

# **A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF ISIE SMUTS**

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## SUMMARY

Psychobiographical research, with the use of psychological theory, allows us to uncover and unravel the life of an individual. This important area of research for the application of a psychological theory has, however, been under-utilized, especially in South Africa. The importance of psychobiographical case study research for the development and testing of theories of human development throughout the lifespan, has been supported by a number of academics in the field. The research subject was Sibella Margaretha (Isie) Krige. Isie (1870-1954) was married to General Jan Christiaan Smuts (1870-1950). He was a prominent South African and Commonwealth statesman, military leader, botanist and philosopher. Although much has been written on General Smuts, a psychobiography on the life of Isie had not been written yet.

Isie was chosen as the research subject through purposive sampling. The study employed a qualitative psychobiographical research method, which aimed to explore and describe Isie's psychological development in terms of Daniel Levinson's (1996) theory of the *Human Life Cycle*. Collected data were analysed in accordance with Huberman and Miles' (2000) approach. It integrated three sub-processes, namely data reduction, data display, as well as the drawing of conclusions and verification.

The findings of the study indicate that Isie's life was consistent with the pattern which Levinson (1996) identified. Isie was relatively successful in resolving the life tasks and transitional periods proposed by Levinson. The findings of the study also indicated that the development of Isie's life structure was strongly influenced by a number of socio-historical and global events.

This research study has given a positive demonstration of the value of development theory. Furthermore, it emphasized the uniqueness of individuals in coping with the challenges of life. As a result it has opened up the possibility of perceiving people and their actions in a different way. Consequently, recommendations regarding the psychobiographical research design and methodology in future have been made.



Key words:

Psychobiography; Sibella Margaretha Krige; Isie Smuts; Human Life Cycle, Daniel Levinson, human development, case study research.



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

#### **1.1 Chapter preview**

This introductory chapter is a general introductory section to the research study. As such, it will contain a brief outline of the psychobiographical approach to research, as well as Daniel Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle. Some of the most relevant aspects of Sibella Margaretha Krige's life history will be pointed out. This will be followed by an outline and description of the research problem. A brief reflection of the researcher's own personal passage will be included. Finally, an overview of all the chapters comprising this study will also be given.

#### **1.2 Context of the research**

Psychobiography has been described in several ways during its conceptual development. Shared by most definitions is an acknowledgement of both a psychological analysis of an individual's life and a biographical depiction of an individual's life history and achievements. The intention is to get more insight into the individual's personality development. In terms of the definition offered by McAdams (2006), a psychobiography is understood to be the methodical use of a psychological theory to transform a life into a clarifying and logical story.

The concept of psychobiography is defined as "the explicit use of systematic or formal psychology in biography" (Runyan, 1982b, p. 202). This implies that psychobiographers are allowed to extract information from various theories of social, developmental and personality psychology.

##### **1.2.2 An overview of the psychobiographical approach**

Various definitions of a psychobiography have been given by Carlson (1988), Simonton (1990), Elms (1994), and Alexander (1988). These will be provided in the next chapter. In short, this approach relates to studying lives already lived, as well as studying great individuals.



Furthermore, it entails doing more than merely writing a biography, since one needs to look at one life repeatedly.

The neglect by South African psychologists of this field will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter. In summary, the importance of psychobiographical case studies cannot be over-emphasised. This has been endorsed by a number of academics in this field (Alexander, 1988; Carlson, 1988; Fouché, 1999; McAdams, 2006; Runyan, 1988b).

### **1.2.3 An overview of the theoretical psychological framework**

As a psychobiography is associated with the study of a complete life, from birth to death, a developmental psychological approach was accepted for the purpose of this study. The theory of choice for this study is Levinson's (1996) theory of the *Human Life Cycle*. This approach was chosen for various reasons. Firstly, this theory is in touch with the issues of adulthood. Secondly, because it explains the lifespan development, it permits the researcher to study Isie Smuts' entire life. Thirdly, the theory inspects the general pattern or specific design of a person's life. This includes the individual's socio-cultural world, features of the self, and important relationships and roles (McAdams, 1988). Lastly, and most importantly, Levinson's theory is held as being a combination of other theories, such as those of Jung, Piaget, Freud and Erikson. As a result it supplies an integrated approach regarding the understanding of adult development (Levinson, 1996).

### **1.1 The life of Isie Smuts**

A literature search revealed that no previous biography or psychobiography on Isie Smuts has been undertaken to date. The main reason for this was that she insisted that her husband was the historical figure and she was not important (Macdonald, 1946).

Sibella Margaretha Krige, one of eleven children, was born in Stellenbosch, on 22 December 1870. Isie, as she was generally known, was married to General J. C. Smuts (born 1870; died 1950). He was a prominent South African and Commonwealth statesman, as well as a military



leader (Millin, 1936). Moreover, General Smuts was one of the founders of the Union of South Africa and an architect of the League of Nations and of the United Nations (Joseph, 1969). During their 53 years of marriage, Isie supported and encouraged Jan in his political career, while raising their children. She died at the age of 83 on 25 February 1954 at Doornkloof.

Isie was selected as a suitable psychobiographical case on the basis of the interest value, uniqueness and significance of her life (Stroud, 2004). A psychobiographical study of her life has special value for the study of *human development*, as it allows us to get a multifaceted picture of a life at a given time. It also allows for the definition of its development over a lifespan. Additionally, it helps to generate new concepts and assists in the development of new theories (Levinson, 1990).

## 1.2 The research problem

The primary aim of this study is to explore and describe the human development of Isie Smuts across her lifespan in terms of Levinson's (1996) theory of the *Human Life Cycle*.

The nature of this study could be explained as both *descriptive-dialogic* and *exploratory-descriptive* (Edwards, 1990). The *descriptive-dialogic* element refers to a faithful portrayal and description of essential phenomena. Moreover, it aspires to further simplify and test a specific theory, such as Levinson's (1996) theory which is the focus in this particular study. The *exploratory-descriptive* element aims to provide a rich and precise description of human development over the lifespan of Isie Smuts.

