's primary purpose was to provide a phenomenological, rich description of the participants selected in a unique context and, thus, the objective of the study was not to generalise the findings.

The researcher was involved in every aspect of the research process and was, thus, susceptible to participant bias (Creswell, in Maree, 2007:298).

According to Harrison (cited in De Vos, 2005b:364), quantitative and qualitative constructs are intertwined with both manifesting different strengths and weaknesses that affect the accuracy of a study. Accordingly, the combined use of these approaches provides research both with a measure of viability as well as contextualised meaning (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003:11). According to Maree (2007:299), when used in combination, quantitative and qualitative data allow for a more complete analysis of a problem.

1.12 STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT OF THE RESEARCH

1.12.1 Chapter 1: introduction and methodology

Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the study and included, *inter alia*, the paradigmatic perspective, the rationale of the study, the research approach and methodology, the significant concepts used as well as the ethical principles involved.

1.12.2 Chapter 2: a theoretical and contextual overview of the developing adolescent in South Africa

This chapter describes the universal psychosocial and cognitive transitions from childhood into adulthood with special reference to the adolescent's transition from dependence to independence and the consequent individuation. The adolescent's transition takes place within a specific context that impacts on his/her developmental trajectory. In this study, the focus was on adolescent development within a socio-economically deprived context (South Africa) that is, in turn, undergoing rapid social change.

1.12.3 Chapter 3: the Gestalt paradigm and adolescent development

The Gestalt paradigm provides the framework – a particular worldview – within which the study was conceived. In chapter 3 the adolescent is described from an existential, humanistic and interactional Gestalt perspective.

The phases of adolescent development are elaborated upon using the Lewinian–Gestalt developmental paradigm that emphasises the recursive interchange and contact between the adolescent and the environment as the adolescent “disembeds”.

1.12.4 Chapter 4: empirical methodology and research design

Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of the mixed methodology research design which was utilised in this study. The chapter also described both the data analysis procedure as well as the qualitative criteria which were employed in order to ascertain whether the study was evidence based.

1.12.5 Chapter 5: empirical results

In chapter 5 the researcher reports on the observed categories and sub-themes observed. These categories and sub-themes are delineated in a comprehensive manner. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews explain and describe the earlier quantitative findings which had been generated by the Future Orientation Scale.

1.12.6 Chapter 6: general summary of findings and recommendations

The aim of this chapter is both to collate the previous chapters and to summarise the findings from the empirical research. As part of this exploratory study the researcher makes possible recommendations in terms of the way in which at risk, indigent adolescents may be encouraged to use their future aspirations and planning in order to improve their social circumstances. The limitations of this study are also considered and directions for further studies deliberated upon.

1.13 CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the study and introduced the research methods, data collection and the data analysis procedure. Chapter 2 will provide the reader with greater insight into the developmental trajectory of the adolescent as well

as their impoverished contextual circumstances and the implications of this context on the formation of future aspirations on the part of the adolescent .

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPING ADOLESCENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the contextual developmental trajectory of the indigent adolescent and to describe how future orientation acts as a protective factor amongst socioeconomically deprived adolescents. Development is a sequential, age-related transformation from birth to death. It is a lifelong process and encompasses physical, psychological and behavioural changes (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 2002:4–6). Adolescent development, particularly in respect of the physical and hormonal changes, influences not only behavioural adaptations but also societal expectations. Specific contextual issues limit adolescent development as the context itself impinges on development, thus forcing the individual to adjust in order to accommodate it. Indigent adolescents in post-apartheid South Africa are no exception. Future expectations, goals and plans become crucial in the developing adolescent with research indicating the significance of a future orientation as a protective factor among indigent adolescents.

2.2 THE ADOLESCENT

The aim of this discussion on the adolescent is to define the term “adolescence” and to describe this developmental phase in terms of the physical, emotional, cognitive, social and moral developmental perspectives.

2.2.1 Adolescence: a definition

According to Louw *et al.* (2002:384) and Carr-Gregg (2005:5), the term adolescence is derived from the Latin verb *adolescere* which means to grow to maturity or adulthood. The commencement of puberty is the primary distinguishing feature that separates middle childhood from adolescence. Current trends indicate an earlier onset of puberty (Bhana, Petersen, Flisher, Swartz & Richter, 2010:24) with some literature suggesting that adolescence may begin anytime between the ages of 11 and 13 and end between the ages of 17 and 21 (Louw *et al.*, 2002:384). In this study the researcher refers to the ages of 13 to 17 as the adolescent developmental phase.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

A knowledge of universal adolescent developmental patterns is of great value as this knowledge may provide a framework in terms of which the individual may be viewed. A complex interplay of physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioural and moral developmental patterns cumulatively provide a holistic theoretical overview of adolescent development.

2.3.1 Physical development

The physical changes in adolescence include physical growth with muscle starting to build (Berk, 2006:174) and the maturation of primary and secondary sexual characteristics (Berk, 2006:178). Atkinson (2006:4) suggests that these dramatic physical changes indicate reproductive potential despite the fact that peak fertility occurs much later. According to Berk (2006:197) puberty profoundly influences both psychological development and social relationships. Physically adolescents resemble adults although adolescents nowadays are often bigger than their parents given the improved nutrition and health of industrialised nations (Berk, 2006:181). According to the researcher this physical maturity often leads to the parents making the faulty assumption that adolescents are able to behave and make decisions in the same way as mature adults. Although adolescents are capable of producing offspring they are, nevertheless, emotionally immature. Adolescents are extremely aware of their changing bodies and their sexual development. Santrock (2006:369) maintains that sexuality is a normal aspect of adolescent development and it is incumbent on the adolescent to integrate this sexuality into his/her identity. Accordingly, adolescence is a time of experimentation and risk taking with research indicating an increase in adolescent pregnancies as well in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases (Belenko, Dembo, Rollie, Child & Salvatore, 2009:1032-1041; Carr-Gregg, 2005:102–104). Physical changes and pubertal development influence the social and emotional interaction between adolescents and their environment.

2.3.2 Emotional development

According to Louw *et al.*, (2002:384), adolescent emotional experiences comprise a convoluted and difficult interaction of pubertal and societal influences. The hormones released during puberty are responsible for intense mood swings and emotional outbursts (Louw *et al.*, 2002:384). Berk (2006:430) is of the opinion that adolescents

experience negative emotions more intensely than they do positive emotions as compared to younger children. In addition, adolescent girls experience greater anger and depression than their male counterparts (Berk, 2006:398). These extreme changes in emotion are dependent on the situation in which the adolescent finds him/herself (Berk, 2006:398). Adolescents tend to focus on their own emotions although they are also capable of empathy. Emotions contribute to self-awareness as well as to a self-concept and self-esteem (Berk, 2006:399). The researcher agrees with this assertion believing that emotions comprise the moment-by-moment feedback which individuals receive from their environment. If the environment is positive the individual will internalise his/her positive experiences and this will, in turn, culminate in an ability to engage with and contact the environment in a constructive manner.

According to Berk (2006:399) individuals with positive self-esteem tend to be socially well adjusted. Carr-Gregg (2005:45) affirms this viewpoint and states that a positive self-esteem coexists with social adjustment no matter what the age, sex, socioeconomic status, and ethnic group. Individuals with a low self-esteem struggle to adjust to their social roles (Berk, 2006:399). In addition, adolescents who are dissatisfied with their relationships with their parents tend to be both aggressive and antisocial (Berk, 2006:450). Moreover, those adolescents who perceive the status of their peer relationships in a negative way are likely to be anxious and depressed (Berk, 2006:450). Fluctuating moods and intense emotion impact on the adolescent's ability to make clear and well considered decisions.

2.3.3 Cognitive development and decision making

Atkinson (2006:4–5) maintains that, while the physical changes in the adolescent are more visible to the outside observer, the cognitive and behavioural changes taking place are as significant. According to Piaget (1955: x) from the age of eleven children reach the formal operational stage in which the skills of hypothetico-deductive reasoning are facilitated. This form of reasoning includes problem solving and assessing predicaments from the position of a 'possible solution' moving towards a reality based decision (Berk, 2006:246). Formal operational thinking is a second order thinking process which permits abstract thought and enables the individual both to think and to plan. The researcher is in agreement with Cauffman

and Steinberg (2000:745) who maintain that future planning begins in early adolescence and improves from the age of fifteen. According to Santrock (2006:384), during early adolescence, assimilation dominates formal operational thought in terms of which the individual perceives the world both subjectively and idealistically. Santrock (2006:384) goes on to say that, in later adolescence, the individual is able to accommodate and adjust to the input of new information. However, not all adolescents or even adults reach the level of formal operational thinking as defined by Piaget (1955:x). Social interaction and school education (specifically in the fields of both mathematics and sciences) influence cognitive development. It is the cognitive thought processes which allow the adolescent to build sophisticated systems of thought and to integrate the past, present, and future (Piaget, 1955: x).

In order to form a considered opinion and evaluate situations adolescents require the ability to apply abstract reasoning. Abstract reasoning facilitates the ability of the adolescent to evaluate existing social, political and religious systems (Louw *et al.*, 2002:424). The researcher is of the opinion that this cognitive process begins the individuation process with the adolescent forming his/her own opinions and questioning the opinions and beliefs of his/her parents. In addition, the ability to deduce and exercise judgement assists in the making of pertinent decisions in respect of their own lives for which the adolescents must take responsibility (Berk, 2006:470).

Despite having the cognitive abilities to evaluate and to make prudent decisions, adolescents may still engage in high-risk behaviours. Renya and Farley (2006:1) maintain that impulsivity and sensation seeking, as well as depression, contribute to risk-taking behaviour in adolescence. According to Renya and Farley (2006:1) the contextual and situational nature of decision-making influences the outcomes of the decisions taken. Berk (2006:447) concurs with this assertion when she states that adolescent behaviour is inconsistent with the adolescent tending to shift from acting impulsively in one situation to intensive forward planning in another. Factors such as peer influences, previous knowledge or awareness of circumstances and fluctuating emotions will influence the adolescent's ability to make considered choices. In general however, the attainment of immediate gratification in a situation prevails over

the benefits of assessing long-term outcomes (Renya & Farley, 2006:1). Arnett (2006:303) agrees and states that, in situations in which behavioural inhibition is required for socially appropriate outcomes, adolescents reason more poorly than adults.

It is important to acknowledge that parental intervention and guidance may offset impetuous decision making as they provide the adolescent with opportunities to use decision-making skills within the context of the family (Santrock, 2006:385). Decision making, self-awareness, body image and moods are all significant psychological and cognitive adjustments in the maturation process of the adolescent.

2.3.3.1 Adolescent egocentricity

Despite the fact that adolescents have the ability both to comprehend and to envisage the thoughts of others, they are, nevertheless, unable to distinguish between what is of importance to them as opposed to what is of significance to others. This overwhelming self-interest results in an inability to distinguish between personal beliefs and perceptions, and those of others (Louw *et al.*, 2002:418). Looft and Charles (in Louw *et al.*, 2002:491) define egocentrism as an 'embeddedness' in one's own point of view and the inability to perceive alternate perspectives or viewpoints. Thus, as indicated by Louw *et al.* (2002:491), egocentricity manifests either in the form of an imaginary audience (the adolescent's inability to distinguish between his/her own concepts and those of others); or a personal fable (the inability to distinguish between mental images unique to the adolescent and those which are universally applicable).

Together with the neural ability of adolescents which enables them to perceive new possibilities and to view themselves as if for the first time, there is also a tendency to become supremely self-conscious. Stemming from this self-consciousness adolescents tend to believe that they are of great interest and importance to others – to the extent that they see themselves as being watched as closely as an actor on a stage (Louw *et al.*, 2002:419). This imaginary audience manifests in the increased awareness of the adolescent of his/her physical appearance (Berk, 2006:34).

An additional characteristic of the adolescent egocentricity is the notion which adolescents have that they are unique and invincible and immune to the laws of

probability and morality. This belief, which is termed 'personal fable', allows adolescents to view themselves as invulnerable and indestructible (Lapsley & Murphy, in Louw *et al.*, 2002:419). Research has shown that adolescent girls with a high level of egocentricity (specifically personal fable) believe that there is a lesser chance of their falling pregnant without using contraceptives compared to girls with a lower level of egocentricity (Louw *et al.*, 2002:419). Risk taking behaviour may increase in the presence of personal fable beliefs with adolescents being inclined to be overly critical of other individuals and of ideas which they do not support and, simultaneously, under-critical of the viability of their own ideas (Atkinson, 2006:5; Santrock, 2006:384–385). The adolescent, despite having the ability to imagine logical possibilities, is inclined to attempt to restructure reality when it does not match his/her fantasies or ideals.

The immaturity of the pre-frontal cortex influences adolescent abstract thought patterns and behaviours. An increase in the ability to think abstractly would enable the adolescent to become empathic and to show a greater interest in broader societal concerns (Berk, 2006:450). In contrast, abstract thought processes has consequences for the adolescent as adolescents tend to become idealistic and extremist (Berk, 2006:447). According to Piaget (1955:x) abstract reasoning leads to the adolescent questioning parental actions and authority with the adolescent arguing in accordance with his/her own idealistic notions. The researcher acknowledges that the ability to compare 'self' with others (parents) in the environment may result in cause for conflict although this ability does provide essential skills for individuating. Adolescents undertake autonomous decision making in the face of pre-frontal cortex immaturity. The fact that the pre-frontal cortex is in the process of developing (Renya & Farley, 2006:1) impacts on brain functions, thus rendering adolescents ill-equipped to make choices that follow adult thinking patterns. Accordingly, parental guidance and input is necessary in making key decisions and choices.

There is an association between formal thinking and moral reasoning – the ability to imagine alternate solutions to problems is a similar mental process to the passing of moral judgements.

2.3.4 Moral development

Kohlberg (in Louw *et al.*, 2002:463) elaborated on Piaget's model of moral reasoning according to cognitive developmental processes. According to Kohlberg (in Louw *et al.*, 2002:463) there are three distinct stages of moral development, namely:

The pre-conventional level achieved in childhood with moral reasoning being determined largely by external authority and the avoidance of punishment.

The conventional level at which the individual conforms to social order and the expectations of others while rules are internalised and accepted as the individual's own. (This is in order to win the approval of others.)

The post-conventional level which is the highest level of moral development in terms of which the individual upholds beliefs and values independent of groups or people. Existing social or political beliefs are not merely accepted, with the adolescent choosing rather to investigate possibilities and, thus, choosing the value system which he/she wishes to adopt (Louw *et al.*, 2002:463; Berk, 2006:501).

Although moral reasoning is interdependent on cognitive ability (Kohlberg in Louw *et al.*, 2002:466) it is also dependent on personal characteristics and situational factors (Louw *et al.*, 2002:466). Predominantly, moral thinking occurs at a conventional level where the adolescent is able to internalise the norms and values of society (Atkinson, 2006:5). Conformity to a peer group and upholding personal values is essential in adolescence. The statistics in respect of police arrests support this viewpoint as the statistics tend to indicate an increase in delinquency in early and middle adolescence as a result of a desire for peer approval (Berk, 2006:508). However, as moral reasoning moves into the post-conventional phase it may happen that there is a decline in anti-social behaviour, particularly during late adolescence and early adulthood during which peer approval is less desirable (Berk, 2006:508). A configuration of psychosocial aspects, together with the integration of individual and personality mechanisms, leads to the formation of a sense of personal identity.

2.3.5 Identity formation

Identity refers to the individual's awareness of his/her unique independent self within a specific society (Louw *et al.*, 2002:425). The development of an identity begins in infancy and continues throughout life with identity development intensifying during

adolescence. The intense physical, sexual, cognitive, social and emotional development which are characteristic of adolescence all contribute to identity formation (Atkinson, 2006:5). It is of importance for this study that, despite the fact that identity development in adolescence is universal, the specific way in which identity develops is culture dependent (Burns, in Louw *et al.*, 2002:425).

Erikson (1968:273) describes adolescent identity as the psychosocial stage of 'identity versus role-confusion'. During this phase of development it is mandatory for adolescents to define who they are, what is of importance to them as well as the direction they wish to take in life (Louw *et al.*, 2002:426). Experimentation is the hallmark of this phase with the adolescent trying out various identities and roles. Identity development is also characterised by self-examination and by fantasising about the roles adolescents wish to play as well as the heroes with whom they are able to identify.

According to Erikson, in order to develop an identity, it is essential that the adolescent master the following tasks:

The individual must form an integrated image of the self (ego synthesis).

Adolescents should form a socio-cultural identity in terms of which they are able to integrate the value orientations of their specific culture.

It is essential that a gender role identity be in place – this gender role identity is associated with sexual maturity and identification as either a male or female, as homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual (Santrock, 2006:398).

Adolescents must establish their own unique value systems – a philosophy of life that will act as a base for the future (Erikson, in Louw *et al.*, 2002:426–427).

The completion of the above four tasks will assist in the formation of a salient identity and limit identity confusion (Erikson, 1963:273). Atkinson (2006:4) concurs with this viewpoint of Erikson when he states that, by means of self-examination and experimentation, the adolescent is able to formulate an individual philosophy of life, thereby committing to his/her unique values and norms. Both Atkinson (2006:4) and

Erikson (1968:273) agree that the above process of identity formation is the process through which self-confidence is established.

2.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Atkinson (2006:1) states that adolescence, as a psychosocial–biological stage of development, may be complex, challenging and confusing. However, while cultural norms and values differ, adolescents share the commonality of completing several life tasks (Atkinson, 2006:1). Puberty begins the process of adapting to a changing body and this, in turn, triggers the establishment of relationships with members of both sexes (Atkinson, 2006:1). Adolescence is a developmental period which is marked by identity formation, a clear sense of self-direction and a commitment to social and political values (Atkinson, 2006:1).

The researcher is of the opinion that adolescence is a preparatory phase for adulthood, involving key decision making with regard to socially responsible relationships and future career and educational goals. Contextual aspects all influence current decision making as well as future expectations.

2.5 CONTEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPING ADOLESCENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.5.1 Introduction

Various changes influence individual development with these changes pertaining to the immediate context – including the family and peer group – the general social context as well as the overarching broader socio-political context (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005:395). Social change refers to the transformation of typical characteristics of society such as the economic system, cultural norms and values. According to Pinquart and Silbereisen (2005:396), social change is a pervasive feature of adolescent development as it creates important developmental challenges for adolescents (Brown, in Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005:396). In addition, Pinquart and Silbereisen (2005:397) are of the opinion that urbanisation and globalisation affect social scripts and render them ambiguous, specifically, the attainment of adolescent developmental goals. Without clear guidelines the adolescent may be facing a future life path in a society that is in constant flux (Atkinson, 2006:3; Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005:398).

2.5.2 Socioeconomic deprivation in South Africa

Post-apartheid South Africa is plagued by many disparities, but specifically the distribution of wealth and resources which, in turn, has far reaching negative implications (Drass-Brailsford, 2005:576). Currently, South Africa is facing a number of unique socioeconomic challenges including high mortality rates; poverty and single parenthood (Cluver *et al.*, 2007:775), rapid urbanisation with children living long distances from their schools as well as children living with relatives in urban areas so as to enable them to take advantage of the perceived better educational facilities (Kok & Collinson, 2006:16, Van der Berg & Louw, 2004: 546–572). In addition, South Africa is in the midst of the world's most severe HIV/Aids pandemic with a predicted rise in the number of orphans from 830 000 to 2,3 million by 2020 (Stats SA Key Findings Report 1995–2005). Recent findings show that it is predominantly family members, including grand/great-grandparents, who are caring for orphaned children and who are responsible for nurturing and educating these children under difficult circumstances (Stats SA Key Findings Report 1995–2005). These family members often live at great distances from both the main centres and from schools. In addition, they are overextended financially and they are struggling to educate and care for these children (Cluver *et al.*, 2007:775).

Despite the fact that post-apartheid South Africa is a modern constitutional democracy, the overall unemployment rate for black South Africans exceeds 30% with young people and women being disproportionately affected (Hallman & Diers, 2004:1). This latter fact has implications for urban households as these households are generally headed by females and the income earned by females tends to fall within the bottom half of income distribution (Statistics South Africa, 2005).

High levels of socioeconomic deprivation have implications for the mental health of adolescents as the socioeconomic context in which they live tends to impinge not only on their present level of mental health but also on their view of the future.

2.5.3 Implications of socioeconomic deprivation for adolescents in South Africa

In a review of existing studies which have been conducted in South Africa it was found that psychiatric conditions, after HIV and Aids and other infectious diseases, rank third in their contribution to the burden of disease (Lund, Stein, Corrigan,

Bradshaw, Schneider & Flisher, 2008:444). In addition, up to 17% of all children and adolescents are currently suffering from anxiety and depression (South African Depression and Anxiety Group, 2010). In low-income families living in informal settlements maternal mental health problems have reached epidemic proportions with high levels of post-natal depression. Statistics indicate that 41% of pregnant women suffer from clinical depression (South African Depression and Anxiety Group 2010). There is a significant correlation between mental ill health and poverty and socioeconomic deprivation. Constant exposure to stressful life events such as crime, violence, inadequate housing and unemployment all contribute to feelings of disempowerment and social isolation (Chisholm, *et al.*, 2007:1). The researcher contends that the numerous risk factors are often experienced simultaneously by indigent adolescents, with poverty and socioeconomic deprivation forming the basis of the stressors. Parental attributes or behaviours such as alcohol abuse or depression threaten the security of adolescents with devastating effects on their own current mental health. In terms of this study it is of importance to assess the possibility of an optimistic future orientation among indigent adolescents despite the constant threat posed by poverty and deprivation to family structures.

