Finding voice through narrative storytelling: An exploration of the career development of young
African females with refugee backgrounds

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Abstract

Understanding the complex process of career development of young people with refugee backgrounds, who resettle in developed countries after experiencing prolonged migration journeys, is a contemporary priority at a time when the highest number of people in recorded history is in urgent need of resettlement. Moving towards anticipated futures and access to appropriate work could be challenging for these young people after resettlement, considering the effects of protracted displacement that might have silenced their agency. To propose new ways of assisting young people with refugee backgrounds with such challenges, further research that increases knowledge about their career development is needed. The current research aimed to enhance understandings of the career development of young people with refugee backgrounds through culturally and contextually sensitive exploration of their career stories. Using a qualitative exploratory multiple case study method informed by narrative inquiry, qualitative data were generated through interviews and analysed using a voice-centred relational method. Each participant's unique career story reflected the operation of various voices, relationships, social structures and dominant narratives, influential in reshaping their future career plans. Findings revealed that narrative inquiry fostered rich storytelling for young people with refugee backgrounds. These findings suggest that narrative career counselling could assist them to re-contextualise their skills, strengths, knowledge and career plans after resettlement. Through such re-contextualisation, voices that might have been lost or diminished during multiple transitions have space to re-emerge. This process may be a first step towards gaining a sense of agency that is needed for the actualisation of preferred career plans.

Keywords

Storytelling, Career Development, Refugee, Youth, Voice, Narrative career counselling

1. Introduction

With nearly one percent of the world's population forcibly displaced for the first time in recorded history (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [UNHCR]; 2016), millions of people are migrating to countries that hold the promise of a safe and fulfilling life. Young people with refugee backgrounds face a complex process of career development while resettling in developed countries (Schultheiss & Davis, 2015; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008). The world of work in these resettlement countries is undergoing dramatic shifts with employment markets and educational systems significantly different from those that people with refugee backgrounds might be familiar with; thus access to meaningful and appropriate work is no longer assured (Blustein, Olle, Connors-Kellgren, & Diamonti, 2016; Duffy, Blustein, Diemer, & Autin, 2016). Successful integration of young people with refugee backgrounds in developed countries is linked to their career development (Abkhezr, McMahon, & Rossouw, 2015; Beadle, 2014).

More than 70% of those with refugee backgrounds resettled in developed countries are below the age of 30 (UNHCR, 2014) and are considered as youth in this article. These young people might need career development assistance. They come from diverse cultural, religious, linguistic, socio-economic, educational and career backgrounds, experience different migration journeys and therefore tell very different life stories. The career development of these young people is influenced by unique experiences during their childhood and adolescent years in contexts very different from that of their final countries of resettlement. Exploring their career development, prior to and across the stages of the migration journey is important for shaping a richer understanding about how they make career decisions after resettlement. Little research has been conducted on the career development of young people with refugee backgrounds after resettlement in developed countries. Career development, primarily rooted in assisting those experiencing disadvantage,

is now confronted with an important task in relation to the refugee crisis. As the number of people with refugee backgrounds continues to grow, further research is needed to better understand their career development in order to propose new ways of assisting them.

1.1. Young people with refugee backgrounds and finding voice

Many young people with refugee backgrounds have faced traumatic experiences such as torture, loss, rape, displacement and other uncommon experiences which have denied them opportunities to access and manifest their voices, leading to self-silencing and a sense of voicelessness (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003; Wessells, 2004). In addition, they have been through extensive and repetitive interviews focusing on detailed stories of fear, hopelessness, helplessness and trauma that have led to their refugee status (Amnesty International, 2013). The repetitive re-telling of such stories becomes a usual part of the complex internal and external experiences of young people throughout their migration journey. As a result of such re-tellings, certain voices may be ignored. Voice as a “polyphonic and complex channel of psychic expression” (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p. 15), can be silenced, censored or lost. These youths might have never had an opportunity to story their career journey and therefore, their efforts, achievements, struggles and challenges for reconnecting with their skills and abilities might have never been voiced. Therefore, an exploration of their career development inevitably needs to involve a process of finding voices that might have been lost or silenced (Abkhezr & McMahon, 2017). However, to do this, the heterogeneity of these young people must be acknowledged (Schultheiss & Davis, 2015).

New trends in the field of career development and a shift towards post-modern approaches that emphasise the context, culture and subjectivity of individuals (Duffy et al., 2016; McMahon, 2014; Savickas, 2012, 2013; Watson, 2017) seem to accommodate the heterogeneity of the population of young people with refugee backgrounds (Abkhezr et al.,

2015; Hughes & Scott, 2013; Słowik, 2014). Researchers and practitioners have been cautioned about relying on theories and ways of practice that do not prioritise the subjective experiences of diverse populations (Watson, 2006). Instead, relying on approaches that provide a space for the exploration of various culturally and contextually shaped voices present in the lives of participants have been encouraged (Abkhezzar et al., 2015).

Attending to the voices present in people's ways of storytelling (Brown & Gilligan, 1991) is an innovative approach to stepping away from traditional discourses that usually do not prioritise people's subjective career stories and experiences (Richardson, 2012). Such an approach could provide a space where youth with refugee backgrounds may narrate career stories and, through the experience of storying, find an opportunity to voice career plans, motivations and concerns for the first time. Exploring and raising sensitivity to the career development of young people with refugee backgrounds among researchers and practitioners is subject to the provision of such a space and finding lost and silenced voices which can be achieved using narrative approaches (Abkhezzar & McMahon, 2017; Maree, 2007; McMahon & Watson, 2013). Narrative approaches to career counselling honour people's subjective experiences, local and particular ways of narrating career stories and conceptualisations of work (Abkhezzar & McMahon, 2017; Abkhezzar et al., 2015; Blustein, Kozan, Connors-Kellgren, & Rand, 2015; Maree & Molepo, 2007; Słowik, 2014).

1.2. Narrative approaches, constructivism and social constructionism

A narrative approach to inquiry embedded within a constructivist, social constructionist framework informs the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this research. Despite similarities, constructivism focuses more on internal cognitive processes by which every person makes meaning of experiences, while social constructionism considers the influence of wider contexts on how such cognitive processes evolve within the individual. Such assumptions in the field of career development claim that people's career preferences

are shaped through internalisations of available cultural and contextual stories, resulting in a construction of an “evolving life story” (McAdams, 2001, p. 117). Therefore, career development exploration based on a constructivist and social constructionist epistemology involves “working with storytellers” (McMahon, 2017, p. 17). A narrative approach to exploration, and also to inquiry, provides an opportunity for storytellers to meaningfully deconstruct and connect aspects of their internalised, evolving life stories. Such deconstructions facilitate a better understanding of socialisations that have been influential in the shaping of career plans and anticipations.