Additionally, the study aimed to generalize the results of the research to the theory, as represented by the concept *analytical generalization* (Yin, 2003). It was not intended to generalize the findings of the research to a larger population (*i.e.*, *statistical generalization*).

## 1.3 The researcher's personal passage

This research project developed out of a personal and familial interest in the research subject. The researcher is in the privileged position to be married to a descendant of Jan Christiaan and Isie



Smuts. The paternal grandfather of the researcher's husband was a first cousin of Jan Christiaan Smuts. Although the researcher's mother-in-law, Elsie, has no blood ties to the Smuts family of Doornkloof, she visited them often during her childhood. This happened because the only brother of Elsie's mother was married to the eldest Smuts daughter, Santa.

Elsie has always been fascinated by the Doornkloof family's simplistic lifestyle and rustic values, and particularly the role Isie Smuts played in the family. As such, Elsie ignited a growing need in the researcher to understand the human development of Isie. Following this, a lecturer at the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Dr Paul Fouché, influenced and later encouraged the researcher to do a psychobiographical study. He personally completed a psychobiography on the life of Jan Christiaan Smuts in 1999.

#### **1.4 An overview of the study**

This study consists of six chapters, the first being an introduction. Chapter Two offers an insight into psychobiographical and qualitative research methods. Chapter Three provides a broad survey of human development and methodically discusses Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle. Chapter Four emphasizes various problems and issues regarding qualitative research methodology. The findings of this research are discussed in Chapter Five. Chapter Six concludes the study and discusses the value and limitations of the study. Additionally, it gives suggestions for future research in the human development field.

#### **1.5 Chapter summary**

The proposed study is a psychobiography of Isie Smuts. The study employs a qualitative psychobiographical research method, which will aim to describe Isie's psychological development in terms of Daniel Levinson's (1996) theory of the *Human Life Cycle*.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH**

#### **2.1 Chapter preview**

The relationship between psychology and biography is discussed in this chapter, as it endeavours to expand the understanding of psychobiographical research. The qualitative method of research will be described in order to fully understand and realize the value of psychobiographical research. The value of life history research and psychobiographical research is presented, whilst discussing the methodological issues and difficulties to be taken into consideration when undertaking a psychobiography. Finally, the methodological considerations relevant to the life of Isie Smuts are highlighted.

#### **2.2 Qualitative research**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated that “qualitative” suggests “an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency” (p.4). Roberts (2002) viewed qualitative research as a way of social intervention, as it helps realisation by producing solidarity, by raising consciousness, or allowing those who have not been heard the right to be heard. Additionally, Geertz (1973) described qualitative research as aspiring to provide thick or rich descriptive explanations of investigated phenomena, whereas quantitative research relates to the calculation of volumes, occurrences, or relational size of entities.

Therefore, qualitative and quantitative researchers differ in how the data obtained are analysed. This means the interest of qualitative research lies with the interpretation of a section of text rather than finding quantifiable numerical properties. Comprehensive narrative accounts are then used to communicate the way in which participants understood, observed or explained a phenomenon (Ashworth, 2003; Smith, 2003; Willig, 2001).

Qualitative psychology is generally absorbed with describing, exploring, and interpreting the individual and collective experiences of participants in an effort to understand a small number of participants' orientation, or worldview (Stroud, 2004). As a result, most qualitative researchers are committed to the importance of language as a primary attribute of human communication, understanding, and interpretation (Smith, 2003). Qualitative research also relates to meaning in context.

## **2.3 Psychobiographical research**

When modern psychologists study lives, they are dealing with either autobiography or biography (McAdams, 1988). Fouché (1999) noted that a psychologist is doing a psychobiography when a methodical and self-conscious psychological theory is used to assist in the process of perceiving and distinguishing the story. A generalised definition of a psychobiography as, “the systematic use of psychological (especially personality) theory to transform a life into a coherent and illuminating story” was proposed by McAdams (2006, p. 503). The importance of psychobiographical case studies has been promoted by numerous academics in the field of life history research, especially in terms of theories on human development (Alexander, 1988; Carlson, 1988; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005b; McAdams, 2006; Runyan, 1988a; 1988b).

### **2.3.1 Defining the field of psychobiographical research**

The psychobiographical field relates to studying lives already lived, or “finished lives” (Carlson, 1988, p. 106). Simonton (1990) proposed that it involves the study of prominent, enigmatic or great individuals. Alexander (1988) added that the emphasis is to offer explanations for features or characteristics of the life history which cannot simply be obtained by using common sense or simple psychological principles (Alexander, 1988). Elms (1994) described a psychobiography as a way of doing psychology and not merely a way of doing a biography. According to him, psychologists have much to learn from looking individually at one life or one human being, over and over again.



Psychobiography has been described in several ways since its conceptual development. Shared by most definitions is an acknowledgement of both a psychological analysis of an individual's life and a biographical depiction of an individual's life history and achievements. The researcher seeks to achieve an insightful interpretation of the individual's personality development.

### **2.3.2 Trends in the development of psychobiography**

Recently the psychobiographical field has been challenged. As a response to the strong emphasis on a scientific approach to the study of development, psychologists have avoided doing detailed studies of individual lives. They reasoned that such studies did not contribute towards creating more universal truths (Howe, 1997).

Only in recent years has psychobiography moved away from its psychoanalytic stance which had resulted from Freud's work (Elms, 1994). The author suggested that it assumed a more diverse variety while utilizing a broader range of useful and suitable psychological theories. According to Rustin (1999), modern social sciences have been inclined to omit the individuality of the individual. With the increasing influence of postmodernism, as well as the development and progress of narrative analysis, story and time aspects have enhanced the research processes (De Lauwere, 2001; Murray 2003).

The attraction of biographical research lies in its explorative nature of varied, distinct methodological and interpretive ways (Banister et al., 1999; Stroud, 2004). Additionally, it is about an individual's account of life experiences which can be understood in terms of present-day cultural and structural settings (De Lauwere, 2001; Roberts, 2002; Willig, 2001).