2.5.3.1 Implications of socioeconomic deprivation on affective relationships

Socioeconomic factors render parents and caregivers alike vulnerable to depression which, in turn, results in a destabilisation of their relationships with the adolescents in their care (Alperstein & Raman, 2003:270). Research indicates that stress which is generated by socioeconomic deprivation results in inconsistent parenting. According to Smith, Brooks-Gunn, Kohen and Mc Carton (2001:1513), this parenting style is less supportive, less involved and both coercive and abrasive. Smith *et al.* (2001:1531) also contend that these less effective and lower quality parent-child interactions lead to higher rates of behavioural and school related problems. Poor mental health among caregivers (most often depression) is linked with increased familial conflict and discordant parent-adolescent interactions (Linver, Brooks-Gunn & Kohen, 2000:3). Poverty and depressive symptoms in adolescence are often associated with long-term decreases in attachment security (Allen, McElhaney, Kuperminic & Jodl, 2004:45). Loss of security and a strained familial environment may all combine with the stressors associated with adolescent development (Hallman & Diers, 2004:3). Adolescents are, thus, vulnerable as they lack parental

support and guidance at a time when they require role models and assistance in making the transition to adulthood. Poor parental mental health is also associated with less effective emotional, social and cognitive outcomes in children and adolescents (Linver *et al.*, 2000:3). Accordingly, it is not poverty per se that impacts negatively on the adolescent but rather the overwhelming multiple and simultaneous emotional and psychosocial impact which poverty has over a long-term basis in interrupting familial security and, thus, leading to higher rates of behavioural and school-related problems.

2.5.3.2 Teen pregnancy and HIV

Social isolation as a result of socioeconomic deprivation is associated with both teenage pregnancy and HIV in South Africa (Hallman & Diers, 2004:3). Social isolation increases the risk of early sexual behaviour on the part of both boys and girls. Sexual behaviour among girls coexists with economically motivated encounters and lower negotiating power in sexual relationships (Hallman & Diers, 2004:3). Poverty is a determinant of adolescent pregnancy risk and early parenthood with 30% of females giving birth before the age of twenty (Stats SA Key Findings Report 1995–2005). The researcher contends that socioeconomic deprivation isolates the teenage girl and further overwhelms her in her impoverished situation. This lack of self actualisation tends to impact not only on her current circumstances but it diminishes her ability to change her future circumstances. Early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners as well as risky sexual behaviour co-exist with substance abuse (Laura, 2000:65)

2.5.3.3 Substance abuse

According to Berk (2006:616) the majority of adolescents experiment with substances such as alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. In industrialised urban societies adolescent exposure to adults using substances in order to cope is a common occurrence (Berk, 2006:508). Herrel and Roberts (2003:8) maintain that drug and alcohol abuse occurs because of a combination of biogenetic and environmental factors. They argue that interacting factors, including social and environmental factors (overcrowding and poverty), all put adolescents at risk for substance abuse (Herrel & Roberts, 2003:10). Within low socioeconomic contexts family mental health problems also exist, thus increasing the incidence of breakdowns in family

relationships as a result of depression and anxiety (Linver *et al.*, 2000:3). Bray (2002:8) states that alcohol abuse is often associated with difficult family situations and an increase in peer influences. In comparison, children within strong family structures tend to be able to act independently of peer pressure (Bray, 2002:8).

The researcher acknowledges that, while substance abuse is a universal phenomenon and that it is associated with the developmental transition of adolescence (Rogers & Mc Gee, 2003:3), South Africa's unique situation compounds the issue. Overcrowded communities, intense poverty and child headed households as a result of HIV reduce the opportunities which adolescents have of encountering positive role models and, instead, they are often exposed to addicts and drug dealers (Mansell & Lui, 2003:50). It is, thus, inevitable that low socioeconomic contexts correlate with an increase in substance abuse with alcohol and drugs being used to mitigate the powerful effects of poverty (Berk, 2006:617). A dependency on drugs in order to cope with stressors becomes the norm as the adolescent lacks parental support in terms of the teaching of responsible decision-making skills and alternative coping techniques (Berk, 2006:617). With a background of overwhelming socio-economic deprivation and the lack of familial support, substance abuse may be utilised as a response to current life circumstances. Nevertheless, this substance abuse has far-reaching implications for the future orientation of adolescents.

2.6 FUTURE ORIENTATION

2.6.1 Introduction

From a theoretical perspective the developing adolescent is psychologically, emotionally and cognitively capable of individuating from his/her family environment. Contextual aspects of adolescent transition within the adolescents' current environmental conditions not only influence their behaviour in the present time frame but also their future goals and dreams. The future as a temporal benchmark becomes critical as children reach adolescence – their environment expands and they plan ahead while making realistic evaluations of their ability to attain future goals.

2.6.2 Future orientation: a description

According to Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000:64) and Seginer (2009:x) 'future orientation' as a concept refers to a complex and multidimensional process. It also signifies a collection of schemata, attitudes and assumptions based on previous experiences (Seginer, 2009:x). These schemata interact with incoming information from the individual's current environment to form expectations for the future, set goals and give personal meaning to future events (Seginer 2009: x). According to the researcher these representations are rooted in both the past and the current environment depending on the unique experiences or perceptions of the individual and they may be either positive or negative.

Historically Erikson (1968:31) defined future orientation as "the present with an anticipated future" while Kurt Lewin (1939:879) emphasised a psychological future, believing it to be of particular relevance in adolescence as compared to children , developmentally, the adolescent has greater cognitive and psychosocial abilities. These abilities provide the impetus required to move toward adulthood (including future ideals). Lewin believed that the perception of time ahead influences present behaviour with the future as an integral part of each individual's present 'life space' (Lewin, 1939:879). Mello (2009:539) describes future orientation as a cognitive-motivational concept that, if positive, may foster positive developmental outcomes. Eccles and Wigfield (2002:109) associate positive future orientation with improved educational attainment whilst Zimbardo and Boyd (1999:1272) regard it as a powerful explanatory aspect of both positive and negative behaviours. Lewin (1939:31) concurs with these previous writers in suggesting that the way in which the individual perceives each temporal dimension contributes to his/her behaviour.

Specific developmental conditions exist for the construction of future orientation however these are underpinned by the context of the macro-system (socio-political structures). This macro-system influences the smaller micro-system (familial and peer relationships). At the heart of these two systems is the formation of adolescent identity that is fundamental to the autonomous individuation and future orientation of the adolescent.

2.6.3 Conditions for the construction of a future orientation

2.6.3.1 Identity

According to Erikson's historical developmental theory adolescents have the psychological maturity with which to engage in identity work and to build on their future expectations and goals (Erikson, 1968:31). In setting future-oriented goals the adolescent identifies several different alternatives from their environment and is therefore able to direct his/her own development while negotiating a course toward adulthood (Erikson, 1968:32; Nurmi *et al.*, 1995:356). Cauffman and Steinberg (2000:745) concur with this viewpoint and specify that adolescents who are fifteen years of age and older have a greater tendency to consider the future compared to early adolescents. Social settings play an important role since adolescents integrate the past, present and future within their specific context (Mello, 2009:540). According to Seginer (2009:243) and Berk (2006:460), proximal and distal aspects of the adolescent's social settings and self-identity are integrated. In terms of this study, adolescents integrate the socioeconomic deprivation they face into their self-structure as their impoverished context is not merely the setting against which development takes place (Wheeler, 2002:50). Symbolic of the developmental trajectory from adolescence into adulthood is the mature nature of the life course domains such as higher education, work, career, marriage and family (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:493; Seginer, 2009: 244). Mello (2009:543) indicates that time related concepts are, by and large, motivational and play an important role in motivating the youth both to act and to identify with time perspectives in order to work toward future goals. According to Erikson (1968:33), once adolescent identity has been established then intimate relationships become figural and the adolescent focuses on romantic relationships (Seginer & Noyman, 2005:30). Erikson (1968:34).emphasises that the development of intimacy is contingent on achieving identity as both contain elements of individuality and connectedness.

Adolescent identity formation begins a lifelong process that is dynamic as it blends both personality (self) and context. Atkinson (2006:6) regards identity as a bridge between the individual and social reality, providing a sense of meaningfulness. Integral to identity is the way in which individuals evaluate themselves within their context and their own self-esteem. Identity is reformulated when there are adjustments within the context, including changes in the way in which the individuals

perceive themselves (self-esteem). Accordingly, self-esteem has implications for identity formation – both under current conditions as well as for the construction of future aspirations.

2.6.3.2 Self-esteem

According to Berk (2006:449), self-esteem is an appraisal which individuals apply to their own sense of worth. This appraisal is a self-judgement and has an effect on adolescent future aspirations. Louw *et al.* (2002:285) agree with this assessment and go on to say that, while self-concept refers to the individual's view of him/her, self-esteem is a personal evaluation of the individual's characteristics. According to Seginer (2009:196), the 'self' creates self-esteem as it is the organiser and interpreter of individual experiences. Self-esteem and future orientation are two different constructs with one influencing the other (Seginer, 2009:196). Hartner and Whitesell (2003:1028) maintain that adolescent self-esteem guides a wide range of behaviours from academic achievement to social behaviour. Accordingly, those who perceive themselves to have a high level of esteem tend to be well adjusted and sociable (Berk, 2006:450). Self-efficacy beliefs, in turn, influence personal motivational processes, affect and behaviours (Bandura, 2001: 23).

Individuals with a low self-esteem also suffer with low self-efficacy and tend to harbour pessimistic thoughts regarding their personal development and accomplishments. As children reach adolescence they are able to engage in self-evaluation with the result that self-esteem positively assists with future orientation. Self-esteem indicates emotional health and makes it possible to attend to both current and future tasks. Hartner and Whitesell (2003:1028), together with Seginer (2009:63), agree that self-esteem also relates to values, experience, internal control and self-evaluation.

In short, those individuals who value themselves also value their current tasks and this tends to affect their view of the future which, in such cases, will be well defined and optimistic. Adolescent self-esteem is affected by the memory laid down in childhood and this impacts not only on their current self-evaluation, but also on their ability to define their future orientations. In addition, the micro-system of the familial and peer environment impacts and encodes the evaluations that the adolescents make regarding themselves.

2.6.4 The micro-systemic impact on future orientation

Seginer (2009:153) and Burley and Freier (2004:326) maintain that both parental and peer influences impact on the future orientation of the adolescent. Burley and Freier (2004:326) emphasise that the procedural memory laid down in early childhood impacts on the adolescent self-esteem, in particular with regard to the way in which they contact the environment. Santrock (2006:405) states that, although the attachment between adolescents and parents remains strong, nevertheless as the adolescent creates his/her own identity there comes a breakdown in connectedness. Identity formation and individuation allow adolescents to move toward autonomy and they are able to evaluate their own characteristics (Berk, 2006:449; Erikson, 1968:31; Lewin, 1939:879). Both current and past parental influences link indirectly via the adolescents' 'self' with parental future thinking and are related to their children's perceptions of the future (Seginer, 2009:153).

Social interaction and peer influences increase in adolescence (Atkinson, 2006:8). Peer relationships influence the adolescent as they connect to adolescent future orientation via self-agency and self-esteem (Seginer, 2009:154). These peer relationships may impact either positively or negatively on the individual adolescent's future orientation. The micro-system of family and peers all function within the context of a broader macro-system that has, in turn, an over-arching impact. This macro-system, including the socio-political and economic aspects, has an uncompromising long-term influence and dictates the functionality and future orientation of the individuals within the micro-systems.

2.6.5 The macro-systemic impact on future orientation

Social class, cultural orientation and the availability of economic resources and opportunities 'colour' all aspects of individual development (Trommsdorff, 2002:132 Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005:395; Seginer, 2009:153). The permeating influence of the macro-system is the focus of this research study, in particular the pervasive influence of socioeconomic deprivation on the future orientation of adolescents.

According to Carter and Murdock (2001:20), the socioeconomic stressors delineated in section 2.5 have a cumulative, rather than a unitary, effect. Socioeconomic deprivation may jeopardise growth and development as the individual's trust and security is compromised (Carter & Murdock, 2001:21). However, despite the high

risk of negative psychosocial outcomes as described above, a large majority of adolescents do succeed in avoiding negative outcomes (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:493; Drass-Brailsford, 2005:575; Mello, 2009:545).

The ability to strive for a positive future is an aspect of resilience in terms of which at risk individuals make every effort to claim a positive future despite economically deprived current circumstances.

2.6.6 Future orientation and resilience

Resilience, which is a term derived mainly from humanistic psychology theory, focuses on human strengths and refers to the ability to remain competent despite stressful life circumstances. It is a subjective term which focuses on a sense of mastery, competence and coping in the face of adversity (Baruth & Carroll, 2002:236; Walsh, 2003:400). Drass-Brailsford (2005:581) describes future orientation as the ability to be goal orientated, take the initiative and be motivated regarding the future. She also specifies that it is an act of personal responsibility. Several studies have shown that indigent adolescents who have positive expectations of the future are less likely to engage in substance abuse and experience psychological distress, teen pregnancy or delinquency (McLoyd, cited in Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:63).

Accordingly, future orientation may be regarded as a protective factor among low-income, at risk, urban adolescents (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000:492; Mello, 2009:539) as these adolescents will be enabled to link current choices and behaviour to future goals (Mello, 2009:539). Clausen (1991:841) found that future planning relates to upward social mobility in adulthood. In addition, Mello (2009:539) states that, in low-income African American adolescents, positive future expectations differentiate resilient adolescents from non-resilient adolescents. In order to defeat the all-pervasive negative effects of socioeconomic deprivation that is sometimes generational it is essential that adolescents in South Africa be encouraged to become resilient. Resilience is sometimes described as an ordinary magic enabling some individuals to make progress despite difficult circumstances (Killian, in Pharoah, 2004:33). Future orientation among socioeconomically deprived youths is an aspect of this 'magic' that bestows on these adolescents the opportunity to be empowered in changing their circumstances through positive future aspirations.

2.6.7 Conclusion

This research is primarily concerned with the impact of the environment on the individual's 'possible self'. This 'possible self' refers to a representation of the self in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986:954). The study focuses on the degree to which individuals are able to view their hopes, fears and plans for the future from their current reality. The self develops within specific social and personal conditions (Wheeler, 2002:50). The researcher aims to ascertain whether individuals who live in South Africa, and whose current socioeconomic conditions are deprived, are able to visualise their future in a realistic way. The focus is on the adolescent as described in the historical theories of Erikson's (1968) psychosocial development theory and Lewin's (1939) 'life space' interpretation of field theory.

The focus of this chapter has been on individual adolescent development and future orientation within the specific context of South Africa. Chapter 3 focuses particularly on the Gestalt paradigm with a description of the adolescent according to the basic tenets of Gestalt theory. These include field theory, holism, phenomenological perspective and organismic self-regulation. In chapter 3 the researcher will also endeavour to describe adolescent development according to the Lewinian–Gestalt developmental paradigm.

CHAPTER 3

THE GESTALT PARADIGM AND ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Babbie (2010, p. 33) asserts that paradigms may be regarded as frameworks – ways of looking at life. Paradigms include assumptions, concepts, values and practices – all pertaining to a particular worldview. Chapter 3 presents a concise description of the Gestalt paradigm with reference to adolescent future orientation within a socioeconomically deprived context. Gestalt, a German word, embraces the whole shape or form (configuration) as it promotes the integration of body, emotion and intellect while, at the same time, also noting the influence of individual need fulfilment within the context of a social environment (Clarkson 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, Gestalt theory is humanistic and existential as it perceives human beings as having existential choice and responsibility (Clarkson, 2004, p. 14). According to the researcher the indigent adolescents in this study have little control over their current socioeconomic circumstances. However, they do still retain the ability to make choices and to assume responsibility for both their current behaviour and future aspirations. Gestalt theory asserts that all human development occurs through interaction with the environment (Kepner, 1987, p. 12) as each individual is an integral element of an environmental field. This connectivity permeates all aspects of the Gestalt paradigm and is described by Yontef (1993, p. 322) as a “field attitude”. Accordingly, the individual adolescents in this study are intentionally described according to their subjective/phenomenological experiences within a field that is in a constant state of flux (Yontef, 1993, p. 322).

Field theory views the self as existing only in comparison with another as an interdependent and inseparable aspect of the field (Yontef, 1993, p. 322). Chapter 3 describes the adolescent as being inter-reliant on his/her environment and as part of a complex web of relationships characteristic of his/her field. In the first section of the chapter the field perspective provides the introduction and foundation of the discussion. The next section applies the basic tenets of gestalt developmental theory to the adolescent, with specific relevance to this study.

3.1.1 Field theory

The field comprises the largest and almost boundless system and includes a temporal dimension of past, present and future. Any part of the field that is figural at any point in time may be regarded as a subset of a larger field. Thus, a system, an organisation, a family or an individual forms a subset of a larger field (Resnick, 2009, p. 2). The individual indigent adolescent, who is part of a larger subsystem of family, is the subset figural for this study. All subsystems interact and are interdependent in respect of the larger field of South Africa. This implies that each individual in South Africa is a member of different subsystems and, thus, ultimately forms part of a unified, integrated whole. Yontef (1993, p. 321) defines 'the field' as "the totality of forces that together form a unified, interactive, integrative and continuous whole". Everything within the field is perpetually in flux, thus signifying that the field is continuously changing, moving and 'becoming' as nothing remains static. According to Pinquart and Sibereisen (2005, p. 396) socio-political change, as is apparent within the South African context, and as is described in chapter 2, is a pervasive feature influencing adolescent development.

Yontef (1993, p. 321) concurs with Pinquart and Sibereisen (2005, p. 396) when he describes the field as an interdependent, systematic web of relationships (1993, p. 321) and he suggests that socio-political status impacts on the developing adolescent. There is a concurrent evolution of both the environmental context and the developing adolescent, who has reached puberty and is in transition from childhood into adulthood.

In view of the fact that all phenomena within a field are determined by the field itself (Yontef, 1993, p. 383) the phenomenon of puberty as the transition between childhood and adulthood has been determined historically within the field itself. In bygone traditional cultures the field dictated that ceremonies or rites of passage marked the transition between childhood and adulthood (Atkinson, 2006, p. 1). Although the culturally diverse, urban, indigent adolescents of today may or may not formally mark the changeover to adolescence, nevertheless, their adaptation to their socioeconomically deprived field is inevitable. As a result, the researcher suggests that, under these unique field conditions, a key element of the transition into adulthood may be the capacity to attain financial independence. The ability to project

into the future and perceive the future in a positive manner (future orientation) is of relevance to indigent adolescents who need to attain financial independence in order to alter their socially deprived status. Clausen (1991, p. 841) maintains that adolescents who have the ability to visualise and perceive a positive future, despite negative current field conditions, are more likely to be productive members of society in adulthood.

According to Lewin (1939, p. 875), behaviour manifests and is both functional and deemed acceptable/unacceptable within the field of which it is part. The universal experimental behaviour found among adolescents, for example, alcohol and drugs, may be perceived by the field as an essential aspect of the transition into adulthood. Berk (2006:16) suggests that some adults who occupy an urban, socioeconomically deprived field generally tolerate adolescent experimentation as, from the adults' perspective, this experimentation is both integral to the adolescent developmental phase and a common coping mechanism utilised by the adults themselves (Herrel & Roberts, 2003, p. 8). Unfortunately, adolescents who are unable to cease this experimentation have a tendency to continue to engage in the high risk behaviours as described in chapter 2. As previously mentioned, the lack of future orientation influences the adolescent's ability to adjust socially unacceptable behaviour in a manner which is supportive of positive, long-term, psychosocial outcomes.

Lewin confirms the effects of interdependency within a field when he states that the condition of any one part of a field is dependent on the condition of every other part of the field (Lewin, in Yontef, 1993, p. 306). The contextually high levels of socioeconomic deprivation which are currently being experienced in South Africa impact negatively on the behaviour of indigent adolescents (McCabe & Barnett, 2000, p. 63; Carter & Murdock 2001, p. 21) and increase the risk of these adolescents moving into adulthood without any future planning or goals.

According to Lewin (in Yontef, 1993, p. 306) the establishment of health and pathology in a current field originates in a prior field (past). In contemporary South Africa adolescents are not subject to the apartheid laws that affected the education and earning potential of their grandparents and parents. However, despite the abolition of apartheid in 1994, the wealth distribution is still skewed in South Africa (Drass-Brailsford, 2005, p. 575) with this generation having inherited the

socioeconomic deprivation and the resultant negative impact of this deprivation on their psychological health (Carter & Murdock, 2001, p. 21).

Lewin, who was the pioneer of field theory, promoted the concept of an individual as multifaceted and as developing within a field perspective (Clarkson & McKewn, 1993, p. 7; Perret-Cleremont, 2004, p. 120). In addition, Lewin argued that personality (self) is observable only within the context of the dynamic field and specifically as the individual interacts within the environment.

3.1.1.1 Defining the term 'life space'

An individual's 'life space' comprises the biological, psychological and social dimensions of an integrated field (Lewin, 1952, p. 54) and refers to the map of the developing person's phenomenological field the unique space which each individual occupies (Lewin, 1952, p. 54). According to Brownell (2008, p. 230), Lewin used the terms 'field' and 'life space' synonymously with part of the field being real and present and part being phenomenological in its orientation. The researcher concurs with Brownell (2008, p. 230) in his differentiation of the two concepts of 'field' and 'life space'. An individual has a 'life space' while, in addition, the individual is also simultaneously part of a larger, unified field. In terms of this study the researcher is interested in the subjective, phenomenological perspective of the life space of adolescents within their unique, familial subsystems – including the overarching impact of the unified field (South Africa) on their future orientation.