In career counselling, narrative approaches emphasise the facilitation of storytelling and collaboration between counsellors and their clients towards exploring career stories that inform the career development of clients. Additionally, by deconstructing such stories, career counsellors and clients together reach a consensus about the sort of socialisations, cultures and contexts that have been influential in shaping of those career stories. Through the facilitation of storytelling, the core constructs of narrative career counselling, such as reflection, meaning making, connectedness, learning and agency (McMahon, Watson, Chetty, & Hoelson, 2012; McIlveen & Patton, 2007) are utilised. The operationalisation of such narrative career counselling constructs will trigger a storyteller’s sense of agency (McIlveen & Patton, 2007; Savickas, 2016).

In research, storytelling as a response to narrative inquiry emphasises the operationalisation of similar constructs and has the potential to facilitate non-interventional exploratory studies (Clandinin, 2007). Narrative approaches acknowledge the role of people as the primary author of their stories and focus on an exploration of “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10) that shape people’s life-career stories. Subsequently, inquiry will attend to participants’ unique preferences, skills and knowledge about their careers. Therefore, facilitating storytelling by making narrative inquiry enhances the possibility of finding voice.

1.3. Goals of the research

This article presents research that explores the career development of three young women with refugee backgrounds by inviting them to tell career stories that have shaped and continue to constantly reshape their anticipated future directions prior to and across their migration journey. The overall aim of the research was to enhance understandings of the career development of young people with refugee backgrounds through culturally and contextually sensitive exploration of their career stories. To achieve this richer understanding, provision of a space in which participants could voice their knowledge, skills and expertise as part of their career-life story was essential.

2. Method

An “empathic” qualitative exploratory multiple case study method was used to generate “experience near” data that was culturally and contextually pertinent to the participants (Stead et al., 2011, p. 107). This exploratory research occurred in the form of a narrative inquiry that is concerned with “inquiry into narratives” or “stories” of participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). The methodological rigour of narrative inquiry resonates with the constructivist, social constructionist framework that gives the researcher an opportunity to explore the very different ways by which participants construct meaning from within their social contexts and experiences to shape their stories.

Narrative inquiry needs to cover a “three-dimensional” experiential space (temporal, spatial, and personal-social) (Clandinin, 2007, p. 247). To connect with all such dimensions of participants’ stories, an openness to the “multiple voices” of participants within the process has been emphasised (Clandinin, 2007, p. 428). Providing a space in which different voices that have operated and continue to operate throughout the lives of participants is an important consideration of narrative inquiry.

Interviews emphasising the storytelling nature of participants are regarded as one of the primary tools of data collection in narrative inquiry. An inquiry made into the narratives of participants is concerned with the overall trustworthiness of the research and is intended to be reflexive research that can portray a glimpse of participants' lived experiences and subsequently be useful in formulating further research (Clandinin, 2007).

2.1. Sampling

Subsequent to ethical approval to conduct the research from the relevant university ethics committee, participants were recruited by purposive and snowball sampling through educational institutions and community organisations providing services for young people with refugee backgrounds. Purposive sampling was initially chosen as a non-probability sampling method due to the nature of research and particular characteristics of participants (e.g., refugee and resettlement experience, age, English language skills). Participation was voluntary. After the first participant was recruited through purposive sampling and completed the interviews, she was so happy about her experience that she informed her two cousins who contacted the first author and expressed willingness to participate in this research.

2.2. Participants

Participants were three young African women who have lived and travelled together since their childhood. Maysa (all names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants), the oldest participant was approximately 28 years old, Zafeera, her younger cousin, 23 and Asima, the youngest cousin, 22. The participants were forced to flee when their village was attacked by militants, approximately 18 years prior to the interviews. In the chaos, Maysa and Asima lost their parents and never heard from them again (Zafeera's mother passed away when she was 2). With the care of Maysa and people they met during their journey, the participants survived two years of travelling, mostly on foot, to different towns in a neighbouring African country, and finally found their way into a refugee camp in a

third African country. Inside the refugee camp, despite the efforts of UNHCR officers to place the girls separately with different families as they were minors, they resisted separation and managed to stay together in the same house. Except for Maysa, who sometimes missed secondary school trying to support her younger cousins financially, they completed primary and secondary school inside the camp. The three participants arrived in Australia approximately six months prior to the research, under the humanitarian visa stream of the Australian government and UNHCR resettlement program. All three were guided by refugee support organisations to do a six months' English language certificate course. At the time of the interviews, they were on the verge of completing their certificates and thinking about their next steps. As all participants referred to each other during the interviews as sisters; hereon they will be referred to as sisters.

2.3. Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used to provide a space in which participants could express subjective understandings of their career development, voice their career stories and make meaning of their future career plans based on their life-career stories. This interview process operated as an invitation for storytelling. The first interview contained questions exploring participants' migration journey, educational and vocational backgrounds, family members' educational/vocational backgrounds, role models, future career plans and current engagements (see Table 1). Such questions were designed to facilitate storytelling and therefore further relevant questions were also posed occasionally to encourage the emergence of thicker descriptions within participants' stories. These questions were also useful for addressing the three different dimensions of narrative inquiry (temporal, spatial and personal-social) which corresponds with social constructionist and constructivist theories.

The second interview (see Table 1) began with questions about participants' feedback and reflections on the first interview. Further questions of the second interview were prepared

separately for each participant and were derived from the transcriptions of the first interview.

Sample questions from interview two are italicised in Table 1. These questions aimed to extend storytelling, connect different aspects of participants' stories and enhance meaning making.

Table 1

Questions from the First Interview

Sample Questions from Second Interview (in italic)

Educational Background

What is your current level of education? Where did you study?

How was the experience of education in these locations?

What educational challenges did you face?

How did you manage to achieve this level of education despite the challenges?

What does this (achieving despite challenges) say about the person you are?

Vocational Background

What sort of work experiences did you have before you come to Australia?

How did you make the decision or happen to engage in those work experiences?

How did you find those work experiences?

What challenges or learnings did they bring forward for you?

How do you think those work experiences and the people you encountered through them have influenced your future career plans?

