Title    Career development and understanding consequences of context: Angolan perspectives from the oil industry

Name    Raisa J Arvinen-Muondo

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERSTANDING CONSEQUENCES OF CONTEXT: ANGOLAN PERSPECTIVES FROM THE OIL INDUSTRY

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Ph.D

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERSTANDING
CONSEQUENCES OF CONTEXT: ANGOLAN
PERSPECTIVES FROM THE OIL INDUSTRY

by

Raisa J. Arvinen-Muondo

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND UNDERSTANDING CONSEQUENCES OF CONTEXT: ANGOLAN PERSPECTIVES FROM THE OIL INDUSTRY

Raisa J. Arvinen-Muondo

ABSTRACT

Despite multidisciplinary and extensive coverage, existing career theory is largely premised on Western frameworks and limited research has been conducted into career development experiences of individuals from African countries in local or transnational settings. Thus the research presented in this thesis extends on existing constructionist career development commentary by gaining insight into the interplay between societal structures and individual action in an African context. The purpose of this study was to investigate factors influencing the career development of professional Angolans working in the oil and gas industry and how experiences associated with living and working in Western contexts influences the career development of such individuals. The aim was to go beyond discovery of factors and analyse data in the form of highly personalised accounts from key informants to deepen understanding of African career development in transnational settings, mindful of postcolonial factors.

Data were collected over an 18-month period using ethnographic fieldwork and semi-structured interviewing with 24 participants. Within an ethnomethodological framework and drawing on developments in postcolonial theory, constructionist grounded theory approaches informed the hermeneutic analysis of data.

Findings revealed that multiple and distinctly nuanced dynamics between institutional micro structures (e.g., family, education and employment) and societal macro structures (e.g., socio-economic, political, historical and cultural environments) significantly shape individual career decision making, behaviour and aspirations in the Angolan context. Experiences of living and working in Western settings were found to have a
profound impact on personal and professional development as well as aspirations for international careers.

The main limitations of this study derive from its relatively small sample size and particularist focus on a single industry, however its value stems from rich narratives captured and significant effort made to triangulate findings via ‘research conversations’ with informants and industry professionals. In light of the above, this study adds to existing career theory by incorporating postcolonial perspectives and career development experiences that go beyond planned structured careers in organisational settings by focusing on the individual consequences of international assignments in transnational settings. In light of this, insights offer value also for multinational organisations that are engaged in developing African talent.
DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate:  Signature:
Raisa Arvinen-Muondo

Date:
This thesis and the journey that is represents is dedicated to

Emilia and Antonio
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PREFACE

The study that I present in this thesis is an inherently personal one; from conception, to process and finally to outcome. Hence I intend to present it as such using an active and personal voice, deviating stylistically from more conventional or conservative management approaches that favour passive third person voices from authors. As an ethnographic study, my role as a researcher, as an insider and as an outsider has shaped the conception of this project, the questions that I have come to ask, the methods I have chosen to explore these with, and ultimately the conclusions that I have drawn. The relationship between the researcher and the researched both shapes and constrains enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008) and hence I will dedicate a significant attention throughout this thesis to explore the ‘reciprocity’ between myself and the field (Coffey, 1999) and to address the underlying assumptions, values, experiences and beliefs, the proverbial baggage, that I bring with me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey would not have happened were it not for a whole lot of wonderful people who have inspired, helped and challenged me along the way. I owe a big thank you to all the individuals, who have shared their stories with me, the Angolan friends and family who have opened up their lives and homes to me. I also owe my gratitude to the University of Bedfordshire for the bursary that has enabled me to embark on this research journey.

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Last, but by no means least I thank my husband Antonio for his unwavering belief in me and our vision for the future. So we conclude one chapter and begin another.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about how individuals go about constructing their careers within complex landscapes. Borders within our world, particularly in business, are becoming increasingly translucent. Business operations and the people that make it all happen move across these cultural, linguistic and geographical boundaries on a daily basis, almost casually. International mobility of ‘high potential’ or ‘talented’ professionals is no longer a phenomenon limited from the West to the developing world, but increasingly individuals are sent from the developing world to the West to acquire skills and knowledge required to run effective business operations in multinational subsidiaries (D’Costa, 2008; Solimano, 2008).

Moreover, global business requires leadership that understands the complexities of operating in a diverse environment. Gupta and Govindarajan argue that global managers must develop a global mindset that enables them to observe and interpret the dynamic world around them with ‘openness and awareness of diversity across cultures and markets with a propensity and ability to synthesize across this diversity’ (2002: 117). Transnational leadership requires an appreciation for local context and broader global business imperatives (Bartlett, Ghoshal, & Beamish, 2008). By exposing individuals to new environments through international assignments organisations seek to cultivate such a global mindset among high potential employees that are seen to possess future leadership capability (e.g., Kohonen, 2005), particularly where resources in home country are insufficient for training and development.
However, introducing individuals to new organisational and social environments also exposes them to new worlds and opportunities. The management and communication of expectations and obligations between employer and employee becomes paramount should the organisation want to maintain motivation and performance levels and retain the individuals whose development they have invested. International assignment experiences have been shown to impact the career development of internationally mobile employees as well as their spouses (e.g., Dickmann & Doherty, 2008; Glanz & van der Sluis, 2001; Peltonen, 1998; Jan Selmer, 1999; Suutari, 2003). Culture and adjustment has also been linked with career development (Kats, Hetty Van Emmerik, Blenkinsopp, & Khapova, 2010; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). For instance, Reynolds and Constantine (2007) in their study of international students (including African) studying in a US college correlated cultural adjustment difficulties with career development, both in terms of aspirations and outcomes (e.g., higher acculturation difficulties indicate lower career development aspirations and outcomes).

The management and organisation of careers that are enacted across geographical and cultural borders is indeed the backbone of the international human resource management (IHRM) discourse. However, as Jackson (2002, 2004) contends, Western human resource management (HRM) discourse tends to perpetuate a view of people as resources, which is inconsistent with how individuals in non-Western cultural contexts view themselves. Even the cross-cultural management discourse, which is concerned specifically with impact of culture within organisational contexts is accused of perpetuating neo-colonial representations of the non-West (Kwek, 2003). This multidirectional mobility challenges corporate leaders and human resource (HR) professionals to create and adapt strategies and practices that maximize the potential in people that come from a variety of national and cultural contexts, all with their own values and ways of interpreting the world around them.
I as the researcher acknowledge the need for coherency and a degree of uniformity within policy and practice in global operations, however, the sentiment that underpins this thesis is a more contextual one. In order for people to be managed and developed successfully to a purpose, an understanding of how individuals perceive their own development and appreciation of contextual factors - including cultural value systems - that shape such perceptions is essential. In other words, understanding how individuals conceptualise their career development and being able to identify what kind of factors influence career related decision making is key to developing individuals in organisations in ways that align with corporate objectives. This is particularly pertinent in country contexts that differ significantly in terms of socio-economic development and cultural values from typically Western settings and ways of thinking.

1.1 CONSTRUCTING CAREERS

The notion of career is tied to what individuals consider life work. It is associated with ideas around occupation, profession and how individuals earn their livelihood. Arthur, Hall and Lawrence have defined career as ‘the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time’ (1989: 9). Bird refers to careers as processes during the course of which ‘information and knowledge embodied in skills, expertise, and relationship networks are acquired through an evolving sequence of work experiences’ (1994: 326). Patton and McMahon suggest that definitions of careers are increasingly inclusive of ‘prevocational and postvocational activities and other life roles and contexts’ (Patton & McMahon, 2006: 4).

I want to emphasise the notion of ‘life work’ in conceptualising careers. The notion of ‘life work’ offers a holistic approach to thinking about careers that does not correlate only to financial reward for work performed. It encapsulates the notion of career as something of perceived value in the efforts that are consistently expended. A reward may be implicit or personal gratification for the efforts dedicated to perform certain
tasks consistently for a longer period of time. I argue individuals can have multiple careers. An individual can perform several roles in their lifetime, be it simultaneously or consecutively, that they themselves consider their life work. Careers rarely happen in isolation, but rather are constructed through interaction with other social actors and the environment. Throughout one’s careers, an individual develops skills, which are not innate, neither are their acquired, but rather grown and influenced by the environment which one inhabits (Ingold, 2000). Development therefore can be interpreted as a process and product of engagement with the environment. Anthropologist Tim Ingold writes:

‘…the identities and characteristics of persons are not bestowed upon them in advance of their involvement with others but are the condensations of histories of growth and maturation within fields of social relationships. Thus every person emerges as a locus of development within such a field, which is in turn carried forward and transformed through their own actions.’ (2000: 3)

As such, we live in a multifaceted and dynamic world. The lives that we lead are shaped by the environments we occupy and the people that we cross paths with. In my thesis, I will therefore argue that individuals make decisions based on past experiences, perceptions of the environment and of others’ behaviour. People are in constant interplay with the environment and other social actors. The assumption is that based on our interpretations of observed phenomena, we as individuals make judgements and take decisions to react or behave in a given manner (consciously or unconsciously). In other words, interaction between people is multidimensional and influenced by the external environment. As such, it is logical to argue that our behaviour and perceptions of others’ behaviour is dependent also on our previous socialisation experiences (see Bandura & Walters, 1963).
In the context of increasing multi-cultural and multinational nature of labour forces and indeed business operations, the norms and values of the environment (social and organisational) into which individuals have been socialised are constantly being redefined by behaviour that may be seen and regarded as foreign by them. From the individual perspective it can be questioned if and how value systems and consequent behaviour do change as a result of exposure to new environments. Moreover, the possible impact of such change on the way in which individuals perceive their personal and professional development and the related decisions they take is also of importance to understand.

1.2 THE AFRICAN CONTEXT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE

The term ‘context’ is used considerably throughout this thesis and is used to describe ‘the circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea [i.e., phenomena], and in terms of which it can be fully understood’ (Context in Oxford Dictionaries [Online], 2012). It may also be used to describe the type of setting in which described phenomena occurs, for example the cultural or political context in that forms the backdrop of events. The significance of context; or contextuality is a central theme, ‘a golden thread’ that runs through this thesis. The underlying sentiment is that everything is contextual to some degree. Although we make sense of the world around us using generalisations and through the establishment of routines (i.e., habitualisation and institutionalisation; Berger & Luckmann, 1966), the influence of contextual factors cannot, and should not be overlooked.

By using the term ‘African context’ as opposed to ‘Africa’, my intention is not to limit the conversation to geography, but to provide a broader concept of traits and values that may be transferable to other geographical locations. African ‘contexts’ within this study therefore encapsulate cultural, political, racial, economic, ethnic and linguistic characteristics. I also acknowledge that Africa is a multifaceted and
heterogenic continent with a variety of cultures, political and economic systems, as well as racial, ethnic and linguistic characteristics. Although I will endeavour to steer clear of unhelpful stereotypes, amidst significant diversity ‘sufficient similarities’ exist between various African contexts for tentative conclusions to be drawn (Blunt & Merrick, 1997: 15) and therefore at times I feel it is justifiable to refer to these under the umbrella of a singular ‘African context’.

Within African contexts career development remains relatively unexplored. Despite its multidisciplinary and extensive coverage, career development commentary is still largely focused on Western frameworks and values and with the exception of a limited number of studies (e.g., Counsell, 1999; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2006; Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Salami & Aremu, 2007). Within African contexts career development has been examined in a very small number of country contexts and in relation to specific practices (e.g., mentoring within career development; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Okurame & Balogun, 2005) or phenomenon (e.g., career barriers for women in South Africa; Mathur-Helm, 2006) or in relation to a particular stage (see Super, 1957) within the career development process (e.g., the impact of parent-child relationship on the career development of high school students in Nigeria; Salami & Aremu, 2007).

In contrast to the above, Counsell’s (1999) work adopts a broader and culturally orientated approach in examining career development and career decision making in Ethiopia. His (1999) exploratory study of careerists’ perceptions and strategies of career development reflects the increasing body of career development commentary that acknowledges the role of context; political, economic and cultural. However, Counsell’s research is inherently distinct in its quantitative nature seeking to prove (or disprove) the applicability of a specific Western framework (7 types of career strategy by Greenhaus and Callanan, 1994, cited in; Counsell, 1999: 46-7) in a Third World country context rather than providing any
alternative lens. Moving away from universalistic and positivist assumptions about career development my intention is to demonstrate how this study builds upon existing constructionist career development theory by bringing to the foreground individual perspectives in a way that acknowledges the role of contextual factors.

In order to incorporate alternative critical perspectives into existing constructionist career development commentary, I will argue in this thesis that postcolonial and postmodern traditions can offer useful insight in developing our understanding of career development in African contexts such as Angola. Postcolonial critique suggests that management and cross-cultural rubrics perpetuate Western ideologies in a universalist fashion (Kwek, 2003). The language of the HRM discourse appears to further enforce a Western conceptualisation of people as means to an end, which may not fit with how individuals in an African context view people or human interaction (Jackson, 2002). Blunt and Merrick contend that ‘individual and group motivation will vary according to cultural preferences and also according to a country’s level of economic development’ (1997: 9). They suggest that the assumption inherent in Western economic management premised on the notion of a free-market economy and merits of individualism and competition are ‘problematic because they contradict important values’ held by a vast portion of the world’s population, particularly in developing countries (Blunt & Merrick, 1997: 9). Like Kwek (2003) and A. Prasad (2003), Blunt and Merrick (1997) contend that much of management discourse seeks to replicate Western theory in developing countries. However, they also highlight that there is an increasing awareness about the ‘nature and pervasiveness of imperialism and consequently developing countries are increasingly reluctant to conform’ (Blunt & Merrick, 1997: 6). By drawing on postcolonial theory my intention is to bring to the foreground alternative perspectives about the nature of politics, power and representation of the experiences and perceptions of individuals who come from an African
postcolonial context. In the context of organisational research, P. Prasad argues:

‘the postcolonial tradition restores a stronger sense of historical and cultural awareness to our understanding of contemporary organizations and is useful in identifying patterns of hierarchical reproduction that are grounded in colonial dynamics’ (2005: 280)

Within this context I will explore how notions of hybridity that signal ‘some level of cultural intermingling and/or fusion’ (P. Prasad, 2005: 275) may offer insight into understanding some of the cultural values that underpin behaviour and attitudes of individuals. However, limiting to postcolonial critique may be unhelpful. Similarly to postcolonialists, postmodernists are concerned with the ‘recovery of lost and marginal voices’, yet postmodernists are ironically criticised for doing so from an explicitly Western perspective (P. Prasad, 2005: 221). Proponents of postmodernism are concerned with critiquing the rationality of modernity, its perpetuation of institutionalized differentiation that segregates health, work, education and family (P. Prasad, 2005), but fail to question it for its perpetuation of Eurocentric ideologies. Nonetheless ideas stemming from postmodernism have inspired ‘interpretations of authority and representation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). I will primarily focus on postcolonial perspectives within this study, but I will also draw upon postmodern ideas particularly to inform my analysis.

1.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND RATIONALE

To summarise, this study primarily contributes to the increasing body of literature around constructionist career development theory in developing country contexts by bringing alternative perspectives to the foreground. In this thesis, I argue that by exploring the experiences of individuals coming from African developing country contexts employed
within Western multinational organisations, a substantive\(^1\) contribution can be made to developing our theoretical and practical understanding of career development experiences within these contexts.

Thus the contribution to existing theory is rooted in rich empirical narratives. Although the study presented in this thesis is not concerned with people management practices and policies per se, as Kamoche contends such policies (and practices) are ‘effective if grounded within the worker’s thought and value system’ (2000: 60) and hence further insight into the career development experiences and aspirations is needed. Like most ‘micro domains of management’ (for instance human resource management and development), career development remains unexamined in the African context of Angola. A limited number of studies have been conducted within other African country contexts such Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia and South Africa (e.g., Counsell, 1999; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2006; Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Salami & Aremu, 2007).

From a macro perspective looking at the broader global economy and continuing discussion around the availability of oil and gas resources, Angola as one of Africa’s leading oil producers receives increasing attention from multinational organisations seeking business development opportunities. Due to the Angolan government’s nationalisation agenda, referred to as Angolanisation, that places significant pressure on foreign multinationals to employ local talent at managerial and professional level (see Bjerke, Strømsøe, Tanum, Heilemann, & Sande, 2004; International Energy Agency, 2006; Paulo, 2006), the way in which local human resources are developed and managed is a significant issue that warrants real attention. Particularly from a sustainability point of view ensuring

\(^1\) The term substantive in describing a particular type of theory refers to the theory’s basis in reality, from which it gains meaning and importance. However, within the context of this study as will become evident in chapter four, the term must be assumed within an interpretivist and social constructionist understanding that ‘reality’ is the result of interpretation and is socially constructed.
corporate approaches align with how individuals envision their career development is essential. The Angolan oil industry suffers from a shortage of skilled and experienced professionals and therefore the competition for candidates is high. Combined with the pressures the government’s Angolanisation agenda brings and restrictions on expatriate quotas (Price Waterhouse Cooper, 2012), further understanding of the professional mobility of Angolans is needed.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THEMES

To investigate career development experiences in an African context and to provide the proposed contribution to existing knowledge, the study presented in this thesis will address the following research questions:

1. What types of contextual factors influence the career development experiences, perceptions, decisions and aspirations of professional Angolans working in the oil and gas industry; and
2. More specifically, what, if any, influence experiences associated with international living, whether on assignment or for educational purposes, have on the personal and professional development of such individuals

In order to address these research questions the following three research themes will be explored through empirical investigation:

a) The impact of structural factors (e.g., corporate, political, economic and socio-economic environment) on career development experiences and perceptions as well as career related decision making of Angolan professionals

b) The role of identity and cultural values present in the Angolan context on the career development experiences and perceptions, career decisions and aspirations of Angolan professionals
c) Influence of exposure to Western social and organisational environments on the professional and personal development experiences of Angolans

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

To answer the research questions that I have set out above and to explore the research themes outlined, I have gathered rich qualitative data using ethnographic methods, including fieldwork in the form of participant observation and semi-structured interviews with 24 participants. In order to make sense of the data I have adopted a grounded theory approach (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002) for its flexibility and versatility (Mruck & Mey, 2007). I carried out fieldwork formally between October 2009 and April 2011 and conducted interviews between December 2009 and November 2010. This project is an inherently personal one and having been immersed in Angolan culture for the past decade, it has been impossible to draw a defined line in the sand between the knowledge that I have gained during the course of this project and that which I’ve acquired over the last ten years. Therefore I have also adopted a reflexive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), which is complimentary to the grounded theory method that I have used to make sense of the data that I have gathered.
1.6 STRUCTURE OF THESIS AND CHAPTER SUMMARIES

This thesis is structured over eight chapters as the Figure 1.1 illustrates.

![Figure 1.1 Thesis structure]

As presented above, in the current chapter I have introduced the study presented in this thesis and its conceptual underpinnings, briefly outlined why research into this area of career development is warranted and proposed that existing knowledge of career development in African developing country contexts can be advanced through the critical lens of postcolonialism. I have also set out here my research questions that the specific themes that need empirical investigation in order for the research questions to be addressed and briefly introduced the methods I have used.
Following on the present introductory chapter, in chapter two I will layout the theoretical underpinnings of this study. Within this chapter I will provide a critical overview of career development literature, suggesting that the study presented in this thesis specifically builds on increasing constructionist career development commentary. It is within this chapter that I also aim to situate this critical analysis of career development theory within the postcolonial tradition and explain how the postcolonial prism can help in making sense of the career development experiences and aspirations within the Angolan context. I will conclude this chapter by summarising the core elements of constructionist career theory to broadly frame subsequent empirical data collection.

In chapter three I will construct a socio-economic, political and cultural backdrop of Angola, upon which the experiences of those who this study is focused on are played out. The complex and dynamic web of political power, a developing socio-economic environment and continuously transforming cultural setting that will be illustrated in chapter three will provide context that will enable the reader to make sense of the empirical findings that I present in chapter six.

Chapter four presents the discussion of epistemological and ontological considerations that underpin my approach to this study. Here I will illustrate how the way in which I have conceptualised and developed this research project and ultimately made sense of the data that I have collected has been inspired by phenomenology, hermeneutics and social constructionism. In explaining my philosophical stance, the latter part of chapter four explores conceptions of reflexivity and demonstrates the central role that reflexivity has within this study. Within this context, I will also provide a more detailed personal introduction to explain how my roles as an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ have shaped this project.

Having elaborated on my philosophical approach to this research, in chapter five I will explain my practical approach, i.e., how I went about my
empirical investigation. In this chapter I will explain the methods I used to gather data and how I went about analysing it. Given the grounded theory approach and its emphasis on the empirical roots of substantive theory, the purpose of chapter six is highly significant as I explain the findings of my empirical investigation. Here I will explain how I have conceptualised the data and emergent conclusions as occupying one of three spheres i.e., social worlds in the walk of life where experiences take place and shape how individuals envision their career paths: family, education and employment. Referring to excerpts from interview transcripts I will illustrate how the Angolan context (cultural, political, socio-economic and historical) has shaped participant experiences, perceptions and aspirations of career development. I will also illustrate the profound impact experiences of international living have had for the Angolans interviewed.

In chapter seven I will locate the empirical findings of this study within existing academic literature reviewed in chapters two and three. Given the iterative nature of grounded theory, as expected, novel concepts emerged from the empirical investigation and hence in this chapter I will also explore additional commentary accordingly. Through critical analysis I will illustrate how existing academic commentary within the management rubric in particular falls short when trying to make sense of how individuals coming from African developing country contexts make sense of their own career development. It is here that I also illustrate why, despite offering critical insight into career development in African developing country contexts, postcolonial theory alone does not provide sufficient insight and why postmodern thinking can help us make sense of some of the values that underpin urban Angolan society.

In chapter eight, I will conclude my research journey. I will highlight the theoretical and empirical contribution that the study presented in this thesis makes to existing knowledge. It is here where I will also present the limitations of this study and outline potential lines of inquiry for the future.
CHAPTER TWO

CONSTRUCTING CAREERS IN POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXTS

In this chapter my intention is to layout the theoretical underpinnings of this study and to pave way for the contribution to theory that the study presented in this thesis makes. This thesis fits into an increasingly large body of literature around how career development is theorised examining the types of factors influence how individuals go about making career related decisions. More specifically, I will build here on an area of career development theory that reflects constructionist and postmodern approaches (i.e., promoting a subjectivist, contextual and socially constructed view of reality) as opposed to traditionally positivist perspectives (see Chope, 2005) or indeed universalist approaches (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000) from which career development theory has arisen. I will extend on such approaches by critically examining what, if anything, postcolonial theory and critique, otherwise referred to as postcolonialism (A. Prasad, 2003), can offer to the ways in which career development is theorised within non-Western developing country contexts. The issue that I am particularly interested in addressing with this study is the relationship between colonial heritage, post-colonial present and perceptions of opportunities available to African individuals whose nations have been previously colonised.

As the review to follow will demonstrate, career development theory has primarily been developed in European or US contexts and thus falls short when applied to non-Western developing country contexts (Inkson, 2007; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007). Within this constructionist frame of reference, culture and societal structures (e.g.,
various forms of institutions) have been evidenced to influence the way in which individuals construct their careers (Blustein, 2004; Chope, 2005; Inkson, 2007; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Kats et al., 2010; Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Peiperl & Arthur, 2000; Thomas & Inkson, 2007; Yakushko, 2007). In essence, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight some of the questions that should be asked when seeking to develop a better understanding of career phenomena in postcolonial and developing country contexts.

2.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

In light of the above, the first part of this chapter is dedicated to highlighting the key debates in conceptualising careers, critically analysing existing constructionist career development commentary, developing an understanding of how careers and career development can be conceptualised and how current career theory encapsulates international and cross-cultural perspectives. In the second part of this chapter I will then introduce postcolonial theory and critique to the discussion. In the final part of this chapter I will bring these two rubrics together and critically examine what insight the postcolonial prism can offer career development theory when applied in developing and postcolonial country contexts.

2.2 KEY DEBATES OUTLINED

Peiperl and Arthur contend that within disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education and management, the notion of career development has seen a ‘convergence around constructs of personality, social structure, vocation, and the organisation of work, respectively’ (2000: 2). However, the career development discourse as a whole remains ‘segmented, incomplete, and lacking in comprehensiveness and coherence’ according to Patton and McMahon (2006: xiii). Peiperl and Arthur (2000) suggest debates around career theory can be divided into four lines of inquiry: 1) structure versus action (i.e., to what extent are careers the consequence of structures or vice versa); 2) stasis versus
adaptation (i.e., to what extent is the world of careers seen as static or subject to change); 3) universalism versus particularism (i.e., a universalist view purports that organisations despite being nuanced in distinct ways, are essentially the same and career theory is generalizable, whereas particularist approaches align with postmodernism’s endeavour to seek the particular, local, contextual and the subjective within phenomena); and 4) institutional knowledge versus individual knowledge (i.e., to what degree can knowledge be seen as a feature of institutions and to what extent is knowledge seen as residing within the individual). I shall explain what these key debates may mean for how careers are conceptualised.

In regards to particularist versus universalists perspectives, the distinction seems clear as one excludes the other by implication. Likewise, stasis and adaptation in this respect seem to be mutually exclusive. If phenomena are perceived to be adaptive, they cannot claim to be static simultaneously. As will become evident in the conceptual analysis presented here, the significance of contextual factors in non-Western developing country contexts means that particularist approaches are inevitable and universalist assumptions become counterproductive when seeking to understand career phenomena in such contexts. Similarly, this study is premised on the idea the world does not stand still and social interaction is not static. Thus, viewing careers as static inherently contradicts constructionist perspectives of careers premised on the idea that social ‘reality’ is constructed through social interaction and therefore is continuously evolving.

However, when it comes to the role of institutional and individual knowledge divisions are not straightforward. This debate refers to tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995) and specifically how tacit knowledge, that is individual knowledge and networks, is perceived, valued and harvested in organisational contexts. The way in which knowledge is perceived has implications for both the individual and the organisation when it comes to professional mobility. Tacit or implicit
knowledge is something that tends to travel with the individual, thus making it harder for organisations to capture. It also implies that if knowledge is viewed as individual, it can be viewed to increase the professional autonomy of individuals. According to Peiperl and Arthur (2000) the institutional versus individual knowledge debate is particularly relevant in the context of protean (Hall & Mirvis, 1995) and boundaryless careers (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994), which I will return to a little later in this chapter.

Finally, the structure versus action, otherwise known as structure-agency, debate (Giddens, 1979) is one that underpins and gives disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and psychology their unique focus and perspective. The structured approach stems from Weber’s (1949) work and relates to the static role of bureaucracies in structuring careers. Arthur and Peiperl (2000) assert that in the twentieth century a common element that prevails in the structure discussion is power and how this is concentrated in a limited number of centralised organisations. Thus subscribing to the bureaucratic or structured view, progression within organisations is typically conceived as being dependent upon time served with the organisation and access to top positions would only ever be possible for a few selected high-potential individuals (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000).

An action based view then by contrast ascribes power to the individual. Maslow’s (1943) ‘hierarchy of needs’ is an ideal example of this view that largely derives from the field of psychology. The central tenet behind Maslow’s hierarchy if applied to career development is that the individual is driven by their need to ultimately achieve self-actualization. In this sense the individual’s ability to achieve self-actualisation is viewed as being ‘psychologically beyond external influences’ (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000: 4). However, commentators since have argued that action-based views such as that of Maslow (1943) are not sufficient as they fail to acknowledge that careers can only be constructed by individuals within the
confines of what is made possible (Peiperl, Arthur, Goffee, & Morris, 2000), be it by the employing organisation or the broader economic environment.

Duberley, Mallon and Cohen (2006) argue that it is unhelpful to separate social structure from individual agency, but rather the interplay between the two warrants further attention. Although both subjective (i.e., action) and objective (i.e., structure) elements feature in contemporary career literature, there still seems to be a tendency to dichotomise individual action and social structure (Duberley et al., 2006). The work of contemporaries such as Inkson (2007), Inkson and Thomas (2007) and Peiperl, Arthur, Goffee and Morris (2000) reflect a shift towards a reconceptualization of careers as social constructions, but Duberley et al. argue that ‘such redefinition does not adequately address the duality of individual action and social structure in career’ (2006: 283). Structure and action appear to be simply different sides of the same coin and thus one shapes the other (see enactment of careers; Weick, 1996).

In arguing that the construction of careers involves individual agency and social structure, social constructionist approaches can offer insight. Before I return to the structure-action debate argument introduced thus far, I will briefly explain by what I mean by social constructionist approaches to conceptualising careers and career development. Social constructionism, the ontological assumption that perceived reality is socially constructed, is a stance that underpins this study as a whole and one which I will elaborate on more in chapter four. However, an introduction is needed here.

2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CAREERS

Social constructionism is concerned with understanding the impact of the contextual factors on the phenomena that is studied. It therefore advocates understanding of the complex relationships between social actors and structures (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 2003). The way in which we
develop our understanding of the world is contextual and culturally and historically specific according to Burr (1995) and Gergen (2003). According to social constructionism reality is not directly perceived, but rather constructed through social processes. Thus human worlds are socially constructed (James, 1996). This is in direct contrast to positivist assumptions that objective reality can somehow be observed, measured or captured independent of human interaction or interpretation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Blustein, Schultheiss, & Flum, 2004; Burr, 1995; P. Prasad, 2005; Schwandt, 2003). Questioning the status quo is an essential part of any social constructionist approach. Blustein, Schultheiss and Flum contend:

‘social constructionist thought generates a critical view of a variety of traditions, questions taken-for-granted knowledge, and shakes the ground under long accepted assumptions of Western culture in general, and in the social sciences in particular’ (2004: 424).

Patton and Mahon (2006) suggest that the emergence of constructionist approaches to career development over the last decade has brought together different career theories and has broadened the way in which career development is conceptualised. Career development studies can be broadly categorised into those that 1) deal with the impact of personality and traits on career development (e.g., Holland, 1997; Schein, 1996); 2) are concerned with stages of development (e.g., Super, 1957); 3) address family and work life balance (e.g., Sanders, Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, & Steele-Clapp, 1998); and 4) are focused on career planning (e.g., Li et al., 2002; Magnuson & Starr, 2000). More holistic approaches suggest that career development studies should bring elements of each of these together. Inkson’s (2007) book on understanding careers is an ideal example of such an approach.

In the introduction of this thesis I proposed that careers should be defined inclusively and holistically to encapsulate the notion of ‘life work’. I
also suggested that individuals develop their careers not in isolation, but within a social context and in interaction with others (Ingold, 2000). Patton and McMahon also concur with constructionist conceptualisations of careers arguing that the ‘individual’s career is developed by them on the basis of his/her perceptions of and attitudes towards career’ (2006: 4). According to Inkson careers are of interest to us because we derive not only our ‘daily bead’, but also ‘our sense of identity’ and ‘our means of achievement’ from our careers. (2007: xviii). So if careers in the constructionist frame of reference are best described as historically and culturally contextual and socially constructed, what does this mean for how we conceptualise career development?

Brown conceptualises career development theories as ‘explanations of how people develop certain traits, personalities, and self-precepts and how these developments influence decision making’ (2002: xi). However, Brown’s definition of career development theory seems limited in that it does not seem to give much consideration to environmental factors that impact the career development process, but may not explicitly correlate to an individual’s personality, traits and self-precepts. For example, political, historical and socio-economic contexts can influence the career related decision making of individuals (e.g., Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007), but do not necessarily directly relate to the development of personality traits or self-precepts. In their review of qualitative career development research Blustein, Kenna, Murphy, DeVoy, & DeWine (2005) concluded that career development theory has tended to emphasise the perspectives of individuals who have exercised some volition over decisions in their working lives (e.g., Mayo, 1991). A more inclusive approach is needed that seeks to understand the experiences of work even when it is not reflecting of organised and planned careers (Blustein, McWhirter, & Perry, 2005).
2.4 SOCIETAL STRUCTURE VERSUS INDIVIDUAL ACTION

Barley’s (1989) writing traces the structure-agency debate within career commentary to the work of Chicago School scholars, and in particular that of sociologist Everett C. Hughes (1958) and his students. According to Barley (1989) Hughes envisioned careers in terms of their ‘ontological duality’ in that careers were constructed within both subjective and objective spheres. The subjective face of careers relates to the way in which individuals make sense of their careers and attribute meanings to them. The objective face of careers then relates to the external environment and what is public. In other words, the subjective relates to individual agency and the objective relates to societal structure as influential forces shaping the construction of careers. For Hughes (1958) the two faces were inseparable. This duality, the significance of the subjective and the objective faces of careers, is reflected in most contemporary career commentary. However the attention that is paid to each tends to be imbalanced (Barley, 1989).

Consensus exists among scholars that careers need to be understood within societal context (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Barley, 1989; Y Baruch, 2004a; Crowley-Henry & Weir, 2007; Inkson, 2007; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Thomas & Inkson, 2007). In this sense it is useful to view societal structure as a consequent construction of interplay between actors, various institutions and historical and cultural environments. Institutions in this context are defined broadly as established practice as well as established formal organisations that play an important role in society (‘Institution’ in Oxford Dictionaries [Online], 2012). Career development thus takes place within the context of and is shaped by various institutions that can be as specific as educational establishments or organisations or as broad defined as occupations, industries or even the family. Inkson (2007) argues that to look at careers in terms of individuals’ experiences in their occupations alone is overly simplistic as careers are shaped by the wider economic and social contexts in which
careers are enacted. This means that careers according to Inkson are influenced by structures such as employing organisations as well as family for instance. Akin to Granovetter (1995), Inkson argues that careers are dependent on the ‘opportunity structures that provide the work that people do’ (2007: 4). In other words careers are also shaped by the opportunities that are made (or are perceived to be made) available by the labour market. This labour market according to Inkson (2007) is naturally subject to change depending on a number of different factors (e.g., demographic, economic, labour, social, organisational and technological).

Similarly Crowley-Henry and Weir argue that the significance of structure cannot be downplayed and agency (individual choice and action) are ‘but one part of a wider picture’ (2007: 256). Structural (i.e., institutional) influences such as education, family and organisation environment have been investigated within the context of careers, receiving varied attention depending on discipline. For example my analysis of career development literature indicates that associations are drawn between education, family-of-origin and careers most commonly, albeit not exclusively, within the field of psychology and education, whereas organisations and family (in terms of work-life balance) are associated with careers within sociology, occupational psychology and management studies, and to an extent within the field of anthropology. Interest in the influence of societal structure on careers derives from the field of sociology, whereas the impact of individual action on careers stems largely from the field of psychology (Barley, 1989). However the latter has certainly entered into the management rubric through disciplines such as organisational behaviour. Issues around diversity, multiculturalism and international mobility are addressed from a variety of perspectives in each of these distinct disciplines.

Although a convergence of the difference strands of literature is more notable in contemporary career literature (Peiperl & Arthur, 2000), due to the complexity and magnitude of the field and the focused nature of
academic research, existing empirical study tends to be focused on various combinations of specific elements that shape career construction. Understandably the parameters of research have to be drawn somewhere and it would be a challenging task to account for every potential influence (structural or individual) within a given study. However, the multitude of potential influential elements reflects the complexity of career construction as a phenomenon, and as such signals the scope to study it from a variety of angles and develop our understanding of what it means for people and organisations in different contexts.

2.4.1 Protean and boundaryless careers

Notable developments in contemporary career theory are marked by the emergence of the protean and boundaryless career concepts, presenting another layer analysis within the context of the structure-action debate. The dichotomisation of structure and agency – the objective and the subjective – is particularly evident in these two concepts. The protean (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1995) and boundaryless (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) career concepts would lead us to believe that individuals in contemporary society exercise considerable volition over their careers. Both concepts are essentially premised on the idea that individual action guides career paths and views career development as multidirectional rather than linear. Protean and boundaryless careers have received considerable attention within contemporary career development literature and it is difficult to find a book published in the last decade that does not reference the work of Arthur or Hall.

The emergence of the ‘protean career’ concept within career development commentary extends on broad definitions of careers suggesting that careers can no longer be perceived simply in terms of organisational influences and structures (Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1995). Hall goes as far as to announce that ‘the organizational career is dead’ in the twenty-first century (1996: 8). The protean career is premised on the idea that careers are defined and led by the individual according to their
values. In order to survive and succeed in today’s rapidly changing environment, individuals must be flexible and self-generating (Hall & Mirvis, 1995).

The term protean derives from the Greek mythological god Proteus who had the ability to transform himself (Arthur et al., 1999). Thus the concept of protean careers is associated with ideas around ‘morphing’ and ability to adapt professional roles (see for example female narratives of international protean careers; Crowley-Henry & Weir, 2007).

However, the development of a protean career orientation in individuals has been linked to both contextual factors as well as deeply rooted personal values (e.g., Briscoe & Hall, 2006; Sargent & Domberger, 2007) suggesting that career development in the protean sense is a combination of the two. According to Patton and McMahon (2006) the notion of protean careers suggests that linear models of careers have been substituted with more idiosyncratic and flexible conceptualisations that acknowledge the role of a variety of factors present within the individual’s environment that shape the construction of their careers. Baruch (2004b) also argues that a shift has occurred within career research from linear to multidirectional models.

Similarly to the protean career concept, the boundaryless career concept also reflects a shift towards multidimensional career frameworks. Boundaryless in this sense means that organisations are no longer relied upon to provide structure to career development and individuals must become self-reliant (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Thus the emphasis has shifted to developing competencies that are transferable so the ‘people in the new order move freely between firms’ (Gunz, Evans, & Jalland, 2000: 26). The intelligent career model (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995) is then best suited for ‘modern boundarylessness’ (Gunz et al., 2000: 26). According to Arthur et al. (1995) the core competencies of an intelligent
career are knowing-why (understanding why the work is important), knowing-how (how to do the work) and knowing-whom (the significance of knowing the right people and developing a network of contacts).

Both protean and boundaryless conceptualisations of careers appear to make sense in a rapidly changing and increasingly globalised world. However, I will demonstrate in the remainder of this chapter that individuals in developing country contexts are confronted with a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to the way in which they are able to and do develop their careers. As such, neither protean nor boundaryless concepts may be suitable in explaining career development in these contexts. Indeed Gunz, Evans and Jalland (2000) suggest that despite organisational boundaries becoming more permeable, careers are constrained by different kind of barriers, even within Western contexts.

In their review of contributions to Arthur and Rousseau’s (1996) edited book, Gunz et al. (2000) highlight that the vast majority of authors correlate boundarylessness to organisational boundaries. This seems to be an oversimplified approach as Gunz et al. (2000) argue that career boundaries are best examined in terms of their subjective and objective existence. By this they mean that individuals are constrained by subjective perceived boundaries. Such boundaries maybe based on the individual perceptions of the organisation, industry, occupation or even geography (Gunz et al., 2000). Objective boundaries on the other hand maybe real barriers to mobility set by the external environment, labour market dynamics, market economy etc.

To summarise, although a motion can be made for individual action, alone it is insufficient to explain the complexities of career development. As I will demonstrate in the section to follow, evidence exists to suggest that careers are in fact constrained by a variety of societal factors (particularly so in developing country contexts) and thus notions of boundaryless and protean careers potentially fall short when attempting to
understand the complexities of career development within developing country contexts.

2.5 CONCEPTUALISING CAREERS IN NON-WESTERN CONTEXTS

Despite its multidisciplinary and extensive coverage, career development commentary is still largely focused on Western frameworks and values with the exception of a limited number of studies (e.g., Counsell, 1999; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Mathur-Helm, 2006; Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Salami & Aremu, 2007). Moreover, the cultural appropriateness, transferability and Eurocentricity of career theory have been questioned (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Unlike many of the commentators within the area of career development, Inkson (2007) explicitly acknowledges that within developing country contexts, other factors such as politics can also shape perceived opportunities and career attitudes. My reading of career development literature focused on non-Western contexts, suggests that research conducted in Russian or post-Soviet Union contexts offers useful insight.

For instance, in the context of former Soviet Union states attitudes towards careers have been significantly influenced by communist political ideology (Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Scorikov & Vondracek, 1993; Yakushko, 2007). Within a communist frame of reference the virtue of work was seen in terms of collective gain and not individual benefit and individuals who succeeded in their careers were held in contempt (Scorikov & Vondracek, 1993). Thus, after the fall of communism in the 1990s as authorities sought to encourage more Western styled individualistic career behaviour it became evident that changing individuals’ career behaviour was not straight forward. Khapova and Korotov (2007) and Yakushko (2007) vehemently argue that career development models developed with Western contexts, primarily in United States, are not sufficient to explain career development within contexts such as former Soviet Union states and call for alternative models and
measures that take into account the complex socio-economic and political contexts.

Yakushko’s (2007) use of Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological model of career development within the former Soviet Union offers a useful framework for understanding careers in developing country contexts. The model outlines five ‘nested systems’ that explain the various environmental factors that influence career development: 1) the individual system that is concerned with individual’s characteristics like personality, age, gender and genetic makeup; 2) the microsystem that includes the individual’s immediate environment (e.g., family members and friends); 3) the mesosystem that is concerned with relationships between the individual and different contexts (e.g., family and community); 4) the exosystem that includes environmental contexts and processes such as legislation and work policies; and 5) the macrosystem that is concerned with the ‘overarching societal values that define work attitudes, gender roles, cultural values, social identities and global resources’ (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Yakushko, 2007: 300). Using Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model Yakushko (2007) examines how career development of people from the former Soviet Union post-soviet times is influenced by political and social changes as well as familial and educational factors. Yakushko’s use of the ecological model in the Soviet context illustrates the need to understand the potential impact political systems can have on how careers are and can be constructed in non-Western contexts.