### **2.3.3 The development of psychobiographical research in South Africa**

As stated in the previous chapter, South African psychologists have been neglecting their obligation to this field by failing to record the life stories of outstanding South African figures from a psychological perspective (Vorster, 2003). This neglect has caused the neglect of an area which is very well suited to the application of psychological theories. However, there are

noteworthy exceptions, as psychobiographies completed during the last decade have included: *The Life of Jan Christiaan Smuts: A Psychobiographical Study* (Fouché, 1999); *The Life of Helen Martins, Creator of the Own House: A Psychobiographical Study* (Bareira, 2001); *Bantu Stephen Biko: A Psychobiographical Case Study* (Kotton, 2002); *A Psychobiographical Study of Mother Teresa* (Stroud, 2004); *Karen Horney: A Psychobiographical Study* (Green, 2006); and *A Psychobiographical Study of Dr. H.F. Verwoerd* (Claasen, 2007). More examples include psychobiographical case studies on C. J. Langenhoven, Athol Fugard and Salvador Dali (Fouché, Smit, Watson, & Van Niekerk, 2007).

At least two more psychobiographies by South African researchers are nearing completion, that of Jeffery Dahmer and that of Johannes Kerkerrel. It is interesting to note that the majority of locally completed psychobiographies stem from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and Rhodes University (Fouché, Smit, Watson & Van Niekerk, 2007). Moreover, most of the research was done under the supervision of Dr Roelf van Niekerk. He was the first academic to introduce psychobiographical research to academic programmes in South Africa (Fouché et al., 2007).

### **2.3.4 The value of psychobiographical research**

The value and advantages of psychobiographical case studies and life history research can be found in the following five areas.

#### **2.3.4.1 The uniqueness of the individual case within the whole**

Psychobiography tends to focus on the development of the individual organism and, as such, emphasizes the individuality of the entire person, rather than focusing on the individuality found in a single element only (Runyan, 1982b). This research method thus gives a holistic, unique description of the individual and concerns itself with understanding a single life (Carlson, 1988; Elms, 1994; Gronn, 1993; Stroud, 2004). Other researchers in the fields of psychobiography and life history (e.g., Gronn, 1993; Runyan, 1982b) have also confirmed the holistic and unique description provided by a psychobiography to be among its major advantages.



#### **2.3.4.2 The socio-historical context**

To understand a person more holistically, attention must be paid to the bigger picture in viewing the person's background. This also highlights the individual's socio-historical cultural experiences, process of socialization and family history (Roberts, 2002; Stroud, 2004). The gestalt context refers to the full understanding of the individual within the rich context of his or her everyday social and historical world (Watson, 1976). The thorough deliberation of a large diversity of socio-historical contexts is permitted through this well-judged choice of life history data (Carlson, 1988).

#### **2.3.4.3 Process and pattern over time**

As a result of psychobiographies tending to concentrate on finished lives, it allows researchers to find and track patterns of human development from an individual's birth until his/her death (Carlson, 1988; Gronn, 1993). This longitudinal research benefits the researcher of life history with an integrated and more complete representation of human development within the particular time milieu (Alexander, 1990; Sokolovsky, 1996).

Fiske (1988) claimed that it becomes possible to form a more comprehensive understanding of the personality in action. This, in turn, enables the researcher to document different dimensions and processes of an individual's functioning at any point in time and in any specific situation.

#### **2.3.4.4 Subjective reality**

Life history research provides an enlightening description and sympathetic awareness of the thoughts, feelings and inner experiences of the chosen subject (Mouton, 1988). This permits the researcher to develop the necessary levels of empathy and sympathy for the chosen subject. These can be converted into vibrant, clear and psychologically compelling life stories (Mouton, 1999; Runyan, 1982b). Moreover, Yin proposed that the reader should be tempted and enticed to continue reading right up to the point of exhaustion.

#### **2.3.4.5 Theory testing and development**

Various theories on human development can ideally be scientifically tested and developed with the use of life history material (Carlson, 1988). As indicated by Yin (2003), theory plays a

crucial role in case research, of which life history research is an example. Yin furthermore indicated that theory plays a significant role in both generalisation and data collection as it helps to conceptualise and operationalise the case data within the theoretical constructs framework. The theory can thus be viewed as a template or model against which the collected data are analysed and compared.

The theory also assists in generalising from the case study to theory. The role of theory in generalisation is typified as analytic generalisation, and it is in contrast to statistical generalisation (Yin, 2003). With analytic generalisation, previously developed theory is used as a template against which the results of the study can be compared. In statistical generalisation, an inference or deduction is made about a population based on the data collected of a sample, whereas analytic generalisation aspires to compare case data with a previously developed theory, in order to examine, extend and develop it even more (Yin, 2003).

Critique regarding biographical approaches is often aimed at design and methodology (Yin, 2003). Yin argued that a good psychobiographer, however, would approach these criticisms as challenges instead of problems. The critical assessment of the psychobiographical approach and ways of minimising these objections will be discussed next.

#### **2.4 Preliminary methodological considerations**

In order to ensure that quality is maintained in the research process, a theoretical discussion of the methodological issues and difficulties is called for. Although many qualitative researchers (e.g., Roberts, 2002; Smith, 2003; Willig, 2001) recognize the importance of validity and quality, they agree that criticism aimed at qualitative research should be done in keeping with the appropriate criteria.

General guidelines to evaluate the quality of qualitative psychological research have been suggested by Elliot, Fischer and Rennie (1999) and Yardley (2000). In this frame of reference, Yardley offered three broad principles, the first being sensitivity to context. There are various



ways of doing this. Firstly, it can be done by the researcher being conscious of the existing literature.

Another option is to take into account the degree to which the study is sensitive to the data themselves. Yet another option is to pay attention to the way in which the socio-cultural milieu of the study may have influenced its management and outcome. Finally, one has to be sensitive to the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Her second principle is embraced by commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence. Her third notion is impact and importance. According to Yardley (2000), a crucial test of validity is whether it conveys anything of use, anything that would make a difference, or anything important.

Smith (2003) has proposed the independent audit as another useful way of considering the quality of qualitative research. This can be conducted on different levels. On the one hand, a researcher not involved in the project may do an independent audit when the study is completed. On the other hand, supervisors can perform mini-audits while the research is yet in progress (Yin, 2003).