Future Career Plans

What are your future career plans?

How did your future career plans might have changed over time as a result of work experiences or other incidents?

Family Educational/Vocational Background

What were the educational levels of your parents/siblings and their careers?

What sort of influence did your parents or siblings have on your future career plans?

What do you think your father would say to you if he knew that you have such future career plans?

Role Models

Who were some of your role models in life?

How did you get to know about these people?

What have you learned from them?

How do you think they might have influenced your career plans?

What do you think X (a role model) would say to you, if she/he knew that she/he has been so influential in your life and career plans?

Achievements/Challenges

What do you consider as achievements/challenges in your life so far?

Post-Resettlement Experiences

When did you arrive in Australia?

What have you been doing since you arrived in Australia?

What are your next steps in order to achieve your career plans?

After all the places you have been to and being exposed to so many people from different cultures, what culture do you identify with more? What are the implications of this cultural identification on your future career plans?

Coming to Australia instead of America, do you think this changed some of your plans for the future? How could it be different if you went to America?

2.4. Procedures

After providing information about the research through the participant information sheet and obtaining participants' consent, participants attended two interviews. The first author conducted all interviews and facilitated storytelling by posing clarifying questions that invited the participants to connect aspects of their story, reflect on their journey, and make meaning of their overall stories. These questions were not necessarily asked in the order presented in Table 1 and were explored depending on each participant's answers to previous questions, to connect aspects of their stories in a meaningful order.

The first interviews were transcribed by the first author which afforded him an opportunity to re-experience the interaction, reflect on the participant's story, and devise exploratory questions that could further facilitate storytelling in the second interview (see Table 1 italicised questions) that was conducted approximately one week later.

All interviews were conducted in a university interview room at a time suitable for the participants, video/audio recorded, and lasted between seventy to ninety minutes. Participants were reimbursed for their travel costs and participation.

2.5. A voice-centred relational method of data analysis

Consistent with the constructivist and social constructionist framework informing the research, a voice-centred relational analysis (VCRA) (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan et al., 2003; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998) was employed to acknowledge and explore voices, relationships and broader social and cultural contexts within the narratives of participants. An exploration of voices present in the life-career stories of participants through the analytical lens of VCRA "keeps respondents' voices and perspectives alive" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 120). A VCRA also provides an opportunity to explore a wide range of relational,

cultural and contextual factors influential in participants' career development in an experience near manner while the interplay of lively voices is considered.

The VCRA consists of four listening stages to explore the narratives of participants, specifically, listening for: 1. the plot, 2. the I-poems, 3. relationships, and 4. placing participants within their cultural contexts and social structures. Each stage is briefly described here:

Stage 1) *Listening for the plot* focuses on “what is happening or what stories are being told” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 160) by the participant, focusing on main events, actors, and the social context in which the plot occurs. Attending to the overall story being told by each participant and rearranging smaller stories of the two interviews to form the overall story was the core of this step. By listening to the plot of the participants' stories, similarities and differences in terms of how each one narrated her journey were explicated.

Stage 2) *Listening for “I-poems”* focuses on the voices of “I” and the I-positions of each participant in describing herself (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 162). The creation of I-poems makes it possible to distinguish and listen for “cadences and rhythms” and the different voices that shape the ways participants talk about themselves (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 162). The relational method emphasises distancing the researcher from objectifying participants' voices. The I-poems assist the researcher to highlight subjectivity by tuning into shifts of the use of ‘I’ within participants' narratives (Brown & Gilligan, 1993).

To create the I-poems, all pronouns of “I” along with the descriptive phrase behind them were copy-pasted sequentially to a different document like the lines of a poem. Each participant's new beginnings, transitions, frustrations, confusions or hopes are reflected through the I-poems and point to aspects of their sense of self. This listening must get as close as possible to participants' “multi-layered” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 130) and “contrapuntal” voices (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 164) that occur simultaneously. The concept of

contrapuntal voices refers to the assumption that the human psyche, like the voices heard within a musical concert, is polyphonic and not monotonic. Every single voice co-occurs with other voices and has a particular relationship (e.g., tension, support, opposition) with other voices within self, voices of others or voices heard within a particular cultural or contextual social structure (Gilligan et al., 2003).

Stage 3) *Listening for relationships* involves exploring how each participant experiences herself in the “relational landscape of life” (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p. 16) and the types of relationships highlighted in re-telling life and career stories. Listening to participants’ ways of relating to other people, certain segments of the text including narratives about other people and their interactions were highlighted and a separate list for each participant was prepared. Certain details or stories related to these relationships were then extracted from the transcripts and compiled into the list. By explicating the nature and dynamics of these relationships, the relational dimensions of the participants’ stories were further exposed.

Stage 4) *Listening for placing participants within their cultural contexts and social structures* aims to find a place for the participants’ “accounts and experiences within broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 20). This listening informs the researcher about the cultural contexts, social structures and institutions within which each participant has experienced her story and reveals the dominant and macro-level narratives, structured power relations and the role of cultural norms and societal values which might have been influential in shaping the overall career story. This stage provides a foundation for linking the previous VCRA stages, explores the dynamics of different voices and relationships within broader cultural contexts, and prepares the researcher for making connections between the multilayered accounts of the participants’ story: the plot, the voices and the relationships.

Each listening stage involved multiple readings of the transcripts and listening to the recordings of the interviews. Every stage was completed independently and a comprehensive report of the four stages was developed for each participant. For the purpose of illustration, only highlights and comparisons of the three participants' reports will be presented here.

2.6. Trustworthiness

To substantiate the trustworthiness of the qualitative data and findings in this research, steps were taken throughout the data collection and analysis stages. To enhance trustworthiness, the lead researcher continually and systematically went through biases and discussed them at length with one of the other members of the team after transcribing every single interview with participants. Furthermore, strategies such as analyst triangulation and maintaining field notes throughout the process of data collection and analysis were used to enhance confirmability and credibility of the findings. Constant analysis and checking of incoming data through transcribing by the first researcher, guided future questioning strategies to ensure confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

3. Findings

Rich stories about the career development of participants that incorporated stories of transition, hope, resilience and perseverance in diverse contexts were revealed and are best reported through the four stages of the voice-centred relational method of data analysis (see also Balan, 2005; Gilligan et al., 2003; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

3.1. Listening for the plot

The three stories shared similar points of origin, but the plots substantially differed. Each participant highlighted certain stages of her migration journey, contexts and sources of meaning making to story experiences and justify future plans. The first major plot of Maysa's stories was rooted in the pre-refugee camp experiences and filled with detailed and vivid descriptions including those of many unfortunate experiences, while her sisters' starting point

of the plot was determined by camp and post-camp life experiences. Maysa's plot specifically had a theme of caring present that wasn't evident in the plots of her sisters, for whom Maysa became the primary carer:

My sisters were all young. They don't know nothing, they just cried ... I was a father, a mother ... I have to take care of them. Like I do anything in my power just to keep them alive; to give them what they want ... for them, I used to sacrifice what I wanted to do.