Within African contexts career development has been examined in a very small number of country contexts and mainly in relation to specific practices (e.g., mentoring within career development; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Okurame & Balogun, 2005) or phenomenon (e.g., career barriers for women in South Africa; Mathur-Helm, 2006) or in relation to a particular stage (see Super, 1957) within the career development process (e.g., the impact of parent child relationship on the career development of high school students in Nigeria; Salami & Aremu, 2007). Akin to former Soviet
contexts, Ituma and Simpson (2006) argue that in Nigeria societal context is an important factor that shapes career trajectories of individuals. Their qualitative study demonstrated that in the Nigerian urban IT sector, career trajectories appear to be influenced both by individual decision making as well as societal constraints.

Significantly, in contrast to Western notions of individually lead careers premised on the assumption that individuals have ‘career freedom’ to choose the course of their self-development (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Brousseau, Driver, Eneroth, & Larsson, 1996; Hall, 1996; Hall & Mirvis, 1995), Ituma and Simpson propose an alternative concept to understand the phenomena taking place in Nigeria: the chameleon effect (2006: 61). By changing its skin colour according to mood, temperature and lighting the chameleon adapts to its surroundings and blends in. Ituma and Simpson argue the concept of a ‘career chameleon captures the contextual constraints which shape career paths’ in developing country contexts such as Nigeria (2006: 61).

Counsell’s (1999) work adopts a somewhat broader and culturally orientated approach in examining career development and career decision making in Ethiopia. His (1999) exploratory study of careerists’ perceptions and strategies of career development reflects the increasing body of career development commentary that acknowledges the role of context; political, economic and cultural. However, Counsell’s quantitative study seeks to prove (or disprove) the applicability of a specific Western framework (7 types of career strategy by Greenhaus and Callanan, 1994, cited in; Counsell, 1999: 46-7) in a Third World country context rather than provides any alternative lens

2.5.1 Careers across cultures and international mobility

Tams and Arthur (2007) contend that within the context of international assignment experiences the role of individual agency and of the organisation have been increasingly dichotomised. Under the broad
umbrella of careers across cultures Tams and Arthur’s (2007) analysis suggests that career studies tend to purport one of three distinct perspectives: international careers, cross-cultural and globalisation perspectives. Starting with the latter, globalisation perspectives reflect the idea that the career attitudes and behaviours of individuals portray their ability to adapt to changing economic, political and social environments (Tams & Arthur, 2007). Globalisation perspectives may be particularly useful as they associate careers with cultural change and convergence as well as viewing careers as vehicles for knowledge that have a potential global reach.

However, in respect to the study presented in this thesis, global perspectives present a dilemma as they are concerned with macro perspectives and global interdependencies between economies, political systems, technology, social trends and the environment (Tams & Arthur, 2007), thus ignoring the role of individual agency. Given the complex nature of globally operating multinational companies and the multidirectionally evolving nature of international mobility (Solimano, 2008) I question whether such perspectives will remain helpful when trying to make sense of careers that are enacted across geographical borders, but also across cultural borders within local contexts.

In other words, international career development is not simply a matter for expatriates, but also for people who work in global environments (Tams & Arthur, 2007), thus international career perspectives that focus on careers that are enacted across international geographical borders or cross-cultural studies that are concerned with cultural comparisons of careers within distinct local contexts are no longer sufficient to explain careers in international contexts. Forster (2000) goes further to assert that the ‘international manager’, a globetrotting executive, is in fact nothing but a myth. According to Forster the notion of an international manager is meaningless as very few individuals actually envision continuous international assignments as part of their career progression.
For example Forster’s (2000) data collected from 500 British-born expatriates from thirty-six organisations across the UK suggested that the number of international assignments undertaken by individuals was significantly low, with only four per cent having been on more than one assignment. However, Forster’s data was collected in the mid 1990’s and limited to one country. Nonetheless, it raises an interesting point about the desirability of international careers. It could be argued that if an individual’s home country for example offers stability and a good standard of living that may be assumed to exist in most countries in the developed Western world, then the appeal of international careers, any potential self-fulfilment, opportunity for career development and financial gain has to be balanced against this. However if an individual comes from a developing country context, where a decent standard of living and welfare of one’s family are difficult to secure due to developing infrastructure, then international careers may have a more significant appeal and meaning.

The work of Kohonen (2005) offers an alternative approach. In her analysis Kohonen (2005) argues that international assignments tend to be investigated from an organisational perspective. Literature around expatriation and repatriation is in general about how international assignment experiences can be managed by the individual and the organisation for the benefit of both as well as attention is given to the consequences of when they aren’t managed successfully and fail. Extensive research exists on adjustment and the various stages involved in expatriation (e.g., Arvinen-Muondo & Perkins, 2011; Black, Gregsen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Lee, 2005; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008; Selmer, 2005; Selmer, 1999; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 1998; Tarique & Caligiuri, 2007; Zakaria, 2000). However, limited attention is given to the processes of identity construction and changes that individuals undergo when experiencing an international assignment (Kohonen, 2005).
Within the acculturation process the expatriate continuously negotiates different roles and identities, personally, professionally and culturally (Arvinen-Muondo & Perkins, 2011). Kim (1995) argues that in order to acculturate into new cultural norms, a process of deculturation (i.e., the unlearning of old culture) is required to create a balance (i.e., ‘intercultural cultural identity). International assignees are expected to undergo this process during expatriation and again when they repatriate. Undergoing such a process within a relatively short space of time (3-5 years) could have an astounding impact on an individual’s sense of self. Shaffer and Harrison’s study of expatriate spouse adjustment reported ‘incongruences between an individual’s identity standard and the inputs received from the environment result in stress’ (2001: 240). A better understanding of the ‘personal consequences’ of international assignments on careers is needed according to. Kohonen (2005: 23). Similarly Sparrow (2000) suggests that the impact of multicultural experiences on identity need to be understood to align with more postmodern and social constructionist views of the world.

To summarise, there is a small number of studies that seek to develop our understanding of how careers are constructed and envisioned within multicultural and non-Western contexts using alternative lenses (e.g., Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007), but on the whole the career theory is still dominated by models and frameworks that perpetuate Western ideologies. Moreover, organisational perspectives remain prevalent within international career development literature and more focus is needed on the impact of international exposure on identity. The shift from linear to more multidimensional models of career development is much welcomed, but a balance needs to be struck between individual agency and societal structure when investigating careers. Thus, the structure-agency dynamic offers useful conceptual framework to explore how careers are constructed in African developing country contexts.
However, with the aim of advancing our understanding around the roles that structure and agency play in constructing careers in post-postcolonial contexts, I will draw on postcolonial theory and critique next. I will begin by introducing the postcolonial discourse. Although cross-cultural and structural perspectives from African developing country contexts have been incorporated into career development and indeed human resource management discourse (e.g., Counsell, 1999; Debrah, 2001; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Jackson, 2002, 2004; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Ovadje & Ankomah, 2001; Salami & Aremu, 2007; Van der Colff, 2003), postcolonialism goes largely unmentioned, and its absence within career theory is particularly notable.

2.6 POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVES

Postcolonialism, as multifaceted a discourse as it is, is essentially concerned with radically critiquing Eurocentricism and dedicated to finding alternatives for Western ways of making sense of the non-Western world in a way that ‘restores a sense of historical cultural awareness’ (P. Prasad, 2005: 280). The purpose of the postcolonial discourse is to allow marginalised voices of those previously colonised and their descendants to be heard (Loomba, 2005). However it is evident that the discourse is also excessively complex and often difficult to understand (Loomba, 2005) and thus criticised also for alienating those whose voices it is intended to give representation to. This is only too evident in the work of postcolonial heavyweights such Bhabha (1996), Spivak (1993) and Fanon (1986 [1952]). Nonetheless, the diversity of the discourse is also its richness as there seems to be endless perspectives to draw from, some of which I will introduce here. So how can the prism of postcolonialism be used to better our understanding of how people make sense of their careers in non-Western contexts? To quote Anshuman Prasad:

‘Postcolonial theory and criticism (or postcolonialism, in short) represents an attempt to investigate the complex and
deeply fraught dynamics of Western colonialism and anticolonial resistance, and the ongoing significance of the colonial encounter for people’s lives both in the West and the non-West’ (2003: 5).

A. Prasad’s (2003) words exceptionally capture what the postcolonial tradition can offer organisational analysis and the management rubric in general. Particularly the latter part of this description that draws our attention to the ‘significance of the colonial encounter’ suggests that within country contexts with a colonial past, the nature of that history plays a notable role in how societal structures have taken shape and continue to do so in contemporary society. Similarly Pushkala Prasad argues that ‘the postcolonial tradition is thus equally committed to understanding and reevaluating our colonial heritage and its current reformulations’ (2005: 263). Returning to the structure-agency debate, I argue that societal structures shaped by the remnants of a colonial past inevitably in return influence individual action. Thus, even on this very rudimentary level, postcolonialism warrants attention when examining how individuals construct their careers within African postcolonial contexts.

The term colonialism has been used to describe Western physical, economic and political domination over other nations. Although colonial empires have fallen, previously colonised nations have gained their independence, the postcolonial rubric persists that Western powers continue in their attempts to exercise power and authority economically, politically, culturally and ideologically within developing countries. Such domination involves a complexity of interrelated practices that seek to ‘establish Western hegemony’ (A. Prasad, 2003: 5). According to A. Prasad (2003) the nature of the colonial encounter in the contemporary world has shifted from physical domination (i.e., colonialism), to economic and political domination (i.e., imperialism) to that of cultural and ideological domination (i.e., neo-colonialism). Postcolonialism is therefore dedicated
to ‘developing a radical critique of colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism’ (A. Prasad, 2003: 7).

Postcolonialism emerged as result of increasing criticism from nationalist political movements against colonial rule and as a consequence of writings by individuals concerned with the struggle for freedom (P. Prasad, 2005). The two endeavours are inevitably interlinked as is evident from the writings of liberation fighters such as Mao Tse Tung, Mahatma Ghandi, Leopold Sengor and Che Guevara that have ‘influenced contemporary thinking about practices of colonialism’ (P. Prasad, 2005: 264). Although early well-known proponents of postcolonialism such as Bhabha (1994, 1996), Said (1978; 1994), Spivak (1993) have been affiliated with English literary discourse, postcolonialism has gained attention within disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology and organisational and business studies within the last two decades (P. Prasad, 2005). In the context of management and organisational studies postcolonialism is immensely relevant as it provides alternative perspectives needed to understand practices that are rooted in colonial structures (Gopal, Willis, & Gopal, 2003) and shaped by neo-colonial influences.

Colonialism, imperialism and neocolonialism all seek to assert Western hegemony within societal structures premised on Eurocentric ideas about the superiority of European ideas and institutions (P. Prasad, 2005), but the nature of such structures are incredibly heterogeneous given the scope and reach of colonial encounters across the world (A. Prasad, 2003). As a consequence, the postcolonial rubric is also very diverse and thus generalising is difficult and potentially misleading. This means that if postcolonialism is adopted as a prism to investigate any phenomena, we must inevitably err on the side of particularism rather than any universalist generalisation. Universality implies the need to systematically undermine, marginalise and eliminate competing views (Kwek, 2003), which contradicts not only postcolonial, but postmodern
traditions. As such questions of representation and authority to represent become relevant. Issues of representation inevitably lead to stereotyping and its impact on identity.

2.6.1 Representation, stereotypes and identity

Perhaps somewhat simplistically put, the infamous writings of Said on orientalism (1978) leaves the reader with a sense that the West and the non-West can be categorised into containers of polar opposites. The central thesis of Said’s (1978; 1994) argument is that the West defines the non-West as its opposite and therefore also defines itself. The non-West, the Orient, becomes the ‘other’. So if we see the West as organised, familiar, normal and tame, then the non-West is defined as disorganised, exotic and wild. In other words orientalism enables the West to manage the Orient. Orientalism is concerned with the act of stereotyping, making presumptions about others. Ghandi draws attention to critics of orientalism who suggest that ‘cultural stereotypes are considerably more ambivalent and dynamic than Said’s analysis allows’ (1998: 78). Bhabha in particular is critical of orientalist stereotyping (Gandhi, 1998).

Bhabha views the stereotype as ‘form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always “in place”, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...’ (1994: 95). In other words, stereotypes are about what is believed to be already known and that which cannot be proved. According to Bhabha this process of ambivalence is essential to the colonial stereotype and indeed what gives the postcolonial discourse its ‘currency’ ensuring ‘its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures’ (1994: 95). Bhabha (1994) argues that the colonial discourse is full of ambivalence and contradictions. For Bhabha the boundaries that the colonial discourse posits between the West and the non-West are inherently contradictory and thus ambivalent. For instance, on one hand the colonial discourse posits the West and non-West as ‘radical “others” of each other’, which locates the non-West outside of the West rendering Western
epistemologies and ontologies as ‘incapable of knowing the non-West’ (A. Prasad, 2003: 20-1). Simultaneously, a departure point for colonial discourse is that the colonised non-West can be understood and can become ‘knowable with the help of Western categories/epistemologies’ (A. Prasad, 2003: 21). Early anthropological writings by colonial administrators are a clear example of this. Despite criticisms, Said's orientalism epitomises a paradigm shift away from looking at the material factors that characterise empire and towards one of politics of representation, thus revealing a significant connection between power and knowledge (A. Prasad, 2003). Said's writing marks an important change in the way in which postcolonial discourse has developed. Gandhi (1998) suggests that it was Said's orientalism that acted as a catalyst for the first phase of postcolonialism as we know it.

Kwek (2003) argues that management discourse is fraught with colonial representations of the non-West. According to Kwek, colonial discourses and the West are fundamentally dependent the ‘construction of an Ontological Other’ (2003: 129). Echoing the thoughts of Smith, using Hofstede’s (1991) cultural dimensions as an example, Kwek contends that frameworks developed by Western researchers in Western contexts simply ‘typologize cultures into universalistic dimensions’ and thus ‘collude, wittingly or unwittingly, in the ongoing reproduction of (neo-) colonial domination’ (2003: 122). Ramone suggests that some ‘question how many postcolonial narratives actually achieve positive aims, suggesting that many simply represent the East in accessible packages for Western consumers’ (2011: 9). Smith (2001) goes even further to argue that all academic study, even that which is conducted by indigenous researchers among their own communities, essentially perpetuate Western intellectual dominance over indigenous knowledge simply because academia in itself is a Western pursuit. I will return to the relationship between research and representation in chapter four as I discuss my own relationship to the study presented in this thesis.
I understand the principle of Said’s and Kwek’s argument, but I question whether the continuous reference to ‘the West’ (which I am also guilty of) just enforces the very same universalistic assumptions in reverse as Kwek and Said (and I) are attempting to steer away from? In arguing the other side of the coin, so to speak Bonnett asserts that Western and non-Western narratives of the West are ‘almost invisible within social sciences and humanities’ (2004: 7). In other words what is referred to as the West is premised on pre-given generalising mediations, rather than the result of any indepth scrutiny. According to Bonnett (2004) the concept of the West has not been subject to deconstruction in the same way that for example postcolonialism seeks to deconstruct representations of the non-West. The division according to him rests on how occidentalism (i.e., scholarly knowledge of the Western cultures, customs and people) is conceived either as ‘a Western project of self-invention’ extending on Said’s (1978) orientalism or as an examination of the West from across the globe (Bonnett, 2004: 7). Bonnett aligns himself firmly in the latter. In short, Bonnett argues that it is unhelpful to view occidentalism in terms of polar opposites, but rather more attention should be dedicated to understanding non-Western conceptualisations of the West. In order to develop our understanding of how people experience working in organisational environments where Western and non-Western conceptualisations are at play, deeper analysis of both would be helpful.

Similarly, Said’s orientalism offers insight, but I argue here that the contemporary relationship between the colonised and the colonisers is more multifaceted than polar opposites can explain and return to Bhabha’s arguments about the ambivalence of the colonial stereotype. I argued earlier that dichotomising societal structure and individual agency in the context of career development was unhelpful and likewise I propose here that the increasing cultural, racial and ethnic hybridity in postmodern societies, Western and non-Western, calls for more multidimensional conceptualisations of the colonised/coloniser relationship. This is particularly so in African countries such as Angola, where the
contemporary political and economic environment encapsulates complex power dynamics not simply between Angola and its previous colonial ruler Portugal, but Chinese and Western interests. In fact recent down turn in the Portuguese economy has led the former rulers knocking on Angola’s door for help with their ailing finances ("Angola’s eduardo dos santos offers help to portugal," 2011). Angola has one of the fastest growing economies in the last decade ("A more hopeful continent: The lion kings?," 2011) and according to De Oliveira (2007) the power of Angola’s government, national oil company and the President largely remains unrivalled (I will discuss the Angolan context in further detail in the chapter to follow). This combination of historical events and shifts in the global economy raises interesting questions about power, authority and representation in the Angolan context.

Returning to the notion of identity construction introduced earlier in this chapter, given the African context, the prominent and controversial work of Franz Fanon (1986 [1952]) warrants mentioning. Fanon (1986 [1952]) presents a psychological critique of colonialism by exploring the ‘psychological impact of white colonial culture on black colonized subjects’ (Ramone, 2011: 37). He went on to argue that the social construction of difference (i.e., classes) along racial lines is a direct consequence of colonialism. For Fanon the response of black colonised subjects to their demeaning situation was to imitate white behaviour, which led to the negation of black identity (Loomba, 2005; P. Prasad, 2005). Reflecting on Fanon’s (1986 [1952]) writings Bhabha (1994) contends that memory is what connects colonialism to the question of cultural identity. Bhabha’s notion of mimicry – of being ‘almost the same but not quite… almost the same but not white’ – offers us more insight into the postcolonial struggle (1994:127-8).

Bhabha’s (1994) notion of mimicry cannot be overlooked in the discussion of identity within colonial and subsequently postcolonial discourses. To address the ambivalence of the colonial discourse, the
paradoxical desire for a ‘reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of
difference that is almost the same, but not quite’ Bhabha suggests this
ironic compromise that he refers to as mimicry (1994: 122). Mimicry is
about resemblance, about ‘representation of difference that in itself is a
process of disavowal’ (Bhabha, 1994: 122). A. Prasad describes it in
somewhat simpler terms as ‘the miming and imitation of colonizers by the
colonized’ (2003: 21). Mimicry is thus premised on the idea that the power
and authority of the colonisers has forced the colonised to imitate the
values and norms of the colonisers (A. Prasad, 2003). However, Bhabha
(1994) argues that it is specifically mimicry that represents the space of
resistance that undermines colonial power. Mimicry is thus about
repeating not representing values and norms of the colonised, which
according to Bhabha (1994) means that the colonised are only partial
copies of their colonial oppressors and therefore mimicry perpetuates a
degree of ‘deference and disobedience’ (Gandhi, 1998: 149). It is this
deference and disobedience that turns mimicry into mockery that signals
the destabilisation of colonial power and authority.

The notion of hybridity signalling ‘some level of cultural
intermingling and/or fusion’ (P. Prasad, 2005: 275) also helps us
understand some of the cultural values that underpin behaviour and
attitudes of individuals and indeed how individuals construct their
identities. Hybridity in this respect means that cultures cannot be viewed
as somehow self-contained and uncontaminated (Bhabha, 1996).
Bhabha’s description of hybridity as ‘a space in between the rules of
engagement’ (1994: 277) captures the idea that as the boundaries
between cultures begin to blur, interaction between actors and the
negotiation of cultural identities becomes increasingly complicated. Within
postcolonial contexts, individuals are therefore in continuous negotiation
between various rules of engagement. Similarly if the argument is
extended to contexts where individuals are not only negotiating the rules
of engagement in the postcolonial sense, but also confronted with new
cultural environments, norms and values, the impact on one’s sense of identity is bound to be immense.

2.7 EMERGENT ISSUES FOR INVESTIGATION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In light of the foregoing, several issues and questions emerge from my conceptual analysis, which inform the subsequent empirical investigation. First, my analysis here has illustrated that the field of career theory is a multifaceted one and literature is abundant. Careers are clearly conceptualised from a variety of perspectives focusing on the impact of personality and traits, stages of career development, work life balance or career planning. However, like other others before me, I argue that a more holistic approach is needed that brings a variety of these elements together (e.g., Inkson, 2007). A better understanding is needed of work experiences that are not only reflecting of organised and planned careers (Blustein, Kenna, et al., 2005), but also of informal, unstructured and unplanned aspects of work experiences that as a whole make up an individual’s career. More specifically I want to explore if and how these different aspects that make up an individual’s career over the course of one’s life relate to one another and how understanding this dynamic will enhance our understanding of career construction.

The crux of my argument presented here is that there is a tendency to dichotomise the role of societal structure and individual agency in shaping careers within existing current career research. Although some convergence is evident as my conceptual analysis illustrates, given the extensive scope of career theory spanning over multiple disciplines, constructionist perspectives that adopt an inclusive approach in this respect remains limited. The emergence of multidimensional models of career development is much welcomed, but a balance between individual agency and societal structure does not seem to exist when investigating careers. The argument put forward here is that by exploring the interplay between agency and structure a balance may be achieved. In this sense
the focus is not on individual action as separate from societal structure. Exploring the interplay between the two inductively, allows the data tell its own story and thus provide a more holistic empirically balanced view of the factors influencing careers. However, the question that remains open is if the scales tip differently in different contexts? For instance are there settings or contexts in which individual agency is likely to weigh more and others where the influence of structural elements is more evident?

Due to the complexity and magnitude of the field and the focused nature of academic research, existing empirical study understandably tends to be focused on various combinations of specific elements that shape career construction. The multitude of potential influential elements reflects the complexity of career construction as a phenomenon and therefore signals the scope to study it from a variety of angles and develop our understanding of what it means for people and organisations in different contexts. Since I consistently maintain that career construction needs to be understood in particularist terms, adding to this diversity of scope multicultural and multinational elements means that the ways in contributions can be made to existing career theory with new and novel constructionist perspectives seem nearly endless.

However, empirical investigation requires focus and as such the scope of such investigation must be sufficiently narrowed down to make a credible contribution. Based on the foregoing commentary, I argue that existing understanding of career development can be enhanced by empirically exploring, and subsequently theorising from, the career experiences of individuals focusing on the dynamic between individual agency (e.g., individual career decision making and aspirations) and societal structures (e.g., socioeconomic, political, historical and cultural contexts).

Furthermore, increasingly multidirectional international mobility of professionals adds new dimensions to the way in which careers are
conceptualised in international and multicultural contexts. Given the lack of commentary on the international mobility of individuals from African developing country contexts two further questions for exploration emerge, one empirical and one conceptual. Empirically, the pertinent question to ask is simply: how do individuals from and African context expatriated to a Western country experience international assignments? Conceptually it may then be asked how suitable are theories around the impact of international assignments on careers premised on Western ideologies are for making sense of experiences of individuals coming from African countries?

The conceptual analysis I have presented here has demonstrated the need to advance thinking around the impact of international and multicultural experiences on careers. Thus I contend that the scope of empirical investigation be further focused to gain insight into the personal consequences of international exposure rather than focus on organisational consequences. Organisational perspectives remain prevalent within international career development literature and given the increasing multidirectional mobility of professionals, the impact of international exposure on identity construction and consequently on career development also warrants empirical investigation. Advancement in this area of thinking also adds to the development of more inclusive and constructionist approaches to careers.

In weighing the arguments reviewed, my conceptual analysis has showed that existing approaches to analysing careers within postcolonial and developing country contexts is limited. More importantly it has been demonstrated by a limited number of researchers (e.g., Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Yakushko, 2007) who have investigated elements of career construction within such contexts, that models and frameworks which have been developed explicitly based on Western conceptualisations of careers may not sufficiently explain careers and their development in non-Western contexts.
I particularly question notions of boundaryless and protean career concepts that have emerged as significant frameworks within existing career theory when applied to developing country contexts. The limited evidence thus far suggests that careers of individuals in developing country contexts are shaped by boundaries that may be viewed as external (objective) physical constraints placed by the environment, or as internal (subjective) constraints that relate to perceived boundaries (see Gunz, Evans, & Jalland, 2000). Therefore further empirical insight is needed to understand what if any career constraints are experienced by individuals coming from developing country contexts. Akin to my earlier point, I question whether a balance between external and internal constraints in this sense exists, or whether the extent to which careers are shaped by either is dependent on context. In order to develop this understanding I argue that postcolonialism can offer insight.

Combining the two bodies of literature, careers and postcolonial, suggests that the kind of actual and perceived boundaries that influence the career construction of individuals in postcolonial contexts are rooted in a complex dynamic of a colonial past and a post-colonial present. This dynamic implies a web of political, economic, intellectual and cultural structures that impact the kind of opportunities actually available to individuals within such contexts as well as the kind of opportunities which are perceived as available. So although societal structures have been subject to investigation within the career development discourse, the dynamics of societal structure, individual agency within the context of a colonial heritage has not. By adopting a postcolonial lens to make sense of the structure-agency debate prevalent in constructionist career development commentary rich insight can be gained about the nature of career construction in African contexts. However, as I have illustrated in this chapter the empirical evidence around how individuals construct their careers in developing country contexts, particularly in Africa, is sparse. I therefore propose that the structure-agency debate and the impact of international experiences already signalled as lines of empirical inquiry to
advance current knowledge around career theory be located within an African context.

Therefore, the issue that I am particularly interested in addressing with the study presented here, is the relationship between colonial heritage, post-colonial present and perceptions of opportunities available to African individuals whose nations have been previously colonised. Career development theory is only in its infancy within the African context. African nations are incredibly diverse and hence generalisation seems impossible, thus making theorising within the African context challenging. However, by growing the empirical scope of career development research in Africa to include an increasingly diverse range of national and cultural contexts as well as industries, in time a more comprehensive cross-analysis of how individuals construct their careers and what are the possible implications across different African nations may be achieved. The study presented here builds specifically on this body of knowledge by adding Angolan perspectives to the discourse.

In this chapter I have highlighted some of the key debates in career theory and highlighted the structure versus action dichotomy as a specific framework within constructionist career development theory to enhance understanding of how individuals construct their careers. More significantly I have argued that a postcolonial theory and critique offers a critical and novel alternative perspective to understanding careers in African developing country contexts. By addressing the issues and questions raised here I pave way for the contribution to knowledge that I make with the empirical investigation that I present in this thesis.

In order to advance understanding around career construction in African developing country contexts, I will focus my empirical investigation on Angolan professionals working for Western multinational organisations. In the next chapter I will build a backdrop of the socio-economic, political, historical and cultural landscape against which the narratives presented in
chapter six are played out against. This landscape is an essential element of my quest for contextual and particularist social constructions of careers in African contexts.
CHAPTER THREE

THE ANGOLAN CONTEXT

In this chapter my aim is to construct a socio-economic, political and cultural backdrop upon which the experiences of those who this study is focused on are played out. The complex and dynamic web of political power, a developing socio-economic environment and continuously transforming cultural setting that will be illustrated here provides a context that will enable the reader to make sense of the empirical findings that I present in chapter six. Given that my aim has been to investigate the impact of contextual factors relating to socio-economic, political, historical and cultural environments present within the Angolan context as well as the influence of international living on career development experiences and aspirations, an introduction to the milieu is necessary in order to understand the relationship between the theoretical underpinnings of this study and the empirical findings to be presented, and moreover to understand the theoretical and empirical contribution that I endeavour to make.

3.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The conceptual analysis of the Angolan context that I provide in this chapter is twofold: in the first part I will provide a macro level analysis on the country’s political economy and business systems that will specifically illustrate the significance of the oil and gas industry. I will narrate a brief history of Angola to explain the country’s encounter with Portuguese colonialism, civil war and consequent instability and underdeveloped infrastructure. I will discuss these further in a micro level analysis exploring
some of the potential implications for individuals who are negotiating their own career aspirations with the realities of the Angolan context and what this may mean for organisations seeking to employ Angolan professionals.

I will also use this opportunity to illustrate that within the postcolonial countries, discussion of business systems and political economies requires acknowledgement of the colonial encounter and the multiple legacies that have been left behind as a result. I will draw on Kapoor’s (2002) analysis of dependency versus postcolonial in particular to highlight some of the nuances of each discourse as applied to the Angolan context. Examined in the context of Angola, Kapoor’s (2002) hypothesis that the two strands of theory despite their differences are also complementary appears logical.

I will conclude this chapter by bringing together the Angolan context as presented here and the some of the core elements of constructionist career theory highlighted in the previous chapter to illustrate the main themes to emerge from this conceptual analysis to frame subsequent empirical enquiry.

3.2 THE MACRO: BUSINESS SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Whitley’s (1999) analysis of emergent capitalisms of Eastern Europe offers a useful conceptual lens for understanding the political and economic change that has thus far taken place in Angola and indeed continues to do so. In the context of former socialist Eastern European countries, Whitley proposes that differences in ‘the nature of state socialist regimes’ and ‘pre-war predecessor societies’ have significantly influenced the way in which political economies in such countries were transformed two decades ago as well as the way in which currently economic systems are being established (1999: 209).
In contrasting two late socialist states, Hungary and Slovenia, Whitley highlights four key differences as points of comparison: 1) trust, authority and loyalty within governing relationships; 2) the nature and policies of state agencies and elites; 3) the banking and financial system; and 4) skill development and control system.

Parallels can be drawn between these four features and those that feature prominently within a macro level analysis of Angola’s current political economy and business systems. These systems have developed as a consequence of the country’s colonial past, legacy of civil war, centralised power of a national elite group, wealth of natural resources (oil and diamonds) and associated power dynamics, and the involvement of foreign multinational organisations.

3.2.1 Angola: legacies of colonialism and the present

Angola is a sub-Saharan country that is estimated to have a population of over 18 million of which approximately 4.5 million are concentrated in the urban capital of Luanda. Angola is controversially known for its five hundred year colonial legacy, twenty-seven years of brutal civil war, diamonds and oil. Angola’s colonial relationship with Portugal dates back to 1482 when the Portuguese landed on Angola’s shores. Angola gained independence in 1975 following a 14 year colonial war against the Portuguese only to be succeeded with a civil war between nationalist movements lasting until 2002. The nature of Portuguese colonialism in Angola was essentially one of integration and assimilation (Bender, 1978). The Portuguese readily mixed with indigenous Angolans from the beginning and the result has been a racially and ethnically diverse society, but not without its complexities, conflicts and power struggles. As Bender (1978) illustrates this notion of diversity and what the Portuguese readily promoted as racial equality as their creation in Angola was used by the Portuguese to justify their right to remain in Angola when colonialism was clearly no longer seen as an acceptable way forward in global politics. However, it is obvious that colonialism, regardless of how
one might dress it, brings with it unequal power relations that within the African context is epitomised in racial inequality and Angola seems to be no exception (see e.g., Bender, 1978). Malaquias’ (2000) analysis of ethnicity and conflict in Angola demonstrates how the country’s conflicts are rooted in ethno-linguistic and racial divisions based on which Angola’s conflicting political parties were also founded upon, albeit divided also by distinct ideologies.

Despite Angola’s position as sub-Saharan Africa’s second largest oil producer and a key player in the global oil market, the country’s oil wealth or indeed diamond wealth is hardly reflected in its socioeconomic development (Campos, 2008; United Nations Development Programme, 2007; Vines & Weimer, 2011). Sectors such as agriculture, telecommunications, manufacturing, education and healthcare that have the potential to sustainably improve the quality of life for Angolans nationally remain underdeveloped. According to Vines and Weimer’s (2011) report one of the key threats to stability in Angola is urban poverty. With high percentages of the population living in urban areas (Angola - The World Factbook, CIA, 2012; Vines & Weimer, 2011) and an estimated median age of 18.1 years, providing employment and educational opportunities to the public is key to not only keeping any future strife at bay, but also for sustainable national development (Vines & Weimer, 2011). In addition, cost of living in Luanda is incredibly high and the vast majority of the populations still live below the poverty line (Redvers, 2012). Luanda is also known for being the most expensive city in the world (Jones, 2012). Although salary levels within the oil industry maybe comparable to those in developed countries such as the UK or the US, the high cost of living means that even as successful and educated professionals, individuals are still increasingly pressured to make ends meet financially.
3.2.2 Political economy, power and foreign players

Reflecting what might be referred to as ‘new-institutionalism’ (e.g., Powell, 2007; Scott, 1995), the perception that foreign oil companies have control over African nations is outdated according to De Oliveira (2007). Western powers that previously controlled strategic resources in Africa no longer have explicit control and instead social groupings inside and outside of organisations established by state structures and policies are engaged in constant competition for control of resource (De Oliveira, 2007). Frynas and Paulo (2007) argue that the power has shifted to African leaders. And nowhere more so than in Angola, where power appears to rest with the historically, politically and economically intertwined relationships between Angola’s President and the leading political party MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola), which by and large make up the country’s government) and its national oil company (NOC) Sonangol (see e.g., De Oliveira, 2007; Frynas & Paulo, 2007; Shaxson, 2007). According to Vine’s and Weimer’s report,

‘power in Angola is exercised through the distribution of oil and diamond rents and political and other influential posts, taking into account political, ethnic, subethnic, regional and racial balances. The overriding imperative is to maintain political and economic hegemony and stability, and to satisfy urban elites’ (2011: 7).

That being said, the overwhelming sentiment that is reflected in Vines and Weimer’s report is that ultimately the power is concentrated with Angola’s president, who has held power since 1979. Recent changes in 2010 to the country’s constitution eliminated the need for presidential elections as the leader of the majority party in parliament will automatically be the president of the country (Dugger, 2010).

De Oliveira (2007) suggests that Angola’s economy is divided into two segments that are governed and regulated by distinct policy and practice: the oil economy and ‘the rest’. The Angolan oil industry stems
back to the 1950’s and became a major export when extraction began in the 1960’s. Despite the post-independence prevalent Marxist ideology, MPLA leaders recognised the country’s growing dependence on oil production and the sector was excluded from the socialist reforms that were imposed in other industries (De Oliveira, 2007). Consequently the Angolan oil industry has been ‘excluded from the domain of socialist policy-making’ according to De Oliveira (2007: 601). The oil industry exists within an enclave, operating within rules and laws of its own quite separate from those that govern business within other sectors (De Oliveira, 2007). Sonangol, the national oil company, originally an Angolan subsidiary (ANGOL) of a Portuguese oil company, was established in 1976 not only as an Angolan oil concessionaire, but also ‘sector regulator, and tax gathering agent’ (De Oliveira, 2007: 600). Moreover, the rise and role of Angola’s leading MPLA movement, key players of which comprise of the ruling ‘elite’ that govern Angola, are intrinsically linked to the emergence of Sonangol and have largely dictated the policy and practice within the Angolan oil industry (De Oliveira, 2007). Similarly to the Nigerian government’s significant role in the Nigerian economy (Ovadje & Ankomah, 2001), the national oil company’s and the oil ministry’s governing power over the oil economy as a whole remains unrivalled and its influence over foreign MNCs operating in Angola considerable (e.g., De Oliveira, 2007; Vines & Weimer, 2011).

The allowance of fiscal incentives, for example tax-exemptions (Singh, 2004), make the otherwise politically and economically high risk country, at least in terms of the oil and gas, increasingly attractive to foreign investors. Unfortunately remaining sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture lag behind the oil sector in investment, both in terms of foreign and government investment (Vines & Weimer, 2011). In terms of international investment, Vines and Weimer (2011) report that despite heavy reliance on the oil industry and the significant presence of Chinese state-owned enterprises and private companies operating in Angola as part of bilateral agreements between the two governments, the Angolan
government is not likely to encourage dependence on any one nation or government.

Given the duality of the Angolan political economy evidencing capitalist and socialist tendencies and its colonial past, dependency theory may offer some insight (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979; Frank, 1969; Kapoor, 2002; Minter, 1972). The scope of this thesis does not leave room to explore this in detail, but what is useful to note here is that although Angola displays considerable autonomy and centralised power over how foreign investors are able to operate within the country within the oil industry (De Oliveira, 2007; Frynas & Paulo, 2007; Vines & Weimer, 2011), as a developing country Angola’s national development and sustainability remains largely dependent on other nations. According to Minter the notion that “A is dependent on B” implies that the effect of B on A is important to A’ thus making the relationship inevitably unequal between the two as there is no notion of full reciprocity (1972: 12). Furthermore dependency in this sense implies that the two actors do not hold the same amount of power over each other within the relationship. In the context of the modern/traditional (i.e., developed/developing world) dichotomy, Frank argues that the onset of capitalism inevitably implies that where the developed world (or ‘civilised world’ as Frank wrote in 1969) gains, the other, namely the developing world suffers. According to Kapoor, the dependency perspective views imperialism ‘as tied to the unfolding of capitalism’ (2002: 647). Based on research conducted in Chile and Brazil, Frank argues against ‘modernisation’s “dual society” thesis’ that views the modern (in today’s terms, the developed world) and the traditional (the developing world) as independent and suggest that the two are connected and parts of the same imperialist system (Frank, 1969; also cited in Kapoor, 2002). Moreover, Frank perceives the role of national bourgeoisie, which in the Angolan case would refer to the ‘elite’ mentioned earlier, as merely a collaborate or within an exploitative imperialist system that is only likely to exasperate the inequality between the core (i.e., elite) and the periphery (i.e., the remaining population) (Frank, 1969; Kapoor,
Kapoor summarises how Cardoso and Faletto (1979) envision two distinct situations of dependency; the first one being one that has a ‘relatively strong local state that allows for more national control over development’ and the second being an ‘enclave situation, in which foreign interests dominate, thereby allowing for less national control’ (2002: 649). Given the commentary thus far, the first seems to explain Angola’s situation quite appropriately. Cardoso and Faletto (1979) conceive dependency as an interplay between external social forces such as foreign classes and groups, multinational organisations, international financial systems, foreign technology and internal forces centred around local societies made up of different classes and ethnic groups exhibiting different ideologies. Thus dependency envisioned as a ‘complex whole’ is not simply ‘based on more external forms of exploitation and coercion’ but is ‘rooted in coincidences of interests between local dominant classes and international one, and on the other side are challenged by local dominated groups and classes’ (Cardoso & Faletto, 1979: xvi). Furthermore, particularly relevant for the Angolan context, Cardoso and Faletto suggest that despite imperialism being a result of external forces,

‘the system of domination reappears as an “internal” force, through the social practices of local groups and classes which try to enforce foreign interests, not precisely because they are foreign, but because they may coincide with values and interests that these groups pretend are their own’ (1979: xvi).

Given the dominant role of the Angolan political elite and how indigenous Angolan and Portuguese cultural influences have intertwined within urban Angola, despite writing several decades ago, Cardoso and Faletto’s conception of dependency offers useful insight today. Returning back to the themes that I seek to explore in this study, the question that then arises is how aware are individuals who are negotiating their realities and aspirations of the complex dynamics between foreign and local interests and how do they envision themselves within it?
According to Kapoor’s analysis ‘from the perspective of dependency, postcolonial theory does not adequately appreciate the role of capitalism, resulting in significant political problems’ (2002: 658). Although Bhabha and Said are perhaps slight exceptions to this, both place greater emphasis on cultural analysis according to Kapoor (2002). Contrastingly ‘dependenistas’ tend to overlook the influence of social context entirely and give little attention to cultural factors (Kapoor, 2002: 661). As pointed out earlier in my discussion of postcolonialism, postcolonial theory on the most part is focused on heterogenic conceptions focusing on local discourses (Kapoor, 2002) and thus according to Kapoor ‘tends to result in the neglect of broader influences’.

However, it is clear that cultural influences cannot be overlooked. Bell argues that ‘culture mediates all political, economic and social processes. It influences on the one hand, national policy-making and, on the other, the response of the African people to changes in their environment’ (1986: 6). Bell suggests that cultural values impact the way in which individuals are able to use available ‘environmental resources in economic activities’ and also how individuals can overcome limitations set by their spatial environment on how they maintain social relations (1986: 6-7). Therefore enhancing our understanding of how individuals negotiate the dynamics between their cultural value systems, the socio-economic, political and historical environments they occupy and the resources they see as attainable should also better our understanding of career development in the Angolan context.

In the context of contemporary Africa (despite being written over 26 years ago still evident today) Bell writes:

‘The values and ideals enshrined in the European institutions which penetrated the continent challenged those of traditional society. Within each newly created colonial state the change in organisation of production influences the nature and location of
economic opportunities, the form of the urban hierarchy and the internal structure of urban centres, the physical character of the rural landscape, the disparities in income and welfare within and between rural and urban areas’ (1986: 2)

Bell’s words capture the sentiment of Angola’s post-colonial situation. It is within this context of a Portuguese colonial legacy that individuals form their career aspirations, against a backdrop of perceived opportunities. In the next section I will provide a micro level analysis aiming to explore specifically the relationship between the wider political economy and socio-economic context and external foreign players within the oil industry.

3.3 THE MICRO IN THE MACRO

Within this ‘new-institutionalist’ frame mentioned earlier, ‘societal effects’ including state policies and regulatory regimes shape organisational structure and play a significant role in the way in which organisations are strategically developed (Whitley, 1999). I argue here that this point of reference seems appropriate also to explain some of the complexities of the Angolan market economy. The Angolan government’s and therefore Sonangol’s policies and practices have historically significantly impacted the way in which MNCs operate and thus strategically manage their own human assets within Angola (De Oliveira, 2007). MNCs are under increased pressure to localise their workforces as part of their operating licenses and the Angolan government is seemingly tightening work permit regulations, thus restricting the number of expatriates companies are able to employ. Vines and Weimer (2011) report that human resourcing in foreign MNCs is challenged by the 30 per cent local content quota they are expected to fulfil as part of the bilateral agreements under which they operate. Such barriers bare implications on the success of knowledge transfer processes as well as operational effectiveness within MNCs and potentially places increasing pressure for
MNCs to send local employees abroad for training (i.e., impatriation; Adler, 2002) rather than relying primarily on expatriates. The way in which foreign MNCs are perceived to develop their Angolan professionals is likely to have implications for the employee-organisation fit that such individuals are likely to envision and therefore impact their career development plans. However, institutional perspectives such as this, similarly to dependency theory, tend to lean towards economic and structural explanations (Kapoor, 2002) and overlook social and culturally rooted explanations.