Kurt Lewin's 'life space' theory (1952, p. 54) introduced a temporal perspective to field theory with his specifying that behaviour is dependent on the present field and not on past encounters. The principle of contemporaneity is also included in this theory and will now be briefly discussed.

Contemporaneity and life space

Contemporaneity refers to awareness of the present moment (present-centeredness) (Clarkson 2004, p. 11). Lewin perceived the individual as having a 'life space' in which the present/current temporal perspective is figural with representations of past experiences and future expectations being regarded as the background. According to Lewin this may either mean that a specific situation may include elements of the past that are being remembered in the 'now'; or else that predictions of the future are

being anticipated in the present moment (Lewin, 1952, p. 54). Accordingly, despite the fact that the psychological past and future remain integral to the individual's 'life space', but are not central to it, the focus remains on "what is" (Lewin, 1952, p. 54). With reference to this study a phenomenological experience within a temporal perspective includes the entire environmental field of the adolescent at a particular moment. In addition, with the meaning ascribed to an event, all unfinished business comes into awareness, including any wishes or fears the adolescent may have regarding the future (Yontef, 1993, p. 309).

In this study the researcher interviewed the participating adolescents with the aim of recording the figural, phenomenological experiences of indigent adolescents in respect of their future in the present moment (here and now). In addition, the researcher aimed to describe the adolescents' future aspirations in a holistic manner including, *inter alia*, their biological, familial and social worlds (life space) within a unified, systematic whole (field).

3.1.2 Holism

Holism, which is fundamental to Gestalt theory, refers to the perception of the individual as a unified whole and who functions interdependently and recursively within an unified environment. The holistic self is an inseparable unity of bodily, emotional and mental experience that affect the integrity of language, thought and behaviour. The physiological and mental dynamics of the individual contribute to the sense of self and interact with the environment. The human being is embodied and fluid, rather than static, with the self making contact with the environment and adjusting to environmental changes. According to Kepner (1987, p. 11), 'the self regulates'. Perls (1976, p. 49) perceives the mind and body as co-operative and harmonious. In terms of this study the embodied, holistic adolescent is inclusive of pubertal, hormonal, cognitive and psychosocial changes. The changes in brain chemistry and the ability to reason and think abstractedly enable the adolescent to integrate past, present and future (Atkinson, 2006, p. 5) and, in this way, permit future expectations to become figural. All biological and psychosocial changes converge and enable a transition into adulthood, thus forcing the adolescent to contact his/her 'life space' in a different way. The adolescent is able to apply enhanced cognitive skills in order to consider the future. This ability to reflect on the

future occurs in conjunction with past and present experiences as a backdrop. In conclusion the adolescent's unique, current and past experiences are organised by the 'self' which makes contact with the environment and assimilates and integrates these experiences into the self-structure.

The adolescent assimilates experiences by applying a unique, subjective perspective to these experiences. This subjective experience is of interest in terms of Gestalt theory and also for this study which focuses on the individual's phenomenological perspective.

3.1.3 Phenomenological perspective

Perls (1976, p. 45) states that human beings seek meaning and actively ascribe meaning to experiences in the field. This phenomenological view represents a subjective stance in terms of which all objects exist only according to the distinctive meaning accorded to them by a specific individual. According to Polster and Polster (1973, p. 29) individual meanings or perceptions are not passive as the person places its target of perception into a place of rich, detailed scrutiny and concentration (figure), and leaves any extraneous experiences in the background (ground).

Consequently, indigent adolescents, who are experiencing socioeconomic deprivation, attribute different meanings to their circumstances. According to Killian (in Pharoah, 2004, p. 33), resilient adolescents believe that they capable of rising above their current poverty and deprivation and they succeed in predicting a realistic positive future for themselves (Mello, 2009, p. 539). The phenomenological meaning which adolescents accord to their futures within the context of their current, socioeconomically deprived circumstances is important in the context of this study. Those adolescents who lack resilience will perceive their current circumstances as the predictor of their futures (a self-fulfilling prophecy) and they will believe that they have little choice or responsibility in terms of changing their future outcomes. The self is not self-contained but rather it exists as an element of a broader field (subsystem). The individual 'self' co-creates phenomenological meaning within the environmental subsystems (family/school) and not in a unilateral, isolated manner.

3.1.4 The self

The self is a phenomenological concept which exists in comparison with “other” (Polster & Polster, 1973, p. 48). Without the other there is no selfhood as the self is achieved in relationship rather than as something inside of an individual. In addition, the self is not a structure or a fixed institution but it is a process – an organising process that is constantly in flux and which changes as it makes contact with the environment (Yontef, 1993, p. 288). According to Yontef (1993, p. 226), human beings are self-determining, choice-making, responsible and active. The Gestalt philosophy advocates individual choice and responsibility and, thus, deviates from the dominant, individualistic, Newtonian paradigm which is deterministic in its orientation (Brownell, 2008, p. 229). The researcher is of the opinion that believing in choices and having future “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954) would allow the indigent adolescent in South Africa an opportunity to take control and to change the generational influences of poverty (Drass-Brailsford, 2005, p. 575). The self is fundamentally need-driven and it is the need or interest of the individual which organises the field (Lewin, 1936, p. 68). In the context of adolescent development the 15 to 17-year-old youth is on the brink of making his/her debut into society as an autonomous adult. At this stage in development it is necessary both to consider and to predict future outcomes, especially in accordance with to the predominant domains including, *inter alia*, higher education, work, career, marriage and family (Seginer, 2009:244).

It bears repeating that adolescent development and identity formation take place within a specific context (field). The researcher, using the Gestalt perspective as a theoretical framework of departure, is interested in the dynamic interplay between adolescent identity formation within the domains as described by Seginer (2009, p. 244). Contact refers to the interaction between the ‘self’ and the environment that takes place within the context of the unified field.

3.1.5 Contact and assimilation

According to Perls (1976, p. 16) no individual is self-sufficient and "everything is of a field". The individual is constantly interacting with the environment and it is in this way that the self seeks to contact the ‘other’ (Bowman, 2005, p. 31). Each human being survives in his/her environment by means of a creative exchange which may

be termed contact and assimilation. This exchange is essential and it may be physical, emotional, literal or metaphorical (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, p. 60). All changes within individuals and their environment are interrelated and they manifest throughout the system with all phenomena having equal relevance (Clarkson & Mackewn, 1993, p. 63).

The sequential development from childhood to adulthood begins with the primary caregiver meeting the child's predominant needs. According to Yontef (1993, p. 155), this stage of childhood development is characterised by parental nurturance and the facilitating of the child's potential. Parents who, because of long-term, socioeconomic deprivation, lack the inner resources to accomplish parental nurturing may distort the child's ability to make healthy contact with the environment (Yontef, 1993, p. 155; Smith *et al.*, Brooks-Gunn, Kohen & Mc Carton, 2001, p. 1513). This may result in the child having a lowered self-esteem that may impact on the child's performance in the current field and on his/her view of the future. Intrinsic biological and psychosocial changes impact on the individual's personal experience of the environment with socioeconomic deprivation influencing the current perception the individual has of him/herself, his/her environment as well as his/her future. The repeated unfulfilled needs from childhood follow on into adolescence with needs not being assimilated into the self-structure. As a result such adolescents operate 'out of awareness' – separate from their own existence (Yontef, 1993, p. 140). It will be of interest to investigate whether this concept is applicable to the individuals who participated in this study.

3.1.6 Awareness

Awareness refers to the experience of 'right now' – the present, contextual awareness of the environment. Perls (1976, p. 66) states that, without awareness, there is no recognition of choice or even self-realisation. According to Polster and Polster (1973, p. 227) a recognition of wants/desires is essential in order to engender any focused action at all. Similar to any awareness experience is the experience of 'wants' which directs, mobilises and focuses the individual. A 'want' has a linking function that integrates present experience with the future where gratification may lie. It also links with the past as 'wants' grow from the point at which one has been making sense of emotions in the moment of wanting (Polster &

Polster, 1973, p. 227). Awareness complements 'owning' with 'owning' referring to a process of knowing and taking control of thoughts, behaviours and feelings (Resnick, 2009, p. 2). In addition, awareness of self is not only fundamental but its foundation is the social field inclusive of language, time, and culture and circumstances (Fodor, 2009, p. 55). The socioeconomic deprivation and resulting negative socio-political influences integrate into the self-structure and are not merely the setting against which development takes place (Wheeler, 2002, p. 50).

Long-term socio-economic deprivation may lead to ongoing, unmet needs which the individual may, in turn, distort, deny and displace. Individuals tend to inhibit their desires/wants including the awareness of the desire. This tends to bring an end to continued suffering and it impedes the danger of the awareness (Perls *et al.*, 1951). Future career dreams and goals, if never addressed, become unmet needs and they inhibit the adolescent's ability to look towards the future with even the awareness of a possible future diminishing. The lack of future awareness will be addressed as part of this study as the researcher wishes to ascertain the amount of reflection and thought which indigent adolescents devote to considering their futures as well as whether they engage with family members/peers about their future goals.

According to Lewin (in Yontef 1993, p. 306), future awareness influences current behaviour as behaviour is part of the experiential field. Mello (2009, p. 540) associates a lack of future orientation both with an increase in impulsive, risky conduct and with the adolescent essentially acting outside of awareness (Resnick, 2009, p. 2). Human beings are primarily oriented toward growth and each individual will form itself into the best 'Gestalt' that global field conditions will allow (Resnick, 2009, p. 2) As there is an interdependent relationship with the environmental field each individual within a field helps to create the reality of others in the field (Parlett, 2005, p. 71). In addition, and according to Yontef (1993, p. 140) the act of awareness is contemporaneously configured in the 'here and now' even if the content (memories) may be from the past. If the history of the field is one of generational, socioeconomic deprivation then the conviction that this reality will never change – this "fixed gestalt" or obsolete response (Perls *et al.*, 1951, p. 255) – will crystallise. The character structure of the field will be inflexible and will influence the phenomenological self of the adolescent. According to Resnick (2009, p. 2) and

Perls *et al.* (1951, p. 139) obsolete responses become habitual in an environmental context and, therefore, an adolescent developing within this context will struggle to see beyond the crystallised character of the environment to possibilities of change and to developing their future 'possible self'. According to Resnick (2009, p. 10) an individual's failure to change and develop has more to do with societal institutions than with personal pathology. The incessant poverty and unrelenting social changes with a continued rise in teen pregnancies (Hallman & Diers, 2004, p. 3) relates fundamentally to societal structure rather than to the own limitations of individuals.

According to Fodor (2009, p. 57) difficulty in making decisions and choices is a deficit in the 'awareness of awareness' as there is clearly an inability to keep up to date with the self (Polster & Polster, 1973, p. 211). Indigent adolescents who lack the ability to make decisions that will benefit their future orientation often engage in risky behaviours (Linver *et al.*, 2000, p. 3).

Gestalt theory is holistic (see 3.1.4) and, thus, it upholds the belief that all people are self-regulating and oriented toward growth. Organismic self-regulation refers to the manner in which people adjust by conforming to their circumstances and reacting to their needs by utilising their own innate resources as well as resources within the field.

3.1.7 Organismic self-regulation

All organisms have an innate drive toward growth and self-actualisation. In addition, human beings, as organisms, are naturally self-regulating and meet their needs in order to live (Perls, 1976, p. 45). However, when deficiencies in the environment exist and needs are repeatedly unmet then the organism will seek to compensate. In terms of Gestalt theory socially unacceptable behaviour, such as substance abuse, promiscuity and teen pregnancy among indigent adolescents, is their creative way of dealing with a difficult situation (Haley, Sieber & Maples, 2003, p. 203). The inadequacy of an environment (described in chapter 2) over an extended period of time means that alternative ways of self regulation are attempted in the form of risky, socially unacceptable behaviour. According to the Newtonian schools of thought unacceptable behaviour is pathological and linear in its orientation with a simple causal explanation (Yontef, 1993, p. 381). On the other hand, the Gestalt paradigm distances itself from this mechanistic view and takes into account all the interacting

factors in the field that may contribute to this unacceptable behaviour (Yontef, 1993, p. 381). According to the Gestalt paradigm socially unacceptable or pathological behaviour is an attempt by the organism to reach equilibrium and to self-regulate.

Adolescent development, both biological as well as psychological, requires a new phase of growth and responsibility – organismic self-regulation within a changing field (Perls *et al.*, 1951, p. 303). Lewinian-Gestalt theory views this maturation holistically within the interdependent involvement of the field.

3.2 BASIC TENETS OF DEVELOPMENT FROM A GESTALT PERSPECTIVE

Perls *et al.* (1951, p. 199) define the maturation of the individual as an evolution from environmental support in infancy to self-support in adulthood. This maturation process involves a transcending of parental dependence by the adolescent in a process of alteration and complication (Perls *et al.* 1951, p. 199). Growth and development alter the adolescent's 'life space' and, specifically, the way in which the adolescent accords meaning to his/her situation (Perls *et al.*, 1951, p. 305). The environment increases in complexity in order to accommodate the adolescent's transformation. Input from alternative social influences increases with supplementary adult relationships and stronger ties to peers (Perls *et al.*, 1951, p. 199–200). Within the framework of field theory Lewin has conceptualised and expanded on Perls *et al.*'s (1951, p. 199) general concepts of development and maturation with Lewin explaining development as a multifaceted phenomenon with changes and shifts in ideology and belonging within the unified field (Perret-Cleremont, 2004, p. 122).

3.2.1 Lewinian–Gestalt developmental theory

Developmental theories in general consider one dimension of functioning (see chapter 2). Piaget focused exclusively on cognitive functioning, Erikson on psychosocial development and Kohlberg on moral development. However, despite the fact that each of these developmental models contributes to the understanding of adolescent development, none of them is holistic in its orientation.

Conversely, the Gestalt perspective of development is interested in the **process** of the developing self in relation to the field (Mc Conville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 10). Lewinian field theory dictates that there is an integration of the biological, psychological and social aspects of adolescent development, thus referring to an

holistic self within a life space (Woldt & Toman, 2005, p. 180). The external field includes the familial, social, cultural, political and geographical aspects that impact on the adolescent's development.

Lewinian-Gestalt developmental theory concedes the adolescent's need to individuate the "self" as separate from the family. These acts of individuation often manifest as rebellion and experimentation. Mc Conville and Wheeler (2001, p. 35) refer to this process as 'disembedding' as the familial influence is no longer a primary influence with the adolescent perhaps choosing alternate relationships with adults outside of the family. There is also a tendency on the part of the adolescent to focus inward, thus developing the self (identity formation). Once this process is complete the individual may pursue an intimate partner/first-love (Erikson 1968, p. 273; Toman & Bauer, 2005, p. 182; Atkinson, 2006, p. 1).

A gradual release of both physical and psychological dependency on the parental subsystem ensues until the adolescent has achieved self-support. However, neither self-support nor self-reliance occurs in isolation but rather within a mutual interdependency with family and other adults. Effective separation relies on the way in which the familial field tolerates the manner in which adolescents individuate and redefine themselves (Toman & Bauer, 2005, p. 186; Santrock, 2006, p. 399). It is in this way that parental and familial influences impact on the adolescent and, in turn, the way in which the adolescent's development impacts recursively on the family (Toman & Bauer, 2005, p. 186).

In illustrating the individuation (disembedding) process Lewin contributed three key phases of field theory which are relevant for the conceptualising of the adolescent life space. Each phase is contextual and involves the interplay between the individual adolescent and his/her interdependent relationship with the environment.

3.2.2 The extension of life space

Lewin (1997, p. 242) considered developing adolescents as having new abilities and potentials which enabled them to push beyond the constraints of their familiar life space. According to Perret-Clermont (2004, p. 120) there is a widening of spatial, temporal, emotional, and social regions including future expectations, hopes and fears. He believed that adolescents require an extension of their environment

geographically, intellectually and behaviourally (Lewin, 1997, p. 242). The need to explore new environments is met by society in an ambiguous way. McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 32) assert that while society, on the one hand, expects adolescents to experiment, on the other hand, it prohibits experimentation. Perret-Cleremont (2004, p. 131) concurs with this assessment and asserts that there is often a contradictory double bind between the adolescents' view of their future identity and overall societal opinion regarding appropriate adolescent conduct. According to McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 33), time opens up for the adolescent as an existential reality especially as the adolescent matures and recognises his/her transition to adulthood. In short, a differentiated life space complements the passage of time that reconfigures as the adolescent progresses toward adulthood.

3.2.3 The differentiation of life space

Lewin (1997, p. 243) focuses on the way in which behaviour alters over time. A dynamic interaction of the individual's whole self in his/her life space increases with an observable variation in conduct including emotional expression and social activities. The adolescent is capable of self-regulating in a manner which takes into account the needs of others. The parts of the self that have the ability to function independently increase, (cognitive, psychological and social selves) and these factors combined enhance independence (Lewin, 1997, p. 243).

According to McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 35) global life space intensifies with enhanced awareness, more activities and interests, and an increase in the landscape of peer relationships. In view of the fact that self and environment are interdependent the adolescent's sense of self becomes simultaneously variegated. Additional subparts of the self emerge and a broader repertoire of personality traits and contact skills become apparent. According to Atkinson (2006, p. 3) adolescence is a period of rapid and intense change in both body and mind. The differentiation of experience plays out in phenomenological polarities both within the self and within the environment. Clear distinctions become evident with the individual moving between polarities such as childlike/grown-up, compliant/rebellious, and goal orientated/playful (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 34). These polarities surface intrinsically between parts of the self or between the self and others in the

environment (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 34). Several aspects of the individual's self will emerge in different situations, for example, with peers risk taking and boastful behaviour is the norm. However, within the context of parental relationships a more obedient, respectful self will emerge. Atkinson describes this period as a time for the emerging of varied selves which are all competing for recognition and which all require ultimate integration (Atkinson, 2006, p. 3).

According to McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 34) adolescence signifies an increase in realism with childhood fantasy giving way to a more realistic, experiential field. The adolescent is able to see his/her parents and peers realistically and objectively, and not as fantastical, deity-like figures (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 34). The researcher is, however, of the opinion that this inclination toward realism may threaten parental authority as it manifests through questioning and the rejecting of both parental decision-making and value systems.

3.2.3.1 Adolescent interiority

A distinct separation between the 'inner world' and the 'outer world' aspects of life space is clearly apparent in the increase in objectivity and realism displayed by the developing adolescent. The adolescent becomes acutely aware of his/her inner 'life space' with highly charged and often painful feelings accumulating behind outward detachment or even anger (Mc Conville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 34). According to the researcher anger and underlying painful feelings are often hidden and this manifests as "moodiness", with few adults acknowledging these mood swings as an heightened intrinsic awareness. Atkinson (2006, p. 3) equates adolescence with an increase in conflict and this may well be due to the upsurge of inner turmoil that characterises interiority.

According to Lewin (1997, p. 245) adolescents become aware of their own inner self as segregated from the outer self. In addition, there is an enhanced awareness of this same differentiation of the inner and outer selves in those around them. They begin to question the authenticity of the adults and peers who impact on their lives and they also start questioning whether what they express outwardly is a true reflection of how they really feel. As children adult value systems and decisions were the ultimate single reality but the advent of abstract reasoning Piaget (1970, p. x) alters this perception with the adolescent questioning the legitimacy of significant

adults. In addition, this awareness of adult authenticity reverberates within behavioural responses as conduct becomes situational.

3.2.3.2 *Self-Gestalts and compartmentalisation*

As their world increases in complexity and involves varied interactions with adults and different peer groups, the adolescents' self-experience also adapts and diversifies (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 35). The 'self-Gestalt' (organisation) of the adolescent differs in orientation between their interactions with their peers as compared to the 'self-Gestalt' they depict with adult members of their families. Adolescents have the ability to self-compartmentalise and they react and respond in a distinctly dissimilar manner with family members in comparison to their responses with friends. These spontaneous shifts in behaviour may become perplexing for the adolescents themselves.

According to McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 34–35) this compartmentalisation is a necessary expression for the development of a differentiating life space. Lewin (1997, p. 248) describes the personality of the adolescent as changeable and without a single centre. For example, a teenage boy is often unable to integrate 'should' and 'want' sufficiently. In addition, he is incapable of adapting his current behaviour in order to study for a test and is not able to understand how going to parties instead of studying will influence his academic performance. According to the researcher the 'self that parties' and the 'self that studies' are distinctly segregated and, thus, the current behaviour will not reflect the desired outcome. The lack of integration of selves in this case would influence the adolescent's behaviour in his current life space and, thus, would also have an effect on the future orientation of this adolescent.

3.2.4 Change in the organisation of life space

Lewin (1997, p. 253) maintains that, within this third phase, the regions of the field integrate to form a whole. Initially the childhood field integrates by 'simple interdependence' but this then gives way to a more complex and higher form of integration which may be termed "organisational interdependence". Diversification and differentiation of behaviours are indicative of organisational interdependence. Significant areas of the adolescent's life space become functionally independent as the adolescent separates him/herself from the family subsystem.