## **2.5 Methodological considerations in qualitative psychobiography**

Although Anderson (1981) proposed that the psychobiography has advantages relevant to its methodology, several methodological difficulties should be noted whilst employing the psychobiographical approach. Similar methodological criticisms, constraints and strategic considerations were addressed by Fouché and Van Niekerk (2005b). These difficulties, as well as means of lessening their influence, are addressed below.

### **2.5.1 Researcher bias**

As a result of the lengthy and in-depth nature of psychobiographical research, it often results in drawing out counter-transference reactions in the researcher (Anderson, 1981). As an example, Anderson conceded that the psychobiographer may occasionally idealise the subject and take pleasure in being associated with such an acclaimed figure. At other times, they may find fault

with their subject as a way of persuading themselves that they are more rational, smarter or friendlier than the subject.

However, the Anderson (1981) noted these responses are largely of an unconscious nature and not done deliberately. These feelings could be minimised or countered through repeated self-awareness and persistent examination of the researcher's feelings about the subject. Developing empathy for the subject is useful; but sustaining empathy is also useful against any inclination to belittle the subject.

Another strategy would be to refer the manuscript to other specialists and intimate acquaintances to read and comment on the relationship between the researcher and the subject (Anderson, 1981; Schurink, 1998). Additionally, some authors have suggested that the researcher should remain open to remarks relating to the nature of his/her relationship with the subject (Elms, 1994). However, where the subject is still alive, auto critique can be used, as the subject can personally expand on the relationship between the researcher and the subject.

### **2.5.2 Reductionism**

Many psychobiographies are said to neglect the complex social, historical and cultural context within which the individual existed. This results in various forms of reductionistic critique (Runyan, 1988b). One such critique is that psychological factors are exaggerated to the detriment of external historical and social factors. Furthermore, according to Anderson (1981), and Elms (1994), psychobiographies tend to concentrate on pathological processes instead of on health and normality. Runyan believed that adult character and behaviour can often be clarified in terms of childhood experiences, but there is a tendency to disregard the impact of later formative years. Erikson referred to this as originology (Anderson).

A number of precautions and approaches can reduce and counteract issues relating to reductionism. These include the use of multiple sources in data collection and analysis (Runyan, 1988a), as well as the avoidance of using too much psychological jargon or terminology (Runyan, 1988a). Furthermore, an approach that focuses on health rather than on disease is



advocated, as otherwise the research may result in pathologising the subject (Elms, 1994). It is also necessary to approach the subject as a complex, whole person in his or her socio-historical context (Anderson, 1981; Howe, 1997).

### **2.5.3 Cross-cultural differences**

If the subject is not a contemporary of the biographer, Anderson (1981) proposed that psychobiographical studies should be considered a form of cross-cultural research. Care should be taken not to apply psychological concepts cross-culturally, as the culture within which the subject lived could be considerably different from the biographer's own culture. As such, the concepts might not be relevant in terms of the subject's behaviour, and therefore it might not be cross-culturally sensitive (Anderson).

Considering this, the author suggested that the researcher undertake a vast and in-depth historical literature research to develop an empathic understanding of the culture and history relating to the subject. Alternatively, living individuals who shared the subject's cultural values could be located and then interviewed (Anderson, 1981).

### **2.5.4 Analysing an absent subject**

The lack of direct contact with the subject is seen as a disadvantage for the psychobiographer, as any expected data from historical sources are sparser than direct contact with a patient (Stroud, 2004). While doing a psychobiography, it is not always possible to interview the subject directly as he or she may be absent, and the biographer has to assemble his representation of the subject from printed documents.

Psychobiographers have several advantages, as they have access to information which covers the subject's entire lifespan, and this can be obtained from a number of sources (Runyan, 1982a).

This allows the psychobiographer to analyse life events in the light of their ultimate effects. This, in turn, results in a more accurate and objective view of the subject's life (Anderson, 1981).

When compared to the psychotherapist, the psychobiographer has access to various informants

apart from the subject. These include those close acquaintances or other biographers who have researched the same subject. Moreover, the psychobiographer is not limited by therapeutic considerations and could therefore offer a more calculated description. The body of work created by the subject, such as public speeches, diaries, drawings, written books and other creations could also be researched (Anderson). However, Anderson maintained that the greatest possibility for research comes when the research subject is still alive, allowing the psychobiographer to interview him or her.

### **2.5.5 Validity and reliability criticisms**

Perhaps the most prevalent criticism regarding psychobiographical design relates to its validity and reliability as an idiographic approach (Runyan, 1983). As noted by Runyan (1988b), the psychobiographical approach has been criticised for the lack of controls and the difficulty of generalising findings. Four tests are commonly used in all social science methods to ensure case study designs of high quality, namely construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Yin, 2003).

Internal validity indicates the formation of a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to cause other conditions (Fouché, 1999). It is mainly relevant when doing explanatory or causal studies, and is not used for descriptive or exploratory studies. The researcher could use the strategy of structural corroboration in order to improve the credibility or accuracy of assumptions made by the researcher. Spending adequate time and doing in-depth research with subject material to check for distortions can achieve this. Additionally, multiple sources of data could be utilised (i.e., triangulation) (Rudestam & Newton, 1992).

Willig (2001) stated that case study research should always entail triangulation to a certain extent. Patton (1987) mentioned four useful types of triangulation that could improve internal validity. These include (a) triangulation of data sources (i.e., data triangulation), (b) triangulation among different evaluators (i.e., investigator triangulation), (c) triangulation of perspectives on the same data (i.e., theory triangulation), and (d) triangulation of methods (i.e., methodological triangulation) (Stroud, 2004).

External validity concerns the difficulty in generalising from the study's findings (Runyan, 1988b). Runyan stated this as being the most prevalent criticism regarding psychobiographies. Yin (2003) suggested that the problem occurs when the researcher seeks to choose a representative case. He proposed, rather than generalising to other case studies or to a larger population, the researcher should try to generalise the findings to the theory. This is called analytical generalisation and aims to corroborate or refute theory.