Accordingly, combining the macro and micro level analysis, a number of interlinked factors are identified here in contributing to the way in which Angolans are developed in the within the Angolan oil economy that potentially impact the way in which Angolans perceive their position within the labour market and the way in which individuals prioritise their needs. First, the nature of Angola’s struggle for independence from its Portuguese colonial rulers and subsequent declaration of independence in 1975 resulted in a mass departure of Portuguese professional and semi-professional settlers leaving a severe lack of skills and abilities across industries (Hodges, 2004).

Second, the subsequent civil war between Angolan nationalist movements that ensued since independence until 2002 has resulted in the destruction of much of the country’s original subsistence industries (mainly agricultural), and had severe economic and developmental consequences on the country’s other sectors such as education, healthcare, tourism, retail and communications. Vines and Weimer (2011) suggest that development of the agricultural sector in particular would have the potential to provide jobs for Angola’s increasingly disenchanted youth, move people out of overpopulated cities and decrease the country’s dependence on foreign imports (e.g., majority of food commodities in Angola are imported; Vines & Weimer, 2011). The development of Angola’s infrastructure is highly reliant on oil exports, foreign direct
investment (FDI) in exchange for concessions and oil backed loans creating a path dependency despite the relative autonomous power of national government described earlier. Vines and Weimer (2011) also contend that even though the government seems to recognise the threat to sustainable national development that the country’s rapidly growing young population poses and are taking steps to address this through policy development (e.g., the Angolanisation agenda, the nationalisation of workforces; Bjerke et al., 2004; Paulo, 2006), they fear that improvement is not happening at a fast enough rate. A shortage of educated and skilled Angolans is a consequence of the lack of access and the quality of education, which is proving a major resourcing challenge not only for MNCs operating in Angola, but national companies. On the other hand it also implies that professional Angolans are competing in a smaller talent ‘pool’.

Developing Angolan human resources rapidly to address this skills shortage is central to growth in the oil industry (“Oil for sale: An interview with Lucinda Guimares, Sonangol’s commercial editor,” 2010). Similarly to Asia Pacific’s economy, the lack of skills supply (James, 1996), and in Angola’s case restrictions on expatriate quotas, could potentially slow down economic growth by making the economy difficult for foreign investors to invest. Akin to Angola, changing economic climate and lacking educational infrastructure has been evidenced to impact management development in Vietnam for example (Weber & Hsee, 2000). Accessibility to educational and career opportunities in Angola has also traditionally been determined by ethno-linguistic divisions (Oyebade, 2007). From a cultural perspective, family obligation, often perceived as nepotism in the West, is a widely practiced custom in Angola as it is in other African cultures (e.g., Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2006; McFarlin & Coster, 1999). Thus the socio-economic position of one’s family, in many cases rooted in ethnic heritage, can be a significant determinant in accessing educational and career opportunities (Oyebade, 2007). For example during the civil war, young Angolans whose families were in such a position were
government sponsored to study abroad in countries such as China and Russia ("Education, education, education," 2010).

Opportunities for education inside Angola have grown post-independence. Since 1991 several private universities have been formed in the capital, Luanda. According to an article published in the Universo monthly magazine, a Sonangol publication, higher education is seen as ‘a central plank of Angolan government policy and a key area of investment’ ("Education, education, education," 2010:8). Without much regulation and lack of ‘reference’ as one rector of a newly founded university described the lack of established reputation via successful graduates in the job market, it is difficult to make any judgment yet on the skills and abilities and employability of graduates from such private institutions ("University challenge," 2010). In other words there seems to be no benchmark.

Although an education from a private university maybe costly to the average Angolan, timetabling is arranged so that students are able to hold down a full-time job during their studies. Unlike in the largest and most reputable public university in Luanda, where places are limited relative to the number of applicants, in several private universities there are no entrance exams and a minimum of a high school diploma is required. Thus the rapid rise in the number of private universities is making higher education more accessible to ‘ordinary’ Angolans ("Education, education, education," 2010; "University challenge," 2010). From the country's socio-economic perspective, this is no doubt a positive development. From a corporate perspective, the increase in Angolan educated university graduates should imply that recruiting locals for local jobs in line with the government’s Angolanisation agenda would become easier for MNCs due to the higher availability of university educated candidates. However, the opposite may be true. As my previous unpublished research has indicated (Arvinen-Muondo & Perkins, 2009), the perceived value given to the skills and abilities of graduates even from highly regarded Angolan educational institutions may be perceived as unequal to the skills and abilities of
graduates from Western educational institutions, such as those from the UK, US or Portugal. The assumption then would be that graduates from newly established universities in a country with no national regulatory framework would exasperate multinational corporate perceptions of inequality between capabilities of Angolan educated graduates in comparison to their Western educated counterparts, rather than diminish the gap.

Given the power and autonomy centralised within the dynamic trio (i.e., Angolan government, the president and Sonangol) that I described earlier in this chapter, current available evidence suggests that foreign multinational corporations (MNCs) are required to operate within the realm of possibilities determined by not only the Angolan financial, cultural and socioeconomic context, but also dictated by the needs of the Angolan government. Akin to the ‘legacy of selective modernization’ of socialist East European societies, the ‘ethical dualism’ described by Marody (1997) seems appropriate to describe the bureaucracy (need for laws), but yet individual selectivity on the applicability of it or indeed the trust that others will play by the rules, making the Angolan context a complex and challenging environment for any foreign player to take part in.

Reflecting a resource based view (Penrose, 1959) of the way in which human capital is resourced, the government is driving forward the nationalisation agenda, referred to as Angolanisation and thus foreign MNCs are required to put into practice strategies that will develop local talent to meet their operational needs. Angolanisation has been associated with the development of future leadership potential, not only for its practical implications of developing technical expertise, but increasing corporate capacity for local know-how to establish ‘constructive relationships’ with local stakeholders and the Angolan government (Ernst & Young, 2004). However, the Angolanisation agenda, has been criticised in the media and online forums for its limited and short-term scope (Paulo, 2006) and bias towards foreign educated Angolans implying that the
agenda in itself is selective (Paulo, 2006) and perhaps perpetuates the social and economic divisions that are prevalent in Angolan society.

Thus, due to the lack of local infrastructure and resources in developing countries such as Angola, oil companies, like MNCs in many other sectors worldwide, utilise international assignments to train and develop the skills and abilities of their employees (Kohonen, 2005). Existing commentary on expatriation, international careers and cadres of international managers suggests that that exposing professionals; economists, accountants, geologists and engineers alike, to international business environments could be considered part and parcel of developing an international career (Brewster, Sparrow, & Harris, 2005; Ghemawat, 2005; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Kohonen, 2005). Indeed it has been suggested exposure to new organisational and social environments is a key ingredient in developing global mindset in individuals that have been identified as having leadership potential (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). Although sending employees from foreign subsidiaries to corporate headquarters for accelerated development (i.e., impatriation; Adler, 2002) is hardly a new phenomenon or one that is restricted to the Angolan oil sector, the increased pressure from Angolan government on foreign companies to develop local professionals for Angolan operations contradicts the notion of an international career. Angolans are needed in Angola. In other words, international development opportunities may not translate to international career prospects for Angolan professionals. Thus, using international assignments to develop Angolan professionals within what may otherwise be relatively universalist development programmes within multinational oil companies, managing career expectations of employees becomes a ‘marketability’ issue. Do Angolan graduates entering the oil industry understand the potential implications of the Angolanisation agenda on their own personal career aspirations?
3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMING OF EMPIRICAL ENQUIRY

In this chapter I have endeavoured to provide a context in which the empirical narratives that I have captured in this study maybe situated in order to give them deeper meaning. Part of my constructivist endeavour is to understand the dynamic relationship between social actors and context or agency and structure and this chapter is an essential component of that construction. I have built upon the notion of new-institutionalism, which I introduced in chapter two and demonstrate how it could be helpful in making sense of the impact of institutional factors on wider societal, political and economic structures. I also argued that there is little doubt that Angola is still a developing nation and thus dependent on external forces, which impact the role of foreign players within the country’s economy. However, the duality of Angola’s political economy seems to suggest that power is increasingly centralised with national rather than international forces. Following in Kapoor’s footsteps I have argued that in a context such as Angola, political and economic systems cannot be examined without acknowledging and investigating the impact of broader social and cultural systems, which in the case of Angola include a significant colonial history.

In Figure 3.1 I bring together some of the core elements of constructionist career theory presented in the previous chapter and the Angolan context which I have laid out here, to conceptually frame my empirical enquiry. So as not to compromise the grounded theory approach that I have adopted here, this framework is not intended as prescriptive, but rather to provide a conceptual summary of the some of the core elements to be explored in order to address the research questions set out in chapter one. The broad themes framed here and the way in which they relate to each other warrant attention if I am to the address areas where existing career theory falls short in answering what impact structural factors have in individual career experiences and aspirations in and
African postcolonial context such as Angola. The conceptual framework presented is intended to highlight the main themes for empirical enquiry that will allow the development of more idiosyncratic, flexible and multidirectional conceptualisations of career construction that recognise the influence of variety of macro and micro factors present within individuals’ environments.

![Figure 3.1 Preliminary conceptual framework of career construction within the Angolan context](image)

Having laid out the theoretical underpinnings of this study, located it within existing commentary and constructed a socio-economic, political and cultural backdrop for this study in the next chapter I will explain the epistemological and ontological stances that have guided my collection and interpretation of empirical data. In the course of doing so I will also explain how my role as a researcher has shaped the study presented here and thus I will dedicate considerable attention to exploring reflexivity.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH TRADITIONS AND REFLEXIVITY

My intention in this chapter is to explain the methodological stance that I have adopted in order to investigate the research themes outlined in chapter one and discuss the intellectual traditions that have influenced my thinking. This study is quintessentially reflexive as I endeavour to translate into text not only the expressions of experience of my participants (1986; Dilthey & Rickman, 1976; Geertz, 1986; Turner & Bruner, 1986), but also my own attempts at self-reflection and a critical analysis of my personal assumptions and beliefs against a backdrop of existing frameworks. The ways in which reflexivity in research can be conceptualised is inextricably linked to epistemological and ontological considerations. As Johnson and Duberley highlight ‘the complexity and terminological ambiguity’ of reflexivity inevitably leads us to thinking about ‘knowledge constituting assumptions about ontology and epistemology’ (2003: 1281).

4.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

In the next section I will elaborate on the interpretivist and constructionist traditions that have influenced my own philosophical approach to this study. The latter part of this chapter is then dedicated to a critical overview of reflective and reflexive research to explain what reflexivity means in the context of the study presented here and how it is manifested. Within this context I will also introduce myself, if you will, in order to provide substance to the choices I have made and the way in which I have come to interpret the data.
4.2 POSTPOSTIVIST TRADITIONS: EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the term paradigm is commonly used to describe shared epistemological and ontological thinking among researchers (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), I have been greatly inspired by Pushkala Prasad’s (2005) alternative conceptualisation of the complexities of knowledge production. According to P. Prasad (2005), the term paradigm provides us with particular guidelines for conducting research. This seems to imply a need to fit within the confines of a particular paradigm, which does not reflect the reality or the complexity of doing qualitative research (P. Prasad, 2005). My interpretation of P. Prasad’s (2005) core argument is that by conceptualising these shared epistemological and ontological assumptions as traditions rather than paradigms, researchers are less constrained in exploring the advantages of working across multiple traditions.

Moreover, traditions evolve and take shape within practice (2005). Traditions, according to P. Prasad (2005) ‘govern every sphere of [qualitative] craftwork’ and ‘intimates an entire way of conducting scholarship rather than merely offering choice of technique or a uniform set of assumptions’ (emphasis in the original; 2005: 8). Thus, within this study I draw on several postpositivist traditions, mainly interpretive traditions such as hermeneutics and ethnography premised on the idea that knowledge about the social world is a result of human interpretation, but also on traditions of the “Post” (P. Prasad, 2005) such as postmodernism and postcolonialism as already illustrated in chapter two.

Here I align myself with P. Prasad’s thinking (2005), who appears to adopt a broad view of postpositivist traditions that encompasses a variety of traditions, including those that are interpretive and critical as well as traditions of the “Post” (e.g., postcolonialism, postmodernism and poststructuralism) and of deep structure. Contrastingly, writing in terms of paradigms, Denzin and Lincoln appear to view the positivist/postpositivist
paradigm as one of several interpretive paradigms (see Table 1.2 Interpretive paradigms in; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 32) rather than vice versa. The key to P. Prasad’s vision of postpositivist traditions and indeed their relationships to each other relates to the way in which she conceptualises qualitative research as ‘craft’ (2005: 6). P. Prasad contends that

‘proficient qualitative research can only develop within reputed and inspiring intellectual craft traditions. Such research is at once theoretically grounded and methodologically rigorous (even if its rigor takes different forms from that which is to be found in positivist research)’ (emphasis in the original; 2005: 6).

Epistemologically this study rejects positivist conceptions and indeed epistemic notions of knowledge production that are concerned with universal applicability (P. Prasad, 2005). Interpretivism, like constructionism which I will discuss a little further down, is premised on the idea that knowledge is subjective and cannot exist independently of thinking (Grbich, 2007). Moreover, because every person experiences and interprets their environment differently, multiple realities are assumed (Grbich, 2007). Interpretive traditions can be traced back to Husserl’s (1960) philosophy of phenomenology which is premised on the idea that all experiences of reality are made possible through interpretation (P. Prasad, 2005). In other words, phenomenology is concerned with

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2 My review of literature around interpretivist and phenomenological research philosophies suggests that although constructionism and constructivism are two distinguishable paradigms in some respects (constructionism; see Papert, 1980; constructivism; see Piaget, 2002, c1959), they also share considerable similarities. Both are in essence concerned with the role of the external environment, other social actors and previous socialisation experiences in shaping individual interpretation, learning, development and consequently behaviour (see Ackermann, 2002, for further discussion on the nuanced differences between the two ontologies). Throughout this thesis I will primarily refer to constructionism. When discussing approaches such as grounded theory and making reference to specific arguments of authors occasionally the term constructivist is used. For example, Charmaz (2006) and Bryant (2003) refer to constructivist approaches to grounded theory, but Bryant and Charmaz (2007a) use the term constructionist. Neither author clarifies at any stage the difference between the two paradigms, which leads me to think that both terms are used under them same premises.
understanding how individuals make sense of their experiences within the world around them (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Grbich, 2007; Schütz & Natanson, 1982). Thus, human behaviour is a consequence of how people interpret their social worlds (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Phenomenological approaches are ideally suited for research questions that focus on the experiences of individuals, where what is of interest is the rich detail of people’s experiences of a phenomenon (Grbich, 2007).

Different phenomenological approaches exist, however I draw on hermeneutic phenomenology (e.g., Gadamer, 2004) specifically. Hermeneutic phenomenology recognises that data is a co-construction between the researcher and the researched (Grbich, 2007) and thus is ideally suited for and requires a reflexive approach. Although variations of hermeneutics also exist, the basic tenet is premised on understanding and interpretation of text (Bruner, 1986; Gadamer, 2004; P. Prasad, 2005). Drawing on fundamental hermeneutics, the emphasis is placed on interpretation rather than representation of reality (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). As Alvesson and Sköldberg contend this process of interpretation is by no means value-free or detached from the researcher, nor does it ‘take place in a neutral, apolitical, ideology-free space’ (2009: 12).

I have been particularly inspired by the work of Clifford Geertz (Alexander, Smith, & Norton, 2011; Geertz, 1973, 1986), Victor Turner and Edward Bruner (Turner & Bruner, 1986) in the field of cultural anthropology. Geertz has become ‘the emblematic figure for interpretive inquiry’ according to Alexander et al. (emphasis in the original2011: xv). Geertz’ (1973) approach to interpretive inquiry introduced a novel perspective that assumed ‘cultural representations and their meanings as a departure point’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:24). In other words, Geertz suggested that writing (as the result of social interpretive inquiry) is an interpretation of an interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Geertz, 1973). Geertz argues that understanding what doing ethnography means is the only way of ‘grasping what anthropological analysis amounts to as a form
of knowledge’ and thus contends that as an intellectual effort ethnography must be seen in terms of ‘thick description’ (1973: 6). Broadly speaking ‘thick description’ refers to understanding action within context (Clark, 2011; Geertz, 1973). It is this context that encapsulates cultural meaning and intentions that gives action significance (Clark, 2011). I discuss ethnography as a method in more detail in the chapter to follow, however my intention here is to introduce ethnography as an intellectual tradition that has influenced the course of this project for its concern with culture.

As P. Prasad (2005) points out interpretive traditions such as hermeneutics derived from literary efforts mainly within the field of sociology, whereas ethnography’s roots are distinctively anthropological, although influenced by similar phenomenological and social constructionist philosophies. Geertz likens ethnography to pursuing the ‘multiplicity of complex conceptual structures’ that are intertwined, which the ethnographer must unravel and grasp only to render again (1973: 10). Geertz further argues that ‘culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is, thickly described’ (1973: 14). Thus, the narratives captured and presented in this thesis are best understood as expressions of experiences (Bruner, 1986; Geertz, 1986; Turner & Bruner, 1986).

Turner’s original conceptualisation of anthropology of experience is rooted in Dilthey’s hermeneutics (Bruner, 1986; Turner & Bruner, 1986). Anthropology of experience is essentially concerned with how ‘individuals experience their culture, that is, how events are received by consciousness’ (Bruner, 1986: 4). Bruner and Turner (1986) view experience in terms of feelings, actions, expectations and reflections, not simply cognition. Dilthey (1976), like the Bruner and Turner (1986) subsequently, distinguishes between experience and an experience, by suggesting that the latter as an articulation of experience is essentially transformed into an expression. For Dilthey (1976) experience and
expressions are in a ‘dialogic relationship of mutual dependence’ as one gives structure to the other (e.g., the hermeneutic cycle; interpreted by Bruner, 1986: 6).\(^3\) Moreover expression of experience is processual, never static and derives from the social world through interaction with other social actors within a particular cultural and historical context (Bruner, 1986). This contextuality of experience and its expressions is one of the key tenets of the study that I present in this thesis.

Ontologically, this study is premised on the social constructionist notion that as humans our understanding of the world is socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Bryman & Bell, 2007) and is reflected in the way in which I have come to make sense of the data. Berger and Luckmann (1966), the pioneers of social constructionism who were greatly inspired by Husserl’s (1960) phenomenology as well as the work of Schütz (1982) argued that common-sense knowledge (i.e., the knowledge that is shared with others about everyday life) is a key ingredient of sociological knowledge. Berger and Luckmann (1966) held the view that human beings are social by nature and that the everyday world that human inhabit is intersubjective in that it is inevitably shared by others. They argued that within this shared reality, social order (i.e., form of stability) is needed, which is created through interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Human beings constantly create new habits and routines through their actions, which Berger and Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) refer to as habitualization. As routines and habits become established ways of acting in specific situations, they become institutions. This institutionalization happens in different forms such as family, school systems and legal systems to name just a few (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Therefore such institutions become to be seen as ‘something

\(^3\) The hermeneutic cycle is used in a variety of ways in literature, but essentially it is concerned with iterative ways of understanding the world. Here I use the hermeneutic cycle to examine experience and expression. Other conceptualisations of the hermeneutic cycle for example focus on understanding text and context.
external’, despite originally having been created by people (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009: 26). Institutional meaning is in turn transmitted by individuals who act out different roles. So, although institution can be represented according to Alvesson and Sköldberg’s interpretation of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) work, institutions only ‘come to life’ via ‘human enactment’ (2009: 27).

As such, according to social constructionism individuals create their own reality through engagement with others in their environment, but ‘this created reality also creates the individuals’ (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). This process whereby individuals ‘internalize social norms and knowledge’ is called socialization (2009: 28). Given that my aim in this study is to explore the impact of different kinds of contexts (cultural, historical, political and socio-economic) on the career development experiences and perceptions of individuals, the process of socialization is a central concept in this endeavour. As I come to discuss the findings in chapter six, I shall return to the concepts introduced here.

Reflecting this social constructionist stance, I argue here that the kind of qualitative research that I present here premised on the idea that the research process and therefore the resultant data is a co-construction between myself as a researcher and the researched. Social constructionism can easily be related to ethnography as the ethnographer observes and sometimes participates in the life world of others (Timmermans & Tavory, 2007). Charmaz contends that a reflexive approach informs ‘how the researcher conducts his or her research, relates to the participants and represents them in written reports’ (2006: 189; also cited in Mruck & Mey, 2007). What I aim to address in this thesis is how social actors within the field that I have chosen make sense of their life world as well as my relationship to the field and the social actors (i.e., my participants) within it. The remainder of this chapter will be therefore dedicated to exploring reflexivity in research and how it manifests in the study I present here.
4.3 REFLEXIVE INQUIRY IN POSTPOSTIVIST TRADITIONS

It seems evident that no prescriptive list of how to do reflexive research exists (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Mruck & Mey, 2007; Warwick, 2011) and that the research process and its outcomes vary depending on the time and place in which the researcher is situated (Mruck & Mey, 2007). Echoing this Warwick (2011) calls our attention to the temporal nature of reflexivity. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), akin to Johnson and Duberley (2003), contend that a ‘sceptical approach’ in exploring how various elements are ‘woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written’ is key for reflexivity. Johnson and Duberley (2003) argue that reflexivity in this sense is about unsettling and deconstructing assumptions, ideas, values and belief systems. The research I present here is shaped by reflexive enquiry, not simply because I intend to make myself visible and thus ‘vulnerable’ (Behar, 1996), but also because the nature of the empirical enquiry encourages participants to explore and actively reflect upon their own experiences and perceptions.

Given the need to adopt a ‘sceptical’ perspective in reflexive research and the postcolonial developing country context of the study, I will continue exploring politics, power and authority in attempts to interpret and represent the ‘Other’ (Said, 1994), but specifically from a reflexive point of view. Following on from chapter two, although postcolonial theory and critique appears to be more often related with poststructuralism, areas of overlap between the two do exists, as both ‘pursue(s) the project of critiquing and resisting Western modernity’ (2005: 262). Postmodernists and poststructuralists are concerned with the ‘recovery of lost and marginal voices’, yet postmodernists are ironically criticised for doing so from an explicitly Western perspective (P. Prasad, 2005). Proponents of postmodernism are concerned with critiquing the rationality of modernity, its perpetuation of institutionalized differentiation that segregates health, work, education and family (P. Prasad, 2005), but fail to question it for its
perpetuation of Eurocentric ideologies. However, ideas stemming from postmodernism have inspired ‘interpretations of authority and representation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) and hence both postmodern and postcolonial conceptualisations of reflexivity can offer insight.

4.4 CONCEPTUALISING REFLEXIVITY

According to Johnson and Duberley’s (2003) critical analysis of reflexive discourse, reflexivity stemming from ontological and epistemological subjectivism can be viewed as hyper-reflexivity or deconstruction. It is based on the assumption that ‘what we take to be reality is an output of human cognitive processes’ (Johnson & Duberley, 2003: 1282). It is based on a postmodern assumption that social constructions (like texts) are multilayered and can be reflexively deconstructed to reveal meaning that has been previously hidden. A deconstructionist view of reflexivity in this sense is relativist and does not lead to a ‘privileged truth’. Instead it exhorts the view that reflexivity is continuous and infinite and each layer of meaning that is revealed can be subjected to further deconstruction and questioning (Johnson & Duberley, 2003). The main problem with adopting such a view is that there seems to be no end, no ‘discursive closure’. As the authors highlight in their review, from a practical management perspective, there is a danger that any insight gained using such an approach will be perceived as ambiguous and impractical as the derived criteria as a basis of practice are essentially always subject to revision (Johnson & Duberley, 2003).

However, subscribing to a social constructionist view, I argue that any ‘reality’ that is constructed by social actors or the researcher (who is also a social actor) is inevitably situated within a specific time and place and therefore relative. For insight derived from this perspective to be practical in this sense therefore relies on the researcher’s ability to account for the contextual factors or subjectivities that may influence their interpretation and representation of the phenomena in question. Moreover,
if multiple perspectives are presented, there is potential to create multiple and versatile scenarios which can be adopted creatively and flexible to suit context.

Reflexivity has various uses (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Johnson & Duberley, 2003; Lynch, 2000; Mruck & Mey, 2007; Warwick, 2011) and is often used interchangeably with reflection, however, reflexivity is commonly described as recursive and circular in nature (Lynch, 2000). The purpose of reflexivity or indeed reflection is ‘typically to draw attention to the complex relationship between processes of knowledge production, the various contexts of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer’ (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009: 8). What can be discerned from Alvesson and Sköldberg’s approach to a reflexive methodology is that reflectivity in research - that is the ‘careful interpretation’ and ‘reflection’ of empirical data forms an essential part of reflexive research (2009: 9).

Reflexivity in its various conceptions derives from multiple perspectives, for example psychology, systems theory and social and cultural theory (Lynch, 2000). My intention here is to focus on reflexivities conceptualised within the latter two, social and cultural theory. The need to account for one’s presence as a researcher in the field may be traced back to early anthropological greats such as Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Levi-Strauss, Boas and Mead. The overt and explicit voices of anthropologists can be heard in their ethnographies of distant peoples and their cultural practices. However, for early anthropologists who studied the foreign and exotic ‘Other’ (Said, 1994) the presentation of ethnography does not seem to be about being personal or giving something of themselves to the reader (Behar, 1996; P. Prasad, 2005). On the contrary, according to Malinowski the integrity and ‘unquestionable scientific value of ethnographic sources is determined by the consistency with which accounts of direct observation, native narratives and interpretations and
inferences of the author can be distinguished from each other within final written presentation’ (1932:3).

Ethnographic study is about the endeavour to ‘understand culture from the native point of view rather than from an entirely detached outsider position’ (P. Prasad, 2005: 77), which can only be achieved through a long period of immersion within field (P. Prasad, 2005; Timmermans & Tavory, 2007). P. Prasad argues that in order to negate the inevitable subjectivity within ethnography, early anthropologists sought to mask ‘this closeness by adopting dispassionate voice when writing about them’ (2005:78). As a result early ethnography according to Geertz (1973) comes across as ‘person-specific and yet somehow not personal’ (as interpreted by Behar, 1996: 8). In this sense traditionally anthropological paradigms have sought objectivity, abstraction and distance from the object of study (Behar, 1996).

Cultural anthropology has inherently colonialist roots, as European colonial powers attempted to gain better understanding of the foreign lands and peoples they conquered through logs and diaries kept by explorers, travellers, missionaries and early colonial administrators (P. Prasad, 2005). However, Bruner suggests in spite of this initial removal of the ‘personal and experiential’ from ethnography, there is an increasing tendency to reintroduce and incorporate personal narratives into our writings to give them life (1986: 9).

The perspective that I advocate here draws on both relativism and (epistemological and ontological) subjectivism. I argue that the active and intentional ‘objectification of the social field’ is ideologically inconsistent with endeavours of non-hierarchical interpretation or representation of the ‘Other’. Intentionally objectifying those whose experiences the researcher wishes to learn from could be seen as patronising and an attempt to impose some form of superiority. Whether such endeavours can even be
realised in practice remains questionable, but the endeavour in itself is admirable and inspirational.

Steering clear from notions of social reality as somehow objectively accessible and meta-theoretical approaches to reflexivity that encourage detachment, I will explore the contribution of interpretive reflexivities. Simply put, interpretive reflexivities are concerned with sense making that identifies non-obvious alternatives to habitual ways of thinking and acting’ (Lynch, 2000). Lynch (2000) suggests interpretation is also an element of other forms of reflexivity to some degree (e.g., methodological and meta-theoretical approaches which seek some kind of ‘objectivity’ by attempting to negate biases through reflexivity). However, interpretation is central to both hermeneutic and radical referential reflexivity. Briefly, Lynch explains that in hermeneutic reflexivity that stems from a notion of the hermeneutic circle ‘the reader’s presumptions about what the text can mean reflexively inform the temporal effort to make out what it does mean’ (2000: 32).

Radical referential reflexivity goes further to exhort the view that ‘interpretations establish the meaning and very existence of the social world’ and moreover call into question representation of such social reality (Lynch, 2000: 33). In other words radical reflexivity seeks to deconstruct and challenge positivist notions of social reality, which reflects the role of scepticism mentioned earlier. The role of scepticism in such radical conceptualisations of reflexivity suggests that such reflexivity may be a complimentary lens to postmodernism’s interest in questioning ‘centuries of received wisdom about knowledge and reality’ (P. Prasad, 2005: 231) and concern with plurality of voices as well as postcolonialism’s commitment to radically critique Western colonialism and imperialism (A. Prasad, 2003).

Schneider suggests that postcolonial critique among other theoretical lenses draws ‘useful attention on the ethnographic I/eye’ focusing on ‘who sees, knows and writes’ through radical reflexivity (2002:
In his paper ‘Against Reflexivity’ in *Theory, Culture and Society*, Lynch essentially argues that reflexivity should not be seen as a methodological virtue, but a unavoidable quality of research, as it is said to surface ‘hidden alternatives’ and ‘empower voices which had been subjugated by objective discourse’ (2000: 36). According to Lynch’s critical analysis, radical reflexivity seeks to disrupt, delay or counteract the objectification of knowledge’ as it is concerned with ‘analysing the construction of constructionist arguments’ (2000: 39)

4.5 THE ETHNOGRAPHICALLY SITUATED SELF

Shipman (1997) contends that human complexity of not only the researched but also of the researcher raises the importance of autobiography in social science disciplines. The study presented here is not autobiographical in the sense that I am not an Angolan professional working in the oil industry, but I am the spouse of one as the paragraph to follow will reveal, and as such, I draw upon my own experiences and those of my husband for inspiration. Strauss and Corbin (1998) assert that preferences and experiences of the researcher are valid reasons for conducting qualitative research. This naturally raises concerns about validity, which I will address in more detail in the following chapter. However, I argue here that transparency about my position, values, beliefs and assumptions i.e., being reflective and reflexive is an essential component of demonstrating the credibility of my findings and emergent substantive theory.

According to Vidich and Lyman postmodernism challenges ethnographic researchers to abandon preconceived ideas, values and prejudices as ‘resources for ethnographic study’ (2000: 60). However, my review of postcolonial critique suggests that this may be an impossible achievement, at least for a white Western researcher in the eyes of the non-Western critic. Particularly where the richness of the data is reliant upon the researcher being fully immersed within their field, practical and
moral boundaries of what is legitimate researchable territory are most often blurred.

Johnson and Duberley (2003) draw attention to the centrality of language in postmodern perspectives of reflexivity as they explore what they have labeled the antithesis of ontological and epistemological subjectivism. In a critical analysis of literature the authors highlight that for postmodernists ‘no meaning exist beyond language’ and that separation between the subject (i.e., the researcher) and the object (i.e., the researched) is contested (Johnson & Duberley, 2003: 1286-7). Indeed postmodernism exhorts multiple voices and the notion that the researcher and the subject share power in the construction of meaning (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Therefore the researcher’s ability to direct their gaze upon themselves critically, to be reflexive throughout the research process and translate that reflexivity into written word is essential to producing research that is practical, democratic and allows for a plurality of voices, all of which are qualities of sound qualitative research, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009).

The dilemma in writing reflexively is that there seems to be a fine line between being ‘confessional’ (Van Maanen, 1988) and ‘vulnerable’ (Behar, 1996) in a way that adds value and is engaging rather than simply being overly self-indulgent. As Behar points out writing vulnerably requires skill as the writer takes a higher risk than those that don’t: ‘a boring self-revelation, one that fails to move the reader, is more than embarrassing, it is humiliating’ (1996: 13). The worst that can happen to an invulnerable writer, according to Behar, is that their work comes across as boring. Behar is quite clear: ‘Efforts at self-revelation flop not because the personal voice has been used, but because it has been poorly used, leaving unsevinized the connection, intellectual and emotional, between the observer and the observed’ (1996: 13-14). So as I introduce myself here, I have given careful consideration as to what kind of ‘facts’ about me
are relevant for the telling of this story. As the thesis develops what I reveal here will take on more meaning.

I am a white Finnish woman, married to a black Angolan man and we have a daughter. We don’t think about these different dynamics (i.e., black/white, European/African) a great deal in our everyday lives, but they seem to take on additional meaning in the context of this study. It has shaped the kind of access that I have been privileged to gain, the perceptions I have formed prior to embarking on this journey (and how they have taken shape during) as well as the way in which I feel I have been perceived in the ‘field’. My experiences of intercultural life combined with previous experiences of expatriate living as a child in Hong Kong and later working and studying in the UK have left me with a great need to understand cultures around us and what makes people ‘tick’ as a result of them. I am passionately interested in how we as individuals come to adapt and react to the different cultural environments that we inhabit and how our behaviour and that of others is influenced by the distinct kind of values that we as individuals hold. This need led me to study anthropology at university and later combined with my newly found interest in the world of business as a result of working the oil industry, I decided to return to university to complete a Masters in International Human Resource Management. If nothing else, my studies in anthropology left me with a way of looking at the world, certain perspective that I have come to recognise and appreciate when I re-entered academia to complete my Masters degree. Thus I am inclined to think qualitatively and ask qualitative questions. This predisposition has influenced the conception of the aims and themes that I have set out to investigate and the ethnographical methods I have chosen to investigate them with. Inevitably this reflects a subjective stance in my interpretation and representation of the data. A sum of coincidental timings in my personal and professional life has placed me on the path that I now find myself on. As a result, the study presented in this thesis is an amalgamation of personal circumstances, opportunities and choices as much as it is of the need to
contribute to our understanding of how individuals coming from an African country context experience and perceive career development within a rubric that is largely still dominated by Western ideology.

Behar’s (1996) work also highlights the ethical complexities that arise when conducting research at ‘home’, a field that amalgamates personal interests and relationships with research agendas. I feel slightly uncomfortable using the term ‘field’ as it implies not only the existence of some kind of boundaries, but that it can be an ‘object’ of study, when in fact what I am describing for all intents and purposes is a space within my social world, which is personal and subjective. I am not only an observer, but also a participant.

My position within this ‘field’ is paradoxically two-fold: and insider and an outsider. On one hand, I am insider. I am the wife of an Angolan expatriate and also a foreigner in the UK. I have been able to establish genuine relationships based on trust and familiarity with Angolans who have contributed to this study. Hence, I have also had the opportunity to demonstrate my awareness of local issues, which seems to have endowed me with some ‘credibility’ among my Angolan friends and colleagues. For those who participated, but were acquaintances to me, I came ‘recommended’. Over the years in my personal life I have encountered, experienced and assumed many ideas, notions, practices and values that may be seen as inherently Angolan. I have also rejected others that I cannot reconcile with the values that I have assumed from my own culture and upbringing. This process of critical self-analysis and the familiarity that I have developed with the Angolan context (e.g., people, culture, customs, values and beliefs) through personal and professional encounters as well as scholarly interest, has enabled me to gain privileged insight and access, at least to the extent that a non-Angolan ‘insider’ can possibly have.
On the other hand, particularly significant from the postcolonial perspective, I am an outsider; I am not Angolan, African or black, therefore as a researcher I am an outsider looking in and examining the ‘other’ (Said, 1994). I am not an indigenous researcher and proponents of the postcolonial rubric such as Smith (2001) suggest that even if I were, the Western discourse that I engage in would in itself render me an outsider to some degree. As a Westerner researching in a post-colonial context (research in this context is a contested term for Smith as it is ‘inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism’), it is a challenge to communicate the ‘vantage point of the colonized’ (2001: 1). Similarly to Smith, according to Kapoor’s analysis (2004) of Spivak’s work, Spivak contends that simply studying the ‘other’ perpetuates a colonial and imperialist view of the non-Western ‘other’ as a resource to be utilised.

Throughout this project I have reflected on my authority and the legitimacy of my interpretations and subsequent representations and found myself conflicted. No more so than when upon completion of an interview with one of professional, a highly educated man, almost as an afterthought commented that he would like to see an Angolan researcher doing the same project. He commented that an Angolan would have an understanding of the cultural heritage (he had spent quite a considerable amount of time explaining the cultural roots behind the matriarchal structure of his society), despite complimenting me on how he had found my project very interesting and it had made him think about his own choices in way he had not done before (in a positive sense). I appreciate that I will always be an outsider in this respect and I humbly accept this position, but I also believe that sometimes as outsiders we are susceptible to notice things in others that we would not perhaps recognise in ourselves. This not to say that my observations would be superior in any way to those of an indigenous Angolan researcher, but that the conclusions I have come to offer an alternative voice. Like Denzin argues in his manifesto of ‘Emancipatory discourses and the ethics and politics of interpretation’, I also believe that non-indigenous scholars have a part to
play in the ‘global decolonizing discourse’, but how this endeavour that ‘is not yet’ is ‘implemented in specific indigenous contexts should be determined by the indigenous peoples involved’ (2008: 436). Spivak argues that by positioning themselves as outsiders, Western scholars avoid addressing their involvement in North-South politics and thus lay the responsibility for change on the ‘Third World subaltern’ and therefore Western researchers should not hide behind ‘naivety’ or ‘lack of expertise’ (1993). It is not my intention to hide behind either, but through reflexivity address my own biases and complicity in the interpretations I will represent in this thesis.

In response to concerns about authority and legitimacy of interpretation and representation I have sought to engage in various ‘conversational settings’ (Warwick, 2011) with individuals in the field including Angolans and professionals of other nationalities who have experiences of working and managing Angolans as well as other scholars. This engagement has allowed me to sound out ideas and concepts as they have emerged from the data and hence I feel confident that the findings that have emerged as a result of my analysis do some justice to those whose experiences and perceptions I have sought to capture.

4.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I have sought to give substance to the conception and development of this study as a personal and academic endeavour. I have demonstrated the contribution of reflexive methodologies, particularly interpretive conceptualisations and suggested that the reflexive researcher needs to go beyond self-reflection to critical self-analysis. I have surfaced the notion of ethics, power and politics of interpretation and representation as significant issue to be addressed throughout this thesis. As the chapters to follow will show, the relationship dynamic between myself as a researcher, friend and as a colleague, the ‘field’ and those that occupy it have played a significant part in how this study has been played out.
I have also suggested that, perhaps somewhat unconventionally, postmodern and postcolonial perspectives may in fact be complementary in making sense of the empirical data that I have collected and indeed my role in interpreting them. I must iterate that I am simply offering one interpretation of complex phenomena and data. My interpretation is influenced by my philosophical stance about the construction of knowledge and I have chosen a particular lens or indeed lenses to make sense of the data that I have collected. If another researcher with a different stance, different values, experiences and beliefs chose to look the same phenomena and data through a different prism, they would be likely to unearth different conclusions. In the next section I move on to discuss the specific research methods I have employed.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH DESIGN

I have been concerned with collecting rich data using ethnography that in its simplest form ‘involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives, for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of research’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 1). My understanding of the cultural context derives from observations and personal experiences stemming back over ten years and extends far beyond the official data collection period 18 months. I started this project thinking that I would focus on interview data, but I quickly realised that it was quite impossible to separate data derived from formal interviews and those that surrounded me every day; the casual conversations I heard and took part in, the knowledge I had accumulated over the years being immersed in Angolan culture and involved with Angolan people.

Like Timmermans and Tavory (2007) I consider myself an ethnographer first and then grounded theorist. I have used ethnography (i.e., fieldwork by the way of participant observation and semi-structured interviewing) to collect data, letting the grounded theory approach guide me in the direction in which to take the data collection and analysis processes. In other words, the grounded theory approach has given structure to the way in which I have managed this piece of ethnographic research.
5.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

In this chapter I will discuss the research methods used to investigate the research questions and themes outlined in chapter one and explain how I have analysed the empirical data collected. I will explain how I have collected empirical data, why I have chosen these particular methods and how this has consequently impacted the way in which I have interpreted the empirical data captured. I will begin here by critically examining what grounded theory has to offer as a research design in the context of this study as an iterative approach and how a reflexive approach can be adapted within this method. I will outline the practicalities of collecting data through fieldwork and interviews and explain some of the challenges I faced, both from a moral and ethical perspective as well as a practical one.

Therefore the structure of this chapter reflects the iterative research process involving formulation of research themes, collection of data as well as the way in which I went about analysing the data. In the course of doing so, I will explain how I have used ethnographic methods to collect data, utilised qualitative data software Nvivo 8 to organise and manage the data and how I have identified and organised emergent categories to make sense of my findings using conceptual mapping. Given the reflexive nature of this study, I will explore my role in shaping the processes of data collection as well as analysis. Naturally this gives rise to ethical and moral considerations and hence I will also explain how I have sought to address these throughout the various stages of this project.

5.2 ETHNOGRAPHY AND GROUNDED THEORY

The relationship between ethnography and grounded theory is a multifaceted one. Both have roots in hermeneutic traditions and are concerned with letting the data tell their own story by allowing themes to emerge. Charmaz highlights that ethnography is concerned with ‘recording the life of a particular group’ involving participation and observation in a
‘their social world’ starting from the ground up recording what catches your attention and thus differs from the data collection method of participant observation, which usually entails a ‘focus on a particular aspect’ of that social world (2006: 23).