3.2.4.1 Simple interdependence

According to Lewin (1997, p. 253) the boundary between the child's self (ego) and the child's environment or the boundary between felt needs and the motor system of the brain depicts simple interdependence. The movement of need or feeling toward action is relatively unhindered and undeveloped with the child having a limited ability to filter this information or to resist taking action (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 37). Early adolescents display affective interpersonal functions and will perform better at school if they perceive themselves to be accepted and liked. Older adolescents are able to maintain their emotional independence in that they may be able to perform well at school independently of any negative perceptions on the part of their teacher. Their needs and feelings separate in that their affective perceptions of the teacher are detached from the teacher's function, namely, to teach.

3.2.5 Maturation of contact

Organisational interdependence is a Lewinian developmental concept. According to Perls *et al.* (1951, p. 305) contact refers to the process of connecting, engaging, joining and separating. Lewin (1997, p. 254) refers to this process as organisation and maintains that the organisation of contact lies at the very heart of development (1997, p. 254). There is an unfolding of 'life space' and a destructuring of childhood unity. Embeddedness in the childhood field gradually ends as an expansion of 'life space' in an unfolding field occurs (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 40). The field evolves from childhood during which the individual is a cohesive part of a family field (embedded) to adolescence and a transformation of boundary processes that organise and integrate the field. The researcher is of the opinion that the process, proceeds from a full embeddedness during which the family and the child align with each other. However, in adolescence the psychosocial development propels the adolescent toward a differentiation of boundaries, then a re-organisation of the field and, finally, the re-integration of the field (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 40).

As the adolescent develops there is a loss of childhood cohesiveness and a transformation of boundaries. The adolescent relates differently to the members of his/her immediate field (parents and siblings). This may often be perplexing to parents and it may manifest in an increase in secretiveness on the part of the adolescent.

3.2.5.1 Embeddedness and disembedding

The 'life space' prior to puberty (pre-adolescence) is characterised by a simple interdependence with unity and cohesiveness within the family field. Confluent contact is the hallmark of an embedded life space (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 38) with little differentiation between the child (I) and the parent (you) (Kirchner, 2000, p. 1091). In reality there is neither discernable contact between the 'I' and the 'you' nor is there withdrawal as there are no distinct boundaries separating the child from the parent (Perls, 1976, p. 38).

It may, thus, be said that these overly permeable boundary processes define embeddedness with the child being fully immersed in the context of family, society and culture. According to Perls (1976, p. 35) introjection involves the incorporation of standards, attitudes and ways of acting and this contact method permits the development of both confluence and embeddedness. Introjections and confluence in childhood sanction the shaping of societal values and beliefs (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 38). Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning (in Louw *et al.*, 2002, p. 413) is in accordance with Lewin's assertion that, during the conventional levels of moral reasoning, the pre-adolescent makes moral judgements that are determined by authority figures and conform to social expectations. Children accept as their own the moral rules as they are laid down in dominant social discourse (Kohlberg in Louw *et al.*, 2002, p. 413).

The differentiation of life space in adolescence involves a move from the immersion in the context of family, society and culture toward disembeddedness. The adolescent re-organises contact boundaries with simple interdependence and replaces them with independence and difference. Parent-child relationships that were initially entwined change during adolescence. Particularly in respect of revealing thoughts and feelings the adolescent will hold parental involvement at a distance. According to McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 39), this emergent need for privacy is indicative of the heightening of boundaries which takes place in adolescence. Organisational transformation occurs in the intra-psychic developmental field with different needs and wants spreading out. In children (simple interdependence) the need for approval and the need for self-expression were grouped together. However, in adolescence, there is a greater integrity of needs with

defined wants. In this stage adolescents 'disembed' and take on a 'counter dependency' (Lewin, 1997, p. 254) stance together with wanting full autonomy and self-support. Simultaneously, the adolescent will adopt bonds that are intensely loyal and supportive among their peers. Overall, distinct boundaries between the adolescent 'self' and others emerge and this phenomenon applies to both family and peer relationships.

3.2.5.2 Developmental integration

As described above there is a significant restructuring of the former 'life space' which, in turn, results in a loss of the former unity and coherence. However, according to Lewin (1997, p. 117), there is a force which moves the adolescent toward higher order integration and this is characterised by an 'organisational interdependence of parts' (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 38). Organisational interdependence is a more mature and more evolved boundary process compared to simple interdependence and it involves aspects of the coordinating of the field and working toward the same purpose. According to McConville and Wheeler (2001, p. 39), this coordination occurs both on an intra-psychic level as well as in interpersonal relationships.

As the regions of the life space have differentiated they now make contact with each other and work toward the same purpose. Previously adolescents would have kept peer relationships with which they were confluent separate from the parental relationships with which they were counter dependent (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 40).

However, the two relational spheres now make contact and establish a connection throughout the 'life space' of the adolescents. Parental relationships become warmer and more connected while peer relationships emphasise adolescent independence and autonomy. According to Perls *et al.* (1951, p. 282) "the self is the integration artist of life". The organism-environment field is, therefore, oriented toward attaining the best organisation that it is capable of attaining (Mc Conville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 40).

Finally, the maturation process is the ultimate goal of development with the adolescent emerging from this process as having increasingly integrated the diverse

aspects of the self (Toman & Bauer, 2005, p. 186). In this study it is of interest to ascertain the way in which the holistic development of the adolescent within a socioeconomically deprived context will colour the adolescent's views of the future and also his/her predictions about adulthood after having completed the maturation process.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Lewin proposed an analogy between adolescents and marginal groups and referred to the adolescent as "the marginal man" (Lewin, 1952, p. x). This analogy refers to the adolescent's debut into adulthood where the adolescent (marginal man) no longer belongs in childhood but is still not accepted by adults and is, therefore, less privileged than adults (Wolman, 1998, p. 115). According to Perret-Cleremont (2004, p. 119) the transition to adulthood is an unfamiliar experience with two key questions dominating the transition: 'What kind of person does society require me to become?' and 'What kind of person would I like to become?' The researcher asserts that these two questions encapsulate the complexity of adolescent development as well as the adolescent's future orientation. According to Perret-Cleremont (2004, p. 122) adolescence is not a set of developmental tasks laid down by society and accomplished unilaterally by each generation of adolescents. Rather, the researcher is of the opinion that there is a constant cycling back and forth between the meeting of individual needs and societal expectations, collectively encompassing learning and transformation. The changing of old modes of thinking about 'self' in relation with 'other' comprises a complex interplay of forces and struggles with many contradictions and double binds (Perret-Cleremont, 2004, p. 121). According to the researcher the Lewinian-Gestalt developmental paradigm encapsulates the complexity and collective nature of development. Lewin's field theory orientation incorporates, *inter alia*, the shifts and changes in ideology, the affiliations with peer groups as well as the crucial transfer from dependence (embeddedness) to independence (disembeddedness).

Lewin creates an awareness of the widening temporal, spatial, emotional and social regions of growth in the adolescent and, crucial for this study, Lewin and Gestalt field theory include the future as a temporal perspective in the case of the developing adolescent.

In chapter 3 the researcher focused on the Gestalt paradigm and integrated the research on indigent adolescents into the Gestalt framework. The Lewinian–Gestalt developmental theory was the focus of the second part of the chapter in which the complex interaction of adolescents as part of a broader unified field was detailed.

Chapter 4 will focus on a description and analysis of both the quantitative and the qualitative data. The quantitative empirical data will elucidate the extent to which indigent adolescents are able to conceptualise a future orientation while the qualitative data which was generated will explore and reveal a rich, in-depth, phenomenological perspective of exactly how indigent adolescents view their future within the domains of further education, career, familial relationships as well as intimate relationships.

CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 aims both to report on the research design which was utilised in this study, as well as to provide an account of the study's analysis including the level of trustworthiness and rigour. The overarching aim of this study was to ascertain the level of future orientation among a purposeful sample of culturally diverse, indigent adolescents. The complex, multidimensional nature of future orientation required the use of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The simplest mixed methodology design, namely, the explanatory, mixed methodology design, was combined with both the quantitative and qualitative approaches (De Vos, 2005, p. 361) and used sequentially (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 11). The quantitative-descriptive survey design was utilised first in the format of a cross-sectional survey (Babbie, 2010, p. 106; Fouche & De Vos, 2005, p. 137). Qualitative, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with eight participants followed the cross-sectional survey in order both to clarify and explain the quantitative findings (Ivankova, Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 266). Each participant was interviewed using an interview schedule with sub-themes in place that encapsulated the following four domains – education, career/occupation, family, and interpersonal relationships (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000, p. 493; Mello, 2009, p. 540). In addition, the following pre-existing categories from international research were integrated into the interview schedule: salience, detail, optimism, realism, control beliefs and familial support. These themes will be discussed in detail with substantiating quotes from each individual participant.

4.2 RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS

According to Creswell (2007, p. x), it is essential that collection include several sources of information including, *inter alia*, the history of the case. The senior school from which the sample was taken has undergone several changes in accordance with the changing political landscape that typifies contemporary South Africa. The school was previously an Afrikaans high school which catered for a middle-income group of learners. It later became a dual medium school but, as the suburb in which the school is located and the country's demographic needs changed and continue to

be in a state of flux, the school has evolved into a culturally diverse, predominantly English-speaking school.

4.2.1 Sample

According to Babbie (2010, p. 198), the researcher’s judgement determines the selection of the purposive sample. In this study the researcher was of the opinion that the sample of one class of 31 culturally diverse, indigent adolescents was the most representative of the population .The participants were mostly between 15 and 17 years of age, This is central to the study as these younger adolescents demonstrate a weaker future orientation (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 28). Secondly, the sample reflected the culturally diverse nature of South Africa as comprehensively as possible with representation from most of the cultural groups in the country.

Table 4.1: Biographical data

Gender	Male	Female			Total
	13	18			31
Race	African	Coloured	White	Asian	
	16	5	10	0	31
Age	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years	
	1	5	24	1	31

4.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

4.3.1 Design rationale

Snow, Wolff, Hudspeth and Etheridge (2009, p. 241) assert that “quantitative research is challenged by the changing structures of society”. The researcher concurs with this statement and is of the belief that quantitative methodology alone would be insufficient to describe the complexity of South African society. An explanatory, mixed methods research design was adopted as this design combines the both quantitative and qualitative aspects of research methodology. The design was applied sequentially with the quantitative aspect being applied first, followed by the qualitative aspect. It was in this way that the researcher intended to provide both

evidence-based research as well as insights into the research problem by using a small sample in order to provide a rich, in-depth description of the future orientation of indigent adolescents.

4.3.2 Quantitative design and methodology

The quantitative approach aims to evaluate the social world objectively. This study made use of a Future Orientation Scale (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 44) in order to evaluate the future orientation of a class of 31 adolescents. Quantitative survey data describes and explains the status of phenomena from a specific population (McMillan & Schumacher, in Maree, 2007, p. 155). For the purposes of this study 31 participants completed a Future Orientation Scale. The scale, which was developed by a group of developmental psychologists, adopted a format designed to minimise socially desirable responses by using the word “but” and asking the participants to choose the statement that best described themselves (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 17). The responses are coded on a four-point scale ranging from “really true” to “sort of true” (see Appendix D). Three subscales combined to form an overall future orientation score including time perspective; anticipation of future consequences and planning ahead. These three subscales are related, but not identical, and they provide a reliable measure of overall future orientation (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 18) with higher total scores indicating a greater future orientation.

Eight participants were chosen from the initial group. Of these eight participants, four had scored below five on the Future Orientation Scale (Group 1) while the other four had scored above five (Group 2). These latter adolescents comprised the participants in the qualitative case study.

4.3.3 Qualitative design and methodology

Case studies are descriptive in nature as they offer a powerful technique for gaining insight into both human affairs and into social phenomena (Babbie, 2010, p. 309; Durrheim, 2006, p. 460, 446). This element of the study regards subjective perception and experience as being highly significant (ontology) and, thus, the most effective way of understanding this reality would be by interrelating with and listening to those affected within their own context (epistemology) (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2006, p. 102). This method relies on descriptive, first-hand accounts which provide

an in-depth understanding of, as well as insight into, both the situation and the social issues involved (Fouché, 2005, p. 272, Snow *et al.*, 2009, p. 244).

Within this design, the researcher used semi-structured, one-on-one interviews in order to gain an insight into the eight participants' perceptions of their futures. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to clarify and probe and even to change the order of the questions. It also allowed the researcher/interviewer the freedom to adjust the level of language which was something that was sometimes necessary with the culturally diverse participants. According to Kelly (2006, p. 287), qualitative research is concerned with investigating small distinct groups within specific contexts. This study focused on indigent, urban adolescents in eastern Johannesburg. The participants shared intently (Greef, 2005, p. 296) their perceptions on their future careers, education, family life and intimate relationships.

The researcher, with pre-existing domains in mind, compiled an interview schedule which defined the line of enquiry (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 87). Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 87–88) highlights the fact that questions that are more personal in nature should be left to the end of the interview schedule as a relationship between the researcher and participant would have been established at that point. Accordingly, all questions regarding familial and interpersonal relationships were left until the end of the interview. The focus of the questionnaire was on ascertaining the participants' own perceptions (Nieuwenhuis 2007, p. 88) with the researcher as an attentive listener, and not leading the responses.

Unlike the quantitative researcher the qualitative researcher is an integral participant in the research process with his/her unique worldview, paradigm and set of beliefs regarding the research process (Creswell, 2007, p. 15).

The Gestalt paradigm is interested in the phenomenological perspective of the individual and, thus, in their unique, subjective perceptions. This paradigmatic perspective supports the input of the perceptions of the researcher. In this study the researcher recorded these perceptions via field notes including non-verbal social cues which she had observed whilst interviewing.

4.3.4 Paradigmatic perspective: Gestalt

The Gestalt paradigm was the paradigmatic framework used in this study and it will, thus, impact on the nature of this enquiry. This approach is fundamentally phenomenological and, accordingly, seeks to highlight subjectivity (Clarkson, 2004, p. 15; Crocker, 2008, p. 139). Whilst the quantitative aspect of the study empirically and objectively ascertains the level of the future orientation of the participants the qualitative interviews focuses predominantly on the meaning which each adolescent accorded to his/her future orientation. The field comprises the largest and almost boundless system and is characterised by a temporal dimension of past, present and future. According to Yontef (1993, p. 322), a field attitude permeates all aspects of Gestalt theory and, thus, the adolescent's future orientation is an element of the subsystem of which the adolescent is a part. The Gestalt paradigm does not concern itself with pathology but rather with the re-establishment of growth and contribution as the self actively meets its needs and actualises itself (Clarkson, 2004, p. 8; Perls, 1976, p. 19).

Of interest in this study is the temporal dimension of the field, specifically the temporal dimension of future, as the developing indigent adolescents make contact with their environmental field. The individual adolescents are viewed holistically and, thus, this view is inclusive of neurology and physiology (Perls, 1976, p. 9). This holistic orientation of self also permeates Gestalt developmental theory and embraces the basic Gestalt paradigmatic tenets, specifically holism, field orientation, phenomenology and dialogic existentialism (Yontef, 1993, p. 200). The Lewinian–Gestalt theory perceives the individual as developing as part of a larger field in which he/she faces changing internal (intrapersonal) or external challenges or circumstances (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 38; Toman & Bauer, 2005, p. 184). The adolescents integrate key aspects of the environment field, particularly its political and socio-economic influences, into their self-structures with the impact of this integration being of vital interest to this study (Wheeler, 2001, p. 42).

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

4.4.1 Data collection procedure

In view of the fact that this is a mixed methods study the data collection involves two distinct methods and occurs in two phases. The first method is quantitative in nature

and it involves the use of a survey questionnaire. This is followed by phase 2 which is qualitative in nature and during which semi-structured interviews were utilised to collect the data.

4.4.2 Quantitative data: survey

The researcher gave the survey questionnaire to a single class of 31 Grade 10 students to complete. She explained each question and then asked the participants to fill in the descriptor that best suited each one of them. In view of the fact that several members of the group did not speak English as their first language the language of the scale was first tested (pilot study) within a small group in order to ascertain whether the language used was suited to for the participants. This method of data collection meant that a significant amount of data was collected within approximately one hour. The response rate was optimal and the researcher checked and accounted for all the participants' responses. There may be limitations to surveys in that the participants may not have the ability to recall certain behaviours and to admit to those behaviours. In view of the fact that the participants were adolescents the possibility did exist they may have struggled to assess their true opinions and characteristics with reference to future orientation (Durrheim, in Terre Blanche. *et al.*, 2006, p. 212). The researcher noted that the participants did, indeed, struggle to distinguish between their true feelings regarding time perspective and future planning in comparison with the ideals of their parents. This manifested in the fact that several of the participants admitted to experiencing confusion in writing their responses. The participants wrestled with themselves and with their need to respond according to their individuated (disembedded) perspectives with introjections of "should" still present from parental socialisation (McConville & Wheeler, 2001, p. 38; Toman & Bauer, 2005, p. 184). The scoring of the survey data pre-empted the second phase of the research, namely, the one-on-one interviews.

4.4.3 Qualitative data: interviews

After scoring the surveys the researcher identified four students who had scored within the high range and four who had scored within the low range as the participants who would take part in the semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. These interviews took place at the school in a private room in which the participants were able to respond freely and confidentially. The objective of the interviews was to

increase the researcher's understanding of the results which had been attained in the quantitative phase of the study (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007, p. 266). The aim of the interviews was to ascertain the participants' own perceptions – in other words, a “conversation with intention” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 88). The researcher focused on being an attentive listener and neither leading the responses nor probing in a way that would have made the adolescents feel uncomfortable (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006, p. 300). Prior to commencing the interviews the researcher reminded the participants of both their parental consent and their own assent forms which had given permission to record the interviews (see appendices B and C). The participants were reassured of the confidential nature of the interviews and the researcher requested permission to take notes during the course of the interview. The construction of the interview schedule had followed the guidelines of Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 88) who advocates a variety of experience and behaviour questions together with opinion, value and feeling questions. The researcher took into account the ages of the participants and, consequently, the interviews lasted between twenty and twenty-five minutes. The researcher kept process notes during the interview, writing down any perceptions or non-verbal cues which she noted during the course of the interview (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006, p. 300) (see Appendix E).

Once both the quantitative and qualitative data had been collected the data analysis procedure commenced.

4.5 DATA ANALYSIS

4.5.1 Observation

Patton (in De Vos, Strydom & Fouche, 2005, p. 334) indicates that the analyst is obliged to observe and to report on the process of data analysis. In view of the fact that this was an explanatory, mixed methods design the analysis of the data was sequential. The researcher processed the quantitative surveys first, scoring them manually in order to ascertain which participants would be required for the one-on-one interviews. The interview data was transcribed and coded using (pre-set) *priori*-codes or themes which had been taken from existing research.

4.5.2 Analysis procedure of survey data: univariate analysis

The survey data were analysed and interpreted using a univariate analysis in terms of which a single variable, namely, future orientation was analysed. The data gathered was summarised from three sub-categories into a single future orientation which was measure and then displayed graphically using bar charts.

4.5.3 Analysis procedure of qualitative data: content analysis

Both De Vos *et al.* (2005, p. 335) and Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006, p. 322) assert that data analysis and data interpretation are two inseparable processes. Content analysis emphasises the subjective meaning of the qualitative responses to the open-ended, semi-structured, one-on-one interview. It involves a process that interprets raw data by identifying key aspects which emerge from the transcribed text (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 101). These key aspects are coded using already prevalent theoretical codes and this involves reading through the transcribed data and dividing it into meaningful segments (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 105). In this study, the researcher applied priori-coding during the analysis procedure. This explicit analysis procedure uses theoretical codes which were delineated from overseas, empirical studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84; Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 107). The analysis of the data according to theoretical content analysis with the procedure of priori coding focuses specifically on answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

4.5.4 Steps in the qualitative content analysis procedure

The researcher utilised the work of Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006, p. 322–326), Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87–93) and Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 109–110) with reference to data analysis in order to describe her data analysis procedure:

Step 1: Familiarisation and immersion. The researcher immersed herself in the data collected, including the filed notes and transcripts. In this way, she developed ideas and theories about the phenomenon being studied (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006, p. 322–326).

Step 2: Inducing themes. This entails studying the data and seeking out those principles that emerge from them. A top-down approach using ready-made categories (priori-codes) was applied to the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84).

Step 3: Coding. The priori codes were indicated using both colour coding and symbols. The fact that preset or priori codes were used allowed the data to be sorted into distinct categories (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 109). The researcher identified themes before sorting the data into categories. This, in turn, enabled the researcher to scan the transcripts as well as the field and process notes for text that complemented the themes. Statements, phrases or lines were coded according to the themes under consideration. In some cases, the text was coded with more than one colour code or symbol if it referred to more than one of the themes identified.

Step 4: Structuring of categories. Certain categories, such as optimism and realism, appeared to closely related to one another and they were coded simultaneously (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 110). In order to structure the data the researcher made separate booklets, each with the title of the relevant category. Naming each, she placed data cut-outs of the transcripts into the relevant booklet and specified the links or relationships between each category. A network diagram (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 111) indicated the links between the categories as well as showing that there was no hierarchy within the categories but rather that the categories were linked recursively with one another (Schematic representation of main and sub-themes Figure 5.10).

Step 5: Elaboration. The purpose of elaboration is to capture the finer details of the coded data. Terre Blanche *et al.* (2006, p. 326) advise that coding and elaboration should continue until saturation has been reached and no new insights are emerging from the data.