Zafeera's stories mostly covered camp experiences (school experiences, voluntary and work engagements) while Asima highlighted life outside the camp and in Australia. Maintaining her refugee status, Asima worked outside the refugee camp at a pharmacy and later opened a handicraft shop. Therefore, her plot consisted of current and future plans in Australia similar to her previous work experiences.

All three participants storied very difficult transitory schooling experiences, yet considered the completion of their secondary education in such contexts as an achievement:

School was very hard because you can't study with no access to books or when the sun is very hot and we had to sit outside ... sometimes you can find like 400 students in a class ... we really didn't have qualified teachers ... they just recently finished year 12 [Zafeera].

I did my primary and passed, but my high school ... really not passed. Most of the times, I dropped out to go and work, so that I bring something home for my sisters ... we needed someone to teach them English. So, I had to work to get money for that [Maysa].

Although pursuing tertiary education was mentioned as unplanned and spontaneous, all three participants' plot of the story revealed that throughout their years of schooling and even after completing secondary education in camps, tertiary studies were always considered an important aspect of developing their careers and part of their future plans. This intention was supported by managers, colleagues and some friends or role models. Storying the movement through various contexts and being exposed to a range of relationships and work

experiences highlighted the influential role of relationships in diverse contexts for constantly shaping and reshaping future career plans. Being on the move, seemed to beget transitions for participants, both in terms of the work and education they pursued and in terms of their anticipations of the future.

Each participant storied transitions through various work roles inside and outside the refugee camp or Australia and also storied the transitions of her anticipations about future career plans. For instance, Maysa highlighted how conversations with various people and being exposed to their stories, reactions and responses operated as planning guidelines for her:

When we started shooting the movie in the hospital, I just felt like I want to help there. I had a feeling that I just need to do it but ... I don't know anything about injection ... then I start talking to doctors and nurses. I asked: Can I help you? ... she said: you know what? I see you really like to be a nurse ... later I saw advertisement of a nursing course.

Zafeera storied a transition from modelling to a helping profession:

They [models] always go and help the homeless, orphans ... build [schools or orphanages] and visit them. So I thought like, if I have that opportunity, maybe I can help more people ... but there will come a time that you step down if you are a model ... if you have not studied.

She continued to consider many other socialisation processes (encounters with other displaced African people, workers of international humanitarian organisations and role models) as factors that enhanced and eased her transitions. She storied that her transformation from a “*shy girl*” to an outgoing and outspoken girl was the result of these socialisation processes:

... once I started working with them ... first it was very hard to go and approach people ... but slowly it just made me to have that power inside me, to have that encouragement ... my manager always told me: Zafeera! You should not fear. That's normal, just talk to them.

Asima also storied her career transition from caring for disabled children into bookkeeping, store management and pursuing some tertiary studies in management. Her stories pointed to several influential factors that shaped her transitions such as being exposed to media, people who were affected by poverty, people who assisted those in need by offering employment or other people such as her role models and feedback from others around her:

... because of my love for mathematics, teachers told me: "You are going to work in a bank" ... I admired accountants ... in movies or magazines, the way they dress and present themselves ... I used to tell myself: that is what I want to be ... I wanna be like her ... someone else later said something about accountants ... through [her] I realised who I am ... working with her, has really helped and influenced me ... I got the experience of running my own business.

Overall, the plots revealed transitioning in movement. As a result of relating to different people and being exposed to different social, cultural and contextual stories, various formulations of anticipations about future careers appeared. These relationships and transitory social contexts which were influential in forming pre-occupations and internalisations about anticipated career directions, will be explored within the third and fourth stages of listening. Before that, in order to get closer to the subjectivities of participants in those relationships and contexts, different voices contributing to the storying of career interests, plans and transitions will be identified and explored through the I-Poems.

3.2. Listening for I-poems

For each participant, 4 to 5 different voices emerged from the I-poems. Some of these voices worked in similar ways for each participant while others worked uniquely. Overall, four distinct groups of contrapuntal voices were identified and will be presented.

3.2.1: External and restrictive voices included voices of authority, deprivation, powerlessness, and underestimation, and a silencing voice. Different life aspects of each participant were echoed through these voices. These voices were present when, as young women, they faced challenges and difficulties such as those on their way to the camp, social pressure to get married at an early age, demanding and restrictive authorities (e.g., in their country of origin, the refugee camp, the host country), or people who belittled and underestimated their potentials, efforts and future plans:

I don't have anyone / stood up and slapped me / we have to / I sat / marry me / we don't want / you are already useless / you will not have kids / you will be useless / ... I won't be / I will be useless / you will never get a chance to work / ... made me to get married / ... we can't make it / told me / you can't / ... I got so angry

3.2.2: Internal and agentic voices usually followed the external and restrictive voices and included those of determination, continuity, exploration, transition, shift, effort, trial, initiation and an overcoming voice. These voices reflected participants' internal dialogue that seemed to accompany them in challenging times and in most cases led to a perceived sense of agency:

I have learned / I really achieved / I came to camp / I speak / I never knew / I just spoke / I can hear / I can speak / I will not be useless / you are in a process / ... I just see our culture / I really like it / made me think / I'm just proud / we have been strong / we supporting each other

For participants to transition from external, restrictive voices to internal, agentic voices, a bridging voice was heard.