Grounded theory is an iterative approach where the formulation of research questions, collection of empirical data and comparison with existing frameworks are in constant interplay. This process involves a continuous reiteration of research questions, the ways in which you collect the data and how you relate this existing literature and ultimately construct theory that is grounded. One shapes the other. This means that new questions can be asked and new data can be collected during the process of analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Thus considerable attention in this chapter is dedicated to illustrating how the grounded theory approach has shaped the course of this research. In the following few paragraphs I will explain what is meant by ethnography and how this specifically fits with grounded theory before going on to critically examine what grounded theory has to offer in the context of this study.

Ethnography is about gaining insight into the social world of those that one studies from their perspective. However, given that the ethnographer enters the field as ‘gendered and multi-culturally situated’ armed with their ‘set of ideas, a framework (theory and ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology)’ which they will investigate ‘in specific ways (methodology and analysis)’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 28), it is likely that the end result of ethnography will inevitably be an outsider’s account (Charmaz, 2006; Pollner & Emerson, 2001). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out proponents of ethnography are often reluctant to give prescriptive advice on how to go about doing ethnography. It is difficult to anticipate the course of ethnography and therefore any research design following an ethnographical approach is always dependent on contextual factors and events. It seems that the advice to students of
ethnography is to simply ‘go and do it’ (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 23).

However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) highlight it is not quite so simple and that all ethnographers should enter the field prepared in essence to manage themselves within it. This means according to the authors that a reflexive research design is essential (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Ethnography complements the grounded theory approach that I have adopted, particularly in my data analysis. A grounded theory approach is intended to add structure to the way in which I manage, organise and ultimately analyse the data. It is evident that grounded theory has multiple applications and like reflexivity, there seems to be a variety of ways of conducting grounded theory research that are dependent on the contextual factors. The strength of this study is that it brings together a variety of qualitative and interpretive practices, appreciating that each of these practices ‘makes the world visible in a different way’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 5).

Grounded theory is used to provide new perspective on existing knowledge or develop theory where little is known (Goulding, 2002) and is ideally suited to investigate phenomena that relates to the interaction ‘between persons or among individuals and specific environments’ (Grbich, 2007). The basis of grounded theory is empirical data from which theory can be developed. That is not to say that I set out with a blank page, but rather a broad understanding of existing literature of the research area (theoretical underpinnings as described in chapter two), professional experiences in intercultural consultancy and personal experiences that have guided the formulation and development of my research themes as outlined in chapter one. Strauss and Corbin (1998) contend that the researcher’s ability to understand nuances in the observed actors or phenomena (i.e., sensitivity) can be derived from the researcher’s personal or professional experiences or through academic knowledge of a given topic. Considering the inductive nature of this
project, the limited academic literature that addresses the phenomena that I have sought to investigate and the small scale research environment (Grbich, 2007), I felt that a grounded theory approach, particularly constructionist/constructivist interpretations (e.g., Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2006) of the method that view data and consequent analysis as co-construction between the researcher and the researched are best suited for this project due to its flexibility and versatility (Mruck & Mey, 2007; Timmermans & Tavory, 2007).

5.3 GROUNDED THEORY: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Grounded theory as a method is concerned with the interplay between empirical data and theory. The emphasis that is placed on empirical material as a base of theory generation and provenance of existing theory seems to vary within different approaches to grounded theory method. However, the underlying premise is an inductive one rather than a deductive one and therefore the emphasis is on generating theory from empirical evidence rather than testing an existing hypothesis. As such exploration is a key part of the research process rather than hypothesis testing (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Adopting an inductive approach presupposes that the researcher is unconstrained by existing frameworks, thus letting the data tell its own story (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

However, I question how possible it is to be truly inductive as the researcher does not enter the field in a vacuum and is therefore inevitably influenced by their exposure to academic knowledge. As I stated in the previous chapter, my background in anthropology means that I am inclined to ask qualitative questions and look at the world in a specific way. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) suggest that abduction maybe seen as an alternative to induction. Abduction according to them is concerned with revealing deep structures within the patterns that one seeks within the data. Following an abductive approach a researcher begins with a broad theoretical and empirical perspective, but quickly ‘leaps into one’s own
empirical material’ (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009:58). Given that abduction is concerned with looking at data in unconventional ways to unearth new rules where existing frameworks fail to explain the discovered phenomena (Reichertz, 2007: 219), an abductive approach appears helpful. However, my main issue with adopting such a strategy is its concern with discovery of theory rather than the (co)construction of interpretations of reality, which underpins the epistemological and ontological stance that I have assumed here.

Covan (2007) draws attention to the ‘legacy of multiple mentors’ of the grounded theory method. She refers back to C. Wright Mills’ work The Sociological Imagination (1959) highlighting that grounded theory (as a method), seeks to generate theory by observing the interplay between three significant dimensions, namely ‘individual biographies, history and social structure’ (2007: 58). The grounded theory method emerged in the 1960s from the work of Barney Glaser, a psychologist, and Anslem Strauss, a sociologist, but the approach has continuously evolved and takes shape influenced by contemporaries. In other words, as Covan (2007) highlights grounded theory as it was originally conceptualised by Glaser and Strauss (1967), has developed significantly in varying directions influenced by the research traditions and practices that various practitioners of grounded theory bring with them. Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) version of the approach emerged as ‘a way of shifting researchers from theory directed to theory generating research using observations of reality to construct both meaning and theories’ (Grbich, 2007: 71).

However, Glaser and Strauss went on to highlight fundamental differences in how they envisioned the approach. Where Glaser (1978) views the development of theory as interpretive, emergent and contextual, Strauss who developed his approach further with Corbin (1998) emphasises the mechanical and systematic process of coding. Goulding suggests that Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) approach overlooks ‘insightful meaning’ in observed phenomena that may only be discernible by allowing
the ‘data to tell their own story’ which is central to Glaser’s later version of the methodology (2002: 47). This has led to writers on grounded theory to initially view the approach as being divided between two versions of the method: the Straussian approach ‘focused on the fragmentation of a three-stage coding process’ and the Glaserian approach that is more concerned with ‘field-based or hermeneutic qualitative research with lesser emphasis on coding’ (e.g., Grbich, 2007: 71).

As a learner of grounded theory, I too was initially engrossed with the task of situating myself and my methods within the scope of these two approaches, but I found that although aspects of each were applicable to what I hoped to achieve, neither seemed to entirely fit with my aims. As a result of this conundrum that I found myself in, I turned to several alternative texts by authors such as Goulding (2002) and Charmaz (2006) as well as an edited volume by Bryant and Charmaz (2007b), chapters of which draw upon here. Charmaz (2000) in particular has suggested that the evolution of grounded theory has essentially led to two distinct approaches: positivist (i.e., assumes that the researcher is an objective observer and categories emerge from data) and constructivist (i.e., assumes that the researcher co-constructs data through interaction with those that they observe; Bryant, 2003).

The way in which grounded theory was originally conceptualised (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and its subsequent variations by these two proponents are primarily insufficient for the purpose of the investigation I present here for their lack of concern with reflexivity (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) and positivist underpinnings (Charmaz, 2000). A process of analysis within grounded theory involving rigorous coding was originally intended to demonstrate that qualitative data analysis could be carried out meticulously that warranted consideration alongside those in quantitative traditions (Grbich, 2007). The Straussian approach to rigorous coding of data is an ideal example of this. Although Glaser’s approach was focused

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4 See footnote 2 in chapter four for further details
more on hermeneutic principles, which reflect more the approach I have adopted within this study, Glaser opposes constructivist notions of the researcher as part of the construction of reality that is being studied (Bryant, 2003; Glaser, 1978; Grbich, 2007). Glaser acknowledges that the researcher is inevitably biased, but he argues the researcher’s biases should be minimised and the researcher should be able to distance themselves from the data to conceptualise underlying patterns within the categories that emerge from the data (Bryant, 2003; Glaser, 1978; Grbich, 2007). This fundamentally contradicts the approach that I advocate here, which as outlined in the previous chapter is premised on a hermeneutic and social constructionist notion that all empirical data, i.e., the social reality that I endeavour to observe and capture in recorded and written form, is a co-construction (Mruck & Mey, 2007) and essentially already the result of interpretation (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009), be it mine as a researcher or that of the social actors that I seek to study.

Thus, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) argue that traditional approaches to developing grounded theory are detached from the context. This seems ironic, given that the aim of the method is to examine the interplay between persons and individuals and the environment that they occupy. Mruck and Mey (2007) suggest that standardization of the grounded theory method is highly optimistic and that instead its advantage should be seen in terms of its flexibility and versatility. Charmaz (2006) highlights that grounded theory guidelines demonstrate the steps in the research process, but it is up to the researcher to decide how to adopt and adapt these to fulfil their purpose. Naturally, the danger in adopting a methodological approach that is flexible is that the end result may leave you with a mess of data to detangle. Also having the freedom to develop your own adaptation also leaves you open to criticism.

However, I have accepted the challenge and I will endeavour to demonstrate here how drawing on various grounded theory approaches, I have collected rich accounts of data using ethnography methods, from
which I have developed and conceptualised categories that give ‘as much attention to their theoretical provenance as to their empirical base’ (Dey, 2007: 177) in order to construct grounded theory through my own ‘past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and research practices’ (Charmaz, 2006: 10).

In the section to follow I will explain the stages in which my research process has developed, using practical examples of some of the challenges I faced to address ethical concerns that arose during this process.

5.4 FIELDWORK

I started my data collection with fieldwork, which I carried out formally between October 2009 and April 2011. I kept a field journal recording observations and notes of events and encounters. Most often these were recorded in hindsight as most of the events and conversations that I wished to take note of occurred in social settings where it was impractical, not to mention counterproductive, to remove myself from the situation to take notes as I would possibly have missed some of the event itself. I engaged in fieldwork within my own social world. As Charmaz contends: ‘Our respect for our research participants pervades how we collect data and shapes the content of our data’ (2006: 19).

Most of my friends and acquaintances were aware that I was carrying out research focused on the career development of Angolans, but other than formal interviews, my fieldwork in the form of participant observation was not always overt. This led me to give considerable thought to what I may ethically or morally include in my field notes. Thus the field notes I have recorded are more concerned with constructing a picture of the context, rather than recording conversations concerned specifically with the personal lives of individuals. For example if an individual talked about their family during a personal conversation, I would take note of attitudes or cultural undertones that were evident, rather than the specific
circumstances or events. This process of context building also involved two weeks of fieldwork carried out in Angola while visiting family in July 2010 as I will go on to demonstrate.

Having been immersed in Angolan culture as a wife of an Angolan who worked for a Western MNC, an expatriate and a student of anthropology and international human resource management, influenced by my past and present experiences and interactions, I began to see questions emerging about how individuals from Angola, an African context, were experiencing international assignments and working within Western organisational environments. I became particularly interested from a cultural perspective and to see how these experiences and perceptions shaped the way in which they viewed their future career plans. This is the original premise from which this project emerged from and as is evident from the research themes outlined in chapter one, these initial concepts have gained focus since. I felt that the best way to investigate this further would be to capture individual narratives, biographies if you will, through intensive semi-structured interviewing.

5.5 SAMPLING

I selected the interviewees using a variation of theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling does not need to be extensive, but it does need to be representative in a way that allows for comparison between groups and categories (Stern, 2007). According to Mruck and Mey (2007) sampling using the grounded theory method develops as you go along depending on the direction of theory development. The open sampling technique used has been largely based on convenience sampling (i.e., locating individuals who have experienced the kind of phenomena that the researcher is interested in and importantly are available; Morse, 2007) followed by snowball sampling (i.e., requesting introductions from initial participants or informants to their colleagues and friends; Morse, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Within the grounded theory method convenience
sampling is an excellent starting point, but failing to move beyond this may lead to ‘premature closure’ if the researcher feels that no new concepts are emerging or the researcher may ‘ignore variation in experience or within the sample’ or ‘define the phenomenon too narrowly’ (Morse, 2007: 235). As I will demonstrate in Stage One to follow, once I had terminated convenience sampling, I used a snowball technique to sample further participants, by requesting introductions from via an Angolan confidant, my husband. As I was interested in a particular phenomenon, my sampling was also ‘purposeful’ (Morse, 2007: 236).

The main focus of the study is on Angolan professionals working within Western MNC organisational environments associated with the Angolan oil industry, however, spouses were interviewed where possible. At the time of choosing to include spouses, I felt their narratives may provide rich insight into the identity formation of Angolans who have grown up post–independence. I also anticipated that their narratives could contribute to building a holistic account of the socialisation experiences of their partners in relation to their international assignments. Spousal adjustment has been recorded as a contributing factor in successful expatriation (e.g., Richardson, 2006; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Furthermore given that the grounded theory method encourages comparison between data, I feel that these accounts contribute to the richness of the data.

5.5.1 Sample characteristics

In total I interviewed 24 individuals, 15 of whom were male professionals working within the oil industry in areas such as geology, engineering and finance and nine were female spouses of the professionals interviewed. One of the assignees interviewed was single, hence no partner was interviewed, two assignees had partners who were not Angolan and had no previous connection to Angola, and three spouses were not available for interview (two were living in Angola and one declined for unknown reasons). All male interviewees were
professionals with university education and working within a Western MNC environment associated with the oil industry. Three of the spouses had completed their university education and the remaining six had various educational and employment experiences. Given that my interest was to investigate the impact of international living experiences, all interviewees had experiences of living in the UK for one year or more, but the purposes of their international living varied from education, employment and to accompany a spouse. Out of the 24 interviewees 21 were between the ages of 25-35 and two interviewees were between the ages of 36-40 and one interviewee was between the ages of 41-49.

All interviewees were Angolan nationals, except for one spouse, who was Portuguese, of Cape Verden descent. Although the focus of the study is on the perspectives of Angolans, I felt that the experiences of the Portuguese spouse could be insightful as she shares a Portuguese colonial past and African heritage. At the time of writing she lives in Angola with her family where the family intends to settle. Given the postcolonial rubric, I anticipated that her experiences could be similarly applicable to those of the Angolan women interviewed. Drawing on her experience, Stern estimates that 20 to 30 interviews generally suffice to reach saturation of the categories (2007). A limited sample size may be criticised for potentially resulting in ‘skimpy data’ (Charmaz, 2006), however, I strongly believe that the time and effort that I have spent on establishing mutual respect, trust and familiarity within relationships and rapport between myself and the participants has led to rich accounts that counteract any such concerns.

5.6 INTERVIEWING AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

I completed all interviews over eleven months between December 2009 and November 2010. Before I go on to describe my iterative approach to interviewing and analysing over three stages, a note about language.
All participants were native Portuguese speakers and they were interviewed in English – their second language (occasionally using Portuguese phrases, spouses more so than the professionals). All the professionals worked in settings were English is the language of business and therefore I did not foresee language as a barrier to communication. Moreover, my ability to engage in Portuguese was sufficient to translate were needed. Commenting on the presence of more than one language in data when following grounded theory Stern contends that: ‘researchers need to focus on the accuracy of their discovered truth, rather than the less important what-did-they-say-exactly’ (2007: 119). Interviewing in English was not an issue as such during the data collection process, but as I will go on to show in the next chapter this presented an unexpected dilemma when presenting empirical evidence in support of my findings.

5.6.1 Stage One

5.6.1.1 Organising interviews

The first 16 interviewees were initiated and organised by me with individuals whom I was socially acquainted with. I initially approached Angolans within my personal circle of friends within the Angolan expatriate community (i.e., convenience sampling). This group consisted of professionals who at the time of interview worked for MNCs associated with the Angolan oil industry and their spouses. Every individual whom I approached, consented and were interviewed. The remaining eight interviews were initiated by my husband on my behalf (i.e., snowball sampling). He sent an email to six of his Angolan colleagues (one female and five males). All six participants initially expressed interest and agreed to be contacted by me directly. The five male professionals all were eventually interviewed, including three of their spouses. The one female professional initially approached did not respond after I contacted her directly by email for reasons unknown although having initially consented to being contacted. Individual perspectives were captured through semi-
structured interviewing only after I had obtained informed consent from the participants individually in accordance with the University of Bedfordshire guidelines on ethical research. As I approached individuals to request an interview, I forwarded each a copy of an information letter and informed consent form (Appendices A and B – slightly varying copies were provided for three participants who were interviewed over the phone due to logistical issues). Once the interview was organised, I provided a verbal overview of the letter before asking the participants to consent by signing, leaving them a copy and keeping one for myself. I conducted all interviews outside any organisational setting and therefore the data are not constrained by any formal corporate sanction (e.g., Martin, 1992).

5.6.1.2 Interview guides and iteration of approach

The first two couples were interviewed in December 2009. The original interview guide (see Appendix C) that I used to conduct the first four interviews was loosely structured around themes such as personal history, educational background, international living experiences and future plans, which had emerged from my initial fieldwork. Capturing participant experiences in these areas would enable me to gain insight into not only how international living experiences shape personal and professional development also what kind of contextual factors influence how careers are constructed within the Angolan context, thus enabling me to begin addressing the research questions that I had set. Grounded theory is aimed at allowing themes to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), hence the interview schedule was purposefully designed with open-ended questions. According to Charmaz (2006) intensive interviewing is about encouraging participants to reflect on their experiences in a manner that is often not done on a daily basis. Upon reviewing the recordings shortly after the first three interviews, I could already see exciting ideas emerge from the data. Although interviewing has been and insightful process, recordings have been at times lengthy (often up to two hours) and as a relatively
inexperienced researcher I spent considerable amount of time learning how to identify what according to Stern (2007: 118), Glaser and Strauss refer to as the ‘cream’ that rises to the top and eventually sticks in the researcher’s mind. After completing the first couple of transcriptions, admittedly I was rather overwhelmed.

5.6.1.3 Analysis

As a result of these first three interviews (one couple was interviewed together, as due to their schedule it was not possible to make time to interview separately) some expected themes that emerged included: education, communication, family, relationships with colleagues and line managers, importance of standard of living, perceived employment opportunities, perceptions of traditional male/female roles within the family and job mobility as a networked activity. Shifting perceptions of gender roles appeared to be linked to experiences of living in the UK and hence I wanted to explore this further. I thus altered the interview guide to include a question on experiences around gender roles within the family and made a note to engage the interviewees’ opinions and experiences in regards to the other new themes as mentioned above. Constant comparison between data and emergent themes is essential to the grounded theory development process (Charmaz, 2006; Goulding, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and therefore each interview situation has drawn from the previous interviews conducted.

5.6.2 Stage Two

5.6.2.1 Analysis and emergent themes

The next four interviews were conducted in February 2010. In addition to similar themes that had already emerged, some new themes were discernible upon initial review of interview narratives. For example the impact of lack of career opportunities for spouses during international assignments was highlighted and the importance of family, shifts in
traditional gender roles and the role of foreign MNCs versus the national oil company as future employment alternatives were significantly reinforced within these participant narratives.

5.6.2.2 ‘Research conversations’

From a reflexive point of view this second stage was significant in developing my own thinking and approach to this project. I found myself engaging in several ‘conversations’ (Warwick, 2011), which have shaped the development of this study. First of these ‘conversations’ that had an impact on the course of my data collection was an informal discussion I had with a senior HR manager who worked within the oil industry in April 2010. Although race and nationality had emerged in some of the interviews thus far as a factor in career development related decisions, at this stage I had not worked with the idea in any particular detail. However, it emerged during this conversation that a perception appeared to exist within the Angolan oil sector (not entirely clear among whom) that the tone of one’s skin could determine the kind of opportunities that are available, i.e., if you are lighter skinned Angolan you would have better chances for career progression in foreign MNCs, but less so in the national oil company and if you were black Angolan the opposite would be the case. My intention here was not to find out whether this was true or not, but it was definitely a perception that I wanted to find out more about from my participants. Engaging corporate perspectives on an issue such as this unfortunately did not fall within the scope of this doctoral thesis, but would make a fascinating topic for future research.

The second ‘conversation’ took place in May 2010 when I attended a workshop on qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 8. This allowed me to engage with other novice researchers as well as the experienced workshop leader and explore different ways of looking at my data and how I could begin to organise the material that I had collected thus far. I did not end up using the software to complete my analysis as I felt that beyond
the first stage of highlighting initial significant concepts, using the software did not allow me to visualise the data in a way that I wanted. Computer software can assist in managing data, but the process and decisions within qualitative analysis are essentially ‘based in investigator-insight’ (Morse, 2007: 233).

**5.6.2.3 Metaphorical containers**

However, Nvivo 8 introduced the idea of thinking of emergent themes or categories (i.e., nodes as they are called in Nvivo) as sort of metaphorical containers. In other words, emergent themes/categories were ‘containers’ where we can deposit anything that relates to this ‘container’. For example, I created a ‘container’ for family. As I worked through the interview transcripts I highlighted sections that related to notions or experiences of family and so forth. To begin with the ‘containers’ that I identified contained segments of raw data in the form of quotes. As my interpretation of the data developed, I began to conceptualise different themes from the empirical material that I had collected, so that as I came to complete my analysis these different containers could also be used to organise various subthemes that emerged as a result of my interpretation of the empirical material (see Figure 5.1).

Once I had completed all 24 interviews (see stage 3 below) this allowed me to come up with 48 different initial containers in which to organise the empirical data (see Appendix D for a complete list). In hindsight as my thinking developed, the items identified at this stage were not strictly containers, but rather a mix of containers and themes, that at later stages would be organised to reflect this (e.g., Figure 5.1). At this first stage of analysis I also noticed themes that had already emerged during my fieldwork that had initiated my line of enquiry as I embarked on the interviewing. These initial containers were identified simply by highlighting events, experiences, perceptions and emotions that seemed intuitively
significant. Hence each container attracted a considerable amount of data with significant overlap. Although the idea of the Nvivo is that ultimately it will allow you to narrow down your categories and see areas of overlap to highlight the relationships between the emergent themes so that they become theoretically useful, this is where I found that as a visual person, I was not able to engage with the data using Nvivo as I had hoped. So instead I used this idea of containers and reverted to manual sorting and coding working my way through interview transcripts, my field notes and an immense amount of post-it notes and drawing countless conceptual maps as I worked through the data.

5.6.2.4 Contextualising data

An important aspect of my study was to understand the narratives that I had collected as holistically as possible. If I was to address the research questions that I had set, I needed to understand the relationship between context, individual experiences and perceptions as well as be able to draw connections between the experiences of the participating individuals. I felt that although Nvivo allows you to conceptualise relationships between different participant narratives, individual context was lost, at least to me. Mruck and Mey (2007) highlight that within reflexive research the context of the interview situation is often lost in the analysis. For the purposes of my investigation I felt understanding that the participant narratives were told in a specific place at a specific time is an important factor in seeing the conclusions that are ultimately drawn as valid and useful. To record this these contextual factors, I kept record of not only when and where the interview took place, but also of at what stages in their careers interviewees were at, the number and nature of the organisations they worked for in the present and past, how old they were, whether they had family and at what stage in their international assignment they were in at the time of interview.
An essential part of grounded theory is memo-taking (Charmaz, 2006; Stern, 2007) as it allows you to track the advancement of your theory. Memos should be recorded throughout the research process from collection to analysis (Stern, 2007). In addition to the manual notes that I recorded, I also kept a research diary to trace back how my thinking has shifted during the research process. This has been an essential part of my reflexive approach as well as key to the development of substantive grounded theory (Morse, 2007; Mruck & Mey, 2007; Reichertz, 2007; Stern, 2007). Memo-taking and keeping a research diary bring together the data and my feelings towards it. As a result is a co-construction of the experienced and perceived reality that eventually useful theory will arise from.

5.6.2.5 Interviewing spouses

It is also at this stage in June 2010 having conducted four of the nine interviews with spouses that I began to question what kind of contribution the data from spousal interviews could actually make. As I initially reviewed my interview material I was unable to see many significant relationships emerging and felt rather frustrated. In hindsight I realise this was not because they were not there, but rather that without further data to compare them with I was unable to understand the significance of what I had captured. I also found the interviews with spouses to be much shorter than I expected and the interview situations to be more restrained. I perceived myself as having more in common with the female spouses (being a woman, an expatriate wife of an Angolan professional and a mother) than the male professionals and thus thought this would work to my advantage. However the opposite seemed to be true and I found that the spouses as a group either had less to say or were less willing to share their experiences with me. There could be a number of reasons this: a perceived language barrier or the presence of their husbands in some instances (due to the language barrier), my identity as a white European,
my role as a professional or perhaps I had not managed to establish adequate trust and familiarity.

However, given that I had started the endeavour I decided to continue with the interviews that I had at this point started arranging. As it turned out that once I had completed my data collection, I was able to look at the wider picture and the first four narratives of spouses that I had captured ended up being the most insightful, albeit perhaps not as insightful as most of the interview material derived from the interviewees with the professionals. As Morse points out that researchers also sample their data since not all data are equal – some stories are simply ‘better illustrations, or better descriptions than others’ (Morse, 2007: 243). This reflects the iterative nature of the grounded theory method and the advantage of having a flexible methodology that allows you to work with the data throughout the research process.

5.6.2.6 Collecting data in Angola

In July 2010 I visited Angola for two weeks, during which time I took the opportunity to collect data which has contributed to context building. In particular I was able to collect more information about salary levels in other sectors to develop a more holistic picture of the oil industry in comparison and contributed to my findings about the importance of socio-economic factors as well as observe behaviour that reinforced my perceptions of prominent cultural values. Although I had been to Angola before, being immersed in my research enabled me to look at what I observed from alternative perspectives.

5.6.3 Stage Three

5.6.3.1 Widening my sample

Reflecting on data collected during my trip to Angola and from interviews to date, in August 2010 I made the decision to widen my
sample, feeling confident that this would allow for better comparison which grounded theory method encourages (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Given that my field of study was largely defined by my own social world, the first nine interviewees were all associated with one large organisation. As I worked with the data and began to see different categories emerge, I felt that further insight from individuals who may work within alternative Western MNC settings can potentially add to my findings. The findings at that point suggested that the propositions that I was exploring could potentially be applied to and complemented by the experiences of Angolans, who have been exposed to the UK environment not only through assignments, but through education and who are working within oil companies that are inherently Western. I therefore approached three friends through a social networking site who attended university in the UK, and were now employed by Western MNCs, who agreed to be interviewed (via telephone). This proved to be a fruitful endeavour and has led to some excellent insight into the impact of international exposure on experiences and perceptions of career development in the Angolan context.

5.6.3.2 Transcribing

During this third stage I completed the remaining interviews and finished the transcription process. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed using intelligent verbatim (i.e., omitting utterances such as ‘uhm’, ‘you know’ etc.). Since my analysis was concerned with emergent themes and relationships between concepts, the way in which individuals used language was not of concern here as it would be in discourse analysis for example. In the context of grounded theory, Covan recalls her teacher Strauss arguing that analysing data from verbatim is not necessarily needed emphasising that ‘if something were important, we would see it or hear it again’ (Covan, 2007: 69). True or not, my analysis of the data is not concerned with how language is used within interaction (e.g., discourse analysis; Bryman & Bell, 2007), but rather what is being
communicated and from a methodological point of view given the reflexive
approach I have adopted, the context of the communication is also of
interest.

5.7 COMPLETING DATA ANALYSIS

5.7.1 Constructing ‘containers’

I went on to complete the initial analysis of interview transcripts that I
had started during the second stage of data collection identifying what I
conceived as containers to sort the empirical data into (see Appendix D).
Around the seventeenth interview transcript, I could see increasingly
similar themes occurring and by the time I had finished the first phase of
analysis (see Figure 5.1 below) having worked through all interview
transcripts and field notes no new themes were discernible to me and I felt
confident that the data had reached saturation.
Figure 5.1 Data analysis: process of interpretation
The containers/themes identified in the first phase of my analysis were the result of reading through the interview narratives and highlighting sections that broadly related to the phenomena that I was interested in (i.e., international living, careers and contexts) as defined by my research questions and the research themes I set out to explore. As a result, I was still left with a vast amount of data to interpret and manage.

As I moved on to the second phase of my analysis, the containers that I had thus far identified gained focus and were subject to considerable revision. As result of this process of interpretation I organised the data into three broad containers: 1) events/experiences; 2) emotions; and 3) concepts, in which I then ‘deposited’ the themes that had emerged from the data. In this sense themes may also be viewed as ‘sub-containers’ of the main containers were empirical data is deposited. These containers and themes may be viewed as broadly as substantive in that they refer to empirical substance of the research material (similarly to substantive coding of Glaser, 1978).

In the third phase, exploring the different segments of text organised according to themes, I then identified areas of overlap to identify relationships between experiences/events, emotions and concepts. I used conceptual mapping as a flexible way of structuring relationships between these various elements (Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2007) i.e., events, experiences, emotions and concepts. I was interested in ‘commonalities and differences between incidents’ and by engaging in such comparison the intention was to reveal, what Kelle refers to as ‘two kinds of theoretical properties: possible sets of subcategories [i.e., themes or ‘sub-container’] of a given category [i.e., container], and relations to the other categories [i.e., categories and themes]’ (Kelle, 2007: 196). For example, several similar themes appear in different containers (i.e., one segment of text from interview transcript has been deposited into more than one container under more than one theme). For example, this is evident with family and upbringing or employment and employment relationships to name a
couple. In fact, an overwhelming number of themes within the ‘concept’ container where linked to experiences of upbringing (in terms of impact of family), education and employment. The themes within the ‘emotions’ container in turn characterised the nature of these relationships. This suggested to me that family/upbringing, education and employment are significant concepts in how career development in the Angolan context and warranted further exploration.

5.7.2 Theoretical sensitivity and inductive interpretation

In order to develop categories within grounded theory, theoretical sensitivity is needed. Glaser and Strauss (1967) unfortunately are somewhat vague as to how they envisioned theoretical sensitivity in their original work and indeed diverged in their opinions significantly in later years. From my review of grounded theory literature (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004; Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2006; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007a; Charmaz, 2006; Covar, 2007; Dey, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goulding, 2002; Grbich, 2007; Holton, 2007; Kelle, 2007; Morse, 2007; Mruck & Mey, 2007; Reichertz, 2007; Stern, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Timmermans & Tavory, 2007), I have deduced that theoretical sensitivity relates to the notion of inductivity, as in that theory should emerge from empirical data and not be forced according to or contaminated by existing conceptual frameworks.

However, in tandem with Kelle’s observation, researchers need conceptual frameworks or ‘lenses’ to ‘observe and describe meaningful events’ (2007: 197). For example some of the containers and themes highlighted in Figure 5.1 have emerged unanticipated, but others such as international living, expatriation, employment and career decisions to name a few, have inevitably been predefined by the nature of enquiry. As these themes are relatively descriptive, they may be considered as limited in their own right and thus theoretical sensitivity and an open mind is needed in conceptualising what has taken place, why and how it was
experienced, i.e., exploring the relationships between all the containers and themes.

In order to make these substantive containers and themes meaningful, theoretical categories (referred to in containers and themes in the context of this research) need to be established (similarly to theoretical codes of Glaser, 1978). Theoretical categories are generally born from a much wider epistemological lens and as a result are much more abstract concepts (Glaser, 1978; Kelle, 2007). Reflecting the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of this study described in previous chapters, the broader theoretical themes that in my interpretation tie the various substantive containers and themes together relate to notions perception, structure and agency.

However, the emergence of significant theoretical themes should not be mistaken for the development of some kind of grand theory. Indeed, my contribution here is to substantive theory premised on the understanding that I make no claims to universalisms. The purpose of the substantive contribution to theory that I have developed here, as I envision it, is to offer alternative perspectives when attempting to make sense of how individuals from Angola perceive themselves, others and their environment in relation to their careers. As a result, I have envisioned a new framework based on core concepts such as family, education, employment grounded in empirical evidence that may be considered useful in making sense of how individuals in an African country context experience their career development. The nature of this specific contribution will be the subject of chapter seven as I discuss my findings in relation to existing literature. Before I move on to the next chapter and explain my findings, to conclude I will summarise the potential limitations of the research methods adopted and highlight additional concerns.
Peculiarities of the research process

In organising interviews I have sought to minimise distractions, such as bringing my husband or daughter with me despite the invitations, it has not always been possible. Indeed, my interview experiences have been varied, ranging from interviewing people in their homes over cups of coffee, dinner and lunch, in a restaurant over drinks and in my own home having cooked dinner as a thank you (and since the interviewee was a man living on his own, I suspect it would have been considered inappropriate for me to go to his house on my own given social conventions in Angolan society).

Needless to say, that more often than not, I found myself in interesting situations that highlight the complexities and sometimes peculiarities of doing qualitative research. For example, for the first interview I had arranged to come to the house of the couple with the intention of interviewing the husband first and then his wife. When I showed up in the pouring rain at the agreed time, no one was home. He appeared twenty minutes late, having called to apologise for his tardiness. We then sat down at the kitchen table surrounded by an immense amount of stuff, including several microwaves and a bathtub. They were preparing to repatriate and the movers were coming the next day to pack all that they had bought in preparation for their move back home. Afterwards I interviewed his wife as she fed her baby and I, whilst attempting to ask questions and listen, simultaneously entertained their older daughter by drawing with her.

Although engaging with my interviewees in such social situations has been challenging at times, it has also been a way for me to attempt to create ‘non-hierarchical relationship[s]’ (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006: 10) in interview situations, which aligns with constructionist approaches to grounded theory (even though as I pointed out in the previous chapter according to some postcolonialists, e.g., Smith, it is questionable whether
such equality is ever achievable). Ethnography is often opportunistic and as researchers we collect and record what we can when we can (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) in sometimes peculiar situations.

5.8 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND TRIANGULATION

In addition to the concerns that have already been highlighted in the preceding chapter, one the major concerns with any piece of qualitative research is perceived intrusion of subjectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Given the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this study, subjectivity is inevitable. As Denzin and Lincoln point out: ‘Objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations’ (2008: 7). I have sought to address this inevitable subjectivity by adopting a reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) and demonstrating transparency (Bryman & Bell, 2007) in my actions and processes. The purpose here has been to capture rich narratives and theorise substantively from such empirical evidence to develop alternative ways of looking at phenomena.

One of the limitations of the grounded theory approach and reflexive research, is that each interview situation is unique and a snapshot in a specific time and place, so even if you interview the same person twice about the same topic it is highly likely to result in different kind of data (Mruck & Mey, 2007). For example, one interviewee I had also interviewed for a previous project looking at cultural adjustment. As I interviewed her for the second time I entered the interview situation with expectations. However some of the issues I expected her to talk about did not arise at all. Familiarity with your interviewees may also mean that some things may be left unsaid between the researcher and the interviewee as the interviewee may assume that the researcher is already familiar with their story. An interview that I conducted with a close friend for example was rather awkward because over the course of our friendship we had
discussed so many issues already that the interview felt like we were simply repeating previous conversations for the sake of the recorder.

Issues around validity and reliability are always of concern within academic research, but perhaps harder to justify within research that is underpinned by interpretivism rather than positivism. Moreover, given the relatively small sample size and particularist focus on a single industry within this study, concerns relating to validity and reliability are understandable. However, the value of this study stems from rich narratives captures and significant effort has been made to triangulate the findings via ‘research conversations’ with informants and industry professionals. According to Denzin and Lincoln ‘Triangulation is not a tool or a strategy for validation, but an alternative to validation’ (2008: 7). In this context, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) are referring to the way in which qualitative research is multimethod in focus (Flick, 2002). Collecting data by interviewing, through participant observation and then subsequently engaging in various ‘research conversations’ (Warwick, 2011) with confidants and professionals who have related experiences I have sought to triangulate my data. Through continuous conversations with people that have not necessarily formally contributed to this study, but have expertise and experience of the phenomena that I am investigating I have sought to sound out my thoughts and interpretations as they developed during the course of this study by ‘putting them out there’ in social settings with Angolans to engage their feedback to my interpretations. In the context of my intercultural consultancy work, I have been alert to the perceptions of my non-Angolan clients, many of whom have considerable experience working with Angolan professionals in the oil industry to highlight any contradictions or affirmations of my findings.

One of my concerns, which may be also perceived as a limitation of this study is its focus on a single sector. I had a particularly insightful conversation with a highly experienced HR professional who had worked in Angola in a non-oil related industry that I had become acquainted with
via a professional networking site for our shared passion of Angola. His experiences were clearly from a very different industry, yet the way in which he articulated his perceptions were very much in tandem with the conclusions that I have drawn. This suggests that the way in which I have come to interpret the data, has potential wider relevance. I make no claims that the conclusions I have drawn in this thesis can be generalised or replicated universally (Bryman & Bell, 2007). However, they do offer an alternative perspective when looking at career development in African contexts that is based on rigorous and credible empirical researched.

My intention here has not been to follow an ‘exact technique in order to specify concepts’ but rather to ‘create sensitizing concepts that stimulate [me] to perceive new relations, perspectives and world views’ (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009: 55). As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009) point out that it is not perhaps helpful to talk of ‘verification’ or ‘testing’ within grounded theory, even if Glaser and Strauss (1967) did envision this as part of theory generation, but look at the grounded theory in terms of its application. Indeed Geertz also rejects the idea of verification when it comes to ‘soft science and suggests that ‘appraisal’ of our work is more helpful (1973: 16). He contends:

‘It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of scientific imagination to bring us into touch with lives of strangers’ (Geertz, 1973: 16).

5.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I have explained how I have gone about collecting rich data using ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing. I have also explained how inspired by constructionist approaches to grounded theory in iteratively collecting and interpreting the intriguing narratives I have arrived at substantive conclusions about how individuals construct their careers. I
As always, there are always lessons to be learnt about things that could have been done differently. For me in terms of managing data, I was rather overwhelmed by the amount of data to emerge from each interview situation. The relatively unstructured and informal approach I adopted in interviewing served well to unearth incredible stories and rich data. However, as I discovered transcription and their analysis was very time consuming. Moreover, I found it too easy to get carried away with the momentum of the narratives and refocusing back to the original research aims that I had set out to fulfil and the research themes that I had set out to explore was challenging. In future, I will not underestimate the benefits of a more structured approach and will endeavour to find a better medium.
CHAPTER SIX
RESEARCH FINDINGS

What this study has revealed is that ultimately career development, like my research journey, is about reconciling aspirations and dreams with reality and with what is perceived possible. I started out wanting to discover how the Angolan context, both structural and cultural, influences the way in which individuals working for Western multinational companies (MNCs) in the oil industry perceive their own career development and identify what have been some of the key factors that have impacted on the decisions they have made. I was particularly interested in learning about the experiences associated with international living and how such experiences may have influenced these career development experiences.

6.1 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Drawing on the conceptual underpinnings centred on postcolonial and indeed postmodern perspectives outlined in previous chapters, I have made sense of the data and organised my findings in a particular way. Addressing the first research question I set out in chapter one, the empirical data captured reiterates the influence of micro and macro structures (see Figure 3.1) on individual career construction and highlights the importance of understanding how these structures relate to one another. The way in which I have conceptualised the data and emergent conclusions are illustrated as occupying one of three spheres i.e., social worlds in the walk of life where experiences take place and shape how individuals envision their career paths: family, education and employment (see Figure 6.1). These spheres may be viewed as micro structures (i.e.,
the institution of family, educational institutions and work organisations) that form the immediate environment in which careers are formed and developed as highlighted in chapter three. These micro structures are in turn shaped by broader macro structures such as political, historical, socio-economic and cultural environments. The influence of micro and macro structures on individual career construction have been highlighted as significant within existing career theory, however, the way in which the role of family underpins career construction and is manifested as an impacting element within the narratives captured here offers unique insight how careers are shaped in the African context of Angola.

Therefore, reflecting the preliminary conceptual framework introduced in chapter three (see Figure 3.1) this chapter is structured in principal according to the core micro structures that shape individual career experiences, perceptions and aspirations defined here as family, education and employment. The broader political, historical, cultural and socio-economic environments (i.e., macro structures) underpin and shape the way in which careers are formed within the context of these micro environments and therefore findings illustrating the influence of these macro environments will be discussed within the context of these micro structures.

Figure 6.1 Core micro structures within which careers are constructed in the Angolan context
The institution of family, as both a sphere in which people are socialised into the values and norms that shape their identity as individuals and within collectives and as a motivational factor that drives career related decisions, is evidenced as a significant factor in the career development of Angolans interviewed, it seems the most logical point to begin. Reflecting the brief outline of the findings I have presented above, I will then move on to present the findings in relation to the educational sphere and explain how the socio-economic context in particular and cultural dimensions such as hierarchy have shaped participant experiences of education. I will then move on to the third sphere of employment and examine participant perceptions and experiences of working in Western MNCs and what role wider national political and MNC corporate agendas have played on participant experiences.

To address the second research question I set in chapter one, I will present the findings relating to international living experiences in the context of both education and employment, but are discussed in greater detail in the latter. Experiences of international living are inherently linked to education and employment experiences in the context of this research and therefore need to be discussed in tandem.

Before I go on to discuss the findings in detail, in the next few paragraphs I will summarise the main findings.

The data captured suggests that for the Angolans interviewed, first and foremost, the welfare of their families was the most significant priority, followed by their personal welfare. ‘Welfare’ in the Angolan context is largely linked to ‘social conditions’ (standard of living) as described by interviewees, i.e., access to adequate housing, energy, water, education and transport. The reasons why providing for one’s family and ensuring their wellbeing by improving their ‘social conditions’ is considered so important in Angola are deeply rooted in cultural values and the socio-economic context, which in turn has been shaped by a legacy of
Portuguese colonialism, politics and war. The desire and sense of responsibility to contribute to the welfare of one’s family therefore induces a need to succeed in education and employment. Family therefore not only provides a structure, an environment, which informs the early socialisation experiences that shape career aspirations and decisions, but the need to provide for one’s family is also a significant motivational factor for career development (see Figure 6.2).