Step 6: Interpretation and checking. This final step involves putting together the researcher's interpretation of the data, utilising the codes as thematic categories and the subsequent sub-headings in the final, written report. According to Terre Blanche thorough checking of the researcher's report would identify over interpretation and/or a lack of integration or either prejudice. The researcher used a critical reader for this purpose. Furthermore, Terre Blanche (2006, p. 326) states that, although complete objectivity is impossible; the researcher is, nevertheless, obligated to indicate any personal involvement.

Throughout the research process the researcher kept in mind that she was accountable for the dependability of the research and that it was, therefore, essential that the research be both evidence based and warranted.

4.5.5 Evidence-based research

Evidence-based research refers to research which is founded on the best available scientific evidence, namely, evidence that evaluates the reliability and validity of its assessment measures (Mc Neece & Thyer, 2004, p. 8–9). It is also vital that research be ‘warranted evidence based’. According to Brownell (2008, p. 3), ‘warranted’ depends on a properly functioning ability to think carefully about the way in which evidence is produced and this differentiates between true knowledge and belief. According to Breakwell, Hammond and Fife-Schaw (1995, p. 10), on the other hand, warranted belief results from logical argument or empirical evidence or even both. Brownell (2008, p. 3) associates warranted research with terms such as authorised, funded and ethically valid evidence.

The researcher instituted quality criteria that would ensure that this study would communicate new insights based on clear empirical guidelines that were both valid and reliable.

4.6 Quality criteria

According to Maree (2007, p. 299), in mixed methods studies trustworthiness and rigour should include both the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

4.6.1 Quantitative data

A non-experimental design, namely, a Future Orientation Scale, was used to describe the status of the future orientation of a sample drawn from a specific population of indigent, urban adolescents.

4.6.1.1 Reliability

The aim of the developmental psychologists who developed the Future Orientation Scale was to produce a test with the highest accuracy possible. The incidence of socially desirable responses was minimised by the use of the word “but” which required that the participants choose the response that most accurately described them (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 44).

4.6.1.2 Validity

The estimation of the reliability of a test refers to its viability as a measuring device. The scale used in this study was a pre-existing test that had already been utilised in an overseas study and, thus, its viability had already been ascertained. This scale purports to measure future orientation and, specifically, utilises three very similar, but not identical, subscales to measure this concept. According to Steinberg *et al.* (2009, p. x) the subscales are inter-correlated (time perspective with anticipation of future consequences $r = .44$; time perspective with planning $r = .44$; and anticipation of future consequences with planning ahead $r = .55$).

4.6.2 Qualitative data

4.6.2.1 Trustworthiness (reliability, dependability)

Trustworthiness refers to the way in which the researcher is able to persuade the reader that the findings of the study are worthwhile (Maree, 2007, p. 299). The researcher applied member checking in terms of which the themes identified were rechecked by the participants. The aim of the researcher in applying member checking was to improve both the accuracy and the credibility of the findings (Tinggaard, 2008, p. 19). The age of the participants meant that member checking took place as part of the interview process itself. The researcher/interviewer reiterated or reflected back a summary of the participants' responses and requested the participant to verify the content and context of these responses (Tinggaard, 2008, p. 25). In addition, the themes generated from literature were checked against previous international research via a literature review. All data will be triangulated using the Future Orientation Scale, field notes, transcriptions of interviews and a research diary, so as to ensure the reliability of the findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 320) question the possibility of existing objectivity in both quantitative and qualitative studies. In this study, the researcher dealt with the issue of researcher bias by constant reflection on the research process itself.

4.6.2.2 Transferability/generalisability

Transferability/generalisability refers to the findings of a study being applicable within other contexts (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p. 110) and the degree to which it is possible to make generalisations from the data (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006, p. 381). In view of the fact that this study constituted primarily interpretive research, which is not

necessarily generalisable, a rich, full description emanating from a specific context was the ultimate aim of the study

4.6.2.3 Validity/credibility

A study is deemed credible according to the extent to which the findings of the study accurately describe reality (Terre Blanche *et al.*, 2006, p. 381; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 294). The triangulation of the data collection methods as well as the data analysis established the credibility of this study. The results of the study were both plausible and credible, as any inconsistencies in the findings had been highlighted. The quantitative survey had been previously tested for reliability and validity and the semi-structured interview schedule followed coding guidelines as set out by international research.

4.6.2.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to the degree to which a study truly reflects the participants' views and not the bias of the researcher. In this study the researcher attempted to adopt what Patton (2002, p. 541) refers to as a stance of "empathetic neutrality". Accordingly, the adolescent participants were treated with empathy and courtesy although the data and the findings were treated with objectivity and neutrality. According to Lincoln and Guba (1995, p. 320–321) triangulation also increases the conformability of findings

4.7 Summary and conclusion

Chapter 4 comprehensively explained and described the data analysis procedure as well as addressing the quality criteria which had been applied to ensure the research was evidence based with both internal and external validity. Chapter 5 aims to record the actual findings of the study and to compare these findings with previous overseas research and literature.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 aims to provide a detailed explanation of the empirical results of this study. A graphical display of the quantitative findings will introduce each discussion with the qualitative findings providing an explanation and allowing for an expansion of the graphical material.

5.2 EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.2.1 Survey results: all participants

The following is a graphical representation of the survey results from the Future Orientation Scale (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 44) as it was applied to the purposive sample of 31 indigent adolescents.

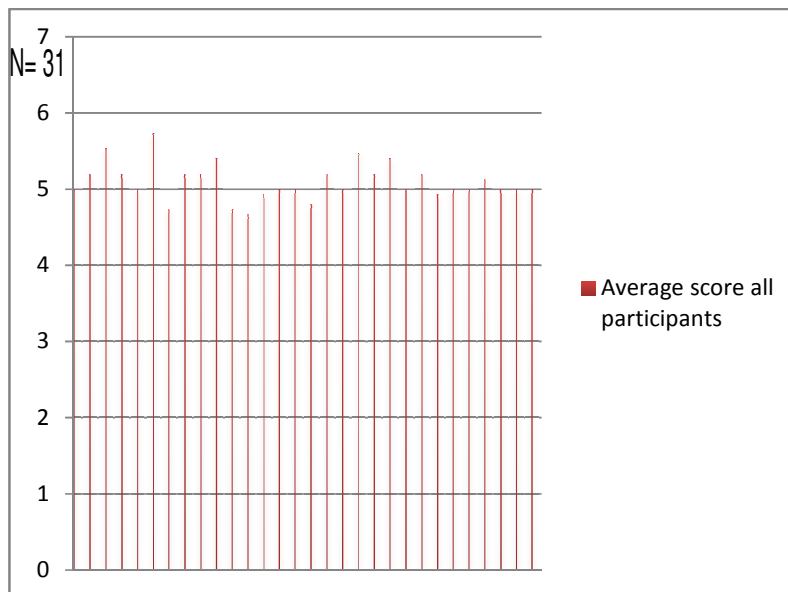


Figure 5.1: Survey results – Future Orientation Scale

Source: Steinberg *et al.* (2009)

Once the data had been collected from the initial group of 31 adolescents it was analysed and represented graphically. Eight participants for the qualitative phase of the study were identified, namely, four who had scored below five on the scale and

four who had scored above five on the scale. The (quantitative) scale results of these participants delineated the following sub-themes, namely, planning, time perspective and anticipation of future consequences. As is expected in explanatory mixed methodology studies the qualitative data generated from the interviews both described and explained the qualitative sub-themes.

5.3 DOMINANT THEMES

5.3.1 Quantitative data

The Future Orientation Scale generated three very similar but defining sub-themes, namely, planning ahead, time perspective and anticipation of future consequences. These three sub-themes collectively provide an overall view of the individual's future orientation.

5.3.2 Qualitative data

The data transcribed from the interviews was coded using priori-codes with themes identified from existing overseas research (Niewenhuis, 2007, p. 109).

The researcher identified the following codes as being pertinent to this study.

5.3.2.1 Sub-themes

The themes related to the domains of interest of the adolescent when perceiving a future included **education**, **career**, **family life** (Mello, 2009, p. 540; Seginer, 2009, p. x) and **interpersonal/romantic relationships** (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000, p. 493; Seginer & Noyman, 2005, p. 17–37).

5.3.2.2 Categories

Salience (S): The importance accorded to or the attention given to future planning (Seginer, 2009, p. 173).

Detail (D): The density or specific information in respect of positive or negative events which the individual expects from the future (Lamm, Schmidt & Trommsdorf, 1976, p. 317–326).

Optimism (O): Affective tone – the extent to which a positive outcome is expected (Van Calister, Lens & Nuttin, 1978, p. 1–13; Seginer, 2009, p. 78).

Realism (R): Range of attainable goals (Claussen, 1991, p. 805–842; Galotti, Kozberg & Gustafson, 2009, p. 17–18).

Control beliefs (CB): Internal/external control beliefs – the extent of credence the individual places in his/her own ability, as opposed to outside circumstances, in respect of controlling future outcomes (Lamm *et al.*, 1976, p. 325; Seginer, 2009, p. 82).

Familial support (FS): Extent to which the adolescent perceives parental/familial support and involvement (Trommsdorf, 1983, p. 381–406; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Seginer, 2009, p. 127).

The transcribed data was coded in order to delineate the above sub-themes and categories. These findings were then organised into a report in which the researcher arranged the empirical results in an ordered fashion providing quotations and integrated details from the her field notes.

In order to enable readers of the report to follow the explanation of the results easily the researcher arranged the data into two groups: Group 1 which contained the graphical representation of the results of the group of participants who had scored below an average of five in the Future Orientation scale and Group 2 which contained a graphical representation of the results of the group of participants who had scored above five in the Future Orientation Scale. Each participant graph is followed by the transcribed, qualitative data which was gathered during the one-on-one interviews. A comprehensive literature review follows each group's discussion of the empirical data gathered.

5.4 GROUP 1'S COMBINED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The participants in Group 1 had all scored **below five** in the Future Orientation scale. Each participant will be referred to by a letter with the graphical representation of the scale results being followed by a detailed explanation of the data gathered from the interviews.

5.4.1 Participant X: Graphical representation of scale results

Planning ahead, time perspective and anticipation of future consequences collectively provide an overall future orientation score.

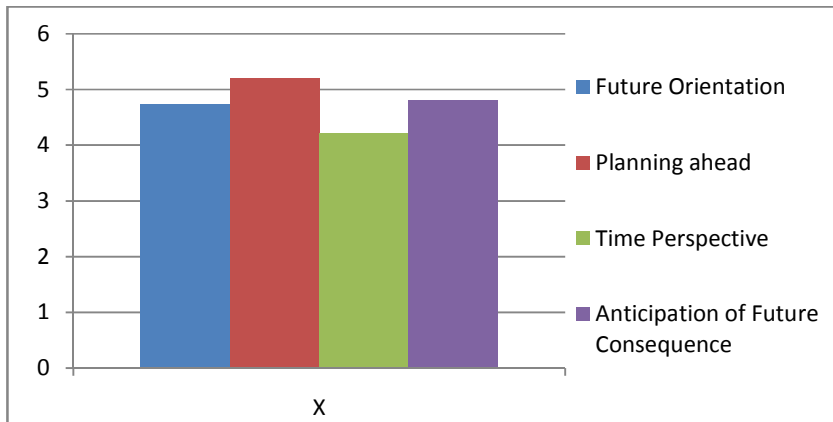


Figure 5.2: Participant X: Graphical representation of scale results

5.4.2 Participant X: Discussion of graphical representation

Participant X struggles to visualise the passage of time, the implications of the past as connected to the present and the anticipation of the future. The participant is able to plan ahead to a certain degree but, as the qualitative evidence shows, the participant’s plans tend to be unrealistic – see score relating to the anticipation of future consequences.

5.4.2.1 Participant X: Qualitative themes generated from interview

Participant X seemed eager to please the interviewer with some of the responses appearing, at times, to have been rehearsed

Salience

Initially participant X communicated the belief that she was actively involved in considering her future on an ongoing basis.

“Every day, I wake up and tell myself I want a future, a better life for myself and my kids”

This response does not collaborate with the answer to the final question which related to an increase/decrease in awareness of the future since completing the Future Orientation Scale and reflecting on the interview.

“Your project has got me thinking about the future for the very first time”

Participant X admitted that she seldom discussed her future education/career with either her mother or her peers.

“Sometimes I talk to my mom about it and my friends, but not very often”

Density

Overall her responses in respect of education and career lacked dense, rich, and well thought out descriptions.

“If my first career choice doesn’t work out I don’t have a back-up plan, I will make it happen.”

The exception was romantic relationships as, in this regard, participant X had definite opinions – she expressed a desire to be in a relationship but also to have her own material possessions and home. She expressed a fear that a boyfriend or husband would take these items away in the case of divorce.

“I want a relationship with a person who is going to take me somewhere, but we must have separate homes and stuff, I don’t want to go to court to fight for my stuff.”

Optimism

Participant X tended to be overly optimistic with no back-up plans or alternatives in place. Despite prompting, X was not able to visualise any challenges in terms of the domains of either career or education.

“I have everything I need; I don’t have an alternative career plan.”

“I don’t think anything can stand in my way, my own determination is there, and I have everything.”

Realism

Participant X’s choice of career, namely, to be a business woman, is a career which is attainable by a large majority of the population and, thus, attainable in her case. Nevertheless, her lack of realism in anticipating difficulties and challenges in the attaining of her goals is significant.

“I don’t think anything can stand in my way, my own determination is there, and I have everything.”

Control beliefs

Despite prompting participant X never actually answered the question as to whom or what would decide whether she would attain the career/education she envisaged. She appeared to deflect the question and spoke in a rehearsed manner about the importance of education. However, her mother’s influence and the need to make her mother proud were apparent and were repeated throughout the interview. According to the researcher this indicates an external control belief as her mother’s positive affirmations appear to motivate X rather than her own internal needs.

“I want my mom to be proud of me; I want her to know how her presence has made a difference in my life.”

“I want a job so that I can care for my mom.”

Familial support

It seemed that future aspirations were seldom discussed at home despite X’s indicating that her mother did, in fact, support her future aspirations “My mom and I have spoken about my future job but not a lot.”

“My friends and I talk about what we want in the future, a car and our own houses.”

(Participant X’s responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the other participants in group 1 and discussed against the background of the literature study.)

5.4.3 Participant A: Graphical representation of scale results

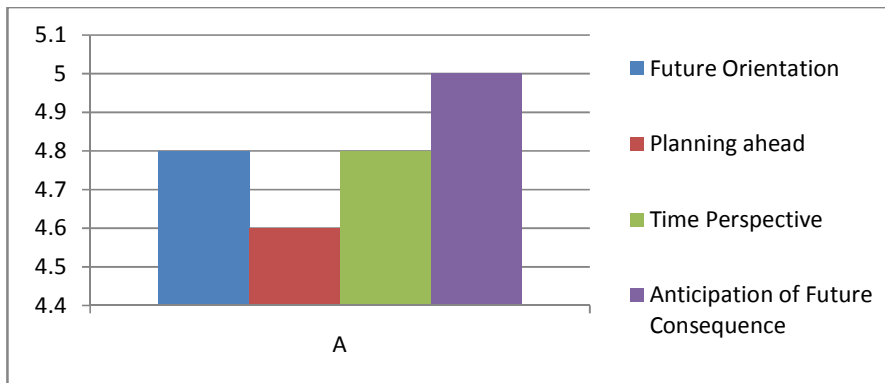


Figure 5.3: Participant A: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant A, the second member of Group 1, appears to struggle to anticipate the future and to plan ahead. In addition, participant A is not able to visualise time on a continuum of past, present and future. In fact, as the qualitative evidence shows, participant A perseverates on the past.

5.4.4 Participant A: Qualitative themes generated from one-on-one interview

Participant A was generally subdued, keeping his hands in his pockets and often breaking eye contact with the researcher/interviewer. In fact, participant A's general demeanour appeared to be bent over, defeated and closed off. The researcher also noticed that participant A showed little emotional response to any of the questions.

Salience

Participant A admitted that he spent little time thinking about or planning for the future.

“I only really think about my future sometimes, only if I am bored.”

Furthermore, participant A had not realised that good marks in science and mathematics are a prerequisite for pilot training.

“Really, I dunno why, I can't see why you need science – you don't really even use it.”

Detail

In general, participant A's responses were sparse and lacked significant detail. In fact, he seemed to respond as if he were recalling a dream he had had as a little boy. In addition, participant A was not able to describe precisely or in any significant detail the steps needed in order to become a fighter pilot.

On being asked whether he felt either positive or negative about reaching his career goals participant A's response was subdued and vague: "Most of the time, I suppose, it's my passion" (Voice dull and lifeless).

Even with prompting participant A was not able to identify any distinct positive or negative feelings with reference to his future career.

"Ja, I guess becoming a fighter pilot is my passion."

Despite the fact that he used the word "passion" his voice lacked either expression or animation.

Optimism

In general, this participant displayed a lack of optimism in respect of all the domains of interest and his responses were, in the main, vague and passive.

With regard to completing his matriculation examination: "I want to, I think, I suppose it is important to get a job."

"In five years from now I will be twenty-one. If I am not in training to be a fighter pilot then I suppose I might just as well go to the army or something ... I dunno?"

Realism

Within the general population, a very small minority qualify for specialised training as a fighter pilot and, hence, the chances of participant A succeeding in this career are restricted.

In addition, participant A admitted that, scholastically, both his mathematics and science were very weak. However, above average mathematics and physical science results are a prerequisite for entrance into the field of the fighter pilot.

“My marks are really bad in science, I can’t do the calculations and I battle with maths too. I forget my work when I have to write the tests.”

Control beliefs

According to the researcher participant A’s desire to become a fighter pilot stems largely from childhood memories with these memories being closely related to his experiences with his father. Accordingly, participant A’s career choice rests in the past in this respect. His control beliefs are, thus, external and have strong links with pleasing his father rather than with realistic, present-day need fulfillment.

“I used to think about becoming a fighter pilot, especially when I was little. I remember my dad taking me to air- shows and showing me around.”

“My father is the main reason why I want to become a fighter pilot.”

Familial support

Participant A perceived his familial support as limited with regard to his future aspirations.

“Now that my marks at school are not great, my parents don’t support my plans for the future much, we don’t talk about it.”

“I used to talk to my parents about being a fighter pilot a lot when I was younger, these days my mom says I must just get a matric, that’s all.”

(Participant A’s responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of other participants in group 1 and discussed against the background of the literature study).

5.4.5 Participant K: Graphical representation of scale results

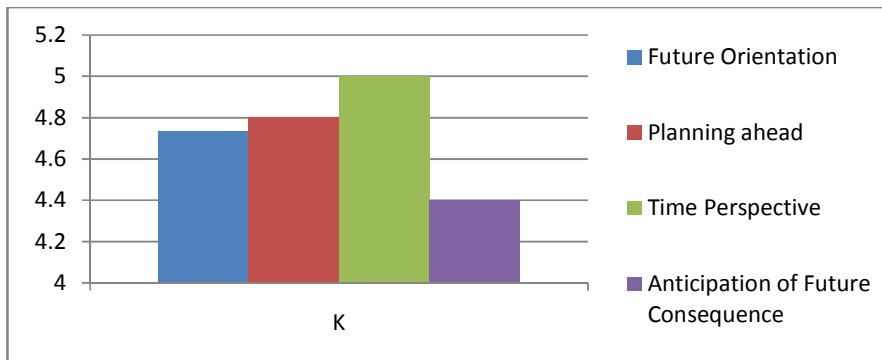


Figure 5.4: Participant K: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant K struggles to anticipate future consequences and, thus, possesses no anticipatory strategies. This, in turn, affects the participant's ability to plan as she also struggles to visualise time in a continuous stream leading from the past into the present and towards the future.

5.4.6 Participant K: Qualitative themes generated from interview

On entering the room, participant K appeared to be somewhat apprehensive and subdued and this disappeared as the interview progressed. Participant K's command of the English language was good but, despite this fact, she answered in very little detail.

Salience

Participant K admitted to giving little attention to future planning.

"I think about the future sometimes, mostly when I am feeling lonely"

When asked specific questions about future planning her responses were generic and occasionally unrelated to the question itself.

When asked whether she herself or else outside factors would decide if she would have the career she wanted participant K answered as follows: "I know that we must sustain life and help in the community"

When the researcher repeated the question participant K answered in a similar vein.

Detail

In general, the researcher found participant K's responses perfunctory and mechanical and tending to lack significant detail. Despite receiving encouragement from the researcher/interviewer to describe the way in which she visualised her future in terms of the four domains participant K struggled to do so.

When the researcher/interviewer asked whether participant K felt hopeful that she would, indeed, attain her future goals the token reply was "Yes, maybe"

Optimism

At times, the affective tone of the conversation was positive although this positivity was inconsistent. In fact, it seemed as if participant K had resigned herself to negative future outcomes.

"I want to help my country, maybe study medicine, but money is a problem"

When asked about her scholastic achievement and the possibility of applying for a bursary participant K seemed confused. (As if the possibility had never before arisen.)

Realism

Initially, participant K had spoken about wanting to study to become a doctor. However, at the age of sixteen with two years only of formal government schooling remaining, participant K had little idea of the requirements pertaining to this career goal. Her secondary career choice involved jewellery design but, once again, participant K had few practical ideas as to how to go about receiving training in this field. In general, participant K's responses were immature and not well thought out. In fact, despite her chronological age she struggled either to visualise or to articulate possible future challenges.