Construct validity involves the establishment of proper operational measures for the concepts being studied (Fouché, 1999). The researcher should aim to cautiously select and clearly conceptualise the particular constructs or variables to be researched. He proposed that it should be connected to the original objectives of the study. The clear conceptualisation of concepts or variables enhances the researcher's ability to distinguish which of the indicators or constructs he or she wants to use during data collection (Yin, 2003).

Reliability relates to whether the study can be replicated under similar circumstances (Fouché, 1999). This could be ensured by keeping to a consistent and easily understandable coding scheme during the collection of raw data, as this would improve the auditability of the themes (Rudestam & Newton, 1992). Yin (2003) highlighted the importance of making as many steps operational in data collection as possible. He furthermore recommended that a case study protocol be compiled in this regard.

### **2.5.6 Elitism and easy genre**

Psychobiographical studies have been criticised as being both an easy and elitist genre (Runyan, 1988b). Regarding elitism, researchers have been accused of focusing too much on royal members, political and military leaders, and the privileged, while ignoring the lives of ordinary men and women. Runyan has argued that it can be honourable to learn more about the oppressed and the neglected. He warned, however, that it is not the social class, but rather the level of accumulation that should be considered.



When debating the issue of an easy genre, Runyan (1988b) remarked that a cursory biography might be written quickly and be easy to write, but that a good biography demands in-depth consultation with numerous sources, good literary skills, sound psychological knowledge, and a vast knowledge of the socio-historical context of the subject. In addition, this approach is appropriate when studying lives from any social level, with subjects being chosen not as indicated by their social class, but rather according to personal characteristics (Runyan).

### **2.5.7 Infinite amount of biographical data**

Psychobiographers often find themselves faced with limitless information (McAdams, 1994). Anderson (1981) suggested a split-half approach in which the large amounts of information are divided into two parts. One half would be used to identify theoretical propositions and constructs, while the other half investigates the material so as to compare and test it with the theoretical propositions. An example would be if the researcher started working with published material to examine and identify propositions. Next the researcher would examine unpublished material in order to compare it with the propositions identified in the published material.

Alexander (1988) proposed that personal data could be approached in two different ways to reduce large amounts of data to make them more manageable. The first method aims at arranging raw data into nine useful categories, called principle identifiers (Alexander). The identifiers are (a) primacy, (b) frequency, (c) uniqueness, (d) negation, (e) emphasis, (f) omission, (g) error or distortion, (h) isolation, and (i) incompleteness. The second method entails asking the data questions (Alexander, 1988; 1990). This technique is used to sort large amounts of data for answers to specific questions.

### **2.5.8 Inflated expectations**

Psychobiographers need to be alerted to the limitations of the approach. They need to acknowledge that psychological explanations do not replace other explanations, but rather add to them (Anderson, 1981). These explanations should be acknowledged as tentative and speculative, and not considered as the final word on the subject (Anderson). The author warns

that psychobiographers should be aware of the shortcomings of their approach, and confess that it is not always possible to know the last word on any subject.

Like all types of research, psychobiography should obey strict ethical research considerations. As a result, the researcher considers it necessary to carefully consider psychobiographical ethical issues having direct relevance to the study of lives.

## **2.6 Psychobiographical ethics**

Case studies, such as psychobiographies, are primarily concerned with aspects of an individual's life events. As such, they require particular sensitivity to ethical issues (Runyan, 1982a). Stake (1994) noted that "qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (p. 244). Elmes, Kantowitz and Roediger (2006) recommended that the same ethical considerations apply to both qualitative and quantitative research. Included are the five issues to be identified next.

(a) Regarding informed consent, it is imperative that the researcher inform the participants about the research procedure and obtain their consent to contribute to the research before data collection commences. (b) The researcher should ensure that participants do not feel obliged to continue participating in the study because they fear being penalised; participants must always have the right to withdraw. (c) Complete confidentiality should be maintained by the researcher concerning any information regarding participants obtained during the research process. (d) The deception of participants should be avoided on the whole. Deception is only justified when there is no other means of answering the research question, and the probable benefit of the research surpasses any risk to the participants. (e) After data collection, the researcher should ensure that the participants are informed about the intention of the research by debriefing them. Where possible, participants should also have access to any publication coming out of the study in which they participated.

In summary, researchers should safeguard their participants from any harm or loss while also protecting their psychological health and dignity continually (Willig, 2001).

According to Elms (1994), there are a number of ethical issues to resolve when preparing for a psychobiography. He explained the first issue involves choosing a subject. The question is whether to conduct research on living or deceased people. Another issue relates to what kinds of data are allowable for use. For example, all kinds of available data, or only the use of archival materials, or only what the family considers suitable.

Yet another issue relates to whether the psychobiographer should aspire to publishing the material (Elms, 1994). If publishing the material is considered, the contemplation should be whether the publication should be a diplomatic, but an honest version, or only what the family of the subject desires to hear. This issue had an impact on this psychobiography of Isie Smuts as some of her extended family members are still alive. Moreover, they are related to the researcher. However, although the intention of this psychobiography is that of publishing it, it will be of academic nature.

The limited existence, and also the availability, of ethical guidelines for psychobiography is emphasized by Elms (1994). He noted that the American Psychological Association has failed to provide specific guidelines for psychobiography. On the contrary, Elms observed that the American Psychiatric Association issued guidelines which paid more attention to the ethics of psychobiography in 1976. These guidelines stipulate that psychobiographies may only be done on living persons with their free consent to being studied, interviewed, and reported for publication. Ideally, however, psychobiographies should be done on deceased persons, if possible long dead, and they should have no close-surviving relatives for whom unpleasant disclosures might be embarrassing.

The above-mentioned guidelines make no particular reference to confidentiality in psychobiographical studies. It was suggested by Elms (1994), however, that all intimate details obtained by the psychobiographer should be treated and recorded with dignity and respect. Moreover, he specifies that each psychobiography needs to be ethically justified to some degree. Above all, ethical psychobiography complements our understanding of ourselves as human beings, as well as our understanding of other humans.