Education and employment are not motivating factors in the same sense as family. Instead the educational and employment spheres, experiences within a collection of various institutional environments, may be viewed as means to an end (i.e., the welfare of one’s family). They are ‘stops’ en route. It is evident from the data that education is perceived as the most valuable means of achieving the kind of future employment opportunities that can enable the fulfilment of individual responsibilities towards one’s family. Career success in both education and employment are therefore seen as necessities, but the desire for status within a highly hierarchical society appears also important. Professional and personal development appears to be more a means of achieving status, providing a ‘better life’ for one’s family as well as contributing the development of Angola on a national or community level, rather than a goal independent of the wider context.

The Angolan professionals interviewed were in agreement that the opportunity to gain knowledge, develop their technical and language skills as well as exposure to networks and HQ operations were key components of professional development within multinational organisations. However, narratives also revealed that international living experiences (for education or on assignment) in the context of this study should be considered influential. For some participants international living experiences were considered to be imposed upon them as part of a wider political and corporate agenda, but for several interviewees international living was seen an opportunity, a motivational factor within their career development.
However, significantly it is also evident from narratives that exposure to new social and organisational environments shapes career aspirations and expectations of the Angolan individuals interviewed in ways that maybe not be reconcilable with the reality of wider national and corporate agendas resulting in feelings of cynicism, scepticism and unfulfilled dreams. Some narratives tell a story of inner conflict; individuals torn between aspirations of international careers, the possibility of being able offer one’s family stability, comfort and security in the developed world and a sense of responsibility towards one’s country and it’s much needed development. Several individuals expressed that they have not only an opportunity, but also a responsibility to contribute to the development of their country by sharing the skills and knowledge they have gained. In addition to family, this sense of social responsibility appears to be a significant motivational factor in the repatriation of Angolans interviewed.

A further note I wish to make relates to the quotes presented in this chapter to illustrate the conclusions that I have come to. An argument can be made (and indeed often is) to say that direct participant accounts should be presented as they were originally conveyed to minimise the perceived intrusion of the researcher’s own biases. Particularly given the postcolonial dimension of this study, I wrote the first draft of this chapter strongly believing that by presenting participant narratives as they were told to me was morally and ethically the right thing to do, if I were to attempt to represent what may be considered the ‘Other’ given my position as a Western researcher.

However, as I completed the first draft I asked a confidant of mine, an Angolan professional also, but one who I had not interviewed to read it so that I could sound out the conclusions that I had come to. On the whole he did not seem to have qualms about my findings, but to my surprise he was somewhat horrified that I had not ‘tidied up’ the quotes that I had
included into grammatically correct English. He felt that the individuals who had shared their experiences with me did so to convey their ideas and had they known that I would present them as speaking anything but grammatically correct English, they would most likely be offended and possibly have chosen to do so in their native Portuguese.

Although I was initially very surprised as I truly believed I was doing the right thing, the more about it I could see his point. After all, one of the main reasons I feel inhibited to speak other languages (such as Portuguese) is because I fear I am not able to express myself and my ideas succinctly or fluently in a way that reflects my actual understanding and knowledge. This is ironic as I truly believe that what is important is the ability to communicate regardless of the level of fluency. This belief has also made me to an extent deaf to the way in which individuals speak any language as long as I understand. When spoken word is transcribed to text, these differences tend to become more prominent. Contextual factors that nuance the communication are not evident to an outside audience in the same way that they were for the interviewee or the interviewer when the communication took place. Although contextual factors such as the relationship between the interviewees and I has played a significant role in the kind of access I have managed to gain, it does not have role in the language or words that were used to tell their stories.

I was so immersed in the narratives that I found it difficult to detach myself from the nuances that to me brought the interview transcript to life, thus blinding myself from the possible interpretations others may have. Furthermore, as the participants are all part of our social circle, I feel I have a moral and ethical responsibility to do their experiences and thoughts justice. Therefore, the some quotes presented in this chapter, where needed have been grammatically corrected. Given that the act of transcription in itself; the choices that are made about punctuation etc. means that the transcript itself is already to a degree ‘interpreted’ and as already evident from the previous chapter I am not concerned with
6.2 FAMILY

The concept of family in Angolan culture is a broad one. Family is not defined in terms of partner and children or parents and siblings. Instead cousins, aunts and uncles, even individuals with no biological ties have equal importance within the family dynamic. In other words, family is not determined by biology alone, but by the relationships one establishes. The nature of one’s relationships is reflected in terms used to describe and refer to one another. It is common for biological first cousins to be referred to as brothers and sisters, likewise distant relatives become cousins, or aunts and uncles and all elders in the family can be referred to as grandmother or grandfather. For example, following my husband’s lead, I call both my husband’s biological mother and stepmother, mãe (mother).

Family is rooted in a sense of collectivism and importance is placed on maintaining relationships in your community. Identity in Angola appears to be defined in relation to collectives. Inherently an individual does not exist in a silo independently, but rather in relation to others. It is evident from both my experiences of participant observation and the narratives that I collected that family brings mutual expectations, obligations and responsibility.

The welfare of one’s family appears to be a primary goal in life for the individuals interviewed, which is made possible through successful personal and professional development. So beginning with the family environments in which the participating individuals were brought up, narratives indicate that paths to career development begin with the values perpetuated within the home. The influence that parents and elders appear to have in shaping individual experiences and perceptions is significant from a cultural perspective, but also very much linked to the structural environment in which they exist as I will illustrate in the section
to follow. Narratives suggest that family as an impacting factor on career construction in the Angolan context is twofold (see Figure 6.2).

**Figure 6.2 The role of family in shaping career construction in the Angolan context**

### 6.2.1 Upbringing, values and the family environment: Cultural perspectives

Parents and elders are highly respected within Angolan society and their opinion bears significant weight for those they seek to guide. The data suggests that the role of elders is an essential component of the social structure of society and the care and guidance that is given by parents also implies a sense of obligation to reciprocate later in life. The role of elders as advisors and as key figures in maintaining social cohesiveness is particularly evident in educational decisions, which I will explore further in the next section. The sense of social and financial responsibility for one’s family appears to be inherent, assumed and unquestioned. Although the participating individuals clearly displayed
personal career aspirations, it is evident that these are interlinked with wider family responsibilities.

This notion of obligation and responsibility toward one's family is reflected in several participant narratives. For example, one participant, who did not have his own family (i.e., wife and children) at the time of interview explained to me that being the youngest child in his family (his elder sisters also had successful careers) he felt less pressured financially and therefore felt that he was free to make decisions about his career based on what he wanted without having to consider the needs of a partner or children. However, he also explained that as his older brother was unable to work due to a disability, he felt he had a responsibility towards his family as a man.

There seems to be a real pressure on many Angolans who are now successful in their careers (e.g., professionals with employment in industries like the oil and gas sector) and perceived comparatively as 'wealthy' by their extended families, to not only provide financial support (e.g., school fees, books, clothing etc.) for extended family, but often there is also an expectation that they to take in younger relatives to live with them. For example, one participant reflected on the notion of entitlement within the Angolan family dynamic:

‘...people in Angola, family in particular, they feel that if you are my sister, if you have an apple it means that I'm entitled to your apple as well and you need to share that with me... People in Africa - if you live in better conditions - they will all come to your house.’

Individuals, particularly those who have been living abroad, anticipate this expectation to be one of the major challenges when they return. A participant who had been living outside of Angola for over a decade for example explained how he viewed the expectations of his family using a metaphor of a sinking boat:
‘They [relatives] will stay in your boat until you sink. That’s the aim. If the boat is still steady they will go away until you start sinking...

There are lots of things that I’m not… I’m different now...’

However, it is clear that escaping these responsibilities is not really considered an option. Instead individuals must develop strategies that will not only enable them to cope with the pressures and expectations placed upon them, but also will benefit their families in the long run. The same participant who had been away from Angola for over a decade told me:

‘... I will tell them [his siblings] that children need to learn and the experiences they are having is a ‘school’ for them [the children of his siblings] . They will teach their children something and they cannot run away from that. The children need to grow up and they need to understand the conditions they live in. They shouldn’t fight for that - they should fight for better... So they will stay in my house for couple of days, but they have to return to their families, to their parents. The children cannot be separated from their parents just because they don’t have what I have. They need to respect their parents and they have to be there... They have to agree. What do you think: is that a selfish position?’

He explained that he had a meeting with his family to discuss his return to Angola and he explained:

‘...I told them: “you are my brothers and you’ve got children and you are responsible for your children... This is the way that European people are used to. And my wife is European and she will think the same way. It doesn’t mean that you are not allowed to come to my house and stay one day or one week, but don’t take for granted that you are now going to be living in my house. I have my own family as well... As part my strategy I will help all of them to balance their standard of living. I’m going to develop a family business in order to
increase their standard of living to be similar to mine, so they won’t really have the need come to me and stay in my house’. 

In other words, individuals having been abroad have developed boundaries, which contradict the inherent social structure of Angolan society. However, there is also a sincere appreciation, empathy and understanding based on first hand experiences of what it means to live in Angola and the challenges that the environment poses. As a result individuals often feel torn between individual desire and the collective good. The standard of life in Angola and the way in which it influences family structures and dynamics can be traced back to Angola’s history of colonial and civil war as I will explore in the section to follow.-------

6.2.2 Family structures and identities: Impact of political, historical and socio-economic context

The importance that is placed on family welfare is very much influenced by the challenging socio-economic environment and poor infrastructure (e.g., poor energy and water provision, cramped housing, poor road conditions, lack of medical services and poor educational resources) with no social welfare system to rely on. The legacy of a colonial war from 1961 till independence was declared in 1975 and a subsequent civil war until 2002 implies that success in life has to a large degree been equated with day to day survival, at least within the environment in which all of the participating individuals grew up. The interviewees all come from slightly varying socio-economic backgrounds, some slightly better off than others, but all existing within the same situation touched by the same environmental difficulties like the destruction and deterioration left behind by the war that has surrounded them since they made their way into this world. None of the interviewees explicitly described themselves or their parents as having financial wealth. Several individuals on the other hand did refer to the poverty in which they grew up in and the need to contribute financially to the welfare of their family.
From my experience of Angolan culture it is very difficult to determine ‘real’ financial wealth that people may or may not possess. From the many ‘confessions’ I have witnessed over the years, image is an important component of social life in urban cities like Luanda. There seems to be a sentiment that one should reflect their wealth in their appearance, whether it is by the car one drives or the clothes one wears. What is of importance is not always real wealth, but perceived wealth. So in terms of my interviewees, I listened to their stories and picking up nuances like where their parents were from, or what they did for a living, and combining it with my knowledge of the Angolan context, I attempted to piece together picture of the individuals that had agreed to share their experiences with me. What seemed evident to me was that most of the interviewees, although now maybe argued to represent the small, but growing middle class of Angolans, did not start out that way, but rather have climbed their way up the social ladder by hard work and determination.

The data suggests that the socio-economic and political background of one’s family does impact the kind of opportunities perceived as available by the interviewees. First, several interviewees described how they felt that their options were restricted and shaped by financial circumstances in which they lived. For example one interviewee talked about his intentions after finishing high school:

‘I was looking for a job really. I was still thinking about going to university, but because of a couple of things that happened to my family, by then I felt that the biggest priority was to find a job to help my mum, brother and sister, the family. Especially [because] from my mum’s side I’m the oldest one’

Second, several interviewees described political connections within their families (of their fathers), which appear to have been an impacting factor in the participants life experiences and in some cases particularly
relevant for educational opportunities, which I will discuss in more detail in the section to follow. The Angolan civil war and accompanying politics has also influenced the life experiences of all the interviewees as it has inevitably shaped the environment into which they were born and in which they have been brought up in. Especially individuals who were not originally from the capital, Luanda, described how they had come to the city, some with their families, others alone to escape the war in other parts of the country. I have encountered heart breaking stories of perseverance and separation told now calmly, almost as if it were simply the course of life. As my husband once pointed out to me, if in Angola one were to start thinking too much about such things, by Western standards the whole nation would be made up of individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder. So there is little point in dwelling over the past and one must just get on with life the best they can.

From my experience and observation of Angolans in and out of Angola, my husband’s sentiments characterise Angolan mentality towards the past quite poignantly. It is not to say that the past does not matter nor that it has had no influence, quite the opposite. But rather, from the stories that I have encountered about the Portuguese or the war, an absence of bitterness is notable and instead people seem to accept this rather more simply as the course of life. Even for the individuals who have grown up in the capital considered a ‘safe haven’, instability (political and financial) and the vast gaps in the country’s infrastructure appear to be concrete factors in determining life priorities for participating individuals.

In terms of family structure and life experiences, war and politics has had a significant impact for three interviewees in particular. One individual told me how his father had to flee Angola when he was young as his father left the leading political party to join an opposition party. Although his father later returned to Angola, the interviewee’s family structure changed as a consequence and he describes many the values that he now holds as ones that were passed on to him by his mother and
stepfather. Similarly, another interviewee spent a significant part of his life in Nigeria as his father, now deceased also belonged to what the he described as a ‘guerrilla’ movement, one of the two main parties opposing Angola’s leading party in government.

Many Angolan friends and family that I have, have a story of separation to tell (whether they choose to tell it is another matter), of family left behind as they were sent to Luanda or places such as Cuba to study and to escape the war. As such, the way in which individuals value and view family is inevitably forever shaped by their experiences. Although on the whole individuals interviewed either did not express concern or did not consider another war a real threat and explained that it did not play any role in their plans for the future, one interviewee, a close friend who had fled from her home town in central Angola with her parents merely days before it was largely destroyed and leaving behind family, felt otherwise. She expressed uncertainty about the future of her country and that she felt afraid, not so much for herself, but for her children. As a consequence one of her priorities was to ensure financial security, a good education and a decent standard of living for her children and be prepared to flee if things go ‘wrong’ in Angola. She explained that she does not want to be pessimistic, but as she closely follows how her country develops, she can’t help but feel that she needs to be prepared for every eventuality.

6.2.3 Post-colonial identity: urban perspectives

Narratives as well as data collected through participant observation suggest that the legacy of Portuguese colonialism has influenced urban Angolan identity on an individual level, but in relation to collectives such as family. My encounters with Angolans suggest that urban Angolan identity, customs and culture is an intertwined amalgamation of what may be considered indigenous Angolan and those that may be seen as Portuguese. Data that I have collected through participant observation in particular, but also supported by interview data suggests on that Angolans have a strong sense of national identity; a sense of self deeply rooted in
Angolan soil, but also some practices and values that urban Angolans have appear to be more Western, or Portuguese than what may be considered indigenous African (by Angolans themselves). Yet, if asked to describe Angolan culture, black, mixed race and white Angolans alike describe a hybrid of practices, customs and values. They tell a story of the sensual rhythms of Angolan kizomba and the urban beats of kuduro, candonqueiro drivers with overloaded blue and white minivans manically making their way through the streets, tastes of Angolan beans and funge, of ladies carrying babies on their backs and bread on their heads, of belief in witchcraft and superstition and a society structured on inherent hierarchy in a place where Angolan time means urgency has little value and everyone knows their neighbours (for good or bad), even in a city of nearly five million people like Luanda. They tell a story of corruption and nepotism, of obligation, loyalty, hope, faith and fate. On the other hand urban Luanda, is about success and image, about expensive cars, Western designer clothes, restaurants that serve foreign food, movie theatres and clubs, shopping centres and supermarkets full of imported food, a material world that is equated with success even by those that cannot afford it, in a country where Portuguese is the lingua franca and Catholicism brought by the Portuguese continues to dominate and shape customs today.

Angolan identity does not appear to be an exclusive identity, quite the opposite. It seems that ‘being Angolan’ is equally about parental heritage and the culture they have assumed as it is about being born in Angola and thus being forever tied to the land. Both are not necessarily required. Although examples are many, the story of one Angolan individual who shared his experiences with me reflects this diversity well. He is very light skinned, what many Angolans would consider white. He describes his mother as Portuguese who came to Angola as a child, and his father as an Angolan, an Ovimbundo, of a Portuguese father and an Angolan mother. He speaks only Portuguese and described himself as Angolan. As he was growing up he did not feel that Portuguese culture was a particularly
explicit influence in his life. As he returned from studying abroad, he felt that things had changed in Angola as a result of a political shift:

‘...When I grew up there was communism, so everyone had the same opportunities. When communism ended we started seeing very rich people and very poor people. I think that, in a sense, people looked at the rich as people who had more opportunities, and who mostly had European influences, and racism increased...’

The participant described his return to Angola and how he began to identify more with his Portuguese heritage.

‘...I felt that we experienced some racism in South Africa and when I came back to Angola I felt that my country is going through the same route as South Africa, which was very sad to me. At that time I probably started connecting a bit more with Portuguese culture. And it is a bit funny because sometimes I don’t feel like I belong to either place, because when I go to Portugal my accent is not Portuguese, so they will notice I’m not Portuguese. When I am in Angola people look at me and they don’t believe I’m Angolan ...’

In my experience it is not uncommon to find Angolans who hold Portuguese passports due their parents or grandparents nationality, nor is it uncommon to find Angolans who have spent majority if not all of their lives in Portugal, but yet identify themselves as Angolan.

The remnants of Portuguese colonialism are possibly most evident in the dominance of Portuguese as the official national language and as lingua franca over indigenous languages. Angola has hundreds of different dialects and several main indigenous languages. However, all the participants explained that they primarily only spoke Portuguese. Several interviewees explained that at the time when they were growing up (post-independence), speaking indigenous languages was equated with being uneducated and peasantry, to quote two interviewees:
‘Angola has really a big problem in terms of national languages, because it’s not really common in Angola, especially in Luanda. It’s not common for young people to speak national languages.’

‘If you are well educated you are not suppose to talk or teach your child these national languages... This is what the Portuguese taught us.’

A small minority told me that they were able to understand the languages of their parents and perhaps speak on a very basic level. Another interviewee explained how during Portuguese colonialism fluency in Portuguese was equated with successful assimilation. Successful assimilation in this sense was in turn associated with being ‘smart’ and ‘intelligent’.

Another interviewee explained why he thought he was not taught the indigenous languages that his parents spoke:

‘... I think I was born during an interesting time: independence. The country was going through a lot of changes quite rapidly and probably, I cannot guarantee this, but probably the reason me and many others don’t speak the language is because my parents had the perception that I would be better off speaking Portuguese, or being fluent in Portuguese rather than being distracted by a language that was considered indigenous and thus inferior. That was certainly a view that many people held at the time’.

Although several interviewees referred to regional differences across Angola in attitudes towards indigenous languages (e.g., people from the north of Angola, like the Bakongo have retained their indigenous language more than those in the south of Angola or Luanda, which was described as a ‘melting pot’), all the interviewees from a range of regions with distinct ethno-linguistic backgrounds gave similar reasons for the dominance of the Portuguese language within their homes. It was
suggested by one individual that since in Angola people from different ethno-linguistic groups have mixed readily, many families are ethnically and linguistically diverse and for the sake of unity Portuguese was language common to all and thus the easiest form of communication. As one interviewee reflected on his own multilingual family where three European languages are spoken noted:

‘These are the sort of things that don’t really happen in Angola, because they [Angolans] come from different tribes so the common language is Portuguese.’

Anecdotal evidence of wider institutional policy towards languages in Angola suggests that Portuguese was adopted as an official language at the time of independence for this very same reason, to unify rather than divide people. This sentiment is supported by interviewee perceptions. To quote one individual who reflected on Portuguese as lingua franca:

‘... I think it’s a good thing what is happening in Angola. In the past we used to have more divisions... but now we are seen as Angolans, as just one nation.’

Although all individuals when questioned expressed some degree of sadness or regret at their inability to speak indigenous languages, I was left with the impression that it was perhaps considered unfortunate, but not an outrage in any sense. Nor was it perceived to have any significant material impact on their lives, or somehow detrimental to their sense of identity as Angolans and definitely of no importance to their career development. Narratives do suggest that Portuguese language ability has traditionally been considered a prerequisite for career success and access to educational opportunities and thus encouraged by elders in the home.

The notion of language skills, in this case English, was also associated with career success in the oil and gas industry by several interviewees, which I will discuss in more detail when I present the findings
relating to the sphere of employment and discuss the role international assignments in shaping participant aspirations and experiences in more detail.

The pressure and desire to contribute to one’s family’s overall welfare appears to be a considerable motivating factor for Angolan professionals interviewed and is certainly supported by my observations within a wider Angolan community. Education as already mentioned is then perceived as the means to fulfilling both personal and professional aspirations as well as a way of meeting social and financial expectations, set by family. In the next section I will therefore explore interviewee experiences and aspirations within the sphere of education.

6.3 EDUCATION

In this section I will present the findings that reveal how interviewee experiences in education and the decisions they have taken in relation to their education have been shaped by macro structures that make up Angolan cultural socio-economic, historical and political contexts. I will demonstrate that cultural values, particularly respect for elders (as I’ve already alluded) and hierarchy, also play a significant role in the decision making process within the educational sphere. Finally I will present the findings relating to the impact of international educational experiences on career development experiences, suggesting that such experiences have had a profound impact on the aspirations of Angolan professionals exposed to international environments during their higher education.
Before proceeding I will provide some background to put the findings presented here into context. Out of the 24 interviewees (nine spouses and 15 professionals working in the oil and gas industry) eight interviewees obtained their undergraduate degrees in Angola (one of whom also completed a postgraduate degree in the UK), three in the UK, two in Cuba, three in South Africa, one in Portugal, one in Nigeria (this individual also has a doctorate from a UK university). Three of the 24 of interviewees (one spouse and two professionals working in the oil and gas industry) have experiences of higher education in more than one country. (e.g., Angola and UK, UK and France and Nigeria and UK). The remaining six interviewees were female spouses who had not completed university. All six spouses interviewed who had not completed university expressed desire to either continue the studies they had interrupted to come on assignment with their husbands or start university studies when they repatriate to Angola. However, they also expressed desire to start their own businesses, but the subject of either endeavour seemed vague at best in most cases. After close analysis of these six interview transcripts I was left unclear as to what exactly these individuals hoped to do in terms

**Figure 6.3 Factors influencing educational choices and experiences**
of their own personal career development. However it seemed evident that it was important to each of these individuals to apply themselves to something in addition to being a wife and mother.

Education in the Angolan context is highly valued and is seen as key to building a better life and successful career. The notion of education as a route to a more successful life in the Angolan context seems to be rooted in the upbringing and values derived from the family environment as much as it is in the wider socio-economic context that appears to place significant pressure on individuals to succeed in improving their physical living environment. The key to succeeding in life and having the ability and opportunity provide for one’s family appears to be through education and thus great emphasis appears to be placed on education within the home. Interviewees explained very similarly, to quote two individuals:

‘...they [parents] saw education as the only way to have a prosperous future.’

‘...My parents, my mum and my stepfather, who was a father to me, really encouraged me or us, all five of us, to embrace the books and study. I remember my father used to say that the wealth of the poor is knowledge’

Moreover, narratives reveal stories of perseverance in an educational system and infrastructure that is severely lacking in resources; both in terms of facilities as well as qualified teachers. They also reveal stories of triumph, success and camaraderie among fellow students as well as exposure to a whole new world and access to networks tinged with a somewhat bitter realisation that reconciliation of dreams and reality is perhaps more challenging than expected.

6.3.1 Defined by context: Aspirations, decisions and opportunities
Narratives reveal that education is not considered choice as such, nor is the subject that one ends up studying. It seems that education in itself is perceived to a large extent the only choice and all decisions made by individuals and their parents appear to be geared towards making education a possibility. In Angola this means sometimes sending children to other provinces or even to another country such as Cuba (as was the case for two interviewees) at a relatively young age to secure an opportunity for secondary education. Educational opportunities therefore are also related to networks of family and friends who are in a position to enable individuals to study by helping them obtain a place to study or by providing a place to stay and care for such young adults away from their parents.

The choice of discipline at entry to university is not therefore chosen based on individual likes and dislikes as such. In the Angolan context discipline choice appears to be about necessity, available opportunities and often influenced by guidance from elders. For some it is about taking the first educational opportunity that comes along, whether made accessible through entrance exams or a family member that is connected and able to ‘open a door’ or financially enable education. As one female interviewee (a spouse) explained she had wanted to study journalism and ended up studying social sciences which led her to law through an opportunity made accessible through family connections:

‘I did social sciences, because it was really difficult to get into colleges... Basically I didn’t have a choice. I wanted to study journalism, because I like to speak, but I didn’t make it. It was really difficult and they were asking for a lot of money and my mum didn’t have it. So I went to this school because my uncle knew the director and he helped me get into this particular school.‘

Another interviewee working in finance in the oil industry described how a relative who was also an accounting teacher made him an offer:
‘...I have an aunt, she’s an accounting teacher and she was my first accounting teacher. She was the one who asked me: “Do you want to go and see the school where I teach?” So I went and I liked the school.’

In addition to the general encouragement towards education, interviewees described how their educational choices had been guided by their elders. When asked how they came to choose their discipline one individual told me:

‘It was accidentally. My intention was to become a doctor or an economist. Then I went to the economy college, but they were not open… so I bumped into my teacher on the street and he asked: “[name omitted] where are you going to continue your studies?” and I said: “I’m going to study economics”. He said: “Economics? You are a good student, so you have to go and do engineering. If you are a really good student you should go to study engineering to see if you are strong”. So I took that into consideration and I went to study electrical...’

Another interviewee described how as he was faced with the choice of selecting a discipline he wrote to his brother to ask for guidance. His brother suggested geology as ‘very good’ option and he agreed.

The significance of the oil industry within the broader economic context and the need for structural development on a national level as a consequence of the war were also highlighted by several interviewees as motivating factors in their discipline choice since both were seen as factors which would increase employment opportunities in the future. For example one interviewee explained how he had wanted to study civil construction because Angola would eventually need reconstruction on a large scale and thus this area would be likely to provide employment opportunities. Growing up it was not his ‘intention to go and study abroad’. However, he found studying and living in Luanda with limited financial means, long
journeys to school and poor educational facilities and resources challenging and therefore he began to look for scholarship opportunities abroad. This ultimately led him to change his discipline; a change that was dictated by necessity rather than desire. He described how he felt that studying in an Angolan university could ‘detrimental to one’s career’ because of the lack of teachers and facilities such as laboratories. He pointed out that success in his studies in Angola was unlikely if one cannot carry out the necessary work due to the physical facilities simply not being available. He went on:

‘So that’s how my mindset started changing and I started looking for these opportunities [scholarships abroad]. In fact, during my last year of high school I was already very active in searching for these kinds of opportunities… And then my brother got a scholarship, so that was already a point of reference for me. I already knew that they do the selection process between this and this time, so I was already waiting for the next one and that’s how it came across.’

The impact of the Angolan context, the time and situation is particularly relevant in the following passage from another individual’s interview transcript. The interviewee is one of eight children and his father is a driver and mother is a housewife. Now working for a large MNC as an engineer, having studied first in Angola and then completing his university studies in the UK after receiving a scholarship, he tells a story of many challenges, success, realisations, disappointments that have shaped his path to date. The following passage conveys the individual’s position as an eldest child in his family and it also characterises the experienced reality of living in Angola and the kind of opportunities participating individuals perceived as possible, albeit expressed in distinct words.

‘...When we finished [industrial school] I wasn’t supposed to go to university, because at that time it was getting hard to pay for my schooling… the situation had changed a lot and there was a new
government, new things. Democracy – whatever you call it – came along and things got quite tough back home... I was the oldest one and I was the one that managed to get to that point so I was more on my own, because my parents had to deal with my brothers and help them... Financially things were not so good... When I finished college my intention was to start working... Then because of the time [war] my options were either to stop working and go to war and be a soldier or avoid being a soldier by going to university. So when this option [joining the army] was given – it was not given – there was no option... At that time when you’re 18 you only got excused from joining the army if you were at university, I had to change my plans again and I went straight to apply for university...’

Other interviewees who related further education to avoiding subscription to the Angolan army, or ‘avoiding the war’, were individuals who studied in Cuba. It was explained to me that during the war, children, mainly sons in their teenage years, of families with some link to the Angolan government were sent to study in Cuba as part of an agreement between the Cuban and Angolan governments. The subjects individuals would study were determined by previous grades and government officials who determined what professions were anticipated to be useful for future national development in Angola. The pupils worked as part of agricultural projects among other things during their studies and lived in purpose built accommodation with other fellow Angolans and students of other African nationalities and as well Chinese students, I was told. When asked about his parents’ attitude towards education one of the two interviewees replied:

‘There was no choice. They [parents] were worried about me going out anywhere. [They said]: “just go”, because otherwise they will catch me an take me to the army’

He was only 14 years old when he left for Cuba on his own and describes his time in Cuba as the best part of his life that equipped him
with skills to culturally adapt, perseverance and work ethic. Both Angolans interviewed who completed their high school and university studies in Cuba spoke fondly of their time in the country and friends who had become family. Likewise, they spoke of the challenges that they faced when returning to Angola after over a decade in Cuba, with little family and no work to return to.

Another interviewee explained how growing up he had always wanted to be an archaeologist. He talked passionately about his fascination with the past and ‘the thrill of discovery’ he imagined archaeology was about. He described how had been surrounded by books in the home that he grew up and how reading about the rest of the world had opened up a whole new world to him. He told me:

‘...I think through those books and through those films I was able to understand and to know that there is much more than I was given. I think it all came together when I realised that after all we are not the same and I have to sort myself out. But I have this huge fascination for the past, to uncover these stories, to go back and understand not only how people lived, but how animals lived.’

However, in Angola at the time in the mid 1990’s it was not possible to study archaeology at university level, so he had to compromise and applied to the only public university in Luanda to study geology. His expectations and subsequent experiences of university life were stark contrasts to each other. He had embarked on university life with what he described to be ‘a romantic view’, but like others interviewed the hardship reality of university life was quite to the contrary, plagued by hierarchical attitudes of teachers, lack of resources and poor facilities. He told me:

‘...it was difficult because we had strikes all the way through and revision of the curriculum... And some of these real world scenarios started to come into play and that romantic view of a university life style was not there. The university was full of very old, very angry
and stressed people. That was not what I was expecting to find and the teachers weren’t very pleasant towards newcomers.’

This participant, like others interviewed and individuals whom I have interacted with during the course of my fieldwork perceived the Angolan educational system to be tough and challenging for several reasons: 1) many of the teachers were not qualified teachers, but rather industry professionals who were often perceived to lack commitment to teaching; 2) books that were in English, when English was not taught at university nor was it a prerequisite to university entry; and 3) teachers whose jobs were characterised as set to test you, to fail you rather than encourage you to succeed. Another participant like the participant quoted above, both of whom studied in Luanda’s only public university explained:

‘I had a few good ones [teachers], but most of them were bad. As I said, they’re not teachers by trade, they are just there to make money and most of them were bad because of that. They don’t teach you because they love teaching. …A lot of Angolan students who went to university in my time, I think are really heroes, because students did a lot of learning by themselves. Obviously teachers - even when we have bad ones - always teach you something, which is good… I met a lot of students better than my teachers.’

Naturally narratives also revealed exceptions to these and several participants also had fond memories of teachers who had a positive impact on their educational experiences, but on the whole the Angolan educational system was perceived to be one that required both perseverance and dedication, an inevitable and necessary hurdle that must be crossed.
6.3.2 Beyond education: Transitions, possibilities and perceptions of employment

University was also equated by one interviewee with access to networks within the oil and gas industry that enabled him to meet professionals who worked within the industry in which he later sought employment. Although this idea was only voiced by one interviewee, cross-examining the interview transcripts and career paths shows that he alongside two colleagues, whom I also interviewed, attended the same university during a similar time period and were colleagues and share almost identical career paths starting with one US MNC, moving to another and finally all three ending up working at the same British MNC. Interestingly this same individual explained how after graduation he had approached the national oil company (NOC) for a job, but was essentially told that if he was not ‘connected’ (i.e., referred - not necessarily recommended - by someone who has influence in the company) he had very little hope of getting a job. I will return to interviewee perceptions of the NOC and of MNCs when I begin to explore the findings relating to experiences and perceptions within the employment sphere.

Similarities can be detected in the movement of individuals between companies within the oil industry (for example all but one graduate of an Angolan university were employed in at least one US MNC - some in two - before moving to a British MNC), however interview data does not indicate that any of these employment opportunities were explicitly obtained through ‘connections’, but rather by submitting CV’s to the companies in question. Likewise the four interviewees who graduated from UK and Portuguese universities described their entry to companies within the oil industry upon graduation as possible by ‘sending out CV’s’ and no comments were made to imply that they had connections with any influence within the companies that they applied for. Only one interviewee working in the oil industry and one spouse who worked prior to coming on assignment to the UK, explicitly described that they had obtained their first
employment out of university through ‘connections’. This suggests that the way in which individuals transition from education to employment and establish their working careers within the context of MNCs operating in the Angolan context may be networked in the sense that people move in similar patterns and thus know each other, but is not necessarily as ‘nepotistic’ as perceived in more traditional Angolan organisational contexts.

Another three interviewees also revealed that they had each hoped to go on to develop academic careers after their studies. Although each of the three participants experiences are uniquely nuanced, essentially each chose to pursue careers in a sector that was seen as more profitable, i.e., the oil and gas industry, due to the perceived poor pay and ‘social conditions’ of academic staff at the time. One of the three interviewees described his love of teaching and how he reluctantly chose to pursue a career as a geologist in a MNC after a promised scholarship for doctoral studies failed to materialise and the pressure of a young family took its toll. He also explained that seeing his fellow classmates who had entered employment in the oil and gas industry making money and ‘changing their lifestyles’ was a motivational factor in his career decision. Another of the three participants who had plans to study pedagogy at university explained:

‘At that time [early 1990’s] teacher’s wages were very low and when I finished [studying] and started teaching, just to give you an idea, I was being paid $50 [USD] per month. That’s very difficult. So I asked myself: Will I do pedagogy at university? No way. That’s when decided to try to do engineering.’

Almost a decade later in 2002, the third interviewee expressed a very similar sentiment, but also pointed out that now the government is investing more into higher education and salaries are getting better.
'...At that time in Angola being a teacher or an academic at university was just about the title... I just thought I don’t want to be like this: people call you Doctor but in terms of your social conditions [materially], life is not improving...’

Although as empirical data that I will present in the remaining part of this chapter will show, status is important in the Angolan context and can be considered a motivational factor in career decisions, status does not appear to be sufficient on its own, if it does not lead to an improved standard of living.

6.3.3 International living: Discovery of possibilities

It is evident from individual narratives that experiences of international education have significantly influenced interviewee perspectives and aspirations and consequent career choices. This is evident in the narratives of each of the individuals who have educational experiences abroad, but particularly obvious in the narratives of the three individuals who completed their undergraduate degrees in UK universities enabled by scholarships. All three narratives share common features such as challenges arising from being separated from family for the first time, learning to cope with a new environment, a new culture and adapting to new ways of learning in a foreign language within an academic environment that seemed inherently different from the one they had experienced thus far. Separation from family was also theme that emerged from other narratives as was learning to cope with new environments and cultures.

What seemed striking to me was the passion with which the three individuals who had completed their degrees in the UK spoke about the impact of their experiences and the consequent realisations about their future prospects. Each narrative conveyed a sentiment that such international exposure opened up a world of possibilities, only to realise that the possibilities that were presented to them may be unobtainable due
to complex dynamics of broader political factors (i.e., Angolanisation, which I will elaborate on shortly). This notion of being exposed to and enticed by opportunities previously perhaps unfathomed is one that is more evident in subsequent employment experiences of these three individuals, but also evident in the narratives of individuals exposed to new environments through international assignments within employment as I will come to demonstrate in the next section.

One interviewee described his time in the UK as a ‘life changing experience’. Another participant told me about his experiences of separation from family and coping with life outside the societal structure that he and his fellow Angolans were accustomed to:

‘Leaving Angola, leaving my family behind, my friends, my country, which when I was there I didn’t think were so important for me, made such a big difference in my life... Coming to the UK really made me realise how much I care for all the things I left behind. There were a couple of other challenges as well once I came here: different culture, structure and attitudes in terms of government, society and organisation as well as different food and weather. Also having to live with other Angolan guys coming from different backgrounds and different kind of education in terms their values and family... I didn’t think that was going to be too challenging, but in a way it was. We were all free. There was nobody here to look after us or say... So if someone wanted to do something there wasn’t much I could do in order to change this person’s attitude... And that was a new experience, because I never really lived with other people away from my family. I always had my family around and it was always a family controlled environment, where I was boss because I was the eldest and I had to look after the younger ones...’

If I think back to the time that this interviewee is referring to, having been friends with him then already as well as several other Angolans (who
have not participated in this study), including my husband, the sense of freedom and the different reactions to it described by this individual was something I noticed then too. From my observations and experiences, the pressure to conform to societal norms of what is considered appropriate behaviour in a given situation or relationship appears immense in the Angolan context. It seems inevitable then that when the constraints of societal norms are removed or indeed changed, it is bound to impact the kind of experiences one has in many and sometimes conflicting ways.

Another interviewee summed up his experience as follows:

‘It was my first time ever out of the country [Angola]... In general I would say it was a very good experience, one that really changed me in different ways: the way I deal with things and the way I react. It made me quite an independent guy. So yes, it was a good experience.’

In addition to the day to day living experiences, the third interviewee described how exposure to knowledge and access to people in the industry during his time at university in the UK has shaped his aspirations and opinions of employment prospects. He explained:

‘Initially in the situation I was in, the whole Angola thing, difficulties, poverty... the NOC was a good option, like a dream for most people.’

He went on to explain how his perceptions began to change as his experiences and knowledge about the NOC and foreign MNCs operating in the oil industry broadened during his time in the UK. He explained:

‘It’s when we got to [the UK] and you start getting to know people in the oil sector, you start learning things about the oil industry and then you start re-evaluating... You start setting different kinds of goals. And that’s when it started to become clearer and clearer that with the
information that I had, it would be - with my attitude, me as a person - probably a difficult match. Me and the NOC.’

6.4 EMPLOYMENT

The data indicates that values shaped by the Angolan structural and cultural context, inherent in the institution of the family and experiences of education are antecedents of career development within the employment sphere. Although the welfare of one’s family appears to remain a main priority, several other motivational factors and contextual influences come to play here that shape interviewee experiences of career development and indeed their job mobility within the industry. Although the findings suggest that culturally rooted values such as loyalty, desire for status and importance of family and relationships play a role in shaping career related decisions and aspirations of the Angolans professionals interviewed, contextual factors such as organisational culture and structure as well as corporate context shaped by broader political agendas emerged as more significant influences within the sphere of employment experiences.

![Figure 6.4 Key factors that influence career construction in employment](image-url)
The first part of this section is intended to further address the first research question set out in chapter one in examining what types of contextual factors influence career development experiences, perceptions, decisions and aspirations or professional Angolans. I will begin by presenting the findings relating to the perceptions participants held of the complex relationship between foreign MNCs and government policy of Angolanisation and what this was inferred to mean for their career development prospects of Angolan professionals within the oil and gas industry. Second, I will explore how stereotyping within the MNC organisational environment has shaped employment experiences. Third, I will focus on perceptions of foreign MNCs and experiences of working within MNC settings and juxtapose these with perceptions of the NOC as an alternative career setting. Within this context I will examine what role relationships and networks play in the mobility of professionals interviewed and the importance placed on availability of learning and development opportunities. The final section of this chapter will be dedicated to exploring the findings in relation the impact of international assignments on career aspirations and decisions, which is aimed at addressing the second research questions set out in chapter one.

One final note about terminology: the 15 professionals interviewed, combined had experiences of working within British, US and French MNC settings and two professionals were revealed also to have experiences of working in the Angolan NOC in addition to experiences of working in US MNCs. Therefore, I will continue to use the term ‘MNC’ to refer to all three Western organisational settings inclusively. ‘MNC X’ and ‘MNC Z’ and so forth with will be used when more than one MNC is referred to in one quote. All professionals had either lived in the UK for educational purposes or on international assignment.

6.4.1 MNCs and the politics of Angolanisation

Both my own observations as well as narratives reveal that foreign MNC operations in Angola are perceived to be determined by the broader
political agenda perpetuated by the Angolan government and the NOC. The government's nationalisation agenda is perceived to place significant pressure on MNCs to invest in the recruitment and development of local technical and managerial talent. The NOC and government (the two seemingly used somewhat interchangeably by interviewees) are perceived to hold power over MNCs. Narratives suggest that it is in the interest of foreign MNCs to maintain good relationships with the Angolan government. Opinions and experiences of Angolanisation are twofold: on one hand it is perceived to place Angolans in an advantageous positions in terms of promotion and accelerated development opportunities, thus adding value to them, but on the other hand the opportunities Angolans are perceived to have available to them in a global context are limited because of the very same agenda. Narratives implied that Angolans are perceived to be developed solely for Angolan operations. According to interviewee interpretations of the context, foreign MNCs must be seen to comply with terms set by the Angolan government to develop and recruit Angolan nationals at professional and management level and therefore the goal of MNCs is ultimately to have skilled and experienced Angolans in Angola, rather than develop them for international operations.