"No, there will be no challenges."

Control beliefs

In response to the question as to whom or what would decide her future career participant K's answer that she was in control appeared to be rehearsed.

"My discipline, I must tell myself I can do it."

It was as if participant K was attempting to convince herself that she alone, and not outside factors, were in control of her future expectations. After making the above statement she deviated from the topic by talking about how to "sustain life". These comments were totally out of context and seemed deflective.

Familial support

Participant K perceives her church, friends and mother to be supportive of her future, but confirmed that her future was not a regular topic of discussion at home.

"I talk about it sometimes with my mother when it comes up, mostly with my friends."

"Ja, I think my mom supports what I want to do."

(Participant K's responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the participants in group 1 and discussed against the background of the literature study)

5.4.7 Participant N: Graphical representation of scale results

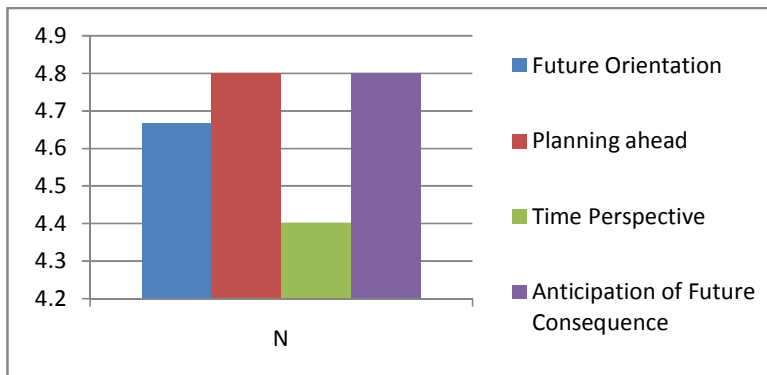


Figure 5.5: Participant N: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant N appears to have little perspective regarding time and seems to lack the cognitive processes necessary to integrate past, present and future (Piaget, 1955, p. x). Participant N's overall grasp of future orientation and future time perspective is

not in line with his chronological age (sixteen). In accordance with the views of Santrock (2006, p. 384), it would appear that participant N is unable to accommodate and to adjust to the input of new information and he struggles to integrate the idea of a future time perspective that involves planning.

5.4.8 Participant N: Qualitative themes generated from the interview

Saliency

Participant N admitted to spending limited time thinking about the future in terms of the domains of education, career and family life.

“Sometimes I think about the future, I wonder about my options but I don’t really think about it that much.”

This statement was echoed throughout the interview as he seemed to be considering the future for the first time.

Detail

Participant N was not able to describe either positive or negative events with regard to his education or future career in any specific detail. His chosen career was to work as an animations producer/director in the film industry. However, participant N could not describe how or where one would study for this. Participant N also expressed a desire to study in America.

In reply to the question as to whether or not he was hopeful about attaining his career and educational goals participant N answered in the affirmative.

Nevertheless, participant N was able to describe the domain of interpersonal/romantic relationships in significant detail and he expressed clearly that he would like to be involved in a romantic relationship. In addition, he stated the need for a family by the age of twenty-two.

“Yes, I want to be a dad, I want at least four kids while I am young at about twenty-two.”

Optimism

In general, participant N was optimistic about the future although the researcher did notice a degree of hesitation before certain responses.

In response to the question as to whether he felt certain that he would complete his education participant N was hesitant and indecisive.

“Not so positive, I think, yes, yes, I do feel positive”

However, participant N was overly optimistic as he was not able, despite prompting, either to envisage or to describe possible challenges that he may have to confront whilst pursuing his future goals.

Realism

Participant N’s choice of career was to work in America as part of the film industry.

“I want to be an animator producer/director.”

In the researcher’s opinion, very few of the world’s population ever become animations producers/directors and, hence, although it may be possible for N to attain this goal it would seem unlikely. Participant N’s alternative occupation was to be a composer of music, also within the film industry. However, at present, participant N is not able either to read music or play a musical instrument and so, again, this goal, although possible, seems unlikely.

Control beliefs

Participant N agreed that he did have some control over his future and admitted that obtaining the education that he wanted was, to an extent, up to him.

“My grades, they are average, I must try to work harder.”

Participant N talked extensively about his sister’s successes and appeared to assume that she would assist him with his future career aspirations.

“My sister will help me to get to America so that I can study there.”

Familial support

Participant N perceives his family as being supportive, especially his mother and aunt. However, this assertion was not borne out by his statement that he does not engage with his family about his future on a regular basis. In the opinion of the researcher regular discussions on future orientation should be taking place as participant N, together with the other participants in this study, have just over two years left of secondary schooling.

“My mom and my aunt inspire me for my future, but we don’t really talk about it a lot.”

“My sister, she is going to help me have the future that I really want.”

(Participant N’s responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the other participants in group 1 and discussed against the background of the literature study)

5.4.9 Group 1; Discussion and literature control

As is to be expected in an explanatory, mixed methodology study, the qualitative data gathered did succeed in explaining the quantitative findings of the research. The theoretical themes generated constituted categories, thus creating the basis of discussion for this report. In view of the fact that future orientation is a multidimensional construct the categories which were utilised in order to theme the data are all interrelated. Both the interaction and the relationship between the variables in the study were far more complex than had been previously assumed. The four participants discussed above had all scored below five on the Future Orientation Scale (Steinberg *et al.*, 2009, p. 44).

5.4.9.1 Salience and detail

In general, the participants in group 1 were not able to describe their future orientation in any significant detail, especially with regard to career and education. This was reflected in the salience of the information given while, in general, these participants admitted to giving little attention to future planning as a whole. Future orientation is as much a situational and affective aspect as a cognitive aspect (section 2.3.3). It may be that, uncertain social conditions have influenced the degree to which these participants allow themselves to anticipate either further education or a career (Pinquart & Silberiesen, 2005, p. 398). The literature suggests that socially

deprived groups may find it more adaptive to avoid anticipating the future as many live in uncertain, negative conditions (Trommsdorff, 1983, p. 384).

According to Trommsdorff (1983, p. 384), human beings are motivated to attain their goals either in the near or the distant future while the need to satisfy certain wishes or to avoid a negative event stimulates these expectations. Within their group of participants both participant X and participant N were able to offer very clear, detailed descriptions of how they envisaged future romantic relationships and family life. In the opinion of the researcher this area of romantic interrelationships and family life appears to be the one area in terms of which the participants in this group allow themselves to anticipate or to plan their futures. Participant X seems to anticipate her romantic future in order to avoid the pain of a possible divorce situation whilst participant N anticipates becoming a father in a need fulfilling manner.

5.4.9.2 Optimism, pessimism and realism

There are two schools of thought regarding optimism and pessimism in the anticipation of the future on the part of the impoverished youth. McCabe and Barnett (2000, p. 506) associate a restricted, pessimistic outlook with socio-economically deprived youth while Freire, Gorman and Wessman (1980, p. 254) associate socio-economically deprived youth with an unrealistic, excessive optimism.

In this study, group 1 displayed a variation of both of these standpoints. Participant N indicated unrealistic optimism with regard to both his first choice of a career (animator, producer, director), as well as that of his alternative career as a composer. Participant N was not able to anticipate any challenges or obstacles in the attainment of these career goals even when the researcher indicated that learning music is a prerequisite for any career in composing. Participant X was also very positive about the possible achievement of her career goals and, once again, she, like the previous participant, was unable to anticipate any obstacles in achieving her goals. Participant A's career goals were patently unrealistic and, despite the use of optimistic discourse such as "I am passionate about becoming a fighter pilot", pessimism was implicit in his tone of voice, sense of uncertainty and general demeanour. The researcher is of the opinion that participant K appeared to be implicitly pessimistic as she often veered off the subject, tended to be distracted and

came across as wanting to please the researcher (interviewer) with what she perceived to be the “right” answers. According to Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000, p. 506) high levels of optimism together with a ‘fantasy’-like future orientation that lacks realism result in a poor adjustment to the actual future. Furthermore, Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000, p, 506) maintain that a fantasy-like view of a future career is often associated with a lack of motivation in respect of achieving within the school environment, as these adolescents are not able to relate what they are currently studying to their future careers. This, in turn, results in their viewing their schooling as irrelevant as it will not contribute to their futures. In the opinion of the researcher, participants A, K, X and N are all at risk of poor adjustment to the reality of adulthood and to their actual future careers, jobs and family life. This supports the view of Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000, p. 503), who suggest that it is essential that adolescents have the ability to identify possible obstacles realistically and to formulate alternative plans.

5.4.9.3 Control beliefs

According to Seginer (2009, p. 83), the ultimate goal of human beings is to take control over their environment. Lerner and Steinberg (2004, p. 99) assert that, in order to be active in terms of their future goals and aspiration, adolescents require positive thinking about the future together with a belief in internal/personal control. In addition, Lerner and Steinberg (2004, p. 99) report that the majority of adolescents believe that personal control will enable them to achieve their desired future goals. This was true for two of the participants in group 1, as both participants N and K believe that they themselves will determine the future. Nevertheless, N did also attribute a degree of control to his sister whom he perceives as essential in assisting him to reach his career goals. X and A are predominantly driven by external control beliefs with A relating his desire to become a fighter pilot to his father’s influence whilst X referred to her mother and to her caring for her mother as her main motivation for becoming a business woman.

5.4.9.4 Familial support

Adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive and encouraging display greater optimism and are able to conceptualise a differentiated and extensive future orientation (Trommsdorff, 1986, p. 125). Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000, p. 503)

maintain that relationships and social support are associated with internal control over future outcomes in adolescents. All the participants in group 1, with the exception of participant A, perceived their mothers as being supportive of their future careers and educational ideals. However, this assertion did not correlate with the evidence as all of the participants had admitted that their future orientation was a subject that was seldom discussed in their homes.

5.5 GROUP 2: COMBINED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Group 2's empirical results will be discussed in the same manner as those of group 1, namely, first, a graphical depiction of the quantitative results followed by a discussion. The qualitative results will explain and describe the quantitative aspects.

All participants in group 2 had scored **above five** in the Future Orientation Scale.

5.5.1 Participant T: Graphical representation of scale results

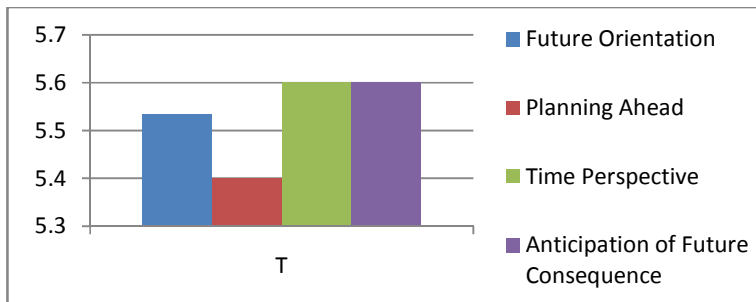


Figure 5.6: Participant T: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant T's overall future orientation results, especially in respect of time perspective, show both an awareness of time perspective and a knowledge of the passage of time including the past, present and future. This, in turn, indicates advanced cognitive functioning (Piaget, 1955, p. x). The qualitative data discussed in the next paragraph will reinforce and substantiate these quantitative findings.

5.5.1.2 Participant T: Qualitative themes generated from the one-on-one interview

Participant T presented herself as mature and she engaged actively in the interview. Her expressions were congruent with animated verbal accounts throughout the interview.

Salience

Participant T was able to answer each question spontaneously within the designated sub-themes which indicated that she had given significant thought and consideration to future goals and expectations.

“I think about my future a lot, I want to know where I am headed and be realistic about my home circumstances and what I want to do.”

“I am passionate about my future and I have some realistic goals that I know I can achieve.”

When asked if there was anything may detract her from reaching her full potential, perhaps a boyfriend, she answered as follows:

“I would go away from him if he tried to stop me, my goals, my life is the most important.”

Detail

Participant T was able to describe her future career and educational aspirations as well as her romantic relationship ideals in detail.

“I will definitely study further at university. I love learning and school so I know I will love university, it will be a challenge.”

“My very first choice of career is to be a paediatrician in private practice; I would like to travel helping those in need.”

“In five to ten years time I will be a role model in my family, I want to use what I have achieved to challenge others in my family to also do well and get a good future.”

Optimism and realism

Participant T was extremely enthusiastic and optimistic regarding her future. In addition, she was energised and she enjoyed sharing her perspectives.

When asked if she saw herself completing her matriculation year she looked at the interviewer as if she (the interviewer) was being facetious and replied as follows.

“Of course, I refuse to waste my life.”

On being asked whether she was hopeful regarding the future her reply was as follows.

“Yes, I am very hopeful and nothing will stop me; I know there will be challenges but I will cope.”

In the researcher’s opinion the optimism displayed by this participant was offset by realistic goals, challenges and outcomes.

“My first choice is to be a paediatrician but I know that finances are a problem so I will use my accounting ability to get a job as a bookkeeper in order to finance my medical degree should I not get a bursary.”

“I know there will be lots of sacrifices and I will miss my family if I work at night but I will use my accountancy to get where I want to go.”

Control beliefs

Participant T clearly believes that her own actions constitute the primary influence on her future .This came across early in the interview when she stated emphatically: “I don’t want to waste my life.”

“It will be mainly up to me to make a future for myself, I know there will be financial challenges and I might not get my first choice to be a paediatrician. That’s okay, I will look at other options in medicine.”

Familial support

Participant T spoke fondly of her family’s input into her future goals and aspirations.

“My family couldn’t get the education, I can. They didn’t have the opportunities I have so I want a good future and they want it for me too!”

Participant T responded to the question about familial support with great optimism.

“Yes, we love to discuss my future, I love it, we chat together and they really support me.”

(Participant T's responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the other participants in group 2 and discussed against the background of the literature study.)

5.5.2 Participant D: Graphical representation of scale results

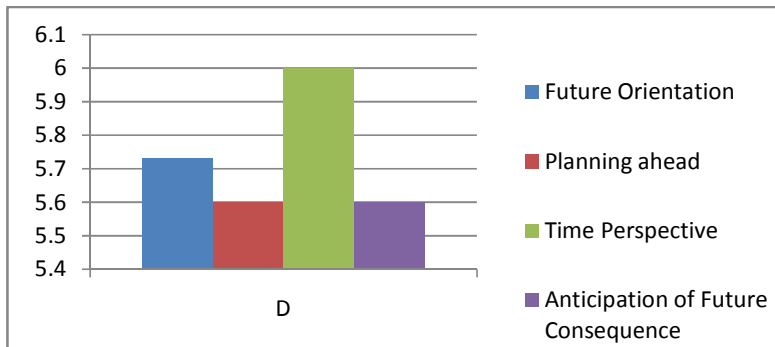


Figure 5.7: Participant D: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant D's graph indicates an extremely high score with regard to time perspective and this finding is carried through and explained in the qualitative data which emerged from the interview. Participant D is able to integrate and note the passage of time – past, present and future. These cognitive processes should be typical of adolescents at sixteen years of age (Piaget, 1955, p. x). It became evident during the interview that participant D was above average in the subjects of mathematics and physical science. This may have affected her formal operational thinking ability and enhanced her grasp of time perspective (section 2.3.3).

5.5.3 Participant D: Qualitative themes generated from interview

Salience

As mentioned, participant D was able to grasp the full flow of time from past to present and into the future. This characteristic of formal operational thinking is demonstrated in the following statement.

“I often think about the past and growing up now. I know there will be challenges in the future but it is also exciting.”

“This interview and the questionnaire has made me aware of the future a little because honestly I talk about my future with my dad and my friends very often, it is important to me.”

In general, participant D is very aware of the future time perspective, believing it to be very important.

Detail

Participant D tends to explain herself in detail, elaborating on personal characteristics and the motives behind her behaviour.

“My big dream is to study overseas or even at the University of the Witwatersrand to become a doctor. You see, I want to help others, I want to make a difference, and I want to help people live a healthy life.”

“If my dream to become a doctor is not possible, I still want to work in the medical profession. I will work in health care as my ultimate goal is to help others. Perhaps I could do radiology or occupational therapy”.

Participant D admitted to not thinking too much about romantic relationships at this stage.

“I am unsure how my future romantic relationships will be. I am not in a relationship now but I do want to have children one day as part of a stable marriage.”

Optimism and realism

Although participant D did elaborate on possible drawbacks she is, in general, implicitly positive with a balance between an overall optimistic outlook that is also realistic. Participant D was honest about encountering possible difficulties in the future.

“I know that I am not always a good communicator as I prefer to listen to others, but still, I want to work as a doctor and I am excited about the future.”

“There are many challenges in life and I am sure there will be struggles but I will find a way.”

“I really want this and my marks are good enough for entrance to medical school.”

“I really want to do this (career) and I am not afraid of hard work but it gets scary. I get afraid that something will happen and I won't get my dream.”

“I remember, too, that there are many options in life and I am a hard worker. If my first plan doesn't work out I will keep searching for possibilities. I don't think anything can stop me.”

Control beliefs

Participant D acknowledged the existence of outside influences but retained the belief that, ultimately, she herself has control and will influence her future orientation.

“Anything is possible, I know it, but I am determined to get the job and career I want, I have the determination and my decision is the most important.”

“Circumstances will happen like the lack of money, but I know if I am determined enough I will control them. I can make whatever changes I need to make.”

Familial support

Participant D perceived her family to be supportive of her future. This perception was reinforced by her description of her family interactions.

“I often talk about my future with my mom and dad. Even though my mom is a housewife she supports the fact that I want a career as a doctor”.

“I want to share my future with my family, comfort them in their old age as they support me now as I plan for the future”.

(Participant D's responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the other participants in group two and discussed against the background of the literature study.)

5.5.4 Participant R: Graphical representation of scale results

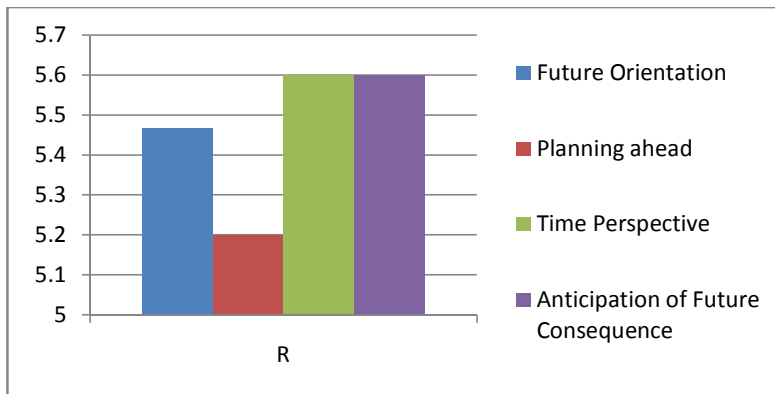


Figure 5.8: Participant R: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant R's scores indicate an ability both to anticipate future consequences and to consider the flow of time – past, present and future. The graphical representation indicates R's cognitive ability, specifically in terms of formal operational thinking (Piaget, 1955, p. x). Participant R also displayed the ability to integrate both the proximal and distal aspects of her social setting (Seginer, 2009, p. 243) which, in turn, allowed her to consider all possible life course domains including education, career, family life and interpersonal relationships. The qualitative data discussed below further explains these quantitative findings.

5.5.5 Participant R: Qualitative themes generated from the interview

Salience

Throughout the interview it was clear that participant R had given much thought to all the future domains discussed and was able to provide in depth, insightful answers to the questions relating to the four domains.

“I think about my future often. I like to plan ahead so that I can think things through before making any decisions.”

“I can say that I did not have to think before I wrote down my answers in the survey. I am always thinking and planning my future, what I need now is to talk to someone to help me make my final decisions”.

Detail

Participant R's descriptions of all the domains were insightful and detailed and she had obviously given careful consideration to both interpersonal and romantic relationships in the present and with reference to future expectations. This level of salient detail indicates that participant R's identity is forming in a way which allows for both the integration of the self and consideration of romantic relationships with a member of the opposite sex (Erikson, 1963, p. 273; Atkinson, 2006, p. 1).

"I will study after matric. I have never seen my life any other way, studying is what I must do to reach my goals, whether it is studying part time while I work or my first choice, to go to university."

"I will be in a romantic relationship in ten years from now. I am in a romantic relationship now that I know, despite what my parents say, this will be a long-term relationship, this boy is who I want to be with forever."

"I will have children one day. I love children and I am good with them. I want to care for my own kids one day and I want them to look up to me."

Optimism and Realism

The coding of this transcript revealed that most of participant R's statements contained a balance of optimism and realism. Although optimistic she was clearly aware of the realistic challenges that she may have to face in fulfilling her future aspirations.

"I will most definitely finish school to matric because education is very important to my family and me."

"I am very hopeful that I will reach my career goals. There is no doubt there will be challenges though, in life there are always challenges."

Participant R was able to consider practical alternatives in a pragmatic, optimistic and reasonable fashion.

“My first choice is to study tourism and work at marketing in the tourism industry as I like people a lot. If money is a problem I feel I could perhaps train as an air hostess now and study part time, cause you know, money is a problem.”

Control beliefs

Participant R was emphatic that she wished to be independent of her family and that she wanted to make her own individual choices regarding her future.

“I will decide on my career and what I want to study and no one else, not even my parents as they sometimes confuse me. But it’s my life and I must make the decision about my future myself.”

“I am thinking about finding a part time job now and saving for my first year varsity fees, this will help me get a head start.”