3.2.3: *The bridging voices of resistance and perseverance* were heard when participants storied their transition between the two categories of external and internal voices. Reflecting on how such transition might have occurred, participants drew upon their resilience. For instance, Zafeera's over-use of the phrases '*I still*' and '*I have to*' was explicit in her I-poems (each appeared around 50 times). The storying of difficult and challenging situations of the migration journey, repeatedly followed by the use of such phrases, signified the continuation of curiosity and determination, allowing the extension of the voices of resistance and perseverance into new internal-agentic voices such as the voices of trial and effort:

I want to do and help / I'm just focusing / me achieving my dream / I can help / I have not achieved / I will never help / I'm just going to work / what you have / you haven't given up / you have gone [through?] so much in life / you will just have to / I have to achieve ... gives me encouragement, power, inside me / I have to make / I have to build / I have to be

3.2.4: *Distinct voices* were unique to each participant, but also played an important role for interacting with other voices. Asima's advising voice was an example of a distinct voice related to her desire of becoming a successful career role model. The voice of determination and her advising voice interplayed. In the examples of I-Poems that follow, Asima's advising voice is heard through the repetitive use of 'you', when reflecting through achieving some of her plans despite challenges and advising others to follow her example:

You take the risk / I can take a risk / find myself falling into a trap / I can / you find yourself / I took the risk / you never know / you may take the first risk / you must work again / you can do / you find out ... read about me / read about my life / you come from a poor, refugee background / you never succeed / you come from that / you succeed more /

*you wanna fight / you wanna reach / you wanna have things / makes you build yourself /
be who you wanna be*

These excerpts of Asima's I-poems reveal the interplay between different contrapuntal voices and how each voice shapes, supports, fuels, silences or invites other voices into play.

3.3. Listening for relationships

A cross-cases analysis revealed the paramount influence of different relationships in shaping, sustaining or marginalising the participants' career plans. For instance, childhood ideas of becoming a model, an actress or accountant which were primarily attributed to the influence of certain relationships, over time transformed through new social and relational contexts. By relating to certain new individuals, groups or media role models, alternative future careers were considered. Overall different ways of relating were heard within the two broad realms of relational harmonies and relational challenges.

The realm of relational harmonies: Storying their career development, educational decisions, future career plans and transitions through various contexts, the three participants eagerly and repeatedly talked about the role of a range of supportive, guiding, encouraging and inspirational relationships.

Maysa's passion and excitement for relating to people filled her migration journey and career development stories with relational narratives. Narrating these stories, she was surprised about the diversity of people who played a role in her career journey: "... *in the camp, people usually don't do that ... but I don't know, nobody wanted me to leave*" (referring to keeping her involved in work). Relationships in her stories were themed around the provision of help and assistance: "*They were all helping me with ideas ... helping me build up what I want to do*". This theme became her organising lens through which she considered relationships and determined the relational dimensions of her career plans.

Zafeera's less crowded realm of relational harmonies mostly focused on people as groups. The only two individuals whose support stood out in Zafeera's story were Maysa and her camp work manager. The encouragement and support she received through these relationships was regulated by, and regulating of her exposure to the work of other groups of people who inspired her. These groups included those who assisted people in the refugee camps of Africa, the employees of active international organisations, and celebrities whose work she was exposed to through media; all had a salient influence in constantly re-shaping a broader picture of potential career options that matched her personal life story of "*going through so much*". By learning about the life of those who worked in service to refugees and who, similar to her, had also been "*through so much*", Zafeera formulated new career possibilities:

... in UN and other organisations ... they studied international relations and their background was not as good as other people ... they are the ones who studied international relations and helping people ... they have gone [through] so much in life, that's why most of the time when I follow them up ... they come from a poor background and they struggled so hard to be where they are now.

Similar to Zafeera, Asima's less crowded world of relationships was limited to her three sisters, an emotionally supportive relative who lives in another country and above all the manager she was working for. The role of this "*lady manager*" was emphasised as the most directly influential relationship in her life-career plan: "*I thought she was a person from nowhere ... she was like my sister, my mother ... we shared ideas but she was much older than me ... through her, I realised my dreams and who I am*". Themes highlighted through this relationship for Asima, included: prioritising work, empowering the poor by creating work, generating ideas, creativity and innovation. These themes provided a base on which Asima made sense of her previous observations about the lives of people in Africa and

related to disadvantaged people through the provision of work. Instead of considering herself as one of those in need of help, through this relationship she found the opportunity to identify more with the 'team of helpers'.

Despite not having parents to support them, the participants seemed to still find other avenues for deriving meaning and support from these 'absent but implicit' relationships by relating to their parents in metaphoric ways, honouring their presence and making it useful in challenging and overwhelming times. The salient influence of the role of family seemed to split among other relationships with teachers, managers and role models (mostly celebrities). Relating with different role models opened up new possibilities for direction and action.

The realm of relational challenges: Some relationships in the participants' stories reflected relational challenges such as discouragement, oppression, constraint and being silenced. The dominant theme of this realm related to issues of power, oppression and abuse when participants came in contact with certain groups of people. Examples included: 1) the militant groups in Africa that caused their forced displacement: "*They attacked our village and everybody was running away. We just don't know what was going on. I just throw everything and hide ... they were shooting and burning houses*" [Maysa]. 2) sexually abusive men: "*the man who was supposed to protect us tried to rape one of my sisters ... we just escape at night*", 3) community members and elders who enforced traditional ways of being for women:

... everybody was telling me, you are old, you have to get married ... they really discouraged me ... from thirteen, you are already married ... everybody was telling me: 'you have to get married Maysa! You are getting old ... you will be useless' [Maysa]. ... [from a young age] they always think that you are already grown up woman. You should not wait any longer ... if you study, you will never work ... going to school, it will

never take you anywhere. You never get a chance to work because everything is for men [Zafeera].

and 4) the abusive and discouraging attitudes of some people after resettlement:

He said: 'You black people! This is not your home, go back to where you came from' ... I just wanted to know what is the problem? ... why he was abusing us ... Is it colour? I don't know ... but I started to learn and study more about people [Maysa].

They say it's almost impossible for you to do this in Australia ... they think I can't, because I don't have support or finance. But I told myself 'I have to'!... I have to focus with my dreams and achieve my goals. I have to stand with it! [Zafeera]

The narratives of relational challenges were usually followed by two particular strategies: 1. reframing the challenge as learning opportunities and 2. remembering relationships which could counter-balance the oppressive influences. Both strategies assisted participants to focus on plans and find a voice to continue moving forward. Maysa reflected on her resistance against the challenge of the community to get married and how metaphoric, local and spiritual relationships assisted her to counter-balance the challenge and move forward:

There was a time I even tried to kill myself. But then I asked myself: No. If I kill myself, who will take care of my sisters?' ... I just sat down and read a small Surah and I said god forgive me and thought of my sisters, my mom and dad. My dad used to say: 'Just put in your mind that I'm with you and god is also with you'. So when I remember some of my dad's words and I will be strong enough, I pray and cry. And I just went back home and they beat me, they do anything, I still smile and stay happy.