All the interviewees recognised that the value of this national effort in principle and generally agreed that professional and managerial positions should indeed be filled by Angolans and not expatriates. However, Angolanisation on a conceptual level was seen by and large as positive, but the implementation on a practical level within MNCs was perceived to be fraught with problems resulting in feelings of cynicism and scepticism. The way in which MNCs are perceived and experienced to respond to Angolanisation has clearly impacted perceived career prospects and the kinds of career decisions individuals envision themselves making in the future. As one interviewee described his experience of working with an oil and gas service company in the UK as a graduate and why he sought new employment:
‘During my time there, I would have to say I always did my best. I was always available and from the feedback I got from my manager – line manager – was that I was doing a great job. But a few things that happen in between, I think, mainly being a graduate, one of the main reasons that really made me move was a problem I had with the HR department over there [UK] and their attempts to show the Angolan government that they have [Angolan employees]. While I was an engineer working for them they kind of tried to push me too quickly into returning to Luanda. I felt that the whole thing was handled very badly by the HR department, which I felt was a very unprofessional and bad treatment on their part. So at that moment I realised that maybe I was being used. As for the HR management, I was just a number to them.’

The participant left the company for another large MNC, resigned to feeling that regardless of the company there was a high likelihood that as an Angolan professional in the oil industry his path would lead back to Luanda.

As a result, reflecting what seems like a very practical approach to career development already evident in educational decisions, there seems to be a certain acceptance that Angolans are developed differently, to a different purpose and have different opportunities available from Western counterparts within Western MNCs. On one had this was experienced as a restriction and seen negatively, but on the other it was also seen to add value to Angolans and their skills as individuals felt that they were competing in a ‘smaller pool’ of talent that in an environment that favoured local talent over foreign talent, at least in terms of recruitment and development. It was seen as advantageous to be Angolan within this job market. For example one interviewee, who was working in the UK at the time of the interview told me:
‘Of course I’m over here and I’m getting the whole working experience and the more I get, the better... In Angola I’ll be even more valued.’

Although perceived differences in available opportunities (positive and negative) were echoed in all narratives, the three individuals who had completed their degrees in the UK in particular expressed strong feelings about this and felt that as Angolans the opportunities that were available to them were different than for their Western colleagues. The following passage from one individual’s interview transcript captures several of these sentiments poignantly:

‘...This is a decision [Angolanisation] that has been made by the government and has been imposed on the international oil companies. They [government] don’t want the international oil companies to keep on having only decisions made by people who are foreigners. They want nationals to be involved in decision making. They want posts with responsibilities to be filled by nationals and that’s where these differences start. Then of course what I’ve been told is that you can have a semi-international career, in MNC X at least. I’ve been told that the best you can do is one post in Angola, then one post outside, then one post in Angola and keep on doing that. That is as international a career as you can dream of having. And that will be based on your competencies, on the potential that you demonstrate... there are very few people who manage to have that kind of a career.’

When I asked how it made him feel to realise that the image he had when joining his current employer, a MNC, did not quite match the reality he encountered, he replied:

‘At that point it was disappointing for me as that’s not what I would have necessarily liked it to be. I want to know that I have the same opportunities that for example my flat mates with whom I did the
Masters with have... Then when you start working, when things go completely differently just because you are Angolan... If you don’t think about the country and the strategy of the government, it can be a bit frustrating... especially if that is not what you want for your career. So it is frustrating in that sense, but at the same time when you think about what is best for country and what is bigger than your personal circumstances you kind of understand why things are that way. You just have to live with it...

There was a considerable cynicism expressed towards MNC approaches to local human resource development. It was expressed by several interviewees that although MNCs are seen to invest in the development of local content, the intent is superficial and simply an exercise of appearances; for MNCs to be compliant with government regulations. Seven out the fifteen professionals explicitly expressed scepticism about the nature and purpose of local HRD in terms of Angolanisation within MNCs and all professionals talked about the perceived inequality between Angolans and Western counterparts within the MNC organisational environments; Angolans being perceived to be in a disadvantaged position. Furthermore three interviewees went as far as to suggest that the opportunities given to Angolans within MNCs are often given a way that sets them up for failure to ensure that MNCs are seen to comply, but in reality never relinquish any real control to Angolans.

‘...Sometimes it’s not in their [MNC leadership – nationality removed to protect the identity of the interviewee and organisation] best interest to try to help. They try to pick Angolans for opportunities, but at the same time “break their legs” so that they can say that: “We are trying, but they are never competent enough”.’

‘I guess the leadership within Angolan MNC X has made it clear that they will have to in some cases accelerate. Now the most important thing is that this acceleration comes with help, comes with
appropriate support and it’s not just about putting people positions because they are under pressure... And I guess even as Angolans, we get very sceptical: so are they putting you there just to test you? So there is a lot of scepticism about the reasons why people are in the positions they are in and whether they are getting the right support or whether they are just being tested so that when they make mistake, they can to say, “Well, we tried, but it doesn’t work”.

‘Sometimes I think you are pushed to fail, because I think sometimes you could have been more exposed to experiences prior to taking on a particular role. When I think they [MNC leadership – nationality removed to protect the identity of the interviewee and organisation] are pressured they say: “We need an Angolan quickly into this role” and they pick an Angolan and this Angolan will not be ready.’

It was also suggested by one interviewee that the promotion of Angolans for leadership positions is positive and should be seen as a more financially viable option for MNCs rather than continuing to utilise expatriates, however the Angolanisation agenda lacked commitment and support from team leaders within the MNC that he worked for. It was also evident from other narratives that lack of confidence in Angolans’ abilities to perform in managerial roles meant that nationalisation at leadership level was perceived to be a significant challenge. However, it was interesting to note that it was not solely negative perceptions of Western managers of Angolans’ managerial abilities that were highlighted by interviewees. Doubt was also expressed by some of the Angolans interviewed, as one interviewee told me:

‘The Angolan government wants senior management to be occupied by Angolans and MNC X is aware of that. So they are making the effort, or they should be making the effort to select Angolans they feel have the potential to go up to that level, to fill those posts... One
of the challenges they face is that, if I am really honest, when you see the performance of the [HQ national] people that they have in management positions and you compare them with the Angolans who you could argue should be in those positions... Well, I’ve not been in Angola that long really to know who are the best Angolans MNC X has, to say that they don’t live up against the [HQ national] people who are in the management posts, but they don’t. What I know about Angolans, the kind of education we have etc., I know that it is hard to find Angolans that would really be able to be as good. It is a reality that is very difficult to come up to terms with, but it is one of these things that does happen.’

Another interviewee explained how he felt that within his team people tended to bypass their Angolan line manager for the line manager of another team as he was perceived to ‘act like a manager’ referring to the Angolanisation process implying that the Angolan manager was not perhaps acting as a skilled and competent manager was expected to act.

Moreover, it was implied in narratives that a ‘glass ceiling’ does indeed exist within foreign MNCs that may inhibit the promotion of Angolans to senior positions. Interestingly, when reflecting on Angolan senior leadership within one MNC, it was implied by one professional that in order for Angolans to achieve such status in a foreign MNC, ulterior motives such as politics and the individual’s connections to the Angolan government would likely have played a part in such a promotion. In other words, he felt that for an Angolan to be promoted within an MNC to such a high ranking position it would perhaps have had less to do with merit or competence, but more to do with connections and fulfilling local quotas.

‘So there are positions in MNC X which are possible for Angolans to get... those positions are for Angolans, but Angolans with big connections. So you first need to have your connections that you can bring to the company... It is difficult for me to one day be in the
CEO’s position, because I need to get my connections outside MNC X first’.

This notion of a ‘glass ceiling’, a point within the hierarchy of the organisation beyond which it seems impossible to progress was a theme that was alluded to by several interviewees, but less explicitly. I will return to this notion as I move on to discuss stereotyping as well as future career plans.

On a more optimistic note, despite the professionals interviewed recognising that significant challenges existed in the development of local future leadership and managerial potential in Angola, several interviewees were less cynical and more hopeful about the future. They felt that it will be a slow process, but there was already evidence of Angolans in managerial roles.

‘I’ve got no doubt that Angolans are one day going to be able to do these jobs and that MNC X is going to let them. I’ve got no doubt about it. The only thing I’m doubtful of is when it’s going to be and I understand MNC X. I told you about stereotyping. It’s not something that is going to change… MNC X has put a lot of money. It’s a big investment… You want to put your money where you feel confident, where you’ve got people with skills, because it’s a lot of money. Also oil business is a very profitable one. It doesn’t take long to get your money back, so I can see Angolans starting to take over managerial jobs in about seven years time.’

As evident in several of the quotes presented here, a number of interviewees, particularly those who had aspirations of an international career, perceived Angolanisation as a limitation for their personal career development. Echoing my personal experiences and those of my husband, the three Angolan professionals interviewed whose spouses were not Angolan found this dimension of the oil industry particularly frustrating, because despite having a desire to also work in Angola for a
variety of reasons (e.g., extended family and a sense of social responsibility) which I will explore further later in this chapter, this desire was contradicted by feelings of anxiety and uncertainty about how non-Angolan spouses and children would adapt to living in Angola and indeed the available job opportunities for spouses.

6.4.2 Stereotyping: race, abilities and career paths

A significant characteristic of the kind of inequality that was evident within narratives and evidently plays a part in the experiences of professional development seems to be stereotyping; stereotyping of Angolans by other Angolans as well Western managers and indeed stereotyping of Western managers by Angolans. Three different stereotypes thought to be flawed in different ways, but shared, emerged from the narratives and appear to be significant in career related decisions and employment experiences: 1) Skin colour to some degree correlates to educational background, capabilities and access to career opportunities; 2) Angolans educated or trained abroad (e.g., in the UK) perceived as more capable and skilled than those educated or trained in Angola; and 3) all Angolans want to become managers (as opposed being technical experts).

Stereotype 1

The first stereotype that relates to race is multifaceted. The underpinning sentiment is that an individuals’ skin colour appears to impact both the kind of opportunities they perceive as being available to themselves and to their colleagues. That being said, from the narratives and my observations I am left with the sense that it is not skin colour in itself that is an impacting factor in peoples’ perceptions, but rather than the assumptions that are made about ones upbringing and level of education associated with skin colour that are deeply rooted in colonialist thinking. A longstanding and common stereotype that is perceived to exist in Angola is that having lighter skin or being mixed race (mestiço) implies that the
individual comes from a more privileged family than black Angolans and therefore has also received better educational and career opportunities. Vice versa the stereotype appears to perpetuate a view that black Angolans are then disadvantaged in comparison. However, it was evident from the narratives that the persistence of this stereotype in general and particularly in a MNC context seemed outdated and almost ironic as the stereotypes the participants found themselves frequently perpetuating, when applied to them were found to be incorrect. Angola has an incredibly racially and ethnically diverse nation. As a result if I think of the individuals who participated in this study, they represent an ethnically and racially very diverse group. Although, the majority of the interviewees consider themselves black Angolans, the group also included a mix of individuals who perceived themselves to be mestíços, and also individuals who felt that their skin colour seemed to be more defined by the society they lived in rather than themselves. Reflecting on the data it is not possible (nor is it my intention) to draw any kind of conclusions that would indicate any correlation between actual skin colour, ethnicity, education or indeed heritage. It is simply a mix. However, if I reflect on the kind of interpretations individuals such as those in this study may have of each other rooted in such stereotypes and compare these with what I know about how those whom I interviewed see themselves, their heritage, upbringing and education it is evident that many of these assumptions would most likely prove to be inaccurate. One individual captures this sentiment well:

‘I think we excel in making stereotypes and just as you described I happen to fall into one of those characterisations. Well I’m mixed race, light skinned and people [make assumptions]: “So he’s [referring to himself] mulatto [mixed race] and he lives in London and he works for MNC X. And he seems to have a good life. Surely his parents must be well off… And surely he must have double citizenship [Portuguese and Angolan]”. No. “And surely his parents are both mulattos and surely his wife is mulatto”. Well sometimes
they are right and sometimes they are not. In this particular instance they are not. My father is actually black. And people seem surprised. Because there is this perception if you are educated, if you can present yourself as a respectful member of the community or society, you must have connections, you must have been privileged… In my case it all comes down to the education I received from my parents… It’s not because I am educated, it’s because of the way I was educated. Well it’s not because I’ve been privileged, this is what I wanted to say, it’s because the way I was educated. Thus, I can feel privileged for being educated, but it has nothing to do with my skin colour...’

In the MNC organisational context, stereotyping was perceived to be related to skin colour to an extent, but possibly more related to nationality, to being Angolan. An overwhelming sentiment that Angolan professionals working within Western MNC organisational environments were perceived either unequal or different in terms of skills and abilities from their Western counterparts emerged from the data. As my concern with this study has not been the MNC perspective as such, it is not possible to say whether this is the case or not. However it does indicate that Angolan professionals working in such settings feel pressure to prove their worth and value professionally and disprove negative stereotypes individuals believed Westerners to have of Angolans as the following quotes of two interviewees show:

‘I think professionally you have to break the ice first... Because here [UK organisational environment] people don't trust you, you have to earn it. You have to work on that every day...’

‘I think for the Angolans, they [MNC non-Angolan management] still think you are not good, unless you show them that you are good...’

When asked about what he has learnt from his international assignment experience another interviewee described scenario he had
experienced that seems to enforce negative stereotyping by Western colleagues:

‘I have been in meetings via teleconference with people in Angola and sometimes they [non-Angolan colleagues] have forgotten that I am Angolan, because only a few people know that I’m Angolan here... And sometimes during the teleconference they forget that I’m an Angolan, so sometimes they put the phone on mute and start laughing about people from the other side... When I go back I will be very sceptical when I take part in this kind of meetings, because I will know what people here think.’

Following on from this, when asked about whether he feels that Angolans are often stereotyped, the same interviewee replied:

‘Yes, quite often, which I think is very unfair because you have so many different people. Like everywhere in every culture you have good people, bad people, but I think they [non-Angolan colleagues] like to stereotype Angolans, which I think is very sad.’

Another interviewee who had been promised an opportunity to complete a Masters degree sponsored by the MNC when recruited explained how he had been warned by colleagues not have too high expectations of his new employers’ promises:

‘When I finally joined the company a lot people warned me: “They [MNC management] say this to everybody and at the end of the day they only choose wh... you know, very few people to do that [Masters] and you know you are Angolan, you are black. So don’t take this too seriously. If you don’t get it, you’ll get de-motivated”. But I just went on trying to work hard and to show that I was committed and I was hungry and that’s how I was offered the opportunity, because it was very early after I had started’.
Although, majority of the interviewees did not explicitly talk about racism when talking about their experiences of being what could be described as comparatively disadvantaged as Angolans within large Western MNCs, one participant who worked in the UK for a medium sized oil and gas company did have a negative experience, which he attributed to discrimination for being black and an African. The interviewee felt that the quality of his work was continuously questioned by management and he felt that as was singled out as somewhat of a ‘curiosity’ in a predominantly white British office environment. The discrimination he experienced ultimately led him to change organisations. It is evident that assumptions made or perceived to be made based on race is an impacting factor in the employment experiences of professional Angolans in the oil industry. However, the nature of the impact is complex and the narratives collected for this study only provide a glimpse into this multifaceted phenomenon.

Stereotype 2

The second stereotype relates to the way in which individuals feel they are stereotyped for having been educated abroad or having international assignment experience by both Western managers as well as other Angolans. The data suggests that Angolan professionals exposed to international environments through education or assignments feel that they are perceived differently than their peers who have been educated or trained in Angola. The perception that Angolans with international exposure are more qualified, capable or skilful within MNC context has emerged out of my fieldwork and previous study and hence I was interested to engage participant opinions and experiences on the issue. I found that the notion was explicitly expressed within two narratives and further alluded to by all interviewees when talking about the benefits of international assignments. On one hand benefits gained from international assignments by interviewees (e.g., English language skills, exposure to HQ operating environment, organisational culture and industry experts as
well as training opportunities) could be interpreted as acquired skills that individuals felt will contribute to their professional career success. The skills that Angolan professionals are able to gain from international assignments therefore contribute to their competitive advantage as individuals within the Angolan job market. However, it was evident also from the narratives that individuals felt that even though some differences exist, they did not feel that Angolan trained colleagues were any less capable. Albeit not limited to, this notion emerged most frequently within participant narratives in the context of experiences of a formal graduate development programme. One interviewee who had studied in Angola and was sent to the UK on an international assignment with a large MNC for development purposes explained:

‘When I first came here [to the UK] from Angola, I found that people do have stereotypes. If you have a student who has gone to Oxford of Cambridge University you will look at them differently... There’s a difference. Also having gone to school in Angola, means everyone in the UK look at you in comparison to those who have gone to school here in the UK. That’s just something I have found in my opinion... Now if you’ve done the graduate development programme in Angola or if you end up coming to the UK [to complete the programme], the manager will look at you differently, because the manager knows you and he may not know the other guy. Since he knows you and when he knows that you have learned from UK guys, he is more likely to look at you with different eyes...’

When asked about his experiences another interviewee who had been educated in Portugal and was on international assignment in the UK at the time of interview with a MNC told me that people who have been trained abroad are seen ‘in a different way’:

‘... They [colleagues and managers] think that being trained Europe you are better qualified...’
He further explained he felt that Western managers see Angolans who have trained abroad as having potential since the company has invested the money in their training. In other words Western managers see such Angolans as ‘assets for their team’. However, the perceived advantages of being exposed to new environments, learning English and having access to industry experts and training also appear to bring pressure to perform, to live up to expectations. When asked about how he thought other Angolans colleagues perceived Angolans returning from international assignment, an interviewee explained:

‘First of all they [Angolan colleagues and managers] expect more, because they will think that you are supposed to be a very skilled employee. They are going to expect more of you. But at the end of the day it’s probably not that different. Probably the way that you will approach problems will be different and the way that you will produce results… It will be down to the individual how you perform whether you are in the US, UK or in Angola. The first impression will be that since you have come from abroad you are seen as a skillful employee. They will expect that you are above average… So the expectation for us is very high… My line manager told me that “the expectation we have of you is very high”. It’s a pressure. The team I will be part of in Angola will also expect me to do a lot better than them and be good source for the team. So I really need to excel myself and do really well…’

To summarise, this is a stereotype that Angolans who have international exposure feel that others have of them. This is not to say that the data proves that such professionals are more qualified or even to deem the perception to be true, as it is not within the scope of this study. However, it does appear to be perception that does influence the way in which the individuals interviewed view and place value on their own professional abilities in relation to others.
Stereotype 3

The third stereotype that all Angolan professionals working in the oil industry want to be managers was a perception actually highlighted as a misguided assumption by my eighth interviewee in August 2010. Admittedly, given the importance of status in Angolan culture I had noticed and the informal conversations I had with both Angolans and Western professionals who worked in the industry, I found that I too had embarked on this research journey with this very same assumption. As a result, when talking about future career plans, if it was not mentioned by the interviewees, I explicitly asked which career path, a technical or a managerial, they aspired to. Prompted by this eighth interviewee to explore the narratives from an alternative perspective in my analysis, I found that, yes, status is important, but status was something that could be achieved by being an ‘expert’ in a technical sense rather than a manager. In other words, the Angolans that I interviewed had immense ambition and although a couple of individuals did express desire to go down the managerial path, the development of technical expertise and being recognised for it appeared to be an overwhelming priority for the individuals interviewed. Even for those that saw themselves in managerial roles, technical expertise was an essential component of being a good manager. I found that professional development seems to be correlated to technical competence. As one interviewee poignantly pointed out: ‘It’s not just about being a boss. Being a boss means being capable.’ All the professionals, regardless of whether they had managerial or technical career aspirations agreed that part of being a competent manager within fields such as engineering or geology required solid technical skills. My eighth interviewee felt that this stereotype had emerged as a result of a shift towards ‘streamlining the production of local leaders’:

‘… Another challenge that we are witnessing in our company is that we are moving towards the sort of energy company that streamlines the production of local leaders. I think that is has created a view that
all the Angolans want to become team leaders and managers. I don’t think I want that. I’m happy to be a leader, but in a technical sense. From the outset I don’t think I have the skills to manage people... I don’t know if it’s something I would enjoy doing, but I would certainly like to work and help other people to develop technical and that’s pretty much what I want to do. I want to work, gain experience, really be knowledgeable…’

As this study is not focused with the corporate perspective, I cannot conclusively say whether the perception that all Angolans aspire to being managers is a view that is largely held by Western managers working with Angolans. However, if this were to be the case the implication could be that the pressure to localise at managerial level somehow distorts the way in which aspirations of such Angolan professionals are interpreted by Western corporate leaders. In other words, if MNC managers responsible for the development of Angolan professionals work on the basis that the managerial path is an overwhelming priority for Angolan professionals, then succession planning in organisations operating in Angola may not correspond to the aspirations of those that the organisation seeks to develop. As evidenced here the managerial path does not appear to be as significant of a motivating factor for Angolan professionals as they believe Western managers perceive it to be.

In the next section I will then move on to exploring interviewee perceptions of MNCs, juxtapose these with some of the images of the NOC that emerged and highlight how these relate to career decisions and indeed job mobility. The findings suggest that in addition to context and the career prospects that are perceived to be offered by MNC, cultural values also play a significant part in shaping job mobility of Angolan professionals in the oil and gas sector.

6.4.3 Multinational corporations versus the national oil company: perceptions and experiences
Contradictions emerged as I started analysing the data in regards to interviewee perceptions and experiences of MNCs. Particularly when I began to examine why individuals have chosen to work for the organisations that they were employed by at the time of interview and if there are any indicators that may be useful to anticipate future career decisions, I found interviewee perspectives to be multifaceted, at times in contradictory ways. The majority of the interviewees as explained earlier worked within one organisation, but several interviewees also had experience of working in other MNC contexts. A key theme to emerge was that MNC working environments were perceived to be less hierarchical than traditional Angolan organisations and the absence of rigid boundaries between employees and managers was found to cultivate an organisational culture where individuals felt they could express their opinions freely, i.e., without having to take into account contextual factors like status and hierarchy. I was also left with the sense that despite the inherent collectivism with in Angolan culture, individuals whom I interviewed appreciated and favoured being judged on their individual performance and likewise knowing that others’ success was dependent on their abilities and efforts. However, as one observant interviewee pointed out, such practices that are essentially based on individualism and self-interest seem contradictory and perhaps somewhat ironic in an industry that is known for its successes based on team work. Furthermore, in the Angolan cultural context the adjustment from one frame of mind to another that seems contradictory to what is so quintessential about being Angolan can be

‘..The approach that you have to do things on your own and you have to think about yourself it’s quite interesting for me. Well it’s not, the idea that I have to do things on my own, because I’ve always done that, but it’s that you have to do things thinking solely about you… This sort of selfish approach was or IS something that I am still trying to reconcile with. Well, I was raised and taught to work for a community, not thinking that the benefits were solely for me, but to a
group of people... But what these companies are really saying is that think about yourself and it’s all about you and we want you to do this and that, but it’s all about you and it’s quite odd, because we are an industry that work on, or are famous for successes based on team work…’

Echoing these sentiments, the NOC as a possible career option was disregarded by several interviewees for being perceived as nepotistic, bureaucratic and highly hierarchical; an environment where one’s opportunities where perceived to be defined not by ability, but by who you know. For example one interviewee explained:

‘We all know that behind closed doors everyone makes jokes and not very nice comments the people from the NOC. But it’s changing, there are really people working hard trying to do things right. I think that it’s not being arrogant to say that we would certainly help improve their performance. But why I never considered to work for the NOC? I don’t know, I think, I think it’s still shrouded in a lot of processes, it’s still - despite all the changes - it’s still a company driven pretty much through individuals or personalities rather than actual systems and processes. So you have to have the right connections or the right people.’

However, two individuals in particular considered the MNC environment to be unfair. The first, interviewee A, had experience of working in a US MNC as well as the NOC and the other, interviewee B had experience of working in a British MNC, but considered that the NOC may be an option in the future. The interviewees were referring to unequal pay between local employees and expatriates. They viewed expatriates who were perceived to have the same skills as being paid more. In talking about his decision to move from an MNC to the NOC, interviewee A felt that the development of local content was not in fact supported by MNC leadership:
‘Well, the money and social conditions [referring to fringe benefits often included in salary packages in Angola] were not enough. So, it was to do with the salary pack and the development of local content was not getting enough support from the employers... So, you would see that the expats were getting more even though you could get and do the same job as the expats... When I joined the company after one year with MNC X I became supervisor... So, I actually made MNC X replace two expats and I was doing the job of two expats, but my salary was still the same. It didn’t increase in any way. So, that’s why I left, mainly.’

However for interviewee B, who only had experience of working in one MNC thus far, a potential move to the NOC was seen really only as an option if he hit the ‘glass ceiling’ within the MNC in which he worked. He felt that the training and development he had received thus far within the MNC he worked for as very positive, but felt that his opportunities were limited due to the (perceived) inequality in pay between expatriates and locals. He therefore felt that once he had acquired enough experience and developed his skills sufficiently, the NOC could potentially offer better opportunities to progress and a less pressured working environment. He felt little difference existed among the various MNCs operating within the Angolan oil and gas sector. However, interviewee B also pointed out that a more likely scenario for the future would involve self-employment and consultancy as he admitted that coming from an MNC working environment, adapting to the bureaucracy and hierarchy of the NOC might prove to be an overwhelming challenge.

As expected, given the focus of my study on the impact of Western organisational environments and international exposure and thus having selected individuals with such experiences, it was not surprising that the majority of the interviewees favoured the organisational environments and cultures offered by foreign MNCs. However, narratives reveal considerable discontent at the approaches and practices adopted by MNCs to develop
local Angolan professionals. Although all the interviewees agreed that the training opportunities made available to them, including coaching and mentoring, met their needs and beyond, MNCs were criticised for lack of flexibility and inability to adapt to the local context. I will provide more detail below as I discuss interviewee experiences of professional development within the MNC environment, but particularly in relation to one MNC where a majority of the professionals had work experience, it was felt that more needs to be done to adapt practices to fit in with the Angolan socio-economic and cultural context. Some interviewees also felt that there seemed to be lack of consistency between business operations and development plans, suggesting individuals were not always clear on their personal succession plans. However, the lack of flexibility was not entirely attributed to Western corporate management. One interviewee felt that Angolans themselves have a need to import models and behaviours from the West, which do not fit or function as intended within the Angolan context. He likened it to trying to fit a square into a circle.

‘... My view is that we tend to import things, models and even behaviours... I don’t think it works and I’m not convinced you can import models in this way. Just because it worked in England doesn’t mean it will work in Angola. When it comes to development for instance, yes we need to be developed and the country still has a long way to go, but we have to approach this development in a way that matches our own cultural behaviours in the way we operate.’

6.4.4 Job mobility and relationships

Data collected from interviews as well as fieldwork suggest that the relationship dimension is a significant component of job mobility of Angolan professionals. Commitment to cultivating and nurturing relationships appears to be an essential part of both social and organisational life. It is evident from the narratives that job mobility is largely about networks. However it is also evident that the mobility that interviewees described was not about nepotism as such. In terms of
internal mobility within organisations, narratives suggest as echoed in
several quotes already, that it is not simply enough to know the ‘right’
people, but it is important to prove ones abilities and only then by
performing well and being noticed by the ‘right’ people can one progress
within the MNC organisational environment. The idea that career
progression is possible in this sense was echoed by all the professionals
interviewed. Despite all the challenges perceived by individuals thus far
identified, I was left with the sense that the individuals I interviewed felt
confident in their abilities to succeed within the MNC environment should
they so choose.

There is also evidence to suggest that mobility within the sector,
i.e., from one organisation to another is also dependent on networks. I
illustrated earlier in this chapter how several individuals had very similar
career histories and how they had studied and worked together in the
same organisations. Two of these interviewees told me of a very similar
scenario, which could even be the same event given their history. They
explained how they had decided to leave an MNC for another. Their
manager at the time was Angolan. When being told that the individuals
were leaving, the manager was not happy and made it quite clear that they
had no business coming back. One of the interviewees explained to me
that as far as their Angolan manager was concerned their relationship was
over, the manager had been betrayed and their mutual trust was broken.
There was no going back. The interviewee told me:

‘When the people they see our CVs [referring to him and his
colleague], each one is copy of the other...’

As the pair resigned from the company they thanked their manager:

‘My friend was saying: “thank you very much for all your support...”.
He [the Angolan MNC manager] said: “No. I don’t want thanks from
you. Once you go out this office, forget this company”. We said: “Ok,
that’s fine” and we left MNC X.’
When I asked about some of the reasons why individuals had moved from one company to another or more in the first couple of years of their careers, work life balance was highlighted as a primary reason for all. Given the nature of disciplines such as engineering and geology within the oil industry, it is not uncommon for graduates to begin their careers working offshore on rotation, usually working on the rig for four weeks and then coming home for four weeks. As the narratives reveal, this can be an ‘addictive’, albeit a stressful lifestyle and often difficult to manage, for example for people with young families. One interviewee for example, found it disrupting as he felt that life was going on in his absence and he had no part in it.

‘... And we didn’t have children, so but it was getting tough. You would come home and decisions were made and life was moving without you and you could feel it. When MNC X were looking for geologists, the salary was better than MNC Z’s salary at the time, but it was a difficult decision at the time because I was professionally quite happy, very happy to be at MNC Z. The working environment was very good, I knew the people... There was a relationship already established and they had good clients, the development plan was good, the ideas we had to go forward were good... and we were very well supported so it was a very difficult decision to make. But I had to decide at the end what was best for me. Despite the salary, if I had the chance to work in Luanda [i.e., office based – not offshore] at the time for MNC Z I would, despite the fact the salary in MNC X was much better.’

To an extent foreign MNCs for many of the interviewees were seen as stepping stones to something else, but it was not always shared or entirely clear to what. Although most interviewees were not able to say specifically what they envisioned for their careers in the long term, it was clear that most thought felt that they would like to take the knowledge and skills that they had acquired working for MNCs and go into business for
themselves. It seems to be a common perception that MNC offer decent salaries that enables individuals to get established. However, given the extreme high cost of living in Luanda, professionals such as those interviewed for this study felt that financially MNCs are not able to offer the kind of salaries that are needed to support extended families and sustain a good standard of living in the long term. Many professionals in Angola seek to develop business opportunities in addition to their full-time jobs for this reason. It is also believed that entrepreneurship is a way of creating employment opportunities for family and friends who would otherwise struggle and thus considered an important activity. In addition to self-employment aspirations, a minority of individuals said that they would consider a move to the NOC in the later stages of their careers. Two of the 15 professionals interviewed had experiences of working for the NOC as well as Western MNCs. They envisioned themselves as working for the NOC in the future. The NOC as an employer was viewed to offer better employment security. Two other interviewees, who had never been employed by the NOC, also felt that perhaps sometime in the future they would consider working for the NOC as opposed to another MNC.

6.4.5 Perspectives of personal professional development

As is already noticeable from several of the passages provided above, the narratives indicate that in the Angolan context professional development is made up of several important components such as challenging opportunities that enable learning and development, solid technical training, support and understanding from line managers and pay that is perceived equitable in relation to effort expended as well as in relation to others. Reflecting on perceptions of MNCs for example, it is possible to also see that an organisational culture that cultivates personal growth and encourages sharing of ideas appears to be conducive to job satisfaction.

‘I like to work for a company where I can pass my ideas and work with people that believe in me, to feel like I am important and I’m
giving my support to the company. Because at the end of the day, you want the money, but you have to, because you spend most of your time at work so you want to have fun too.’

The majority of the professionals whom I interviewed were either participating or had recently participated in a graduate development programme (GDP) on average lasting three years. I found that their experiences and perceptions of the programme influenced their experiences of working within the MNC environment as the two were intertwined. Within the particular organisation, I was left with the impression that the majority of Angolans who join the company are placed on the GDP, regardless of the number of years they may previously have had working in the industry. I also understood from the interviewees that the programme itself was a company-wide programme and implemented on a global basis. Out of the 15 professionals interviewed 11 had been placed on the organisations GDP. Out of the four that were not, two were secondees from another company and two were employed by other organisations at the time of interview. Out of the 11 individuals eight, most of whom had more than two years of work experience in the industry working for another MNC, but were placed on the GDP nonetheless.

Even though on the whole the training opportunities provided within the GDP were experienced positively, particularly mentoring and coaching, several individuals felt that the GDP was not the ‘right route’ for them. Several individuals also had not understood that when they were employed by the organisation that they would be placed on such a programme nor did they fully understand the nature of the GDP and its implications. For example one interviewee who had several years of experience working in two different MNCs prior to joining his current company explained to me when asked if he was on the GDP:
‘Yes, the programme was not sold in the interview. The interview was: “we want a geologist to help us in, because we will soon be drilling”‘

And when I asked him how it made him feel when he realized that he had been placed on the GDP, he replied:

‘Well, it only dawned on me when I came to London. That was crap. That was not what I wanted… I was certainly not impressed and that’s a criticism that I certainly conveyed to people at the time and now to whatever situation I see. It’s the fact that it’s part of the culture. People don’t tell me things, you know. Or they are not direct. Or they can be very eloquent when they put their ideas forward and paint a very colourful picture, or a very delightful picture, but I didn’t buy it. I’m not saying that because I’ve done it and I’m at the end. I felt the same way at the time.’

To another interviewee the GDP was experienced as an impediment to development, not so much from a technical perspective, but from a career progression and pay point of view. The interviewee felt that the programme was slow when he compared his career progression to his colleagues in Angola who were not on the programme. In other words the sentiment that has come across from this narrative as well as fieldwork is that individuals feel that inconsistencies exist within the GDP in terms of technical competence, responsibilities given and pay grades. Pay grades are not perceived to correlate to the skills and abilities individuals feel they have. Within the Angolan oil industry this seems to be a particularly complex issue. An essential component of the GDP in the Angolan context seems to include an international assignment, which I will discuss further in the next section.

Furthermore, English skills were also perceived to be a key to a successful career in the oil industry as the operating language in MNCs tends to be English. One interviewee who had learnt English during his
school years felt that at the time when he began to look for employment opportunities after graduating he was in an advantageous position because of his English language skills. Learning English was identified as both a motivating factors as well as a positive outcome of international assignments for both professionals and to an extent for spouses as I will go on to reveal in the next section as I reveal what part international assignment experiences have on career development experiences and aspirations.

6.5 INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS: VEHICLES OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As I explore the interviewee experiences of international assignments, I find myself returning to the beginning of the circle, to the family. Before concluding, in this section I will examine the impact of international assignments from professional and personal perspectives. Narratives reveal that international assignments were seen in terms of positive outcomes, but the decision to take up an assignment was not experienced as a choice as such by most. Although majority of interviewees also expressed positive attitudes towards going on an international assignment to the UK, the opportunity was perceived as one that was to a degree imposed upon individuals.
From the perspective of the professionals, some felt that their international assignment was not optional, but rather a part of the job that they had accepted and as such it was a ‘task’ that had to be done. For others an international assignment was seen as an essential part of career success. They felt that regardless of how they felt about going abroad, in order for them to develop professionally and remain competitive in the Angolan job market, international assignment experience was necessary. Three interviewees explicitly expressed that the prospect of the international assignment was one of the motivating factors in seeking a career in foreign MNCs. One of the two professionals who had experience of working in the NOC also described how within the company if one wanted to progress, international exposure with an operating company was seen as essential.

With regards to the nine spouses that agreed to be interviewed, all expressed some hesitation towards coming to the UK on assignment and a common theme to emerge was a sense of responsibility to be with their
husbands. That is not to say that they did not have positive experiences during their assignment, but the initial reaction was sadness for having to leave their families and friends behind as well as jobs and studies. The assignment was for most spouses seen as an interruption.

The major motivating factors that contributed towards positive attitudes of international assignments were: 1) learning English language skills; 2) professional training and development opportunities; and 3) financial gain. First, both spouses and professionals perceived learning English as advantageous for future career prospects. English skills were seen to add value to them as professionals.

Second, professional training and development opportunities were mainly anticipated by the professionals I interviewed, but also several spouses expressed that they had come to the UK expecting to engage in work or study. Although not expressed in all interviews, this expectation that employment or educational opportunities are also available for accompanying spouses is certainly one that I have heard echoed in the experiences of several Angolan friends. The realisation that educational and employment opportunities are limited, given limited English skills, cost of university education and simply the challenges of negotiating your way through an environment that is alien has been a hard one to come to terms with for many accompanying spouses. One interviewee, a qualified lawyer, who had just completed her studies and work placement before coming to the UK with her husband, explained her disappointment at what she perceived to be lack of opportunities for her in the UK:

‘Well, I think this is what made me feel very disappointed. When I came to London, I never imagined that I would become a housewife, because my whole life I have been independent…’

This feeling was also accompanied by an expectation that the company that had deployed her husband to the UK should carry some responsibility in assisting spouses in finding suitable career opportunities,
even if it was in an unpaid voluntary capacity. Three out of the nine spouses studied for further qualifications in their areas during their assignment in the UK. These three women were also the only ones from the group of spouses that had already obtained a university degree before coming to the UK. In addition to these three women, one other woman who had left behind her career expressed frustration at having to stay at home full-time and actively sought alternative opportunities with varying success that would add value to them as professionals when returning to Angola.

Thirdly, international assignments were perceived to be financially rewarding, although this seems to have been experienced with mixed feelings. It seemed that several participants were disappointed at the expatriate pay package offered to them by their company. However, reflecting on the many conversations that I have had with Angolan friends, it struck me that this disappointment seemed to stem from a comparison between what other MNCs were perceived to offer, since the expatriate pay packages actually received had also enabled several individuals build houses for themselves or buy land in Angola in preparation for their return.

Since I conducted interviews with the participants either approximately halfway into their assignments or near the end, I had the opportunity to engage with their experiences of their time in the UK. It seemed that each interviewee had experienced and overcome challenges of adapting to new environments, socially and organisationally but the overwhelming sentiment was a positive one.

However, common challenges that emerged from the data included communicating and building relationships with locals in the UK, English language skills (particularly for accompanying spouses, but also professionals), separation from extended family and friends and lack of support network. Interviewees felt that the ‘rules of engagement’ in the UK differed from Angola and many struggled to understand what they
perceived to be lack of interaction with neighbours and colleagues at work. For example one interviewee, whose comments echoed those of many others collected during data collection, told me about how he grappled with the way in which he viewed the behaviour of his British colleagues when he first arrived:

‘So, another shock that I had was British culture. A British person can be your friend, but he can just pass by you without saying anything. In Angola this would never happen. If you are my friend and you just pass by me, it means that our friendship is over. You have to say at least something’

Another male interviewee explained:

‘I will give you an example. In the office in Angola, if you are a really well dressed woman and if I say to you: “You are beautiful”, you would be really happy. If my wife’s workmate said to her that “you look good”, she will be happy. It’s nothing sexual. But in the UK, if you say to a colleague that “You are beautiful today”, she will think it’s harassment or something... Another thing is that, in Angola if we are in the same team and you don’t come a greet me, something is really wrong. Not only wrong, but really wrong. You are really sad, unhappy or angry with me... Here it’s like when we [colleagues] speak and discuss late into the night [for example over a drink after work] and tomorrow you come and just sit and don’t greet me. It’s challenging. It’s not easy for us.’

That being said, the international assignment experience was overwhelmingly perceived as one of professional and personal growth. From the personal perspective two significant themes emerged: 1) a new experience of being a nuclear family; and 2) developing alternative ways of seeing things as a result of exposure to a new culture and society. The idea of being a nuclear family, functioning and making decisions within the family without the influence of relatives meant that couples grew closer as
they came to rely on each other more on a daily basis. An overwhelming majority of interviewees, both male professionals and the spouses who were interviewed, explained that during their time abroad, they had become accustomed to and enjoyed the new sense of closeness with their nuclear family that they had developed being away from extended family. In talking about her experiences of living in the UK as an expatriate, one spouse explained to me that in the absence of her extended family in Angola, she had learned more about caring for her children; about being with them and giving them attention. She explained that in Angola, she was busy studying and working since she always had family, friends and neighbours to rely on to look after her child. In the UK, she explained, this was not an option since she had no family here and she did not know her neighbours and therefore she had to learn ‘a different’ way of being with her family.

Likewise, men, especially those whose wives had had a baby during the assignment, described how their traditional roles as men within the family had changed as a result of being away from extended family. Fathers described how they had the opportunity to spend time with their children during their assignment in a way that did not seem possible within the confines of Angolan culture where men still had a very traditionally masculine role. They described how in Angola, even if one was personally inclined to help with house work for example, a task traditionally considered work of women, the pressure from society, both men and women, to conform to a more ‘macho’ image of man was immense. Being abroad, unrestricted by societal norms and expectations on one hand and unsupported by their family and community on the other, meant that men were more engaged in family life within the home, which included helping with housework and caring for children. However it also meant that there was a lack of a social support network which majority of participants, especially the spouses interviewed missed. This isolation from family seemed to lead to a new divisions of labour within the household, where the men interviewed participated in other household tasks that in Angolan
culture are traditionally though to be ‘women’s work’. As one interviewee told me:

‘In terms of my personal life, the assignment has been very good for my relationship with my husband. I think we are closer, we are better friends. When we got married, we lived in Luanda for a year and a half, but my husband was working for another company on rotation and sometimes we had problems… It was a little bit difficult at the beginning of our relationship. But when we came here [UK], it was completely different. It had a very positive effect on my relationship with my husband and my son as well.’