## **2.7 Chapter summary**

This chapter has depicted psychobiography as a well-planned activity, from the start when the goal is determined, to the choosing of the subject, to the seeking of a data collection, to the selection of themes and concerns, and to the final drawing of the image. Writing a psychobiography is partly a craft, with the possibility of using the stories and ideas produced to later address additional problems that may develop in one's professional life.

Furthermore, qualitative methods are finally acquiring their place in psychological research. This chapter has offered a broad theoretical survey of the research design and methodology of psychobiography. It has emphasized the importance of considering preliminary methodological issues in planning and executing qualitative research which will reduce criticism associated with such research. Interpretive quality and validity issues have also been addressed.

As we are part of a storied world, the narrative allows for orderliness in our lives and it offers structure to our very sense of selfhood (Murray, 2003). This brings us to the following chapter which reviews human development with a discussion of Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle.

## CHAPTER 3

### HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE HUMAN LIFE CYCLE

#### 3.1 Chapter preview

The focus of Chapter Three is the psychology of human development. A brief history of human development will be considered as a means of providing a supportive understanding to the *Theory of the Human Life Cycle*, according to Levinson (1996). Lastly, Levinson's theory will be described and discussed.

#### 3.2 Human development

To gain a better understanding of the complex phenomenon called lifespan development (Sigelman & Rider, 2003), it is vital to develop a framework of principles and hypotheses about human behaviour. Eminent psychologists in this field, such as Piaget and Freud, considered development as the process by which we reach adulthood, meaning that it stops with the termination of adolescence (Levinson, 1996). As a result, they did not concern themselves with the possibilities for adult development or with the characteristics of the life cycle as a whole. Levinson's (1996) theory of human development and the human life cycle was loosely based on the earlier work of Carl Jung, Arnold van Gennep, José Ortega y Gasset, and Erik Erikson. A brief description of the interaction between the theories of Carl Jung and Erik Erikson, both prominent psychologists, will follow. These theories were selected specifically as they provided fundamental foundations in helping to understand human development, and particularly adult personality development as described by theorists such as Daniel Levinson.

It could be argued that Carl Jung (1875 – 1961) was the first modern voice in the previous century to focus on the possibility of adult personality development (Levinson, 1996). Early in the 20th century he proposed that personality development could not progress very far by the end of adolescence. The concluding figure regarding development, however, was Erik Erikson. When he published *Childhood and Society* in 1950, he became an influential developmental theorist. Yet, Levinson proposed that the book be called *Life Cycle and Society*, as it placed children

within a pronounced framework of the life cycle. The developmental concepts proposed by Erikson chiefly governed the individual life course, as he accentuated the following: the process of living; the concept of life and not case history; and not using therapy or testing as the main research method, but instead using the story of one's life.

According to Sheehy (1997), various observers of adult development have suggested that people go through expected periods of transition and constancy in their adult years. McAdams (2006) proposed that developmental transformation is not only limited to childhood, but that adults continue to age and develop in an expected, incremental manner into and through middle age. One of the strengths of Levinson's (1996) broad theoretical framework of human development was its good account of normal development, as it is considered a synthesis of other theories, such as those of Freud, Jung, Piaget, and Erikson. This has consequently resulted in Levinson's theory providing an integrated approach in the understanding of adult development (Fowler, 1981).

### **3.3 Daniel Levinson's theory of the human life cycle**

The detailed and influential model of Levinson's Human Life Cycle is based on biographical interviews with men (D.J. Levinson, Darrow, Klein, M.H. Levinson, & McKee, 1978) and, more recently, with women, mainly in their adolescence and onwards (Levinson, 1996). Levinson proposed that everyone (male and female) goes through the same basic sequence of eras and at the same ages, although each person's life is unique. He viewed the course of life as not being an easy, continuous process with qualitatively different seasons or phases, but explained the metaphor of seasons as appearing in many contexts. By means of examples, he noted that in the same way that there are seasons of the year and seasons within each single day, each of these has a counterpart in the individual's life cycle. This imagery suggested that the life course developed through a succession of definable seasons or segments (Stroud, 2004).

Levinson (1996) proposed that change occurs within each season, and transition is necessary for the move from one to the next. Furthermore, he reasoned that although every season has its own



time, it forms part of a whole. All seasons are equally important, as each has its place and contributes to the whole.

Levinson (1996) stated that we often think of development in childhood as being identical to growth, while fulfilling the individual's potential. However, he suggested that development is a progression of evolution, which he viewed as being different from growing. He considered the process of evolution as containing the dual aspects of positive growth (i.e., growing up or *adolescing*), and negative growth (i.e., growing down or *senescing*). He explained *adolescing* as heading for adulthood and implying definite growth towards a possible optimum, while *senescing* suggests heading for old age, and implying negative growth and termination. Both *adolescing* and *senescing* are viewed by Levinson as occurring during the entire life cycle with appreciable differences in character and relative balance from era to era. According to him, how a person approaches development in one era might not supply an exact model regarding his/her development in other eras.

Levinson (1996) further argued that childhood-centred considerations of development give a rather grim view of adult development, as they deal mainly with positive growth. The consequence is that any valuable potentialities and achievements of middle and late adulthood are likely to be ignored. As *adolescing* and *senescing* exist together in an uncomfortable balance in early and middle adulthood, Levinson proposed that adulthood has interweaving aspects of both growth and decline. As a result, adult development has its own unique character which has to be studied for its own merits, and not merely as an extension of childhood or as an introduction to old age.

### **3.3.1 The life structure**

Levinson (1996) portrayed the developmental eras of pre-, early, middle and late adulthood as periods in the life structure development. His concept of the life structure includes the sociocultural world of the individual, the person's participation in this world, as well as various aspects of the self which may have either remained stable or have been transformed. He viewed adult development as the development of the life structure through periods or seasons of relative

peace and periods of transition (McAdams, 2006). The more we learn about the life structure, the better our understanding of adult development should be. The concept of the individual life structure and its development, as proposed by Levinson, is described below.