Borrowing strength from the realm of relational harmonies to balance the influence of oppressive and abusive relationships along their migration journey was common to the stories of all three women. Every relational challenge was followed by an explanation of finding

resources from other relational domains including spiritual, cultural and broader social relationships.

Exploring the two distinct relational realms made the interplay of different voices, their sources or intensifiers explicit and visible. For instance, Maysa's explanations that negative relational experiences will not hinder her career development and may even provide a learning opportunity, showed how the voices of trial, initiation and agency have gained some momentum in Australia against the voices of powerlessness, confusion and struggle. Listening for relationships signified the importance of the next stage of listening as the three participants' plot of the stories and ways of relating were filled with relationships that were made meaningful when placed within broader cultural contexts and social structures.

3.4. Listening for placing participants within their cultural contexts and social structures

The participants narrated local, cultural and contextual stories based on twenty years of being witness to ethnic, religious and political conflict, war, travelling through different locations across Africa and meeting new people from other countries who shared similar contextual experiences in various social structures. These local cultural and contextual stories consisted of dominant narratives, cultural norms and values.

The other social structure simultaneously providing a dominant narrative was the portrayal of and exposure to Western work behaviours and values through media and social networks. Exposure to media, as a source of dominant macro narratives, must be considered in view of the participants living with hope and knowledge that one day they will live and work in a Western country. These social structures and contextually available dominant narratives, in addition to the normative contextual and cultural forces available to each participant individually (e.g., relational domains), facilitated the construction and extension of a unique guiding narrative for a future career plan.

To get a sense of how each participant's particular contexts and life events might have shaped her unique guiding narrative for a future career plan, it was important to sequentially and in details consider those events, in light of dominant cultural narratives and social structures. As this detailed elaboration is outside the scope of this paper, only the placing of Maysa's stories within cultural contexts and social structures will be presented here.

Participants started their journey together when Maysa was 10, Zafeera 5 and Asima 4 years old. Maysa's age and the sequence of events initially became vital in defining a 'caring role' for her. Additionally, being older and spending more time in their own village, exposed Maysa to contextual and culturally acceptable feminine work values of their community (perhaps caring roles). Maysa lived, experienced and saw the world for some years through the lens of being a carer for her two sisters whom she felt constantly responsible for. This perceived sense of responsibility sensitised her to young African females' broader social issues such as female circumcision and trying to force young girls into early marriage both of which she experienced. The new context of the refugee camp still required Maysa to maintain her caring role in different ways. For Maysa, work in this new context slowly shifted its purpose from merely surviving to social and community involvement and finally a degree of self-determination. This transition in the purpose of work was not completely aligned with some of the cultural stories of the African communities. For example, the presence of a restrictive dominant cultural narrative about the social participation of females was reflected through the stories of participants. Maysa said:

In Africa, most of the times we ladies, we women, people and society don't see us that we are so important ... even if you study hard, you are not that important. You will still get married and take care of your kids. So you can't do anything.

The meaning of 'career development' of women in the context of certain religious or tribal communities is limited to feminine work roles associated with the agrarian era. But

even among such local communities, there were exceptions and differences. Maysa's realm of harmonious relationships provided her with a different set of dominant narratives. As a result of tensions between the different available social structures, Maysa's unique guiding narrative for a future career plan became one of 'helping through caring for women in Africa':

Things are almost similar in Africa ... the problems young babies and mothers are facing ... circumcision of ladies ... that's the reason why I have to count from the day I came here to six years ... because all my plans are about helping them all.

The different social structure and macro narratives operating in Australia distanced the participants from restrictive dominant social forces that limit the social participation of women. In this new context, participants actualised career plans that were previously partially constructed cast with uncertainty:

Coming here, it has really changed me and my life ... I was a traditional person ... it has really opened my mind. I see that age, it doesn't matter. You can even reach your thirties; you still get married. Australia really helped me open my mind and see my plans clear.

Maysa's new context weakened the alliance between the voices of powerlessness and confusion, and provided more space for the operation of internal and agentic voices of initiation, trial and agency.

Through this final stage of analysis, an exploration of dominant and normative narratives available within a diverse range of cultural contexts and social structures occurred. This exploration revealed a range of cultural and contextual stories from pre-, within- and post-refugee camp contexts and from different educational and vocational settings in which participants' career constructions constantly reformed and evolved. Finally, these cultural and contextual stories enriched the understanding of the interplay between different contrapuntal voices and relationships influential in the career development of participants.

3.5. Participants' reflections on the interviews

All three participants viewed the interviews as extremely helpful with feedback beyond researchers' expectations. Between the two interviews, Maysa initiated discussion with her case manager about university entry and subsequently met with a university admission consultant about potential entry pathways.

Before beginning the second interview, Asima reflected on her first interview experience:

I think it made me to be courageous ... and I've learned a lot and when I went back home, I was like "Oh, so I can talk" ... And I think it made me comfortable ... I was just smiling all the time, until my sisters were like: 'Wow. These days we haven't see you smile like this' ... it made me feel like, there are people like you, who are ready to listen to our stories and even if I didn't say everything, but I think we really need it. Because we have problems and we keep it to ourselves. We are just scared of sharing it.

Maysa, reflected on her first interview:

It was amazing. There are some things I didn't know, but I learned more about myself ... it opened my mind more; to know more ... some things become clear to me and some things also change ... like it became more clear for me that I really want to study nursing ... and my six year plan for going back also changed.

After completing all interviews, Zafeera said: *"This is the best thing that has happened to me after I came to Australia. I never had a chance to talk about these with someone"*.

Asima began the second interview with the goals of improving her speech and asking questions of the interviewer. Shifting the power dynamics of the interview, Asima took the role of the interviewer within its last few minutes. This repositioning beyond the role of a

participant, was a re-clarification of her abilities and sense of self, contributing to the re-authoring of alternative life-career stories.

Participants who started with shaking hands, uncertain and confused attitudes, ended up with a shift in their positions. Such shifting in the positioning of participants after two interviews in a context filled with attention, curiosity and reflexivity, generated a sense of agency about their career development goals.