Echoing the experiences of several Angolan men and women, another interviewee explained when I asked if there were any positive things that he will take away from his experience in the UK:

‘Yes, of course there are, especially for my daughters and my personal life is much more stable comparing to when we were in Angola… There were so many influences from our family and from our friends that we couldn’t stand as a family, as myself and my wife and my kids. Because in Angola the way in works in our culture is that you let other people influence your heart… I think they have good intentions, but sometimes they don’t give the right opinion. So I think in that sense we have grown as a family, because we have been apart, no influence from anyone… I would take that as the best thing…’

Interviewees also described the international assignment experience as one that has developed their cultural awareness and ability to deal with people with different values to their own. This cultural awareness and exposure to diversity was seen very much as a positive:

‘I think I’ve learnt a lot of things. I’ve learnt how to deal with different people from different countries… In Angola we just have our Angolan
culture. Sometimes when you don’t understand other people’s culture it is very difficult for you to deal with them. You judge people from [the perspective of] your own culture. That was the big change in my life.... My approach to life now is completely different than when I came from Angola, it’s completely different. I think it has been a good school for me, I have learned a lot of things... Professionally I had a lot of ups and downs, but overall I have to say it has been positive. This is part of life... Life is not just a straight line.’

Another interviewee described how he the realisation of how diverse a society London has had a profound impact on him.

‘…If I can talk a bit about the social aspect of all these experiences is that the striking thing that I witnessed when I came to London was to realize how diverse, how heterogeneous this society or this city is. And if I used to think that I was a patient and tolerant person, I think I am going out being even more tolerant and more patient because you have to cultivate these qualities if you want to survive in a society like this. And it’s really fascinating, because in a way we have now in Luanda, what I believe to be very diverse and heterogeneous society as well. Ok, we are all the same colour, or roughly, we share the same citizenship, but we are all different and I’m aware of that fact. And the differences stem from these social differences.’

Professionally international assignments were equated with adding value to individuals. In addition to the English language skills already discussed, the key benefits of international assignments as described were: exposure to HQ operating environment, organisational culture, industry experts and access to networks and therefore international assignment experience was also believed to lead to advanced career opportunities. A central component of the exposure to HQ corporate culture and operating environment that individuals felt they had received during their assignment was developing networks and understanding the
politics and structure within group dynamics. These were perceived to be almost ‘essential for survival’ in the corporate world as one interviewee described it. The professionals who shared their experiences with me felt strongly that international exposure has enabled them not only to gain exceptional technical training and access to expertise, but also to develop an understanding of the ‘bigger picture’ of how their companies operate globally and what this means when placed into the Angolan context.

‘I think I have the benefit of being Angolan, knowing how we operate and understanding our flaws and the advantage this four years of exposure to this environment, which is so dynamic and fast paced that I consider it to be a plus. I will certainly use these experiences to not only improve the way I do business in Luanda, conduct myself but try to inspire other people as well…’

Another interviewee described his experiences of working in the UK office:

‘Professionally, I would say here in MNC X we have more exposure, because [in London] you can find all the experts and you can gain experience from them, which is good. In Angola, I think the oil industry is reasonably recent and you don’t have experts like you have here... I think that’s the main thing that I take away from here.’

Furthermore as the first passage above demonstrates, it does not seem to be simply enough to acquire these skills, but passing on such skills and knowledge emerged as a significant theme in several narratives. As I worked my way through the narratives that I had captured, what struck me was the need for individuals to contribute to development in Angola through the transfer of acquired knowledge and skills to colleagues and communities. This sentiment emerged from the majority of the narratives that I had captured, albeit expressed in distinct words and contexts. The need to return home because of a belief that one can - as an individual - make a difference to the greater good of their society, nation or country is one that I have come to notice over the last 10 years.
6.6 RETURNING HOME: CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND ASPIRATIONS

The need to return home because of a belief that one can - as an individual - make a difference to the development and greater good of their society, nation or country is a characteristic that emerged from participant narratives, but one that I have also come to notice over the last 10 years. There seems to be an inherent need among the professionals interviewed to be a part of the country’s nation building process as it emerges from over three decades of war. Although experienced to different degrees, there seems to be a sentiment that returning home from abroad is important, not just to be closer to family and to live in an environment that individuals seem to feel is part of who they are, but also they have a desire and a duty to contribute to the development of their country and their communities.

Figure 6.6 Perceptions and experiences of repatriation
This sense of responsibility often leaves individuals feeling conflicted, particularly those who also have a desire not only for an international career, but hope they could provide their families a more comfortable standard living abroad. On one hand individuals are enticed by the prospect of international careers and tempted by the possibilities and infrastructure available in developed countries such as the UK, but on the other there seems to be almost an element of betrayal of one’s country and one’s people if succumbed to temptation. As one interviewee reflected on his own choices:

‘I may sound confused… on one hand I now think that I can be out of here [Angola] any time soon. If I have the right things in place, the conditions and everything and I can be out of Angola and be somewhere else in the world. But on the other hand I really want to be there… to help as much I can to change the status quo. It may sound very romantic, but changes are needed and we are not going to have change by any other means, we will not have another war, another fight. We will have to change the way our society has been shaped by empowering people with knowledge. If I happen to have this knowledge I want to be part of this change. But on the other hand, I think my family deserves [better].’

What was striking to me is that even those that were very anxious about returning to Angola because of the difficult conditions and challenges they would face, everyone had a need to return home. For some it was an opportunity for professional development not to be missed, but for all it was about family and belonging to a land that gives birth to values inherent to the way of being. Angolan culture is about the present and not about the distant future. It is evident that although one can have hopes and dreams, an element of fate prevails and what will happen, will happen. I have struggled to find the right words to describe what home means for Angolans. It is a quintessential concept for Angolan identity and
it is where values and family are rooted, from which they grow. Home is rooted in the land, one needs to have land.

When I look at the narratives that I have collected, all stories regardless of the different routes taken, seem to lead home. There is a sense of belonging and a sense of family, which ultimately takes priority. Seven out of 15 professionals expressed that they would like to live outside of Angola at some point in the future. Three of those seven had non-Angolan wives and their desire did not seem to be entirely personal, but rather rooted in concern for their families’ ability to cope in the Angolan environment. The remaining four who had Angolan wives, liked the idea of living abroad for both professional and personal opportunities they felt it offered. However, each seemed quite resigned to living in Angola, as if it were their fate; that is just the way it is. To conclude, I want to leave you with a passage from one person’s story. Having spent most of his childhood and adult life abroad, enticed by the democracy he had enjoyed, he describes his return to Angola: his return home:

‘...I started enjoying democracy. [I thought] I’m going to settle in the UK and go into academia... And then my uncle, my mum’s cousin, came to talk to me in our mother tongue: “You know, you are one of us, you are a model for these youngsters. You know if you go they will always come and ask: “What are you chasing?”... In Bakongo society, we say you teach your children indirectly. You teach them in terms of proverbs... So the proverb my uncle told me: “Do you see a train? A train cannot go forever. It will leave London, it goes to Paris, to Hong Kong, and you know, it goes to India. There is no way. It will still return to London. It departed from London. It cannot go... you departed from here. You saw it was time to return here”. And this man is my uncle. My maternal uncle... I had no choice but to listen.

Then my cousin came... My uncle said: “Look at your brother. Your cousin, he wants to leave Angola. We are going to lose him again.

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We lost him for so many years, now that he is back..." so he came. He told me, “You are joking! You are kidding! There are so many people, us Angolans who are looking forward to coming and working in Angola. There are Angolans here who don’t even have jobs. And you end up with a job. You just want to go. Go and do what?... People bank on you. The family. You are an elder. Whatever. And you just want to go... And now we have peace. You have nothing to complain about... why do you want to leave?” And I said: “Okay, I’m going to settle”. And I settled...’

6.7 EMPIRICAL CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

To summarise the empirical contribution that my analysis brings to existing understanding of career development, the findings revealed that multiple and distinctly nuanced dynamics between institutional microstructures (e.g., family, education and employment) and societal macrostructures (e.g., socio-economic, political, historical and cultural environments) significantly shape individual career decision making, behaviour and aspirations in the Angolan context.

More specifically to address the research questions outlined in chapter one as to what types of contextual factors influence career development experiences, perceptions, decisions and aspirations of professional Angolans, narratives demonstrate that family and the welfare of one’s family is a major driving force and motivator of career development, beginning with the family environment in which individuals grow up in, to new formations of families later in life. The significance of family can be understood as a consequence of two interrelated factors: 1) prominent cultural values such as collectivism, interdependence and social conformity as; and 2) challenging socio-economic environment manifested as lack of consistent access to basic amenities (e.g., water, gas, and electricity), poor infrastructure, lack of educational resources etc. The
experiences individuals therefore have of socialisation within their family environments shaped by broader macro contexts influence the kinds of educational choices they come to make and indeed the opportunities they perceive as available and attainable.

Employment experiences of the individuals whose stories I have captured with this study have been significantly influenced, not only by other institutional factors such as family and educational experiences, but by broader societal structures. Political context, in the sense that it encapsulates the dynamic and complex relationship between foreign multinational organisations, Angola’s national oil company and the Angolan government, plays a significant role in shaping individuals’ perceptions of available professional opportunities. Acute awareness of the government’s nationalisation agenda on the impact of MNC resourcing in the oil industry is a significant factor in how individual’s define themselves professionally and the value that they perceive is placed on them for their nationality over skills. Related to this, the historical context is significant in shaping experiences and aspirations of the Angolans individuals interviewed as the perceptions and stereotypes relating to race and nationality can be traced back to Angola’s colonial encounter with Portugal. Thus colonial encounters of the past are also prevalent in the contemporary dialectical relationship between the West and Angola.

I also found experiences of living and working in Western settings to have a profound impact on personal and professional development as well as aspirations for international careers. From the point of professional development, however, I discovered the Angolan politico-economic context that defines the nature of foreign multinational operations in the oil industry was a significant constraint to individual’s possibilities to realising their aspirations for international careers. In other words, international assignment experiences exposed individuals to possibilities outside of Angola, which they found were contradictory to the government’s
nationalisation agenda imposed on foreign MNCs that is intended to have Angolans developed for Angolan operations.

In addition to the constraints that the external environment was perceived and experienced to place on individual career development, I also found that other subjective, culturally rooted constraints shaped the actual enactment of careers. In the previous chapter I suggested that these perceived constraints relate to the importance that is placed on collectivism, interdependence and conformity as underpinning societal values in Angola and connected to this a notion of social responsibility and nationhood.

To address the second research question examining what if any influence experiences associated with international living have on the personal and professional development of Angolan professionals, I found that on a more personal level that has implications for self-precepts and identity, international living experiences shaped conceptualisations of family. The absence of extended family meant that both men and women re-evaluated and adapted their assumed gender roles to fit the environment. As a consequence the narratives revealed that the individuals experienced significant personal growth as a result of their international assignment experiences in the UK. Moreover, the narratives captured here suggest that several individuals experienced a shift in their priorities and cultural values away from collectivistic thinking towards more ‘Westernised’ notions of individualism as a result of their international experiences.

In summary, the way in which professionals in the Angolan oil industry conceptualise and accordingly develop their careers is dependent on institutional and broader societal structures. Thus individual career attitudes, behaviours and aspirations cannot be understood without an appreciation for contextual structural factors. Moreover, these institutional micro structures and societal macro structures are interconnected in
dynamic ways, and thus it is the interplay between these that shape career construction and not any isolated contexts. Given the significance of history in shaping current dynamics, careers need to be understood holistically in the Angolan context in ways that recognise the different stages in which careers develop over the course of an individual’s life.

In the next chapter I will discuss these findings in relation to the theoretical underpinnings outlined in chapter two and map out how the empirical findings presented here can contribute to our existing understanding of career development, particularly in African and postcolonial contexts. In my discussion I will critically explore how postcolonial and postmodern perspectives can help make sense of the relationship between societal structures relevant to the Angolan context and individual agency. I will also explore to what extent can career construction in the Angolan context be understood using frameworks premised on Western ideology and limited existing non-Western models of career development. Reflective of postcolonial and postmodern endeavour, my discussion will ultimately focus on formulating alternative ways of looking how individuals envision their career development and the driving forces behind their visions and decisions.
CHAPTER SEVEN
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: SITUATING NARRATIVES

My intention in this chapter is to bring together the conceptual analysis of existing career and postcolonial theory, the socio-economic, political and cultural context of Angola and the empirical findings presented thus far to illustrate how the study presented in this thesis as a whole provides a unique contribution to existing understanding of career theory in African postcolonial contexts. As such the purpose of this chapter is to place the substantive contribution outlined at the end of the previous chapter and illustrated in figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 6.5 and 6.6 in context with existing theory and thereby address the research questions set out in chapter one conceptually and empirically.

7.1 CHAPTER OUTLINE

I will begin this chapter by presenting the career construction framework that amalgamates the conceptual underpinnings and the empirical findings of this study. Reflective of the conceptual framework I introduced in chapter two and the empirical findings I presented in the previous chapter I will then discuss the significance of family in constructing careers in the postcolonial context of Angola. The findings indicated that family is an important influencing factor in career decision making and the reasons for its significance has derived from cultural as well as socio-economic context, my discussion will touch on both. The influence of family in terms of previous socialisation experiences and as a motivator was highlighted as important factor in educational aspirations
and decisions for cultural and socio-economic reasons also and thus this will form a part of my analysis here to illustrate how the empirical findings of this study contribute to developing a more holistic understanding of career construction.

I will then focus my discussion on experiences of employment including international assignments and how the way in which the experiences captured here add insight to existing knowledge about career aspirations and how these are enacted within an African postcolonial context. The final part of this chapter will be dedicated to exploring how more Africanised models present in current commentary offer insight and ways in which they fall short in the Angolan context.

7.2 CAREER CONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

As the findings have revealed the way in which careers are constructed for the Angolans interviewed is context specific. Career development experiences, decisions and aspirations are shaped by contexts in which they take place, be it from an institutional perspective or from a broader macro one. Drawing on existing conceptualisations of careers, and career development theories, the substantive contribution that I make in this thesis is illustrated in Figured 7.1. I argue that in the Angolan context, the ways in which careers are constructed can be viewed as a dynamic multi-layered construct, in which the individual career construction forms the core. More specifically, careers in the Angolan postcolonial context are constructed by individuals within the context of micro structures (i.e., institutions) that can be viewed broadly as family, education and employment. This notion of micro structures combines elements from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) microsystem, mesosystem and the exosystem (as discussed in chapter two), in that it encapsulates the roles played by the individual’s family, friends, environmental/institutional contexts and the relationships between the individual and these various elements. The institutions of family, education and employment are not
only interrelated, but exist and are shaped by broader *macro structures* such as the political, historical, socio-economic and cultural environments. These macro structures also draw from Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological framework as I interpreted these macro structures to encapsulate societal (including cultural) values that define career attitudes and behaviour.

Bringing together my conceptual and my empirical analysis suggests that rather than being ‘equal’ counterparts, the historical and political context in fact precede the socioeconomic context. I argue here that the socio-economic landscape of Angola has been shaped Angola’s colonial encounter, rather than vice versa. With regards to the impact of cultural contexts, we can argue that it precedes all other structures and I would not disagree. However, for the purpose of understanding career aspirations and decisions, I argue that it is helpful to view the cultural values that individuals hold and that are prevalent in society as a mechanism to manage the uncertainties or challenges that the socioeconomic situation brings. The relationship between the various components of micro structures and the broader macro structures is dynamic and continuously evolving. The relationships that I have identified here draw from recent development in postcolonial theory as well as postmodern perspectives to offer unique insight. However, this is simply one interpretation and using the career construction framework as a conceptual model in other contexts would most likely highlight different kinds of relationships.
In chapter two I critically examined various existing Western and non-Western frameworks to develop a broad understanding of the field in which to locate this study. I situated the study presented in this thesis within existing constructionist career development literature, being mindful of transnational and multicultural issues. Referring to the key debates highlighted by Peiperl and Arthur (2000), I suggested that the study that I present in this thesis has the potential to contribute to current understandings of the interplay between individual action and societal structure. Given the African post-colonial context of this study, I proposed that postcolonial theory and critique offers useful conceptual lenses to make sense of empirical findings. Postcolonial perspectives remain largely unexplored within career development theory. Thus, postcolonialism provides a novel approach to making sense of career development.
experiences and offers alternative ways of understanding the dynamic relationships which connect individual enactment of careers and societal structures within the developing country context of Angola, a context I examined in chapter three.

Having adopted a grounded theory approach to guide my data collection and analysis, new themes have emerged as a result of such an iterative approach. Therefore, the discussion here not only locates the empirical findings within career and postcolonial commentary analysed in chapter two, but also incorporates additional literature needed to give meaning to the empirically emergent concepts. My analysis here therefore also reveals there are elements at play that when analysed through the prism of postmodernism useful insight can be gained. In addition to exploring ways in which postcolonialism has helped me make sense of participant narratives to bring new insights to the foreground in existing career theory, I will also explore how it potentially falls short in the Angolan context. Drawing on hermeneutics and social constructionism I have analysed the findings presented in the previous chapter in a particular way and thus come up with one interpretation. Should the findings be analysed using another paradigm, the consequent discussion and analysis would likely differ.

Also a further point to take a note of as I explore postcolonial rhetoric here and its significance to the empirical findings is that the Angolan context that forms the landscape for this investigation may be analysed from two distinct but interrelated postcolonial perspectives: Angola’s colonial encounter with Portugal and Angola’s post-colonial encounter with Anglo-Saxon multinational corporations (MNCs). From a colonial and imperialist point of view and relevant to postcolonial critique, there are two dialectical layers within Angola’s encounter with the West.

The first layer relates to the physical, political, economic, cultural, ideological and linguistic domination by Portuguese colonial powers over
all aspects of Angolan society and how that encounter is reflected in Angolan culture, customs and systems today. With Angola’s independence in 1975, shifts in the global economy since then and particularly with Portugal’s economic downturn in recent years, the balance has shifted in several ways. Portugal no longer has a physical foothold in Angolan territory and as my conceptual analysis of the Angolan context in chapter three demonstrates, political and economic power in Angola has shifted away from its former colonial rulers into the hands of the Angolan government. However, Portugal’s colonial imprint remains evident in many facets of Angolan society, culture and customs and especially in urban areas such as Luanda.

The second layer then relates to the influence of Western, more specifically Anglo-Saxon elements. Anglo-Saxon influences are relevant for the study presented in this thesis since my research question relates specifically to the living and working experiences of Angolans within Western settings and the impact of such experiences on career development. Moreover, data were collected from individuals whom all had experiences of working or living in British settings.

7.3 FAMILY, EDUCATION AND CAREER CONSTRUCTION

The significance that is given to family when making career related decisions, even at a young age, is shaped by both the cultural values that are embedded in the environment and by the Angolan socio-economic, political and historical context (see Figure 6.2), the Angolan situation as Justin Pearce, a journalist who has written about Angola aptly put it. Family, an extended concept, epitomises what it means to be Angolan and ultimately life is about providing for family. This sentiment appears to inherently underpin the kinds of decisions individuals make about their careers. I will begin with by exploring cultural reasoning for this.

General consensus exists within career development and vocational development literature that family is a significant factor in shaping career
development of individuals (Blustein, 2004; Brown, 2004; Bullington & Arbona, 2001; Chope, 2005; Counsell, 1999; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986; Whiston & Keller, 2004). Academic commentary that examined the influence of family on career development is abundant as Whiston and Keller's (2004), Brown's (2004) and Blustein's (2004) extensive reviews demonstrate. The impact of family in shaping vocational decisions has been investigated from a variety of proximal and contextual perspectives ranging in focus from family expectations, interaction, demographics and configurations (see Whiston & Keller, 2004). Vondracek et al. (1986) argue that career development needs to be understood as developmental and contextual or dynamic and interactional recognising the continuously changing individual and environment. In doing so, Vondracek et al. (1986) also contend that culture influences learned roles and family role expectations of children as they grow up.

Building on this, Brown's (2004) analysis of existing studies that investigate the relationship between family influences, racial and ethnic dimensions and career development indicates that the influence of parental aspirations, parental involvement, perceived parental support and the support and encouragement of extended family in career decision making is particularly evident in studies conducted among ethnic minority groups and within collectivist cultural contexts (e.g., Tang, Fouad, & Smith). The influence that elders (e.g., family members or teachers) seemingly have on vocational choices in the Angolan context according to the narratives here echoes Brown's conclusions.

Adding to Brown's review, other studies on career development in non-Western contexts or in relation to non-Western individuals also highlight the significance of family in career development (e.g., Bullington & Arbona, 2001; Counsell, 1999; Salami & Aremu, 2007; Singaravelu, White, & Bringaze, 2005). For instance, Singaravelu et al.'s comparative study of factors influencing career decision making of international
students in the US found that 'family influence was most prominent in non-Asian international students…. these students originated primarily from Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, where economic growth is relatively slower…' (2005: 53). Salami and Aremu also observe that where in individualistic cultures parental dependence is viewed negatively, as immature, in collectivist cultures children 'derive a greater sense of psychological security from their obedience to and dependence on parent' (2007: 598).

In light of the state of the country’s developing, but poor infrastructure and the difficulties described by individuals in dealing with issues as traffic and transport, power and water cuts, lack of educational opportunities and poor medical care on a daily basis to name a few, suggests that the benchmarks for living standards is different to those in Western developed nations. In Maslow’s (1943) terms, greater emphasis is placed on the fulfilment of physiological needs (e.g., breathing, food, water, and sleep) and safety needs (e.g., security of body, employment, resources, morality, the family, health and property) simply because the environment makes their achievement more challenging. In African developing countries security and support comes from the family and social networks. My analysis affirms existing arguments proposed about significance of collectivism, interdependence in African cultures (Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2006; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Karsten & Illa, 2005; Lynham, Nafukho, & Cunningham, 2009; Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Salami & Aremu, 2007).

As is evident, the significance of family in shaping career decisions and aspirations nor the importance of family in career development as such is not a novel concept. As my analysis here illustrates the role of family in shaping careers has been covered from many angles. The findings of the study presented here support such existing understandings of the impact of family on career development experiences. However, my analysis suggests that influence of family tends to be examined from a
family-of-origin perspective, thus focusing on the impact of family that one has grown up with, rather than the new family configurations formed later in life as adults (Blustein, 2004; Brown, 2004; Keller & Whiston, 2008; Whiston & Keller, 2004).

When the family is considered in relation to work, it tends to be done so from a work-life balance perspective (e.g., Sargent & Domberger, 2007; Shortland & Cummings, 2007), but not expressly looking at how providing for one’s family can be a motivational aspect of career development. Building on this idea of family as not only a starting point, epitomising an environment which shapes and guides individual aspirations, family and more specifically providing and ensuring the welfare of one’s one family on a physically challenging environment is a key motivational element in the career development of Angolan professionals within professional lives. The challenging socio-economic environment also accentuates the need and the difficulty in achieving a balance between professional commitments and aspirations and family life.

The findings presented here suggest that achieving work-life balance in the Angolan context cannot be viewed from an individual perspective because the quality of life (access to basic amenities and more importantly education) of extended family is often dependent of the professional success of a few selected individuals such as those whose experiences have been captured here. Certainly current commentary on work-life balance does not reflect the nature of this compromise as it is perceived in African developing country contexts.

By demonstrating why family welfare is a perceived as a priority and how family as an environment for early socialisation as well as formations in later life explicitly shape career decisions, the empirical study presented here brings to the foreground novel perspective on career development in non-Western contexts. The findings presented here offer a more holistic and comprehensive perspective of the influence of family in shaping
career development in the Angolan context thereby offering a sense of continuity throughout the different stages of career development. In this sense deepening our knowledge about the impact of family also contributes to understanding the unstructured and unplanned aspects of careers that take place outside organisational settings, but yet make up an individual’s career as a whole.

7.3.1 Colonial encounters post modern perspectives

To understand the challenges that Angola’s socio-economic or indeed political context poses that amplified dependency on others within your family and indeed community, a closer look at the country’s colonial legacy is needed. By examining Angola’s colonial encounter a better understanding of the changing nature of Angolan society and prevalent inequality can also be attained. Angeles’ (2005) analysis demonstrates that economic inequality in developing countries directly correlates to colonialism. His primary proposition is that the nature of economic inequality in the developing world relates to different types of types of experiences during the colonial period (Angeles, 2005). In other words, where the presence of European settlers was greater, so is the economic inequality. Moreover, Angeles (2005) makes an important point as he contends that understanding the significance of colonialism is essential in addressing problems of inequality between the rich and poor in developing nations on the long term.

Angeles (2005) also draws a useful distinction between settler and peasant colonies, the latter being one where the number of European settlers was relatively small and exploitation was focused on tax collection rather than direct seizure and control of land and resources. European settler communities on the other hand were significantly larger, albeit still a minority, but took control over both land and resources. Thus income inequality in such countries became particularly high. Portuguese presence in Angola can be characterised as a settler colony, but one that differed from those of the British colonial empire in Eastern Africa (Chabal,
2007). I will elaborate on this as move on to discuss employment experiences, career construction and notions of race and nationality.

Bringing together my own observations and findings with existing commentary on Angolan politics and economy, the shift towards more Western economic and political systems and emerging middle class of Angolans in a society that has been previously been simply characterised by the rich-poor divide, urban Angola today resembles that of a capitalist consumerist society - albeit with an African twist. Thus post modern perspectives can offer an alternative perspective. The findings indicate that the acquisition of material wealth is important in the Angolan context, not only out of necessity. Material wealth is seen as the way to improve standard of living for one’s family and the only way to access to basic amenities given the country’s developing infrastructure. Money is also important for the perceived status that it brings. Utility of goods is clearly significant in Angola, given the country’s developing infrastructure as evident in the findings presented in the previous chapter, but the emphasis on representational value of goods in an increasingly free market economy focused on consumerism is also evident in the urban Angolan context.

Referring to the ‘African industrial manager’ Jaja (2003) for example observes the significance of impression management within African organisational dynamics. Jaja suggests that the twenty-first century African industrial manager seeks to ‘regulate the image others hold of him in many different ways’ relating to the way in which they communicate, dress and even furnish their offices (2003: 76). Thus the way in which individuals represent themselves depending on context and what they hope to achieve is important.

Reflecting on the significance of material wealth in the Angolan context, Jean Baudrillard’s (1975) controversial visions of postmodern society offers intriguing insight. In critically reevaluating Marx’s arguments around utility and exchange, Baudrillard (1975) argues that as a result of a
transformational shift in society from production to consumption, material goods can be understood in two terms: goods that have a utility value and goods that have an exchange value (P. Prasad, 2005). In his ‘Translator’s Introduction’ to Baudrillard’s (1975) book *Mirror of Production* Poster explained that where Marx focused on the ‘real’ act of production and consumption, Baudrillard argued the ‘process of signification is the true essence of capital’ (1975: 5). In other words, what is of importance is the value that is placed on the goods produced or consumed.

The significance (i.e., the value) of goods is therefore socially constructed according to Baudrillard (1975) through processes of communication and marketing (P. Prasad, 2005). According to Coulter’s (2011) analysis of Baudrillard’s criticism of Marx suggests that capitalism thus produces the social. Baudrillard’s major criticism of Marxist theory of productivism is that it offers no real or radical alternative to a capitalist production as it defines utility and exchange in terms of political economy (Coulter, 2011). Thus what Marx produces is simply a mirror of production (Baudrillard, 1975: 152). Baudrillard’s (1975) contrastingly argues that postmodern society is saturated with goods of symbolic value; what is significant is what these goods represent rather than what they are or indeed what their use it (P. Prasad, 2005). According to Baudrillard postmodern society is epitomised by this consumption of goods with symbolic value which also in turn has an impact for how selfhood and experience in constituted (Baudrillard, 1975).

The aspect of postmodern society reflected here has significance for the findings that I presented in the previous chapter in two respects. It indicates that capitalism creates social structure, i.e., classes (Coulter, 2011). Returning to chapter three and De Oliveira’s (2007) arguments regarding the dichotomised nature of Angola’s political economy would suggests that in Angola’s case social classes are products of two distinguishable systems. Although some media reports suggest that Angola has no middle class (see Redvers, 2012) and society is simply
epitomised by a small but very significant rich elite and the vast majority who live in poverty, others suggest that a middle class is emerging, albeit hard to define (see Aherns, 2012). My observations and findings indicate that the latter is more probable.

Aherns (2012) article suggests Angola’s middle class is not easily defined, but education seems to be central as she reports that in general middle class Angolans are university educated and hold professional jobs. Referring to an interview with Mark Weimer of Chatham House, Aherns (2012) reports that the problem in defining a middle class in Angola according to income is that the income of the individual tends to be distributed among family. Thus, determining how well-off one is financially is also dependent on how widely one’s monthly earnings are dispersed. In the end, a person earning $5000 a month and another earning $9000 may well reflect similar kinds of lifestyles depending on their family circumstances. This latter point raises an interesting issue about the significance of family and how individuals experience, or rather assume, financial responsibility for their immediate and extended families and how this is reflected in the way in which they make decisions about their careers. I will return to this shortly. Within the context of the oil industry I suggest that the findings presented here support the notion that urban Angolan society, in Luanda at least, cannot be seen entirely in terms of a rich/poor divide.

So against this backdrop that I have presented thus far, in the next section I will discuss some of the more specific aspects of interplay between structural influences and individual enactment of careers in relation to the institutional micro structures highlighted by the career construction framework. In doing so, I will highlight where existing commentary on career development falls short and how therefore the study presented here advances theoretical and practical understanding about career s and career development in African developing country contexts.
7.4 EMPLOYMENT, CONTEXT AND POSTCOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

The novel insights that this study brings to the foreground derive from postcolonial perspectives used to understand the dynamic relationship between Portuguese colonialism, Western Anglo-Saxon influences, notions of nationality and race in defining perceived available opportunities and therefore career development of individuals. These dynamics highlight the interrelated nature of political, historical, socio-economic and cultural elements when examined in the context of careers. The analysis I present here suggests that the above mentioned dynamics also influence perceptions of employment relationships and psychological contracts, which in turn have important consequences for how individuals in the Angolan context envision their careers. Empirical findings also suggested that professional success in the Angolan contexts is viewed in terms of growth and development; technical development as well as the ability to understand and negotiate within the complex dynamics of organisational culture, political agendas and networks of interpersonal relationship.

Career development and the decisions that are taken within the sphere of employment are significantly shaped by the political agendas in the Angolan oil industry according to the findings. The perceived value and self-value of Angolans as professionals within this context appears to be determined by the Angolan government’s nationalisation agenda (Angolanisation) and MNCs ability or need to address it (see Figure 6.3). Perceptions and experiences of Angolanisation and MNCs’ perceived responses to the agenda impact how Angolan professionals view their employment relationships and psychological contracts (i.e., ‘the Individual beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organisation’; Rousseau, 1995: 9). In other words, career development experiences in the organisational settings are shaped by objective external career constraints and subjective perceived constraints (Gunz et al., 2000).
In light of the foregoing, two main themes of the main themes that emerged from the empirical findings, stereotyping and Angolanisation may be interpreted as career boundaries. The insights that emerged are founded in the interplay between perceived reality and the wider societal context and how this interplay influences career decisions and aspirations. Thus career constraints in the Angolan context can be explained from historical, political, socio-economic and cultural perspectives. Postcolonial theory particularly offers useful insight into making sense of the Angolan professionals’ perceptions and experiences of stereotyping and Angolanisation as well as the implications for employment relationships.

Existing career development commentary, particularly in non-Western contexts suggests that contextual factors such as political, socio-economic and cultural environments are important factors in determining career development in developing country settings (e.g., Counsell, 1999; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Yakushko, 2007). Counsell’s (1999) study for instance demonstrated that one of the most mentioned factors influencing career thoughts and behaviours of Ethiopian careerists was political and economic issues, which in developing country contexts tend to be closely related. Studies conducted in former Soviet states also related career attitudes and behaviour with legacies of communist policies and culture (Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Yakushko, 2007). Deft and Laurent (1989) associate culture explicitly with careers by arguing that cultural context defines how individuals see their careers. Indeed cross-cultural classics such as Hofstede’s (1980, 1991) cultural dimensions are frequently referenced in career development commentary that explore cultural approaches to careers. In addition to bringing new insight to the foreground, the findings of this study support such arguments.

7.4.1 Stereotyping and postcolonial critique

Findings in relation to the three different significant stereotypes (i.e., in relation to race, education and the desire to choose management over
technical career path) that emerged from my empirical analysis reflect the kind of subjective perceived career constraints that Gunz et al. (2000) describe. In chapter six the first stereotype that I highlighted related to racial stereotyping, suggesting that assumptions about individual’s background and status based on the tone of one’s skin remain an issue in the Angolan context. The narratives here do not reveal if such stereotypes are true or not, but indicate that skin colour is still interpreted to imply certain status, upbringing and educational attainment, admittedly often leading to incorrect assumptions.

The second stereotype referred to the perceptions that Angolan educational qualifications at university level were less valued than qualifications obtained from universities in Western countries, thus implying that the skills and abilities of professionals who obtained their degrees in Angola are valued differently to their Western educated counterparts. The third stereotype was concerned with the misconception that all Angolan professionals in the oil industry want to be managers.

These stereotypes derive from Angolan individuals’ perceptions about how their abilities are valued and the kind of opportunities they perceive as available. Reflective of social constructionist approaches, I argue here that such perceptions have derived from the individuals’ interpretation of other peoples’ actions within the context of their past socialisation experiences. My analysis of participant narratives indicated that perceived stereotyping of Angolans by Westerners as well Angolans plays a part in the career development experiences of Angolan professionals working the oil industry. However as I pointed out the nature of the impact is not conclusive within the narratives that I have collected nor in the fieldwork that I have carried out. The perception of inequality or discrimination was strongly evident in all narratives, but the ways in which they manifest, have been experienced and indeed their consequences felt vary from person to person.
Perceptions of available opportunities professionally were associated with nationality and in some instances race (the two frequently used interchangeably in participant narratives), suggesting that individuals feel different opportunities exist for different nationalities. The interview narratives revealed that differences in the types of working environments and professional opportunities perceived available within the Angolan national oil company (NOC) and Western multinational corporations (MNCs) exist. These perceived differences were related to nationality and race.

These findings can be interpreted within a postcolonial frame of reference and broken down to associations between racial and economic inequality in developing nations and colonialism. Indeed, race and class have received attention within the postcolonial discourse, most notably from Fanon (1986 [1952]) and Gilroy (1987) and we can also return to Angeles (2005) thesis regarding the nature of colonialism in correlation to economic inequality in developing nations. I will return to Angola’s colonial encounter with Portugal to illustrate where perceptions of inequality hail from.

Early Portuguese settlers in Angola were poor and poorly educated rather than aristocrats (Chabal, 2007). It took little time for Portuguese settlers to mix with indigenous Angolans and consequently we have the emergence of a mixed race (mestiço) Creole society, or the Afro-Portuguese. Thus the arrival of the poor and the poorly educated subjects of the Portuguese crown in Angola, according to Chabal, ‘skewed the economic development of the country and resulted in certain forms of racial discrimination’ (2007: 7).

Significant to the development of my analysis here is also Angeles’ observation that independence in such nations was done by the descendants of European settlers. Angeles observes:
‘This implied that the privileges that this group had obtained during the colonial period were not removed with the change of political status. If anything, European descendants were freer to impose their views and secure their advantages since they did not need to accommodate to the orders of the metropolis anymore’ (2005: 7).

In the Angolan context, Malaquais links the extensive colonial encounter and subsequent tensions between Angolan nationalist movements with ethnicity, race and class (2000). He contends that although the country’s nationalist movements can be divided along ethnic lines, racial and class divisions were prominent elements of the post-colonial discourse and conflict. Malaquais writes that for the opposition parties UNITA and FNLA, their concern was what they perceived to be the exploitation of the country’s resources by and to the benefit of a small portion of Portuguese settlers. Moreover, the two parties viewed the key figures in the leading MPLA party to be Portuguese-descendants or descending from economically privileged classes (Malaquias, 2000). According to Malaquais race was not on the agenda for the Luanda-based MPLA, but class was. MPLA was founded very much on Marxist-Leninist ideology, which the party managed to use to gain the support of ‘the embryonic proletariat, the emerging intelligentsia, and revolutionary mixed-race Angolans (mulattos)’ (Malaquias, 2000: 96).

However, with the fall of the Soviet Union MPLA renounced their Marxist-Leninist ideology in the early 1990’s and ‘embraced Western political and economic models’ and thus ideology lost meaning towards the end of the conflict (Malaquias, 2000: 96). Although class is no longer an explicit item on the agenda, the imprint left behind by not only the government’s past ideologies, but over five centuries of colonial history inevitably has left a mark that is still visible in Angolan society today.
The way in which Portugal’s colonial legacy is evident in urban Angola today is multifaceted. Modern Angolan culture and cultural identity seems to be as much characterised by what may be considered indigenous African customs and beliefs as it is by those that stem from Portugal, but have ingrained into society over five centuries of Portuguese assimilationist colonial policy (Bender, 1978). The findings suggest that although these sentiments still linger today, the nature of the race-class dynamics are shifting. I therefore question to what extent it is helpful to dichotomise between Portuguese and Angolan elements within the context of urban Angolan culture and identity.

Rather than attempting to distinguish between Angolan and Portuguese cultural values, attitudes and customs, perhaps in the urban Angolan context a reconceptualization of identity and culture is warranted. In addition to the hybridity of urban Angolan culture – a fusion of Portuguese and Angolan elements (Chabal, 2007), the nature of current Angolan politico-economic landscape, remnants not only of racial struggle but of class struggle – has also left me questioning to what extent can postcolonial rhetoric alone help interpret how urban professionals in Angola make sense of their careers now and in the future.

I return now to the second stereotype about how Angolans are perceived by their Western and Angolan managers as well as colleagues influences the nature of their current employment relationships and the psychological contract. The narratives revealed that several Angolan professionals interviewed believed that Western management and leadership viewed their skills and abilities as less than those of their Western counterparts. This stereotype was perceived to influence the kind of progression and developmental opportunities available.

This stereotype can also be subjected to ‘classic’ postcolonial analysis about the power of Orientalist definition (Said, 1978). By defining the non-Western ‘Other’ as inferior, the Western thus defines themselves
as superior. By doing so, according to postcolonial critique, Western corporate management simply justifies their subjugation of the Angolan ‘subaltern’ Angolan (Spivak, 1993). As I revealed in the previous chapter some of the comments made by interviewees about the need for MNCs to be seen giving Angolans opportunities, but setting them up for failure and thus ‘demonstrating’ the incapability of Angolans to take on decision making responsibility and therefore proving their own Western superiority reflects specifically the kind of colonial encounter that postcolonial theorists seek to critique.

Ironically, similar views about the skills of foreign educated and Angolan educated professionals were also believed to be held by some Angolans. Narratives also revealed a certain admiration for ‘Western’ style management practices premised on more egalitarian approaches than those conceived in highly hierarchical Angolan settings. Classical postcolonialists would argue that this is simply evidence of the West’s attempt to colonise of the mind of the subaltern.

Within the postcolonial frame of reference such perceptions can be analysed in relation to Fanon and Bhabha’s observations about imitation, mimicry and hybridity introduced in chapter two. In analysing the social construction of classes along racial lines Fanon argued that the response of black colonised subjects to their demeaning situation was to imitate white behaviour, which led to the negation of black identity (Loomba, 2005; P. Prasad, 2005). However Fanon’s argument suggests that imitation of one identity implies the loss of another. Given the hybridity of modern urban culture that brings together indigenous Angolan and Portuguese elements, I am not convinced that Fanon’s radical views are necessarily helpful in understanding what is happening in contemporary Angola and how that shapes individual appropriation of surrounding valued.
Bhabha’s (1994) notion of mimicry characterised as an ironic compromise is about resemblance and ‘miming and imitation of colonizers by the colonized’ (2003: 21). Although mimicry is associated with the idea that the power and authority of the colonisers has forced the colonised to imitate the values and norms of the colonisers (A. Prasad, 2003), Bhabha (1994) argues that it is specifically mimicry that represents the space of resistance that undermines colonial power. Mimicry for Bhabha is about repeating, not representing values and norms of the colonised, therefore mimicry perpetuates a degree of ‘deference and disobedience’ (Gandhi, 1998: 149). It is this deference and disobedience that turns mimicry into mockery that signals the destabilisation of colonial power and authority. Returning to my earlier point about equating success with the ability to understand and negotiate the dynamics of the Western organisational settings, from Bhabha’s perspective, the ‘imitation’ of Western values and practices could be interpreted as simply as a way of learning the rules of the game to ultimately turn the tables around.

Reflecting on the third stereotype and the assumptions that Angolan professionals feel are made about their career aspirations by Western corporate leaders could be interpreted to derive from a broader cultural assumption about hierarchy and significance of status within Angolan culture. The stereotype raises significant questions about the management of employee and employer expectations. The importance of aligning individual employee interests with organisational needs and objectives in achieving success has been highlighted in existing people management commentary numerous times (e.g., Boswell, 2006; Sullivan, Sullivan, & Buffton, 2001; Ulrich, 2001) and the study that I present here is no exception. If individual aspirations are misunderstood by those responsible for succession management in organisations because of culturally rooted misconceptions then the training and development offered by the organisation is likely not to match individual’s needs.
As I pointed out in chapter two, according to Bhabha (1994) stereotypes are preconceptions based on what is believed to be already known, but cannot be proved. However, the narratives presented this thesis demonstrate that although status that comes with a managerial position is important for some, it would be simplistic and counterproductive for Western management to view career development in the Angolan context as driven purely by a need for status. The narratives here clearly illustrate that managerial position is equated with technical expertise and individuals are reluctant to take on board title and responsibility that they feel technically ill-prepared to deal with. In Kwek’s (2003) terms such stereotyping is an evident example of unhelpful cultural typologies perpetuated by the West.

In summary, the management of the employment relationship between Angolan professionals and between Western MNC corporate management is clouded by stereotypes that perpetuate Western ideologies of the ‘ideal’ employee, i.e., ‘talent’ as well as wider culturally rooted miscommunication and misinterpretation of priorities. On this micro level, the dynamic between Angolan employees and Western employers reflects a struggle against colonial thinking that is still perceived to persist within the particular setting reported in this study.