### **3.3.1.1 The concept of the life structure**

The individual *life structure* is the principal concept in Levinson's model, and it refers to "the patterning or design of the individual life at a given time" (Levinson et al., 1978, p.99). Levinson viewed it as having many or only some components. He proposed that a few components have a central place in the life structure and a person's relationship with others in the world were noted to be the central components of the life structure. Levinson aptly observed the following about relationships: "They give shape and substance to the life course. They are the vehicle by which we live out – or bury – various aspects of ourselves; and by which we participate, for better and for worse, in the world around us" (Levinson, 1996, p. 23). He identified these significant relationships as being with an instantly present other, such as a lover, spouse, friend, parent, or child. More examples quoted by Levinson included an imagined or symbolic figure, a group or institution, a feature of nature, a person from the past, a loved or hated place, and similarly a book or a painting.

The concept of the life structure necessitates examining the nature and patterning of adult relationships with significant others, as well as the development of these relationships over the years (Stroud, 2004). These relationships are described by Levinson (1996) as, "the stuff lives are made of" (p.23), as they give essence to and shape to the life course. He viewed these relationships as vehicles we use to live out or to lay to rest various aspects of ourselves, as well as a means of participating in the world.

### **3.3.1.2 Components of the life structure**

Levinson (1996) viewed the *central components* as those with the most significance for the self and the life as they get the biggest portion of a person's energy and time. They strongly influence the distinctive qualities of all the other components. The central components are most often family, marriage and occupation, as noted by Levinson. The family is a world with many complexities involving many other people, pursuits, and social contexts.

Levinson (1996) proposed it to include previous marriages and families, the family of origin, the extended family and the current nuclear family of spouse and children. How one relates to one's family is interconnected with the way one relates to, for example, race, occupation, ethnicity, occupation, and cultural traditions (Levinson, 1996). Similarly, occupation is a key component of the life structure, as it connects a person in a complicated occupational world with other life structure components. Added to family and occupation, Levinson noted that the following components of the life structure may be included: "love relationships; friendships; relationships to politics; religion; ethnicity, and community; leisure, recreation, and the use of solitude; relationship to the body (including bodily health and illness, vigour and decline); memberships and roles in many social settings" (p. 24).

Furthermore, Levinson (1996) noted *peripheral and unfilled components* as other components in the life structure. Peripheral components are more easily disconnected or changed as they entail less self-investment. The absent component, which Levinson referred to as the unfilled component, plays a key role in the life structure. Examples supplied by him include yearning for a meaningful marriage, occupation or family.

Yet, the relationship with the self is lying beneath and pervading all these other relationships (Levinson, 1996). A boundary is formed between the self and the world by the life structure which acts as a go-between between the self and the world. To understand this boundary we have to view it as a link: something that connects one to the world, yet something also partly separate.

The life structure is the context within which *external aspects* (i.e., social contexts, roles, influences of any kind, events) and *internal aspects* (i.e., motives, subjective meanings, personal qualities, and conflicts) are interconnected (Levinson, 1996). The author warned that to see only the silhouette of the structure, void of its specific content is to have a very basic view of the life. However, he noted that to focus on detail only without understanding the overall developing structure, is to miss the life as a whole.

Levinson (1996) identified four eras in adult development, including the eras of pre-adulthood (age 0–22), early adulthood (age 17–45), middle adulthood (age 40–65), and late adulthood (age



60 onwards). Amid these eras, there are cross-era transitions which include early adult transition (age 17-22), the mid-life transition (age 40-45), and the late adult transition (age 60-65). These cross-era transitions conclude the outgoing era and initiate the following era.

Moreover, the eras and cross-era transitions outline the bigger structure of the life cycle. Two periods of building and maintaining an entry life structure (ages 22-28; 45-50) initiate the subsequent era. Culminating life structures for early and middle adulthood (ages 33-40; 55-60) provide a means of realizing the era's key aspirations and goals. Two mid-era transitions (ages 28-33; 50-55) allow the reappraisal and modification of the entry life structure and exploratory efforts towards the formation of a new structure.

It is important to note that we spend almost half our lives in developmental transitions. Levinson's (1996) conception of the eras, transitions as well as developmental periods, will now be discussed in greater detail.

### **3.3.2 Eras, transitions and developmental periods within the macrostructure of the life cycle**

Levinson (1996) considered the eras as each possessing its own bio-psychosocial character and making a particular contribution to the whole. Each new era commences as the earlier one nears its end. A cross-era transition (usually lasting about five years) concludes the departing era and starts the next. As the eras and the cross-era transitional periods provide a fundamental order in the flow of all human lives, yet they still allow for countless variations in the individual's life course. They shape the broad structure of the life cycle. Each era, as well as each developmental period, begins and ends at a distinct average age, with a range of about two years either side of this average.

The concept of transition is crucial in many theories. Levinson (1996) viewed transition as "a time of promise, of hope and potential for a better future, of hope . . . a time of separation and loss" (p.30). A transitional period includes three key developmental tasks: first the *termination* of the current life structure, followed by *individuation*, and finally *initiation*, when a new structure is started.

Although it could be reasoned that these tasks follow a consecutive order, development does not progress so logically (Levinson, 1996). As a result, the three abovementioned tasks may intertwine right through a transitional period, or a person may try to begin a new structure when starting a transition but before terminating or individuating. The following paragraphs will give a better explanation of the three tasks.

In simple terms termination means a conclusion or ending. Levinson (1996) viewed a termination as not just a conclusion, but also a turning point; it can be viewed as both a result of the past, as well as a beginning for the future. Individuation entails the person's relationship with the self, as well as to the external world. As a person acquires a greater individuation of the self, so a person gains a better understanding of who they are and what they want. As such, the person learns to rely more on his/her own inner reserves which in turn allow the person to be more self-generating, more independent, and more responsible.

This process occurs as well in a person's relation to the outside world, as persons with more individuated relationships are more sincerely connected to the world (Levinson, 1996). This allows for better exploration abilities, as well as a better understanding of the requirements and offers of the world. As a result, the person takes more responsibility for their personal creation of meaning.

As stated earlier, a transition is considered as both an ending and a beginning (Levinson, 1996). As a beginning, it represents the task of initiation which includes exploring new possibilities, changing existing relationships, and searching for aspects of the self and the world. As an ending, it calls for the person to deal with the issue at hand, be it loss, separation, termination, departure, or completion. The process of initiation may continue throughout a transitional period, and involves making a choice.