Familial support

Participant R admitted that, although her family was supportive, the possibility did exist that they could also interfere with her choices. She indicated that her father believed that she should become a lawyer but that she could not envisage this for herself. However, she did perceive her mom as being supportive and reasonable when they discussed her future aspirations which was something they did often.

“Yes, we do talk about my future career as this is important for my family and me, but I am very aware that my dad wants me to follow what he wants and I refuse to do a job I hate as I know this will make me unhappy later on.”

“My mom suggests that I do teaching, but is very open to my ideas and we chat often.”

(Participant R’s responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the other participants in group two and discussed against the background of the literature study.)

5.5.6 Participant J: Graphical representation of scale results

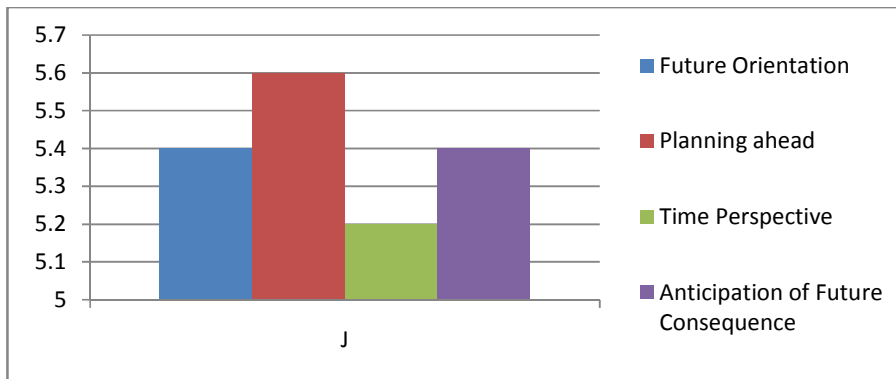


Figure 5.9: Participant J: Graphical representation of scale results

Participant J's general future orientation score was slightly lower as compared with the other members of group 2. However, she scored highest on planning ahead and this ability is key to her preparation for adulthood as it will enable her to make decisions about her future career, education and significant relationships (Atkinson, 2006, p. 1).

5.5.6.1 Participant J: Qualitative themes generated from the interview

Salience

Participant J responded specifically and quickly in integrating past and future aspects.

"I have had big dreams since I was young and my family is not very successful but I want to be."

"I always think about my future as I want a lot more for myself than my family has now."

The interviewer's final question as to whether the survey and interview had increased her awareness was answered as follows:

“Answering the survey has made me more aware, it made me think about my future in more detail, I had to be clear, but it was not the first time I thought about it, I think about it often.”

Detail

Participant J offered detailed responses with reference to the sub-themes of education, career and interpersonal relationships with her responses including the integration of present and future perspectives (section 2.3.6).

“I will probably be in a romantic relationship in five to ten years from now. I am in a serious relationship now, I have met his parents and my mom will meet them soon.”

“I am very interested in glitz and glamour right now and I love the limelight so I would like to work in television as a journalist in the future.”

Optimism and realism

Although optimistic participant J was also pragmatic in her replies and in describing her future aspirations.

“I am very positive about finishing my education and doing journalism at Rhodes University. I also plan to model part time to help pay my fees.”

In the researcher’s opinion participant J would make an excellent model as she is well groomed, graceful and attractive and, hence, this is a realistic goal.

“I know there will be challenges and I am used to having plenty of challenges in my life, but I will keep on trying and never give up.”

“If my plan to go to university doesn’t work out I will train toward some kind of business degree.”

Control beliefs

Participant J believed that she is the primary force that will influence her future. Once again, participant J was realistic and frank about her strengths and weaknesses in this regard.

“I am in control of getting the career I want but I must be very careful because sometimes other people can change my mind easily, especially friends.”

“If things don’t work out with my first choice, I will keep on trying.”

“I believe that I will get what I want myself but sometimes I doubt, I think that money may be the thing that will hold me back.”

Familial support

The notion of familial support was repeated often in the interview with participant J reinforcing her family’s commitment – specifically, her mom – to supporting her future goals. In fact, she made this point four times during the interview.

“My mom and my sisters will support me in whatever I do.”

“My mom always has and will always want the best for me”.

“My biggest influence in helping me in my future is my mom.”

“They (my family) will always support me.”

“I talk to my mom and my sisters a lot about the future, especially about my education.”

(Participant J’s responses to the following categories will be integrated with those of the other participants in group 2 and discussed against the background of the literature study.)

5.5.7 Group 2: Discussion and literature control

5.5.7.1 Salience and detail

Polster and Polster (1973, p. 227) maintain that it is imperative for an individual to recognise his/her wants and desires as this engenders focused action. The data from group 2’s interviews indicate a real awareness of individuals’ wants and desires as the descriptions were rich in both salience and detail. This was true specifically in terms of the domains of education and career, thus indicating that the group members had spent considerable time thinking about and planning their futures. Participants D and T had described romantic relationships in less detail, although

this may have been as a result of the fact that their self-identities were still developing. This would accord with Erikson's (1968, p. 33) statement that the development of self-identity is a pre-requisite to achieving identity as part of a close, intimate relationship.

Lewin (1936, p. 68) asserts that the self is fundamentally need driven. According to Trommsdorff (1983, p. 384) and Galotti *et al.* (2009, p. 17) human beings are motivated toward goals either in the near or distant future with the need either to satisfy certain wishes or to avoid a negative event stimulating these expectations. The adolescents in group 2 are striving toward a better lifestyle than the lifestyle which they have at present. For example, participants T and J both want to satisfy their wishes for a better future and to avoid the hardships which they and their parents were enduring at the time.

5.5.7.2 Optimism, pessimism and realism

Mc Cabe and Barnett (2000, p. 506) associate a restricted, pessimistic outlook with socio-economically deprived youth while Freire, Gorman and Wessman (1980, p. 254) associate socio-economically deprived youth with an unrealistic, excessive optimism.

There was implicit optimism in the tone of the group 2 interviews although the participants were both implicitly and explicitly optimistic. In every case, this optimism correlated with the realistic challenges that the participants would possibly have to confront and also with possible alternative solutions. There was a density of information provided by the adolescents in this group. Realistic, external obstacles such as finances were listed as possible barriers in the way of their achieving their career or education goals. However, the mention of these obstacles was invariably followed by carefully thought-out alternatives and possible solutions. Participant R is committed to taking a weekend job in order to save toward her tuition fees, participant T is prepared to work as a bookkeeper and study part time, while participant J plans to model part time to assist with paying her tuition fees. This group of adolescents is neither pessimistic (Mc Cabe & Barnett, 2000, p. 506) nor unrealistically optimistic (Freire, Gorman & Wessman, 1980, p. 254). Instead, they are they realistically optimistic and possess the ability both to identify challenges and to make alternative plans.

5.5.7.3 Control beliefs

Internal control refers to the generalised orientation or conviction that one is the primary influence of future outcomes (Seginer, 2009, p. 78). On the other hand, external control refers to the belief that powerful, external, random forces such as chance or luck which are stronger than the individual self will determine the future (Seginer, 2009, p. 78). Whilst the adolescents in group 2 are not blindly optimistic, believing that they are the sole force that may affect their futures, they do, nevertheless, believe that they themselves constitute the primary influence on their future educational, career and romantic relational outcomes.

According to Polster and Polster (1973, p. 227) an awareness of wants and desires accompanies owning which, in turn, entails taking control of thoughts, behaviour and feelings (Resnick, 1995, p. 2). Drass-Brailsford (2005, p. 574) and Galotti *et al.*, (2009, p. 17) regard the ability to be goal orientated as an act of personal responsibility. In the opinion of the researcher the adolescents in this group take control of and own their thoughts, behaviours and feelings both in the present and with reference to their future aspirations. Schmidt, Lamm and Trommsdorff (1978, p. 84) maintain that social status influences both internal and external control beliefs, with individuals from deprived socio-economic backgrounds believing that they have little personal responsibility for events. However, the findings from group 2 contradict this research as the members of this group, despite having the same social status as the participants in group 1, clearly believed that their own acts constituted the primary force in predicting their future orientation.

5.5.7.4 Familial support

The adolescents in group 2 all perceived their parents as being supportive – their dialogue corroborated this fact. They all agreed that their parents spoke to them often and at length about their future careers and education. Even participant R had mentioned parental support despite having conflicting feelings about her father's perceived interference at times. Participants R and J appeared to have progressed further than participants D and T in respect of the process of self-identity (Erikson, (1968, p. 33) and were deeply involved with romantic relationships at the time (Seginer & Noyman, 2005, p. 35). They indicated that these relationships were the focus of discussion in their homes with increased parental involvement in the form of

arranged meetings with boyfriends and dialogue regarding romantic relationships. Participant D admitted that she talked to her father at length about her educational and career goals and that she confided in her sister about her romantic relationships.

The educational and social status of parents determines not only their own future orientation but also their socialisation goals and behaviour in respect of their children (Trommsdorff, 1983, p. 391). The parents of the participants both groups one and two may have been considered to be socio-economically deprived and members of the working class (manual labourers). Nevertheless, in terms of group 2, parental support included the desire both to break free from generational poverty (Drass-Brailsford, 2005, p. 575) and to harness the potential of their children.

Children who perceive little support from their parents are, generally, less optimistic about the future and less hopeful than children who perceived their parents as being supportive (Trommsdorff, 1983, p. 391). This was certainly true for both groups. The participants in group 1 indicated less perceived familial support and were less realistically optimistic than the participants in group 2 who perceived their families as being supportive and were, thus, more realistically optimistic.

5.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Despite the fact that both groups one and two were from the same sample of indigent, urban adolescents the participants in these two groups perceived their futures in divergent ways. Group 1's descriptions of the future lacked salience and detail whilst group 2's descriptions were dense in both positive and negative predictions. Group 1's descriptions were mostly optimistic, but unrealistically so, and they tended to lack alternatives or back-up plans. In fact, their descriptions were often escapist, fantasy-like accounts. Group 2's descriptions were realistically optimistic with detailed, well-researched alternatives. The group 1 participants appeared to believe that external circumstances would determine their futures and that these forces wielded a greater influence over the future than their own. On the other hand, the group 2 participants manifested a definite belief in internal control as defining their futures. Both groups 1 and 2 were of the belief that their parents supported their future orientation although only the group 2 participants were able to

substantiate this with accounts of definite, current dialogue between themselves and their parents.

Both groups 1 and 2 were from the same sample group and had, thus, been exposed to the same macro systemic, stressful life circumstances (section 2.5.1). In addition, they are also at the mercy of the rapid social changes which are, at present, endemic to South African society (Pinquart & Silbereisen, 2005, p. 395) and the pervasive socio-economic deprivation that jeopardises growth and development (Carter & Murdock, 2001, p. 21). Their parents were all victims of the apartheid laws that have had a generational influence on poverty (Drass-Brailsford, 2005, p. 575).

However, despite experiencing the same level of socio-economic deprivation as group 1, the members of group 2 have managed to attribute a different meaning to their circumstances.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Chapter 5 focused on the empirical data and discussed the finding in respect of each group with regard to the dominant themes and sub-themes. Chapter 6 will further explore these findings and relate them to the literature review which was presented in chapters 2 and 3.

5.8 Schematic representation of main themes and sub-themes

Schematic Presentations of Main and Sub Themes

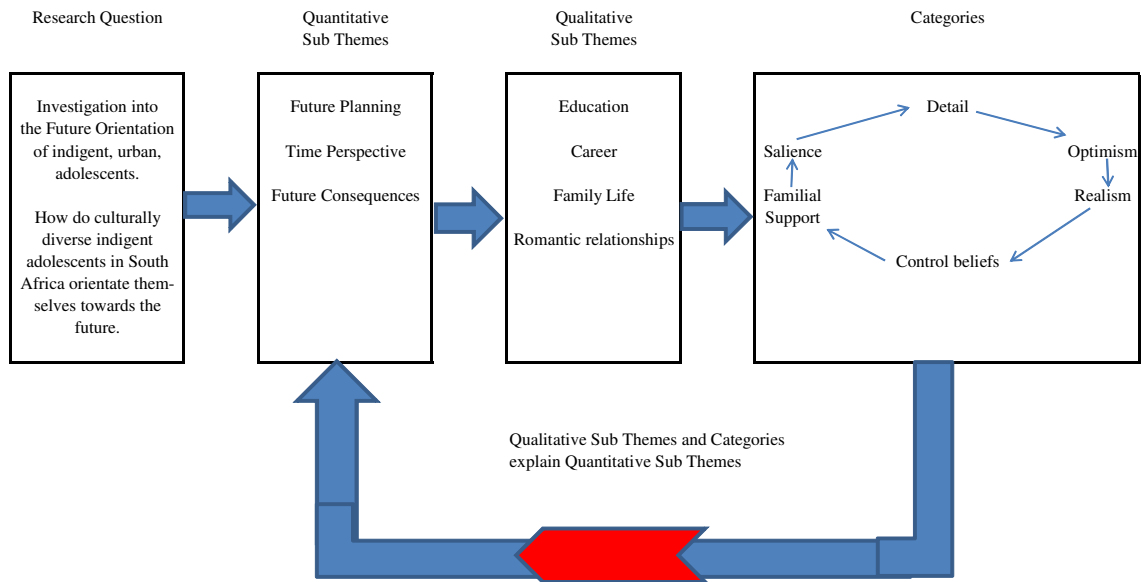


Figure 5.10: Schematic representation of main themes and sub-themes

CHAPTER 6

GENERAL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter concludes the study with a discussion of the most important findings. It also provides recommendations, limitations and conclusions that serve to answer the research question: **How do culturally diverse, indigent adolescents in South Africa orientate themselves towards their future?** The conclusions reiterate the aims and objectives of the research while the limitations delineate the study's deficiencies. Finally, the recommendations provide suggestions for future research.

6.2 THE GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

It was the researcher's intention (De Vos, 2005, p. 361) both to understand and to explain how indigent adolescents in South Africa orientate themselves towards their future within their current life space.

6.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE CHAPTERS

6.3.1 Chapter 1: Introduction and methodology

Chapter 1 provided a brief overview of the study including, *inter alia*, the paradigmatic perspective, the rationale behind the study, the research approach and methodology, the significant concepts used as well as the ethical principles involved

6.3.2 Chapter 2: A theoretical and contextual overview of the developing adolescent in South Africa.

This chapter described the universal psychosocial and cognitive transitions from childhood into adulthood with special reference to the adolescent's transition from dependence to independence and consequent individuation. The adolescent's transition takes place within a specific context that impact on the adolescent's developmental trajectory. In this study the focus was on adolescent development within a socio-economically deprived context (South Africa) that is in a state of rapid social change.

6.3.3 Chapter 3: The Gestalt paradigm and adolescent development

The Gestalt paradigm provided the framework or particular worldview within which the study was conceived. In chapter 3 the adolescent is described from an existential, humanistic and interactional Gestalt perspective.

The phases of development were elaborated upon using the Lewinian–Gestalt developmental paradigm that emphasises the recursive interchange and contact between the adolescent and his/her environment as the adolescent “disembeds”.

6.3.4 Chapter 4: Empirical methodology and research design

Chapter 4 provided a detailed description of the mixed methodology research design utilised in this study. It also discussed the data analysis procedure as well as describing the qualitative criteria which were employed in order to ascertain that the study was evidence based.

6.3.5 Chapter 5: Empirical results

In this chapter the researcher reported on the categories and sub-themes observed that were then delineated in a comprehensive manner. The qualitative data gathered from the interviews explained and described the earlier quantitative findings which had been generated from the Future Orientation Scale (Explanatory Mixed Methods Study).

6.3.6 Chapter 6: General summary of findings and recommendations

The aim of this chapter was to collate the previous chapters and to summarise the findings from the empirical research. As part of this exploratory study the researcher will make recommendations as to ways in which at risk, indigent adolescents may be encouraged to use their future aspirations and planning in order to improve their social circumstances. The limitations of the study will be considered and suggestions for further studies considered

6.4 EVALUATION

6.4.1 Attaining the research objectives

The objectives of this study enabled the researcher to structure the study in a comprehensive manner. The objectives were delineated in chapter 1 and will now be

evaluated and assessed in order to ascertain whether they have been achieved in the course of the research.

The objectives were as follows:

Conduct a literature study on the psychosocial development of the adolescent; future orientation as a protective factor; the context of socio-economic deprivation in South Africa; the Gestalt paradigm as well as Lewinian–Gestalt developmental theory. These objectives were realised in chapters 2 and 3 in which the researcher conducted a comprehensive literature study that included current and classical literature sources. The literature selected was carefully prepared in order to provide a 'literature framework' in terms of which to conduct the study.

Administer a demographic questionnaire as well as a standardised Future Orientation Scale which was compiled and pilot tested by Steinberg, Graham & O'Brien (Steinberg; Graham, O'Brien; Woolard; Cauffman & Banich, 2009:44). This, the quantitative aspect of the study, aimed at measuring three related, but not identical, subscales of the future orientation (time perspective, anticipation of future consequences and planning) of 31 participants from a predominantly indigent, urban senior school. The researcher administered the above-mentioned demographic questionnaire and the Future Orientation Scale to a single class of 31 culturally diverse, indigent, urban adolescents.

Analyse the Future Orientation Scale according to its scoring schedule. The researcher scored the scale in order to prepare for the second phase of the study (qualitative phase). A scoring schedule was prepared from which participants were selected for the one-on-one interviews. Group 1 comprised four participants who had scored below five on the scale while group 2 comprised another four participants who had scored above five on the scale.

Conduct a semi-structured, one-on-one, in-depth interview with the eight participants selected – four who had scored a high rating and four who had scored a low rating on the Future Orientation Scale. The perceptions of these adolescents' future orientation in terms of the domains of educational, occupation, family of origin and interpersonal relationships were explored, compared and described qualitatively. The researcher conducted the interviews

and was able to collect precise, comprehensible data. The interviews covered the abovementioned domains which, according to literature (chapter 1), are universally central to the future orientation of adolescents.

Analyse the qualitative data gathered in the one-on-one interviews using content analysis in order to delineate themes and sub-themes. The quantitative data was analysed first and this data was then utilised to commence the qualitative phase of the data collection. The qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and this, in turn, enabled the researcher to generate themes and sub-themes as well as categories.

Provide a detailed description of the phenomenological data using both a quantitative and a qualitative methodology that would describe the research findings appropriately against the backdrop of the literature study. Chapters 4 and 5 fulfil this objective as data is plainly described and discussed and then integrated with the literature study and paradigmatic perspectives.

Present conclusions based on the research findings regarding the current future orientation of indigent adolescents in South Africa. This remains the objective of this current discussion.

6.5 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study was to understand and explain how indigent adolescents in South Africa orientate themselves toward their future within their current life space.

After the empirical data had been collected the researcher compiled her findings and compared these findings with existing international studies as well as the concepts and data already discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

6.6 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.6.1 Macro-systemic impact on future orientation: Striving for a better future.

Western society idealises autonomy and future orientation with this concept being reinforced in the media, within family structures, and in schools. These first world western ideals are provided for in overseas countries with the putting place of

structures and amenities. Ironically, these ideals are valued in South Africa which is a country which is experiencing unique social changes together with high levels of socio-economic deprivation. However, despite these realities, South African society is striving for the a first world western ideal in seeking both a future identity and a future orientation under extremely difficult, unsupportive circumstances.

The purposive sample of participants in this study reflects the above while all the participants in the study, without exception, expressed a need to improve their circumstances. Although socio-economically deprived this has in no way daunted the academic aspirations of these adolescents. The participants who took part in the interviews all placed considerable of value on tertiary education and all expressed the desire to receive further education.

6.6.2 Adolescent chronological age and development

Planning for the future and personalising identity occur predominantly during the transition between childhood and adulthood. Existing literature suggests that young adolescents are not able to comprehend the continuum of time from past and present and to integrate a future perspective. The researcher concurs with the findings of overseas studies in stating that the optimal time for assessing future orientation is between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years. From the perspective of both identity and chronology, the participants were actively involved in predicting their future outcomes.

6.6.3 Adolescent cognitive development

The formal operational phase (Piaget, 1955, p. x) is active during the adolescent developmental phase, thus enabling the adolescents both to engage in hypothetic-deductive reasoning and to integrate past, present and future. However, Piaget (1955, p. x) and other researchers do indicate that not all adolescents/adults are able to engage in formal operational thought.

Piaget's (1955, p. x) findings are applicable to this study of culturally diverse, indigent adolescents. However, a few of the participants only were unable either to integrate or to visualise time on a continuous basis, nor were they able to integrate the future into the present at this stage of their adolescent development.

6.6.4 Variations in achieving adolescent identity

As the adolescent matures and evolves from environmental support to self-support so does identity development increase. The ability to define whom he/she is and what is of individual importance is essential to identity formation. In this study, it became obvious that the individuation process had occurred at a faster rate for some of the adolescents than for others. Within the large sample group of 31 many of the adolescents had been able to answer the Future Orientation Scale easily and without considering their answers. However, a small group of the adolescents had confessed to experiencing confusion in respect of their own opinions and values and the value system they had 'introjected' as part of childhood 'embeddedness'.

6.6.5 Adolescent identity and romantic relationships

In view of the fact that identity contains both elements of independence and connection it follows that identity formation is a precursor to romantic relationships. Some of the participants were able to provide a detailed account of their future expectations in terms of romantic relationships. This confirms the existence of the different pace at which adolescents achieve identity formation and move on to identifying themselves within the context of romantic relationships.