4. Discussion

This research provided a space for participants to voice their career-life story. The voice-centred relational method of analysis prioritised the subjectivities of the participants and their voices. By storying their career development, participants revealed the importance of socialisations, social structures, dominant narratives, relationships and cultural and contextual domains, prior, across and post migration. Thus the findings highlighted the importance of career theory and practice taking account of contexts, cultures and relationships for understanding the career development of young people with refugee backgrounds.

The findings revealed the participants': 1. sense of self in transition, 2. their relational resourcefulness for self-reliance in times of tension and 3. the role of storytelling for giving voice to participants' experience of the recursive relational, cultural and contextual variables in shaping of their career interests and plans. Each will be discussed.

4.1. Sense of self in transition

Protracted displacement of youth with refugee backgrounds during their migration journey, transitioning through various locations and waiting for final resettlement, exposes them to a diverse range of cultural and contextual influences in their countries of origin, transitory and resettlement countries. Such multi-directional exposure to diverse social structures invites a constant sense of "in-betweenness and split existence" that often promotes

“agency in waiting”, particularly among youth (Brun, 2015, pp. 19-21). Youth, as a transitory, heterogeneous process and a “relational concept” is constructed through social processes (Wyn & White, 1997, p. 10). Simultaneously being attached to past, present and anticipated future locations provides a foundation for generating narratives about future plans and possibilities based on many different and at times contradictory sources. Therefore, as participants’ narratives indicated, two transitory processes were occurring at the same time for them: one related to the construction of narratives of self in the maturation process and the other related to narratives of self in transition through contexts. Simultaneously experiencing the two transitory processes and their associated conflicts and supports, influences the construction of transitory values, interests and aspirations.

Protracted displacement of youth with refugee backgrounds characterised by active waiting, hope and anticipation (Conlon, 2011) of future life and careers, directs their attention to sources that envision and portray future possibilities in potential countries of resettlement. Yet these anticipated possibilities are still partially entangled with the cultural aspects of the previous stages of transition. Therefore, in actively waiting for a future in another location, there was a constant interaction between the participants’ everyday lives and the stories circulating in local and non-local cultures about future possibilities. Particular attention to non-local and global stories reflects the importance of media and role models outside the context of refugee camps or African cultures. The interplay of cultural stories available within the context of Africa and the refugee camp with cultural stories presented through media, provide a constantly transforming lens by which life stories are interpreted and future possibilities evaluated. It was the explorative process of narrative inquiry that provided a stage for reflection upon such interplays, for re-storying new or forgotten narratives that could potentially provoke “agency in waiting” and re-contextualise it in the new environment of the resettlement country.

The influential nature of exposure to Western conceptualisations of career through available local or global stories brought some degree of clarity to anticipated future careers as well as tension to the participants' lives. As the career development of women is limited to work in the home and in families in agrarian contexts, construction of career identities based on social structures outside their local cultures invited tension.

4.2. Relational resourcefulness for self-reliance in times of tension

The stories of emerging tensions between the participants and their communities as a result of career internalisations that were not aligned with local cultural values, illustrated participants' relational resourcefulness for self-reliance in challenging times, when faced with "aversive relational influences" (Blustein, 2011, p. 6). Consistent with the conceptualisation of vocational behaviour as "an inherently relational act" within the frameworks of the "relational theory of working" (Blustein, 2011, p. 1), when faced with tensions about their career choices and anticipations, participants looked for support and affirmation among various relational sources. Participants relied upon constructions of a 'resilient self' to transition from I-positions that initially sounded restrictive, incapable, passive and uncertain towards self-affirming, hopeful and active I-positions. To expedite such transition for situating themselves in preferred anticipated careers, participants drew upon metaphoric, local and global relational stories.

Metaphoric relationships were those related to their parents, family of origin and spiritual dimensions. Participants found that remembering what their parents directly told them in the past or might have anticipated for their future, assisted them in times of tension to transition from silencing to empowering voices. These 'absent but implicit' narratives, usually rehearsed along with metaphoric spiritual narratives, were found to be most useful to move on in traumatic and chaotic situations. The powerful role of family in the career development of young people has been elaborated in some career theories (Brown, 2004). In

a critical analysis of the role of family in the career development of people from diverse cultural backgrounds and social strata, Brown (2004) considered two important factors: a) “perceived parental support” and b) “extended family members” (p. 589-590). Considering that the participants had no parents or guardians across their journey, their narratives repeatedly illustrated the extraction of “perceived” relational support from absent, imaginary and metaphoric relationships (e.g., mostly with parents) as well as extended family members. The vacant role of parents was substituted by important others who occasionally took the role of family members in exposing new domains of work, affirming, rejecting or weakening certain decisions and actions. Such interactions became influential in shaping participants’ anticipations and internalisations about future career plans and ultimately contributing to the composition of narratives of self in transition. It is important to note that in African culture the concept of extended family members is fluid and was evident when participants repeatedly named their friends, supportive elders and cousins, as sisters, uncles or aunties. Overall, ‘perceived parental support’ experienced through metaphoric relationships with their parents was contingent upon the availability of local supportive relationships.

Local relationships included participants’ interactions with other refugees, relatives in other countries, teachers, managers, employees of international organisations and community professionals (e. g., physicians, nurses, journalists). These relationships operated as I-position catalysts and assisted participants to reconsider preferred anticipated careers. However, it is noteworthy to consider the role of local relationships in exposing young people in refugee camps to global stories which are not aligned with local cultural values (e.g., a manager in camp who reinforces Maysa’s consideration of Angelina Julie as a role model). In times of tension with local communities that rejected participants’ preferred anticipated careers, some local relationships supported them. The dualistic role of supportive local relationships, is not surprising as most people in refugee camps experience a ‘self in

transition', lost between social structures and dominant narratives that promote collectivist work values and also individualist -mostly Western- work values. The narrow boundary between relating to role models and local relationships was reflective of the recursive nature of local and global relationships.

Global relationships refer to relating with discourses that connect participants with sources of meaning through which contextual and cultural complications and conflicts can be understood. These understandings consequently propose potential future careers for negotiation between participants and their local relationships. This was evident in participants' choices in relating with Black African role models and also global figures (e. g., Nelson Mandela, Kofi Anan, Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, Michael Jackson, Emmanuel Jal). Contrary to earlier studies that found limited access to occupational role models for disadvantaged young people (Ladany, Melnicoff, Constantine, & Love, 1997), three factors contributed to broadening the participants' access to occupational role models: 1) expansion of technological advances even into the refugee camps of Africa, 2) the absence of parents promoting the need to relate with various other meaningful relationships while in transition, and 3) the significance of role models in the discursive context of refugee camps. The richness of both local and global relationships stories, explains how youth with refugee backgrounds, particularly those who have experienced protracted displacement and active waiting, manage their sense of self in society by relating to various meaningful relationships and through this relating, exercise communication in different ways (Daiute, 2010). Participants identified with aspects of role models' stories that reflected a transition from identical or semi-identical contexts and underprivileged situations to anticipated future contexts and situations; from voicelessness to finding voice. The act of storying such identifications and relations within various transitory contexts reflects the social-relational nature of participants' anticipated career narratives.