However, the dynamic highlighted here is more complex, because organisations in question here are not Portuguese, but rather a mix of large Western MNCs. Thus the dynamic must be understood in terms of Portuguese colonial as well as Anglo-Saxon influences. My analysis of the empirical findings support the conceptual proposition that I made in chapter two where I suggested that the increasing cultural, racial and ethnic hybridity in postmodern societies, Western and non-Western, calls for more multidimensional conceptualisations of the colonised/coloniser relationship. Considering the hybridity of urban Angolan cultural identity that I have argued for and the nature of the power dynamics between national and foreign interests in the Angolan contexts, I cannot help
thinking that postcolonial perspectives that perpetuate the view Angola/Angolans in the context of this study as the ‘subjugated Other’ as too simplistic and possibly somewhat patronising.

From a corporate perspective, it raises the question that if flawed stereotypes are used to interpret skills and abilities of Angolans, then on what basis can organisations operating in such contexts define and develop local leadership potential? Surely, if such stereotypes are perpetuated and left unquestioned to shape MNC leadership perceptions of Angolan talent, then the pool is bound to be small. Furthermore, if Angolan professionals feel that they are perceived negatively by their leadership then the psychological contract is bound to crack, if not break, leaving individuals feeling de-motivated and cynical. The way in which Angolan’s felt they are perceived and valued was also found to relate to the Angolan government’s nationalisation agenda, which I will discuss next.

7.4.2 Angolanisation

The findings have indicated that Angolanisation plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and experiences of working in the Angolan oil industry. The Angolan government’s agenda to increase the recruitment and development of local skills across industries appears to be taken very seriously by national organisations as well as foreign MNCs alike (Vines & Weimer, 2011). My recent attendance at a recruitment fair aimed at African nationals who are interested in returning to Africa and recent personal communications with talent agents specialising in African recruitment seem to affirm that the era of the expatriate is fading on the continent and organisations need local talent. In the case of Angola, the desire to nationalise and the consequent need to develop local skills is challenged by the shortage of skilled experienced and higher educated Angolans. As a result of the country’s poor education system ("Operational risk: Angola," 2009) and difficulty in accessing university
education due to limited educational institutions and disproportionate fees, educated and skilled Angolans are in short supply and in high demand.

The findings revealed that foreign MNC operations in Angola are perceived to be determined by a broader political agenda perpetuated by the Angolan government. Angolanisation is perceived to place significant pressure on MNCs to invest in the recruitment and development of local technical and managerial talent. In the previous chapter I asserted that opinions and experiences of Angolanisation are twofold: on one hand it is perceived to place Angolans in an advantageous positions in terms of promotion and accelerated development opportunities, thus adding value to them, but on the other hand the opportunities Angolans are perceived to have available to them in a global context are limited because of the very same agenda.

Narratives implied that Angolans are perceived to be developed solely for Angolan operations. According to interviewee interpretations of the context, foreign MNCs must be seen to comply with terms set by the Angolan government to develop and recruit Angolan nationals at professional and management level. Therefore the goal of MNCs is ultimately to have skilled and experienced Angolans in Angola, rather than develop them for international operations. However, on a conceptual level Angolanisation was seen by and large as positive, but the implementation on a practical level within MNCs was perceived to be fraught with problems resulting in feelings of cynicism and scepticism. The way in which MNCs are perceived and experienced to respond to Angolanisation has clearly impacted perceived career prospects and the kinds of career decisions individuals envision themselves making in the future.

In light of the foregoing, Angolanisation could be likened to affirmative action programmes. Affirmative action programmes, rooted in the United States emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a form of addressing (or compensating as proponents of affirmative action view it;
unequal representation of women and racial ethnic minorities in employment (Smith, Wokutch, Harrington, & Dennis, 2004). Affirmative action is based on the idea that an a member of a minority group can be given an employment opportunity over a member of the majority group even if they are more qualified in order to achieve balance (Van Jaarsveld, 2000). Affirmative action programmes have also gained significant momentum in post-Apartheid South Africa understandably (McFarlin & Coster, 1999; Van Jaarsveld, 2000), where the need to balance out inequalities in employment opportunities between minority white South Africans at the expense of majority black South Africans is needed. Van Jaarsveld argues that in the South African context, despite being viewed as reverse discrimination by some, affirmative action is ‘controversial, but necessary’ (2000: 5). From an organisational perspective affirmative action programmes are often seen a costly because of the resources needed for training and education (Van Jaarsveld, 2000).

Admittedly different, affirmative action is also considered mutually supportive of managing diversity (Smith et al., 2004) and associated with equal opportunity. However, the three are not one and the same. Equal opportunity policy refers to ensuring equal opportunities for individuals or groups indiscriminately where as managing diversity is essentially premised on capitalising on diversity of skills, abilities and values manifested in diverse workforces (Kirton & Green, 2010; Riley, Metcalf, & Forth, 2008). An agenda like Angolanisation is bound to have an effect on any diversity or equal opportunity policies that organisations may implement and this would offer fascinating scope for future research. Indeed, it strikes me that Angolanisation actually works against the principle of both equal opportunity programmes and diversity management since it promotes opportunities for one group (i.e., Angolans - justifiably so) and by doing so seeks to negate diversity. Ironically, the professionals interviewed all experienced Angolanisation, an agenda that is aimed at providing Angolan individuals like them better opportunities for
employment very substantively, yet all also felt in some respects that they are perceived unequal for being Angolan returning back to my earlier analysis relating to stereotyping.

In the Angolan context, Angolanisation does not promote equal opportunities based on racial or ethnic background, but rather on the basis of nationality. Thus is a country with high unemployment and where majority of national revenues derive from the oil economy where foreign players have a significant presence, the promotion of local people over foreign expatriates is beneficial for national development. Moreover, from a corporate point of view investment in the development of local human resources makes long term business sense, particularly when success depends also upon understanding local dynamics. However, as already highlighted the pressures of such a nationalisation agenda also bring controversy as individuals feel sceptical about whether they are valued for their skills and abilities or for their nationality to fill some government quota. The consequences, whether intended or not are felt in the employment relationship.

7.4.3 Graduate development programmes

The majority of professionals interviewed had taken part in a graduate development programme (GDP). Narratives revealed that these were experienced with mixed feelings. On one hand GDPs were associated with exceptional training opportunities, but on the other several individuals felt that their progress within their organisation was constrained by the GDP. Narratives also revealed that several individuals who had considerable work experience in previous organisations in the oil industry when entering the company they were employed by at the time of interview were placed on a GDP that is essentially intended for recent graduate or individuals with less than two years of experience. For these individuals this resulted in significant feelings of disappointment and frustration.
Moreover, by placing Angolan professionals who are over experienced or over qualified on a training programme that is known to be intended for entry level applicants in Western MNC contexts does nothing to negate the kind of stereotypes that Angolans already believe Western managers already have of them. It is perceived to simply affirm the perception that as Angolans their skills and abilities are not on par with Western counterparts. However, as my focus in this study was not on corporate perspectives and given the relatively small sample size, it is impossible to say how wide spread this practice is or of it is indeed limited to Angolans only. Further investigation would be needed to discover whether this phenomenon extends to other subsidiaries in other developing country contexts and how this compares relative to the experiences of professionals from developed Western countries.

However, in the context of the study presented and for the individuals whose experiences I have captured here is that the actions of the organisation and the management who are perceived to represent the employing organisation are interpreted as lacking flexibility and contextual understanding. MNC practice in this sense is perceived as universalistic, thus inappropriate and unconducive to enhancing organisational commitment. Logically, one would think that cultivating organisational commitment in collectivist societies where individuals are more like to identify with groups would be easier than in individualistic societies, where the focus is on individual achievement. Ironically contemporary forms of Western best practice management emphasise the importance of participation and team work, yet MNCs that adopt such practices perpetuate individual performance management practices for example. Approaches that are perceived as universalistic by Angolans seem to have a negative impact on organisational commitment, thus leading to more individualistic career behaviour that is more reflective of protean careers (Hall, 1996). Considering that one of the major challenges that organisations operating in the Angolan oil industry face is retaining
individuals they have invested cultivating organisational commitment is imperative to sustainable business.

The flipside of GDPs is that in large MNC contexts, they are associated with fast track development for individuals who have been identified as high potential and earmarked for ‘high-calibre’ executive positions in the future (Doherty, Viney, & Adamson, 1997). In the Angolan context a point that seems to distinguish those considered ‘high-potential’ from the rest who may also be participating on GDPs is the opportunity to uptake training abroad in the form of an international assignment. Resources and facilities for training in country appear to be limited in Angola and thus those identified has somehow ‘high potential’ are earmarked for one or more international assignments.

Angolan professionals interviewed seemed to be aware of this and as they all were on assignment or had been on one previously it would suggest that each professional interviewed understood that their development as future managers or technical experts received investment and attention. As such individuals interviewed also felt that what was expected of them by colleagues and managers was high. The management of graduate’s expectations has been highlighted as a significant challenge (Doherty et al., 1997). As such within the context of this study, the expectations of professionals offered international exposure through assignments or education were experienced as high by the individuals themselves. I will return to the impact of international assignments later in this chapter, but before I do so, I will explain how organisational commitment in this sense relates to conceptualisations of the employment relationship in more general terms and the potential impact of such perceptions on career development.

7.4.4 Conceptualising the employment relationship
Stereotyping, Angolanisation and experiences of GDPs have implications for the employment relationship and more specifically on commitment. The evidence suggests that the employment relationship in the Angolan context is a more personal one than traditionally viewed in the West. What seems clear is that in the Angolan context, the employment relationship is not solely about the relationship between the organisation and the employee, but rather greater emphasis is placed on the relationship dynamic between the employee and their managers. This finding seems to affirm the interpersonal focus in relationships in the Angolan context and vice versa. The employment relationship is about managing promises and expectations, which seem to be played out and personified in relationships between employees and their managers according to the findings.

The employment relationship is not merely about a transaction of reward (extrinsic or intrinsic) in exchange for effort, although this is important too. It is not so much about the organisation and the employee, but rather the manager and the employee. This presents a problem because managers change and each brings with them their own values shaped by their personal experiences. The empirical findings of Chi and Chen’s study into the relationship between the psychological contract, counterfactual thinking and job commitment among Taiwanese repatriates suggests that ‘a subjective perception of psychological contract fulfilment is a more important predictor of job attitudes than actual changes in position, pay, and skill improvement’ (Chi & Chen, 2007: 474). Thus, the management of expectations once the employment relationship has been initiated seems to require nurturing of relationships between individuals and their superiors in the Angolan context.

According to Jackson in African contexts ‘commitment and mutual obligations stem from group pressures to meet one’s promises and to conform to social expectations’ (2002: 1011). However, this commitment necessitates the establishment of a mutually rewarding relationship
between the two parties. If the organisation, which I propose here based on the empirical findings presented in the previous chapter is personified by leading organisational members does not invest into cultivating relationships with employees, employees are unlikely to identify the organisation as a collective that warrants mutual obligation and commitment.

7.5 INTERNATIONAL LIVING EXPERIENCES

Within international career development commentary organisational perspectives remain prevalent (Kohonen, 2005). Furthermore the impact of international assignments on the career development of expatriates from African countries, remain largely unexplored. Therefore, the findings presented in this thesis add individual perspectives of African internationally mobile individuals to the discourse. The findings here provide particular insight into the controversial side of using international assignments as a developmental strategy in large MNCs where such a strategy involves transitions between developing and developed country contexts. This study also links, cultural values of collectivism, interdependence and conformity, social responsibility and notions of nationhood with repatriation and career development in the Angolan contexts.

International assignment experiences have been shown to impact perceptions of the self and have an impact on identity for both assignees and their spouses (Kohonen, 2005; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). From a socialisation and social constructionist perspective we are a sum of our experiences. With regards to the impact of international assignments it is clear that such experiences have been profound for both the professionals interviewed and their spouses. One of the most notable findings that relates to both assignee and spouse experiences is the changes in family dynamics.
The absence of extended family and friends for support was experiences as a challenge, but the positive in terms of outcome. The international assignment experience has resulted in a shift in traditional gender roles. Due the absence of familial influence and support narratives suggested that men took on tasks during their assignments that have been traditionally considered the work of women, such as childcare and household chores. This was perceived positively by both men and women interviewed. Similarly the absence of ‘interfering’ family members was perceived as liberating. The temporary independence from extended family has marked an increased prominence given to the nuclear family, which in turn indicates a shift towards more individualistic values and less interdependent self-precepts. Indeed some interviewees explicitly questioned how they would handle the demands of extended family when returning to Angola. The fact that these were highlighted as significant issues by the interviewees supports the idea that social conformity in Angolan society is important and thus contributes empirically to our understanding of the broader African context. For the same reason these findings demonstrate a change in a significant aspect of Angolan cultural attitudes as a consequence of an international assignment experience.

Such experiences could be more broadly related to shifts in self-perception and identity. However, an international assignment maybe considered as a temporary space, using Bhabha’s (1996) analogy - a culture in-between - and as such I question the permanency of the kind of changes that have been noted occurring here during international assignments. Reflecting social constructionist and socialisation (Bandura & Walters, 1963) perspectives that I have engaged to make sense of the data I have collected, I argue that individuals are essentially a sum of their experiences and thus international living experiences inevitably shape individual identity. However, the question remains is whether such changes in behaviour, attitudes and identity will continue to be reflected once repatriated. Particularly given the pressure to socially conform to
familial or societal pressures, are the transformations made during time abroad salient enough to withstand such pressures?

The narratives captured here illustrate variety of journeys leading to personal discovery and development, awareness of others and the big wide world out there. From a professional perspective the impact of international assignments is notable. The findings indicate that exposure to new organisational and social environments, people from diverse backgrounds, industry experts and the opportunity to observe operations and organisational dynamics from a headquarter perspective is perceived as a positive element on international career development. However, exposure is also bitter sweet for some. It is evident that for a few individuals, mainly those who have studied abroad as well as worked, international living has shaped their aspirations for international careers and the frustration of reconciling those dreams with MNC agendas to nationalise is immense.

However, the data suggests that the need for family, to belong, to return home and the ability to resolve oneself and adapt to what they perceive as ‘just the way things are’ perhaps surpasses the need for an international career. Angolan identity appears to be very much rooted in the land. Nationality is an important component of Angolan identity, but it is not one than defines it alone. In fact the meaning of being Angolan seems to derive from ancestry to the nation. For instance even individuals who hold foreign nationality and have spent considerable amount of time in their lives, if not all their lives outside of Angola, can still make a claim to being Angolan. This suggests that the cultural identity runs deeper than simple citizenship.

Cultural identity according to Jameson ‘refers to an individual’s sense of self derived from formal or informal membership in groups that transmit and inculcate knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life’ (Jameson, 2007: 207). Jameson (2007) observes that culture tends to
be equated with nationality in existing discourse and suggests that cultural identity thus needs to be reconceptualised in a way that it is inclusive of other components such as religion, race, ethnicity, class, language and vocation in addition to nationality. Nationality, according to her, is not the most ‘salient factor in a particular situation or the most central factor in an overall sense of identity’, even if it is perhaps the easiest one to focus on from a data collection perspective (Jameson, 2007: 205).

The findings of this study revealed that individuals had a strong sense of being Angolan and expressed a strong sense of obligation to be a part of the country’s national development. The salient feature of being Angolan is not nationality as such, but a shared project of nation building. Basch, Glick, Schiller and Szanton’s notion of ‘nation’ envisioned as ‘a people with a common past and biological bond of solidarity’ (1994: 268) perhaps offers insight in sight here. Perhaps it is this idea of a shared past and a biological bond of solidarity that draws Angolans to Angola, sometimes in conflict with individual needs and desires.

In light of this, international living experiences do impact career development experiences and aspirations and can influence career decisions, but do not necessarily lead individuals to actively seek employment opportunities abroad. Experiences of working within a Western MNC environment as a whole seem more pertinent to career decision making in this context. In summary, there are a multitude of reasons why international assignments bring about positive outcomes. However these must be balanced out with the compromises one must make between individual needs, welfare of the family, greater good of extended family, community and ultimately the nation, all within the realm of possibilities presented by the broader environment.
7.6 CONVERGING PERSPECTIVES AND ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUALISATIONS

In light of the foregoing, I argue that some convergence of approaches and perspectives is needed to fully understand the complexities of career construction in the Angolan context. This part of my analysis will focus on bringing together non-Western and Western approaches to career development. In doing so, my analysis will also examine culturally premised explanations and those that are focused on the impact of societal structures such as political, historical and socio-economic contexts to deepen understanding about the kind of factors that impact career construction in African developing country contexts.

In contrast to most existing cross-cultural career development commentary in African contexts, Ituma and Simpson’s (2006) metaphor of chameleon careers explicitly proposes an alternative way of understanding careers in African contexts. In chapter two I explained on the basis of their study of Nigerian IT workers, Ituma and Simpson (2006) argued that the most adequate way to describe the flexibility and the need to adapt to changing environments was using the chameleon metaphor. The chameleon changes colour according to mood, but also according to changes in temperature and lighting. The chameleon metaphor is telling of the relationship between individual action and structure within the context of the findings presented in the previous chapter. On one hand if the individual’s career success is dependent upon their ability to adapt to changing surroundings which are out of their control implies that societal structure is inevitably the shaping force behind career construction. Similarly the chameleon cannot control changes in temperature or light, but must adapt. Structure in this sense dictates what is possible and gests to the individuals what it is that they need to do in order to both survive and succeed. Not simply for their own sake, but for the sake of their families who depend upon them. However, this does not mean that the individual has no volition, although the emphasis is on structure. Within
this context of possibilities, perceived or real and perhaps limited, the individual makes their decision. In other words, although individual volition exists, the scope of decisions to be made is perceived to be and actually determined by broader societal structures. Thus the chameleon metaphor offers insight into career construction in the Angolan context also as it describes individuals’ ability to adapt, at times seemingly resign themselves to the opportunities that the environment has presented them with, or not presented as the case may be.

The way in which individuals navigate within socio-economic environments can be examined by understanding the cultural context. Returning to the findings and the emergent concepts such as the significance of family, the sense of social responsibility towards one’s community and nation and job mobility as form of collective activity, cultural perspectives offer insight. A concept that has emerged specifically from South African collective action movement in the 1980’s (Swartz & Davies, 1997), but has gained momentum since as an Africanised management concept is ubuntu (Mbiyi & Maree, 1995). According to Lynham, Nafukho and Cunningham ‘Ubuntu is a worldview grounded in a way of being, a code of unwritten ethics, deeply embedded in the African culture’ (emphasis in the original; 2009: 61). It is about acknowledging human interconnectedness and interdependence. Ubuntu emphasises the need for consensus building, spirituality, trustworthiness, fairness, respect, truth, compassion (Lynham et al., 2009; McFarlin & Coster, 1999). Ubuntu appears to be primarily referred to in the South African context, but has potential wider African applicability to explain some of the cultural nuances that emerged from the empirical findings I presented in the previous chapter and have referred to in this chapter also.

However, the ubuntu worldview tends to be used to understand how people may best be managed or developed in African organisational contexts from organisational perspectives and thus tends to be treated as an Africanised alternative to Western management models, not explicitly
to explore implications of such values on career construction. In their review of Mbigi and Maree’s work (1995) Swartz and Davies (1997) observe that the concept of *ubuntu* overlooks its negative aspects. The positive desire for dialogue, consensus in decision making, reconciliation and harmony, core elements of the concept, can also be interpreted as a pressure to conform by giving up individual desires and needs for the greater good of the collective. These needs and desires ultimately form a ‘metaphorical baggage’ of unwanted behaviours and feelings (Swartz & Davies, 1997: 291).

From a career development perspective the need to conform to expectations of and to the greater good of collectives can inhibit individuals from realising their individual potential if the two do not equate. The importance given to the opinions of elders in the context of educational decisions according to narratives could be interpreted to support this notion of conformity taking precedence over individual volition in career decision making. However, the narratives did not in any way imply that elders’ opinions were received reluctantly or negatively. This suggests that even if the influence of elders over career decision making is the consequence of a hierarchical society that emphasises conformity, it is not necessarily experienced as such by individuals.

The concept of *ubuntu* as originally conceptualised as a management approach by Mbigi and Maree (1995) ‘lacks rigour in terms of empirical data to support claims about the usefulness of the metaphors in organizational development terms’ (Swartz & Davies, 1997: 292). In the context of career development it provides a useful frame of reference for examining commonalities across African cultural values, but fails to explain the nuances in different African contexts. Moreover, the concept of ubuntu paints an overly positive caricature of African culture that offers little critical perspective. But perhaps this is an understandable response to centuries of colonial representational repression by the West.
The Angolan cultural context also offers an explanation for perceived constraints to professional mobility. Hooker (2009) accounts a scenario of an employee moving from one organisation to another in the middle of an ongoing project in search of better prospects. In a North-American or a European setting this kind of behaviour can be tolerated and employees are seen more or less replaceable as they value derives from their qualifications and technical skills. Business between companies is perceived as a relationship between the organisations and not specific employees according to Hooker (2009).

However, in relationship focused cultures, cooperation between organisations relates to the individuals who represent them (Hooker, 2009). Trust and familiarity has been noted as a key component of relationships, personally and especially in business in African contexts (McFarlin & Coster, 1999). Similarly, I recounted a conversation between one of my interviewees and his manager in the previous chapter (see 6.4.4) about the interviewee’s intention to leave his employer to take up employment with a new company. The response of his Angolan manager, essentially voiding their relationship due to what he perceived as betrayal, makes sense if the cultural importance of relationships and the values that underpin them are understood.

The comparatively limited research conducted in African contexts around employment, organisations and culture point to the fact that in African contexts, regardless of the heterogeneity across the continent, emphasis is placed on relationships as opposed to rules or transactions (e.g., Counsell, 1999; Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2006; Hooker, 2009; McFarlin & Coster, 1999). This echoes Africentric approaches that are premised on the idea that even though each individual, group, nation and culture in Africa are unique, some shared ‘core values and philosophical assumptions that originate from a shared African history’ are notable (Alfred, 2001: 111). My analysis here supports the possibility of some common cultural elements that prevail across distinct African contexts.
This thesis is premised on the idea that theories, frameworks and models developed in Western contexts alone are insufficient to explain phenomena in non-Western contexts. This is not to say that they cannot offer insight and be useful, but that more contextual approaches are needed that take into account societal and cultural nuances. Postcolonial rhetoric is premised on the idea that the West desires to subjugate and perpetuate hegemony and power over the non-Western ‘Other’ through representation. Said’s (1978) Orientalism, considered a cornerstone of contemporary postcolonial theory, suggests that the West continuously seeks to define the non-Western ‘Other’ as its polar opposite. Smith (2001) argues that academic knowledge in its entirety is a perpetuation of colonial mindsets and Kwek (2003) asserts that even the cross-cultural management rubric continuously typologizes the non-West into neat cultural universalisms that perpetuate Western stereotypes.

In chapter two I suggested that understanding career construction in postcolonial contexts meant that we needed to explore the continuing ‘colonial encounter’ (A. Prasad, 2003) between the West and the previously colonised. I see that postcolonialism offers a valid and critical lens to analysing what is taking place in the Angolan context today, but I also question to what extent the postcolonial rhetoric in fact perpetuates the stereotypes that it seeks to negate. Returning to Bonnett’s (2004) work that I referred to in my conceptual analysis, the postcolonial rubric enforces pre-given generalising mediations of the West. By defining the West according to such mediations, doesn’t postcolonialism then also define the non-West in a particular way? Either way, the encounter between the West and the non-West seems fraught with mutually perpetuating stereotypes.

As the empirical evidence has revealed that in the African context, more balanced and holistic approaches are needed that include various structural and individual elements that make up an individual’s career. However, this does not mean that Western models of career development
and Western conceptualisations of careers are redundant and inapplicable in African contexts. Returning for example to the work of Gunz et al. (2000) and the notion of objective and subjective career boundaries we can see that concepts such as these have wider relevance, albeit nuanced differently depending on context. In the context of researching human resource management practices in Eritrea, Ghebregiorgis and Karsten’s (2006) findings indicate that some ‘cultural patterns are conducive to Western management practices’.

Echoing a similar view, the narratives captured here suggest that Western styled organisational environments manifested in MNCs perceived as more egalitarian and informal as well as encouraging of participation and open communication were experienced positively by the interviewees in comparison to the more hierarchical and formal organisational cultures of the Angolan national oil company for example. Although the emphasis on individual performance in MNC organisational cultures was experienced with some mixed feelings, on the whole the notion of career progress based on performance was favoured more traditional Angolan approaches where opportunities for promotion are perceived to be based not necessarily what you know, but who you know.

Thus, when examining the interplay between work experiences and career decisions of urban Angolan professionals in MNC contexts, there are cultural elements at play which suggest that career construction in this contexts may also be understood using Western conceptualisations of careers. However, the hybridity in Western organisations that operate in African countries such as Angola also means that there is no one prescriptive model. Echoing existing career research in developing country contexts (e.g., Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Ghebregiorgis & Karsten, 2006; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Manwa & Manwa, 2007; Okurame & Balogun, 2005; Yakushko, 2007) the empirical findings presented in this thesis indicate that in understanding career construction in such contexts requires recognition of broader societal structures as well
as the influence of institutional elements. Moreover, the impact of such societal structures, both macro and micro on individual action needs to be recognised and understood.

In the conceptual analysis presented in chapter two I raised the question whether frameworks developed in Western contexts and premised on inherently Western ideologies are appropriate for understanding career development in African contexts. Bringing together conceptual and empirical elements to develop the career construction framework I presented at the beginning of this chapter (see Figure 7.1), I have drawn from Western frameworks as well as the more limited number of models that propose some form of non-Western alternatives. In respect to career development theory specifically, as I have highlighted in my review of existing commentary, consensus exists that contextual and constructionist approaches are needed that recognise the significance of structure, including cultural value systems that shape individual construction of careers.

7.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Returning idea of representation and my authority to represent the ‘non-Western Other’ as a ‘Western Other’, I wonder how Angolans themselves would go about make sense of their own experiences. My experiences and the findings suggest that in Angola the focus is on the present, rather than the distant past or indeed too far in the future. Moreover, the prevailing sentiment, despite difficult experiences and challenging circumstances, is one of hope and faith. The past and the present may be explained by colonialism, but would Angolans want to define their future by it too? Angeles (2005) for example argues that the problems of economic inequality cannot be addressed of the future cannot be solved without looking at the past, but does that kind of retrospective logic underpin the way in which Angolans would construct their futures? Obviously this is a question that is far beyond the scope of this study, it is
one that lingers in my mind and encourages me to ask alternative questions.
CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION

The study I present in this thesis primarily contributes to the increasing body of literature around constructionist career development theory in developing country contexts, by bringing to the foreground alternative perspectives informed by developments in postcolonial theory. Career development research in non-Western contexts is increasing (e.g., Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Bullington & Arbona, 2001; Counsell, 1999; Ituma & Simpson, 2006; Khapova & Korotov, 2007; Yakushko, 2007), and yet the discourse is still dominated by Western frameworks for understanding career development. Moreover, the consequences of international assignments on career development have received considerable attention within international human resource management and career development literature (e.g., Baruch, Steele, & Quantrill, 2002; Kohonen, 2005; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Riusala & Suutari, 2000; Selmer, 1999), but the career development experiences of African internationally mobile individuals remain relatively unexplored.

Thus the purpose of the study presented in this thesis was to investigate factors influencing the career development of professional Angolans working in the oil and gas industry and how experiences associated with living and working in Western contexts influences the career development of such individuals. My intention was to go beyond discovery of factors and analyse data in the form of highly personalised accounts from key informants to deepen understanding of African career development in transnational settings, being mindful of postcolonial factors.
To address the research questions and to explore the themes I outlined in chapter one, I have discovered and analysed how various dynamics of institutional micro and societal macro structures shape the way in which individuals coming from Angola, a developing, post-colonial country context make career related decisions and envision the development of their career paths. In addition to the rich personal narratives I have captured using indepth interviewing, I have reflexively drawn on personal fieldwork experiences to gain insight. Within an ethnomethodological framework and drawing on developments in postcolonial theory, I have managed and made sense of the empirical data using constructionist grounded theory approaches to inform my hermeneutic analysis. As a result we have a social construction of a reality as experienced by the individuals who contributed to this study to enable the development of existing theory.

As I have illustrated in the previous chapter existing postcolonial and career development commentary falls short in several ways when trying to understand the complexities of the Angolan context and its impact on individual career construction. However, this is not to say that existing theory, even when it is based on Western conceptualisations of careers, cannot contribute to building a comprehensive framework to understand how careers are constructed in the Angolan context. Similarly, existing Africanised models of career development or world views also do not offer a complete answer, which is expected given the heterogeneity of the African continent. Therefore the career construction framework that I presented in the previous chapter draws on a variety of Western and non-Western frameworks to account for the variety of factors that influence career development in the Angolan context. In the section to follow I will outline the specific contribution to existing knowledge that I make with the study presented here.
8.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

In light of the above, the research that I have presented in this thesis extends on existing constructionist career development commentary by gaining insight into the interplay between societal structures and individual action in an African context. This study adds to existing career theory by incorporating career development experiences that go beyond planned structured careers in organisational settings and by focusing on the individual consequences of international assignments in transnational contexts. The unique contribution that the career construction framework (Figure 7.1.) that I outline here makes stems from the postcolonial and postmodern perspectives used in the analysis from which the framework emerged. Given the insights that I offer here derive from the perspectives of Angolan professionals working in Western multinational organisational contexts and therefore characterise some of the significant career motivators and constraints of such individuals, the findings of this study also have value also for multinational organisations that are engaged in developing African talent.

Returning to the findings relating to the significance of family in shaping career decisions and aspirations, the importance of family in career development as such is not a novel concept. As my review of literature illustrated the role of family in shaping careers has been covered from many angles. However, existing research tends to focus on the influence of family-of-origin, or alternatively the role of family from a work-life balance perspective, but the study that I present here suggests that the influence of family in shaping career development can be understood from a more holistic and comprehensive perspective thereby offering a sense of continuity throughout the different stages of career development. In this sense deepening our knowledge about the impact of family also contributes to understanding the unstructured and unplanned
aspects of careers that take place outside organisational settings, but yet make up an individual’s career as a whole.

Exiting career development commentary, particularly in non-Western contexts suggests that contextual factors such as political, socio-economic and cultural environments are important factors in determining career development in developing country settings. The findings of this study support such arguments. However, the novel insights that this study brings to the foreground derive from postcolonial perspectives used to understand the dynamic relationship between Portuguese colonialism, Western Anglo-Saxon influences and racial and national stereotypes in defining perceived available opportunities and thus career development. Furthermore, postmodern perspectives offer new insight on the nature of contemporary consumerism among urban middle class Angolans and the impact of material wealth as a motivator on career development.

Within international career development commentary organisational perspectives remain prevalent. Furthermore the impact of international assignments on the career development of expatriates from African countries, remain largely unexplored. Therefore, the findings presented in this thesis add individual perspectives of African internationally mobile individuals to the discourse. The findings here shed particular insight into the controversial side of using international assignments as a developmental strategy in large MNCs where such a strategy involves transitions between developing and developed country contexts. This study also links, cultural values of collectivism, interdependence and conformity, social responsibility and notions of nationhood with repatriation and career development in the Angolan contexts.

In light of the foregoing, the primary contribution made here relates to the development of constructionist approaches that account for the interplay between societal structure and individual agency in conceptualising and constructing careers within the context of African
developing countries. By bringing together experiences relating to elements such as family, education and employment, this study offers an more inclusive approach to career construction that is limited in existing career development research that tends to treat significant elements such as the individual agency, stages of career development, work-life balance and career planning as separate.

8.2 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Beyond the methodological limitations, which I discussed in chapter five, the main limitations of this study derive from its relatively small sample size and particularist focus on a single country and industry. However the value of this research stems from the rich narratives that I have captured and significant effort I have made to triangulate findings via ‘research conversations' with informants and industry professionals. My intention has not been to generalise from the findings to broader African contexts, but to highlight the experiences and perceptions of individuals, from which insight can be gained to enhance existing career development theory as outlined above. Given the diversity and heterogeneity across the African continent, rather than providing a prescriptive model to be applied universally, my purpose here is to offer an alternative perspective and raise critical questions when trying to make sense of career construction in African developing countries.

Moreover, by growing the empirical scope of career development research in Africa to include an increasingly diverse range of national and cultural settings as well as industries, in time a more comprehensive cross-analysis of how individuals construct their careers and what are the possible implications across different African nations may be achieved. The study presented here builds on this body of knowledge by adding Angolan perspectives to the discourse.
8.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings of this study has value for MNC corporate leaders, people management practitioners and international mobility professionals involved developing African, more specifically Angolan future leadership potential. My intention here is not to provide a prescriptive model to be universally applied across African or even Angolan organisational contexts since the evidence points to the contrary. Instead, in order to successfully develop Angolan professionals in the oil industry and for organisations to retain the potential they have invested in, greater understanding of the Angolan context and its impact on individual career decision making is needed. This is not to say that all Western based practices and policies need to be abandoned, but practitioners need to be more discriminate about how and when they go about implementing them. Greater flexibility and recognition for the complexity of the Angolan context and how it shapes individual perceptions, experiences and aspirations is needed.

8.4 ISSUES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

This study has added to several important areas of career development theory as I have illustrated in this chapter. However new insight, also raises new questions and reveals novel avenues open to discovery. In light of the findings presented in this thesis, extending the scope of research in the Angolan context alone in several ways could add significant further insight. By widening research focus to other sectors, or to include the perspectives of working class Angolans, those whose livelihood depends on the informal labour market or recent graduates entering the work of employment would allow for considerable comparative analysis. Would the values and career attitudes, behaviour and aspirations of such individuals be the same as those whose experiences I have captured here?

Another significant avenue of future research relates to the career development experiences of Angolan women. Although the study that I
present here provides important insight into the international assignment experiences of Angolan women and in doing so highlights some significant cultural dynamics present in the Angolan context that are supportive of wider African values, the data in relation to their career development is more limited. Furthermore combining narratives from male and female interviewees brought to the foreground some interesting insights about the gender roles. It strikes me that examining the dynamic between Angolan women’s career experiences and aspirations and role expectations would offer fascinating insight into the life of contemporary African women.
Dear Participant,

I am a postgraduate researcher at University of Bedfordshire Business School. I am conducting research into the professional and social experiences of Angolan professionals and their partners, currently living in or recently returned from the UK (and other European countries) and working within a multinational organisational environment. In line with the nationalisation agenda, organisations in the Angolan oil industry are challenged to design practices and policies that sustainably develop local human resources in line with strategic operational objectives. Many organisations opt to develop future management potential via international assignments. Therefore, my research focuses on how individual experiences professionally and socially during international assignments impact the way Angolans view their personal career development.

I would like to invite you to take part in this project. I am requesting that you take part in a face to face interview to share your experiences with me. Interviews are expected to last approximately 60-90 minutes and will be conducted at a mutually convenient location. If you are repatriating between August 2010 and November 2010, I hope you will consider being interviewed twice (one during your assignment and a follow-up conversation within 12 months of you and your family returning to Angola).

Interviews will be tape recorded. This is so that I can focus on your experiences and not get distracted by note taking. You will be provided with a summary of your interview. Once transcription is completed, I will destroy the audio recording. You and your organisation are guaranteed anonymity. I will remove your name from the information you provide and the results will not identify you or your family. All information will be kept securely. You have the right to withdraw your participation for 30 days from the date of the interview. The results of this study will be presented in a doctoral thesis and may be presented at conferences and in published academic journals.

By collecting experiences of individuals like yourself, I hope to make a contribution to what is currently understood and known about how Angolans interact and develop within a multinational environment and hence I do hope you choose to take part. Should your partner (if applicable) consider participating (together or separately), I would very much value their contribution also. Your participation would be very much valued and appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any questions regarding this study.

Yours sincerely,

Raisa Arvinen-Muondo
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I (Participant name)

________________________________________________________________________

voluntarily consent to take part in the above research project.

- I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible effects of my involvement in this project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.
- I understand I will receive a copy of this Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

Participant Signature ___________________________________________ Date ____________

I have supplied an Information Statement and Consent Form to the participant who has signed above, and believe that they understand the purpose, extent and possible effects of their involvement in this project.

Researcher Signature ___________________________________________ Date ____________

Note: All parties signing the Consent Form must date their own signature.

Should you have any concerns regarding this project or the way that it is being conducted that you wish raise independent to the researcher, please contact the Angus Duncan, UREC, University of Bedfordshire, Graduate Research Office, Park Square, Luton, LU1 3JU.

University of Bedfordshire
Department of Strategy and Human Resource Management
Park Square
Luton LU1 3JU
Tel: +44 (0) 7717131281
Email: raisa.muondo@beds.ac.uk
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

I am a postgraduate researcher at University of Bedfordshire Business School. I am conducting research into the professional and social experiences of Angolan professionals and their partners, currently living in or recently returned from the UK (and other European countries) and working within a multinational organisational environment. In line with the nationalisation agenda, organisations in the Angolan oil industry are challenged to design practices and policies that sustainably develop local human resources in line with strategic operational objectives. Many organisations opt to develop future management potential via international assignments. Therefore, my research focuses on how individual experiences professionally and socially during international assignments impact the way Angolans view their personal career development.

I would like to invite you to take part in this project. I am requesting that you take part in a telephone interview to share your experiences with me. Interviews are expected to last approximately 45-60 minutes and will be conducted at a mutually convenient time. Interviews will be tape recorded. This is so that I can focus on your experiences and not get distracted by note taking. You will be provided with a summary of your interview. Once transcription is completed, I will destroy the audio recording. You and your organisation are guaranteed anonymity. I will remove your name from the information you provide and the results will not identify you or your family. All information will be kept securely. You have the right to withdraw your participation for 30 days from the date of the interview. The results of this study will be presented in a doctoral thesis and may be presented at conferences and in published academic journals.

By collecting experiences of individuals like yourself, I hope to make a contribution to what is currently understood and known about how Angolans interact and develop within a multinational environment and hence I do hope you choose to take part. Your participation would be very much valued and appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any questions regarding this study.

Yours sincerely,

Raisa Arvinen-Muondo
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I (Participant name)__________________________
voluntarily consent to take part in the above research project.

- I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible effects of my involvement in this project.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the answers I have received.
- I understand I will receive a copy of this Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

Participant Signature ___________________________ Date ______________

I have supplied an Information Statement and Consent Form to the participant who has signed above, and believe that they understand the purpose, extent and possible effects of their involvement in this project.

Researcher Signature ___Raisa Arvinen-Muondo _____ Date _____________

Note: All parties signing the Consent Form must date their own signature.

Should you have any concerns regarding this project or the way that it is being conducted that you wish raise independent to the researcher, please contact the Angus Duncan, UREC, University of Bedfordshire, Graduate Research Office, Park Square, Luton, LU1 3JU.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE - ASSIGNEES

Careers

Personal background

Educational background

How did you choose your discipline?

Professional background/history

International assignment

Adjustment

Tell me about your experiences of coming to and living in the UK?

Has the experience matched your expectations? How?

Any particular challenges (socially and work wise)?

Any particular positives (socially and work wise)?

Can you tell me about your relationships with your teammates and your line manager?

Repatriation

How do you feel about returning to Angola?

Do you know what you will be doing (work role) when you return and how do you feel about it?

If any, what kind of expectations do you have (professionally and personally)?

Can you tell me about what you feel you may have gained from the experience?

Future

Can you tell me a little bit about what you see yourself doing in the future?

What do you feel if anything, you have gained from completing the graduate development programme?

Do you see your current organisation playing a role in your future career plans and if so what kind of role?
INTERVIEW GUIDE - SPOUSES

Careers

Personal background

Educational background

  How did you choose your discipline?

Professional background

International assignment

Adjustment

Can you tell me about your role within your family?

Tell me about your experiences of coming to and living in the UK?

How did you feel about coming to the UK?

Has the experience matched your expectations? How?

Any particular challenges (socially and work wise)?

Any particular positives (socially and work wise)?

How do you feel now about the assignment?

Repatriation

How do you feel about returning to Angola?

If any, what kind of expectations do you have (professionally and personally)?

Can you tell me about what you feel you may have gained from the experience?

Future

Can you tell me a little bit about what you see yourselves doing in the future?

Do you have any plans in terms of work or study when you return, if so can you tell me a little bit more about them?
Appendix D

Initial emergent ‘containers’:

1. Education
2. Family
3. Material wealth
4. Language
5. Organisational Adjustment
6. Relationships
7. Communication
8. Repatriation
9. Positive Experiences
10. Negative Experiences
11. Race
12. Ethnicity
13. Stereotyping
14. Trust
15. International living
16. Job mobility
17. Identity
18. Positive expectations
19. Negative expectations
20. Professional development
21. Personal development
22. Upbringing
23. War
24. Connections
25. Lack of connections
26. Infrastructure
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# PARTICIPANT DETAILS

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**Age:**  
- 20-24  
- 25-30  
- 31-35  
- 36-40  
- 41-49  
- 50 <  

**Nationality:**  

**Home region:**  

**Children:**  

**Partner:**  

**Length of assignment and location:**  

**Stage of assignment at time of interview:**  

**Length of time with company before assignment:**  

**Discipline/occupation:**
PARTICIPANT DETAILS (Telephone)

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Length of assignment and location:

Stage of assignment at time of interview:

Length of time with company before assignment:

Discipline/occupation:
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