6.6.6 Optimism, pessimism and realism in socio-economically deprived circumstances.

Existing studies show that adolescents who live in pervasively deprived social conditions have a restricted ability to anticipate the future. In some studies this is viewed as constituting an adaptation to the prevailing circumstances. The Gestalt paradigm views this adaptation as repeated, unmet needs that are eventually suppressed in order to put an end to continual suffering. The adaptation to the repeatedly unmet need, which inhibits the visualising of and planning for a future, may also sometimes be distorted. The adolescent 'escapes' the present day to day deprivations by concocting unrealistic, fantasy-like, future plans. It became clear from the study that these fantasies of the future are high in salience and detail but that they lack pragmatism. At first, this tendency may appear harmless, but existing research has indicated that, when the individual realises on leaving school that his/her future fantasies are unachievable, this results in a poor adjustment to the real life stressors of job seeking.

Half (50%) of the participants in this study were able to describe their future orientation in salient, realistic detail. Two of the eight participants (25%) displayed the tendency to fantasise unrealistically about the future, while two other participants (25%) were unable to describe the future in pragmatic detail. As will be discussed below familial support also affected these results.

6.6.7 Future orientation and familial support

During childhood the relationship between the child and the adolescent follows 'simple interdependency'. However, this evolves and changes to 'organisational interdependence' in terms of which the adolescent's life space diversifies and the adolescent comes to consider the time perspective of past, present and future (section 3.9.3). In this study parental and familial involvement played an important role in the diversification of the time perspective and, in particular, of future orientation.

Existing research indicates that adolescents who perceive their parents as supportive and encouraging display greater optimism and are able to visualise a detailed future orientation. The participants in this study who were aware of their future aspirations, clearly perceived their parents as supportive and were able to recall time spent planning future education, careers and, in some cases, romantic relationships. These future aspirations were described in rich, prominent, relevant and significant detail. A realistic optimism was also displayed in cases in which parental input and guidance had meant that these adolescents were able both to seek alternatives and to plan for possible obstacles.

Group 1 (low scorers on the Future Orientation Scale) participants admitted that infrequent time has been spent thus far in planning their future education, career or interpersonal relationships with their parents. This lack of parental support for the future had contributed to these adolescent participants' unrealistic, optimistic view of future outcomes. Their descriptions lacked salience and detail as they were unable to describe realistically any possible obstacles that they may encounter. It may, thus, be concluded that, in general, this group of adolescents believed less in their future aspirations and were unsure of their future plans.

6.6.8 The effect of paternal and maternal contact and involvement on future orientation.

Existing research further demonstrates the effect of parental involvement on the future orientation of indigent adolescents .Furthermore, it illustrates that interaction between the adolescent and both maternal and paternal figures enhances adolescent optimism with regard to future aspirations and planning.

Of the sample of eight participants interviewed two (25%) only had had contact with both parents, while the rest of the participants lived in female-headed, single income households (usually with the mother). Despite this obvious lack of paternal influence four of the eight (50%) participants expressed positive, realistic plans and aspirations. It was evident from the study that the pervasive social changes within this group of culturally diverse, indigent adolescents (section 2.5.2) mean that female-run households are 'the norm' and homes with both parents present 'the exception'. Based on the study findings the researcher is of the opinion that a hopeful and involved maternal influence is sufficient for some adolescents to attain a comprehensive future perspective.

6.6.9 Individual characteristics

It is essential that the individual characteristics of the adolescents be taken into account when assessing the results of this study. The researcher identified the following characteristics that had been revealed by those adolescents who were able to express their future aspirations in relevant, significant detail. These personal characteristics include goal orientation, initiative, motivation and the understanding of the self as having a measure of agency (internal control beliefs). These characteristics were largely absent in those participants who lacked the ability to plan ahead in significant, realistic detail.

6.6.10 Adolescent integration and the 'self'

The 'self' organises and interprets individual experiences, thereby deciding what experiences the individual adolescent will integrate. The participants in both groups subjectively attributed meaning via the contact that they made with their unique environments. These influences were, in turn, integrated into the self-structure of the adolescents. The group 1 participants had attributed meaning to their circumstances

in a vastly different manner to those in group 2 despite the fact that both groups had stemmed from the original, purposive sample group.

In contrast to the members of group 2, the group 1 participants predominantly held the belief that they had little inner control over the future and that future outcomes are affected primarily by external conditions. Group 1 was unrealistically optimistic with two group members indulging in fantasy-like future beliefs. All of these factors (see sections 5.4.9 and 5.5.9) indicate the distinctly different integration and interpretation of individual experience between the participants in group one and group two.

6.6.11 Future orientation and resilience

Resilience – a term derived from humanistic psychology theory – focuses on human strengths. Future orientation may be regarded as an aspect of resilience as research has shown that it acts as a protective factor amongst low-income youth (section 2.6.6). The purposive sample of 31 adolescents from which eight were selected for the qualitative study all originated from a population of indigent adolescents facing similar socio-economic challenges and pervasive social problems. Four of the eight participants (50%) revealed that they were able to think about the future in detail and that they had, in fact, spent a significant amount of time forecasting their futures. The fact that these participants expressed their thoughts regarding possible complications or obstacles that may arise on the journey toward their goals revealed their problem-solving abilities. The ability to visualise the future in an optimistic, detailed and realistic manner precedes empowerment, thus altering current circumstances through positive future aspirations. These four adolescents are clearly resilient as it is positive future expectations which differentiate resilient adolescents from non-resilient adolescents.

6.6.12 Sub-themes (domains)

The researcher found that the sub-themes of education, career, and family life together with the additional domain of romantic relationships were universal domains and were applicable in this study of indigent, culturally diverse, urban dwellers. The sub-themes resonated with the participants in this study as these adolescents are preoccupied with these issues as part of their adolescent developmental trajectory.

6.7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In general, this study concluded that, although socio-economic deprivations as well as many other pervasive social issues, do influence the future orientation of adolescents in South Africa, nevertheless these influences have not extinguished these indigent adolescents' motivational striving toward a positive and productive future. The predominant influences on the future orientation of indigent, culturally diverse adolescents in South Africa include familial support, resilience and individual characteristics.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Having completed her exploration of the way in which indigent, urban adolescents configure their future orientations, the researcher was able to make the following recommendations, specifically to anybody who works with adolescents in South Africa.

Motivational and social skills are extremely important in encouraging a positive outlook on the part of adolescents. Schools constitute the institutional innovators which are central to the adolescents life at the time. Training teachers and educating them on the importance of future orientation as a resilience factor in terms of the at risk adolescents would be a catalyst for change among adolescents. Teachers would then have the ability to mentor the youth in their care by providing them with the knowledge that they have both choices and the capability to apply themselves in order to bring about change in their lives

Pervasive social changes and generational socio-economic deprivation have resulted in many families having a restricted, pessimistic outlook of the future. This type of outlook is influencing the current generation of adolescents and their future aspirations. If communities and schools could foster an increased awareness of, and education in, both future orientation as well as the role played by adult involvement and familial support, this may enable parents to encourage a future orientation in their adolescent offspring.

Formal, individualised career guidance which involves testing and practical guidelines as part of the curriculum would educate and empower the adolescent

.This, in turn, would help increase an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses and enable them to make realistic career choices.

This type of career guidance would also help educate adolescents and expand their knowledge in respect of possible future careers that require apprenticeships rather than formalised tertiary education .This study has indicated that many adolescents appear to regard university as the only option and career guidance could change this misconception and provide the adolescent with other alternatives.

Encouraging entrepreneurial skills would be most beneficial and could offer the opportunity to make use of existing skills such as conscientiousness and industry. It would, thus, be advantageous to implement entrepreneurial skills-based programmes as part of the curriculum especially in an environment with high levels of unemployment such as South Africa.

It would be of immense benefit if incentive based bursary schemes from big businesses were made accessible to the more indigent adolescents as financial constraints are often a barrier to their realising their full potential.

Business programs in terms of which adolescents are invited into institutions or place of business should be made more available. This would allow adolescents to witness first -hand what certain jobs entail. These programs are already in place for the middle to high-income groups and have been extremely successful in creating a realistic awareness of what future careers entail.

The recommended interventions have focused predominantly on the increase and facilitation of a resilient response to the adversity faced by adolescents. This is overly simplistic and implies that working with the families and offering career guidance is sufficient. In actuality, however, a top-down approach is needed in terms of which socio-economic deprivation would be eliminated and the root causes of poverty identified and dealt with.

6.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research is not generalisable as it involved a small, specific sample of indigent adolescents.

A longitudinal study would be ideal to investigate the way in which the adolescent structures and configures his/her future orientation. Such a study would capture the differences in the maturation process and changes in self-identity. In this case a longitudinal study was not feasible as this study was of limited scope. The study was limited in that it did not consider the gender of the participants. First and foremost the researcher was interested in the responses of the adolescent participants and in their chronological age.

The fact that the school was located in a socio-economically deprived area and is the feeder school for a nearby informal settlement enabled the researcher to assume that the parents and adolescents were poor. Although not officially confirmed this was undoubtedly true but the researcher did, nevertheless, not request any statements of household income.

As is the case with most research this study focused on the present time perspective and looked into a predicted future. The study did not include the past in its assessments.

This study took place just after the close of the 2010 Soccer World Cup which was an event that placed South Africa firmly within the global landscape. The country experienced a wave of optimism which suspended the shared reality of socio-economic deprivation. This phenomenon may well have influenced the outcome of this research study.

6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study investigated future orientation and, thus; a recommendation for possible research would be to chart the progress of future orientation and identity formation in a longitudinal study.

Further research may also compare and contrast current parental expectations in conjunction with adolescent future expectations.

Repeated research using the same study as a base within a rural setting and comparing the rural study with the urban study would be an interesting way in which to broaden research in South Africa.

Research among indigent adolescents may also include parenting styles as an added variable.

The future orientation of pregnant adolescents in an urban/rural setting and investigating the way in which these pregnant adolescents perceive their futures from their current perspective would also contribute to the existing body of research.

The effect of family conflict on future orientation and the influence of family breakdown on future orientation is also a possible area of future study.

A comparative study between the future orientations of adolescents from divorced homes and adolescents from cohesive families might also be undertaken in the future.

Similarly a study of rehabilitated late adolescents and the future orientation of adolescents who have recently completed a drug/alcohol rehabilitation program is another recommended area of research

It has been found that depression is prevalent among indigent adolescents and, thus, an alternative study may ascertain the correlation between adolescent depression and future orientation.

6.11 CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of the study notwithstanding themes were confirmed and identified as being applicable and pertinent to the unique South African situation. The pervasive influence of socio-economic deprivation and the history of apartheid all weigh heavily on the emerging group of adolescents in today's society. The past is gone; the present is the only reality and it is the 'here and now' that is the focus. This study has provided not only some understanding of the social challenges faced by adolescents but also the way in which future orientation may serve act as a major protective factor among the at risk, indigent youth.

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Appendix A

UNISA/HUGUENOT COLLEGE – SCHOOL CONSENT TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Title: AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF INDIGENT CULTURALLY DIVERSE URBAN ADOLESCENTS

Your learners are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Debra Shelley (Mdiac Play Therapy) from the Institute for Child, Youth and Family studies at UNISA/Huguenot College. The results of this study will be in part-fulfillment of a dissertation for the completion of the Mdiac in Play Therapy. They were selected as possible participants in this study because they are learners in an urban culturally diverse school. They have been selected for this study in order to provide input into the current future orientation of the youth in South Africa.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

It is the researchers' intention to understand and explain how the adolescents in South Africa from deprived socio-economic circumstances view their future within their current life space.

PROCEDURES

If your learners volunteer to participate in this study, they will be asked to do the following:

Complete a short future orientation scale.

Participate in an interview to provide a detailed picture of their, observations, experiences and perceptions regarding their future orientation.

The interview will be on a one-on-one basis and will occur at a place that is convenient for all.

The duration of the interview is estimated between 30 and 45 minutes.

All sessions will be videotaped and transcribed, and stored in a safe place only accessible by the researcher.

Feedback will be provided to you if necessary and if requested.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The nature of this study may require them to participate in activities which may involve potential risks and discomfort. The adolescents will be alerted to the possibility that in the event of personal discomfort regarding the awareness of their own future orientation they can and will be debriefed by the researcher.

They may find that the questionnaires/scales will take up some time. They may withdraw from this study at any time, if you choose.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The results of this study will be part-fulfilment of a dissertation for the completion of the Mdiac in Play Therapy. These results will be of benefit to society in general, as they will further the understanding of the current future orientation of the youth in South Africa.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will not be paid for your participation in this study, nor will you be charged any fee.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of your own pseudo-name for the duration of the study to ensure that you will not be identified. The data will be kept confidential and will be labelled with pseudo-codes and stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's private office (The researcher will only have access to this office).

All material will be published in the research report at Huguenot College. Before publication, a feedback session with you will be conducted allowing you to share, clarify and report on your experience of participating in this research. Feedback to the school will be provided if necessary.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to participate in this study. You may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so (refer to point 3).

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact

Student: Debra Shelley 083 709 1481

Study Leader: Susanne Jacobs 082 783 7474

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Dr Retha Bloem head at the Institute for Child, Youth and Family Studies at UNISA/Huguenot College.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [*me/the subject/the participant*] by Debra Shelley *in* English and [*I am/the subject is/the participant is*] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [*me/him/her*]. [*I/the participant/the subject*] were given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [*my/his/her*] satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the subject/participant*] and/or [his/her] representative _____ [*name of the representative*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and [*no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____ by _____*].

Signature of Investigator Date

Appendix B

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH: PARENTAL CONSENT

Title of the study:

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE FUTURE ORIENTATION OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE URBAN ADOLESCENTS

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation. It describes the procedures, benefits, risks and discomforts of the study. It is important for you to understand that no guarantees or assurances can be made as to the results of the study. Once completed, a summary of the results will be available to you on request.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

I am a Masters student conducting research on the way in which adolescents in South Africa perceive their futures. I am interested in how your adolescent sees their futures in terms of career, future studies, family as well as interpersonal relationships. The information which is obtained from the adolescents will give me insight into the general perception adolescents have of their futures as well as if they have consider their future goals at the present time.

PROCEDURE AND TIME FRAME OF THE STUDY

The adolescents will be asked to fill in a very basic questionnaire which will be explained to them in detail. Some adolescents will be asked to take part in an interview where they will be asked about their goals for the future. The interview will be recorded on video tape to save time and improve accuracy. This discussion will take place on a pre-arranged day at a pre-arranged time.

POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORT

It would be difficult to predict if there will be any discomfort There will be a debriefing session for all of the participants and if the need arises for psychological or therapeutic interventions, a trained counselor, will be available to deal with the

psychological aspects. If at any stage the adolescents feel uncomfortable in the session they are welcome to halt proceeding any further.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS FOR RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND/OR SOCIETY

Future Orientation has been widely researched in other countries and it is valuable to investigate how our youth in South Africa view the future .These investigations can assist all who work with young people ,enabling them to invent programmes for schools and therapists to encourage the youth to think about and plan for their future as productive adults .The researcher intends to use the findings of this research to provide suggestions and guidance to practitioners furthering their understanding of how the youth in South Africa perceive the future.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

The researcher will not be compensating the participants in monetary form.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I hereby undertake to ensure that information obtained will be treated confidentially. The identity of the participants will not be disclosed to any publication, that means neither your identity nor your child's identity will be disclosed whatsoever. Video recordings of each session will be only viewed by the research team.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at anytime during the study, even though your signature indicates that you have agreed to participate. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCHER

Principal Investigator:

Debra Shelley, Masters Student, UNISA/Huguenot College, Centre of Play Therapy Training and University of South Africa

Contact Numbers: 0837091481

RESEARCH SUBJECTS' RIGHTS

Your participation is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at anytime during the study without any penalty. By participating in the research you will still have rights. Should you wish to query your rights as a research subject, please contact:

Dr Susanne Jacobs

Supervisor for this research Study:

Centre for Play Therapy Training UNISA/Huguenot College

Contact Numbers: 082-783-7474

Dr Retha Bloem

Director/Head/Research Coordinator

Centre for Play Therapy Training UNISA/Huguenot College

ContactNumbers: 021-873-1181

DECLARATION BY RESEARCH SUBJECT/ LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE:

The above mentioned information was given to me by **Debra Shelley**. It has been thoroughly explained to me by Debra Shelley in English. I, as the participant am proficient in English, without needing a translator. I, as the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions and Debra answered my questions satisfactorily.

I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done

NAME OF PARTICIPANT

NAME OF LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE

DECLARATION BY RESEARCHER

I declare that the information in this document was explained to _____
and/or their legal representative. They were encouraged to ask me any questions and received
sufficient time to ask me any questions. The conversation was done in English and no translator was
used.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER DATE

Appendix C

ADOLESCENT PARTICIPANT ASSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

Your school is allowing me to do a study about how adolescents in South Africa view their futures. There have been many studies done like this in other countries but very few in South Africa.

Being part of this study is voluntary, your parents/guardians and your headmaster have been given a consent form to fill in but I want to make sure you understand what your role is in this study.

I am going to ask that you all fill in two questionnaires and some of you will be asked to take part in a one-to-one interview. I would like to interview all the participants but my research is unfortunately limited to eight interviews only .

Your information will be confidential and at no point in my research report will your name or the name of the school be mentioned.

If you are asked to be part of an interview this will be recorded **only** to verify what you have said, the footage will be kept in a locked cabinet.

Please ask if there is anything you don't understand or if you feel uncomfortable at any time.

The researcher has explained the research to me and I agree to participate.

NAME:_____ SIGNATURE:_____

Thank-you very much for agreeing to take part in this research study.

Kind regards: Debra Shelley

Appendix D

FUTURE ORIENTATION SCALE AND SCORING GRID

Future Orientation Scale

	Really true for me	Sort of true for me		Sort of true for me	Really true for me
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people like to plan things out one step at a time	BUT	Other people like to jump right into things without planning them out beforehand
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people spend very little time thinking about how things might be in the future	BUT	Other people spend a lot of time thinking about how things might be in the future
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people like to think about all of the possible good and bad things that can happen before making a decision	BUT	Other people don't think it's necessary to think about every little possibility before making a decision
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people usually think about the consequences before they do something	BUT	Other people just act- they don't waste time thinking about the consequences
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people would rather be happy today than take their chances on what might happen in the future	BUT	Other people will give up their happiness now so that they can get what they want in the future
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people are always making lists of things to do	BUT	Other people find making lists of what to do a waste of time

	Really true for me	Sort of true for me			Sort of true for me	Really true for me
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people make decisions and then act without making a plan	BUT	Other people usually make a plan before going ahead with their decision	
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people would rather save their money for a rainy day than spend it right away on something fun	BUT	Other people would rather spend their money right away on something fun than save it for a rainy day	
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people have trouble imagining how things might play out over time	BUT	Other people are usually pretty good at seeing in advance how one thing can lead to another	
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people don't spend much time worrying about how much their decisions will	BUT	Other people think a lot about how their decisions will affect others	
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people often think what their life will be like 10 years from now	BUT	Other people don't even try to imagine what their life will be like in 10	
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people think that planning things out in advance is waste of time	BUT	Other people think that things work out better if they are planned out in	
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people like to take big projects and break them down into small steps before starting to work on them	BUT	Other people find that breaking big projects down into small steps isn't really necessary	

	Really true for me	Sort of true for me			Sort of true for me	Really true for me
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people take life one day at a time without	BUT	Other people are always thinking about what tomorrow will	
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Some people think it's better to run through all the possible outcomes of a decision in your mind before	BUT	Other people think it's better to make up your mind without worrying about things you can't predict	

Scoring:

All items are scored left to right, on a scale of 1-4. Reverse score items 1,3,4,6,8,11 and 14, so that higher scores indicate a stronger future orientation. Future Orientation total score is the unweighted average of all 15 items. Planning ahead is the unweighted average of items 1,6,7,12 and 13. Time perspective is the unweighted average of items 2,5,8,11 and 14. Anticipation of Future Consequences is the unweighted average of items 3,4,9,10 and 15.

Appendix E

OPEN ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Do you find that you often/not so often think about your future and what it is going to be like, why do you say so?

2.Education:

Do you think you will finish matric, or do you plan on leaving school before?

How do you feel about studying further after matric?

Do you feel positive or negative about completing your education, why do you say so?

Do you talk about your future education with your family? A lot/little

Do you feel as if your family support your plans for your future education?

What will decide if you finish your education to the level you want it to be, why do you say so?

Say your current plans don't work out what alternative plans do you have?

3.Career/Occupation

Where do you see yourself five years from now in terms of your career or a job?

Do you feel hopeful that you will reach your career goals?

Do you find yourself often talking about your career goals with your family?

Who or what will decide if you get the career you want ,yourself or circumstances ?

If your first choice of career doesn't work out, do you have a backup, an alternative career perhaps?

4.Family

If you imagine yourself as a part of your family in 5-10 years time. What role do you see yourself playing?

Do you see yourself being taken care of by them/dependent or independent of them?

5.Romantic relationships

In 5-10 years from now, is it likely that you will be in a romantic relationship why do you say so ?

Are you able to visualise yourself becoming a parent in 5-10 years from now, why do you say so?

After filling in the questionnaire, have you noticed yourself become more aware of your future orientation, thinking about it more/talking about it more? How does this new awareness make you feel?