4.3. Storytelling and giving voice to participants

Facilitating the process of storytelling as an act of inquiry into the career narratives of participants exhibited examples of the five process constructs of reflection, meaning making, connectedness, learning and agency, inherent in the practice of narrative career counselling (Abkhezr & McMahon, 2017; McMahon et al., 2012). Additionally, the curiosity and tentative listening posed by the interviewer, allowed participants to experience a relational power dynamic which was different from many of their previous interview experiences (Abkhezr & McMahon, 2017).

During the interviews which were in no way intended as an intervention, participants reflected on and made meaning of various critical moments, relationships, social and contextual structures throughout their migration journey. They also made connections between stories that reflected various aspects of their life, interests, values and anticipated future directions. They learned more about themselves and the stories contributing to the construction of their anticipated future directions and plans. The position of “perspectivism in interpretation” (Besley, 2002, p. 131) inherent in narrative approaches (e.g., storytelling), promoted an awareness for participants about a multitude of contributing factors to their career development. Therefore, consistent with social constructionist and constructivist theories, storytelling operated as a practice of reflexivity over the relational, social, cultural and contextual dimensions of participants’ career development.

The experience of reflexivity is often linked with agency (Savickas, 2016). Facilitating a sense of agency, defined as the “sensed capacity to enact a desired role” (Cochran, 2007, p. 14), is an important goal of career counselling. In the context of youth with refugee backgrounds, often with collectivist cultural backgrounds, agency is conceptualised as a relational concept (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). Participants’ experience of recursiveness between various aspects of their migration journey re-contextualised and

translated their sense of ‘agency in waiting’ into agency after resettlement. Participants were reminded that they had not been passively waiting for their current situation, but have been active participants in the construction of such internalisations and stories.

Therefore, a ‘voice friendly space’, sensitive to subjective, cultural and contextual experiences of participants whose voices might have been lost or silenced, and the experience of storying career development throughout the migration journey (which is by itself another act of socialisation), had two important implications for participants: a) a reconstruction of career stories and plans following a de-construction that occurs through the research process and b) re-vocalising or finding new or silenced voices as a result of such reconstructions.

5. Implications for practice, theory and research

Loss of voice and a decline in sense of agency becomes very likely for youth with refugee backgrounds, due to the development of a “culture of disbelief” and “defeat” (Harris, 2002, p. 4) through the long journey of protracted displacement. Being invited to participate in research interviews allowed participants to experience themselves as worthy of providing opinions about their skills, strengths and knowledge (Gabrium & Holstein, 2012) that carried them through such unique and challenging transitions. Such experience transformed participants’ subjectivity from passive respondents to active “constructive practitioners of experiential knowledge” (Gabrium & Holstein, 2012, p. 32).

This research was not intended as and does not claim to be an intervention. However, the findings indicated that exploring career development through storytelling in the form of narrative inquiry facilitated by semi-structured interviews benefitted participants by re-vocalising silenced or diminished voices, finding new voices and enhancements of their sense of agency after resettlement through a re-contextualisation of ‘agency in waiting’. During the interviews, there were occasions where the constructs of narrative career counselling manifested within the stories told by the participants. This suggests the potential usefulness of

narrative approaches to inquiry and counselling when working with young people from refugee backgrounds as such approaches recognise the importance of cultural, contextual, relational and social considerations for understanding their career development. Therefore, narrative career counselling, grounded in social constructionist and constructivist theories, may be an appropriate approach for career practitioners to use when working with young people from refugee backgrounds.

The current research is contributing new knowledge to the field of career development about a neglected population, demonstrating how career development research can be an enterprise that “cuts across privilege and identity statuses” (Duffy et al., 2016, p. 127). Furthermore, examining the qualitative data related to the career development of this neglected population through VCRA for the first time, expanded on the relational and contextual components of their career development.

6. Limitations and future research

As an exploratory qualitative study, this research aims to expand knowledge about and possibilities of narrative inquiry with a group that has been neglected in career research. This research could be seen as a first step among many that need to be taken, before developing interventions for young people with refugee backgrounds whose unique life and career transitions require particular attention that can be best achieved by experience near and qualitative research. However, there were limitations to this study. One limitation is related to axiological assumptions of qualitative research which emphasise the possibility of the researcher’s values and worldviews interfering with objective analysis and reporting. The first author who conducted the interviews also conducted the analysis of data which might have resulted in biases, reducing the confirmability of findings. To enhance confirmability, the first author employed reflexivity strategies such as keeping a “reflexive journal” including “data reduction and reconstruction, synthesising strategies, process notes, and materials

relating to intentions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 319) throughout the research process. In his encounters with a co-author after transcribing the first interview, the first author discussed his process notes, reflexive journal material, intentions, ideas and potential questions for the second interview. Additionally, the team of authors cross checked the data analysis several times, raised questions and provided feedback to ensure maximum confirmability and trustworthiness of the findings.

Future research could include larger samples, male participants and young people from a wider range of cultural backgrounds and diverse migration journeys.

7. Conclusion

Moving and anticipated movement through various geographical, social and cultural locations is the nature of protracted displacement. This protracted migration journey may weaken youth with refugee background’s sense of agency or silence their voices. Exploring the career development of youth with refugee backgrounds needs to give voice to forgotten and weakened stories of hope, skills and experience by remaining sensitive to the cultural and contextual elements of various stages of the migration journey. Narrative career interviews that facilitated the exploration of participants’ career development in this research manifested as a voice giving process that enhanced recently resettled youth with refugee backgrounds’ sense of agency.

Epilogue

Asima who recently rented a shop, is doing well in her business. She plans to continue working and when things are settled, begin studies in business management. Zafeera is exploring her options for gaining university entry to study international relations. Maysa is studying a certificate in Aged Care that ultimately can articulate entry into university to study a bachelor of nursing and midwifery.

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