Levinson (1996) noted that transitions evolve effortlessly, yet a developmental crisis may occur when a person finds it difficult to meet the challenges of the present period. Often a transitional period is a time of moderate or more acute crisis with the crisis indicating that one is being trapped between the conclusion of one life structure and the start of the next one.

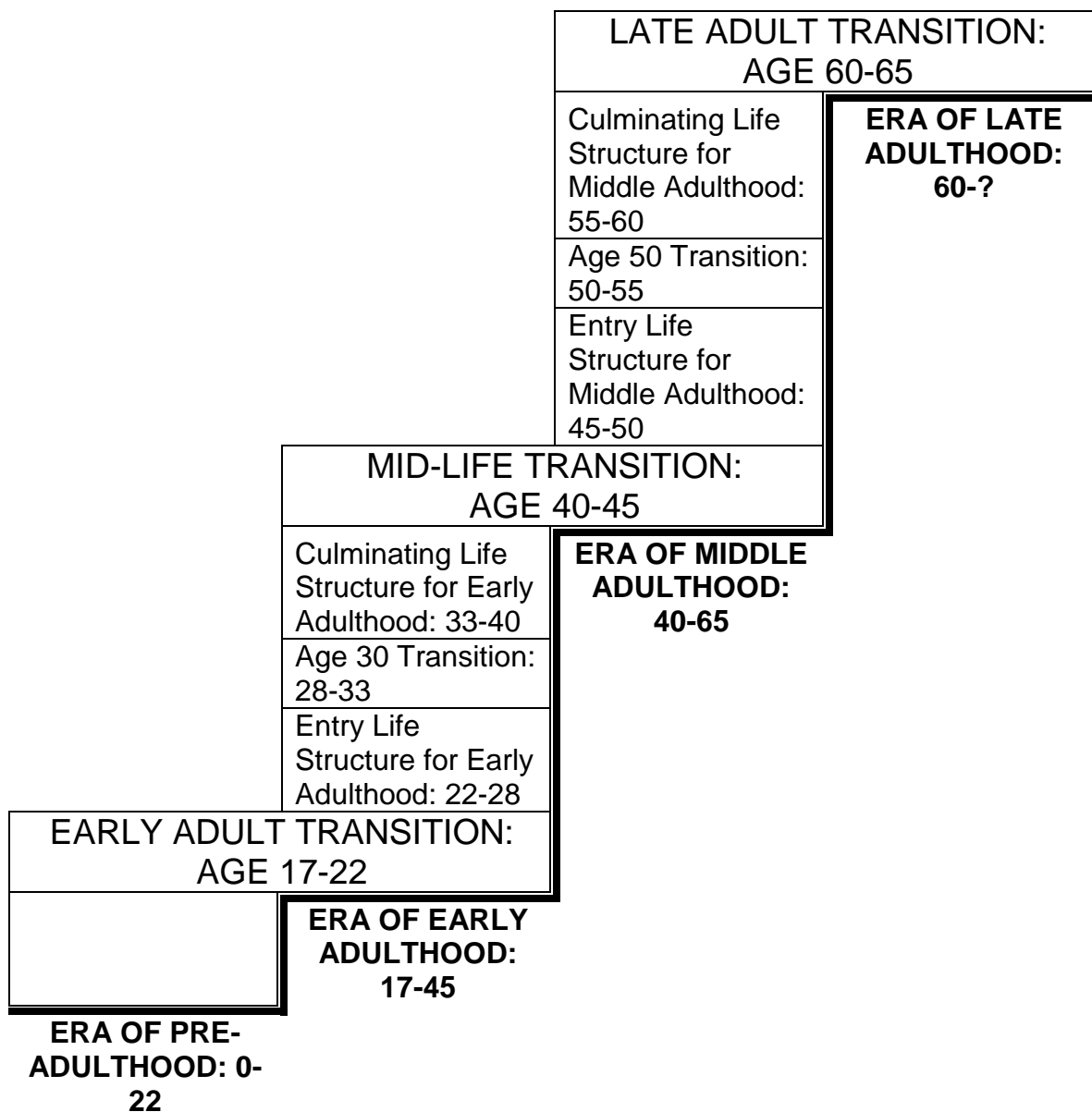
Levinson (1996) explained a severe crisis as occurring when a person is unable to move forward or backward. It is almost as if one's future is at stake. He described a crisis at the start of a period as coming from serious problems in setting up a sufficient structure, while a crisis later indicates difficulty in maintaining the structure. Furthermore, he clarified an adaptive crisis as one where there is difficulty in coping with highly stressful circumstances, such as illness or warfare. Contrary to and different from an adaptive crisis is a crisis in life-structure development, although it is possible for these to happen simultaneously.

A traumatic situation will most probably induce an adaptive crisis if it coincides with an already problematic developmental period (Levinson, 1996). Similarly, the gravity of a developmental crisis is likely to be increased by a traumatic incident. As to exactly when a transitional period ends, Levinson suggested it to be when there is less urgency in the tasks of terminating, examining, and exploring. He proposed that the first priority should be to build a new life structure.

Levinson (1996) proposed that one must look beyond the particular stressful episode along with one's emotional and behavioural adjustment to it to establish whether one is experiencing a developmental crisis. This would entail deliberating on one's life in broader terms, ascertaining the present period in the life structure development, as well as measuring the degree of difficulty one is having with current developmental tasks. Levinson (1996) noted that developmental crises have numerous sources. In conclusion he suggested that a transition need not be entirely negative as it has advantages and losses, with such losses including hurt and pain to oneself, others and a less than satisfying life. Advantages involve forming a life structure more fitting for oneself, as well as more feasible for the world.

A more detailed description of Levinson's concept of eras and transitions within the life cycle follows, with the developmental periods encompassing the eras of early and middle adulthood, as portrayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Levinson's developmental periods in the eras of early and middle adulthood**



(Source: Levinson, 1996, p. 18)



### **3.3.2.1 Era of childhood or pre-adulthood (age 0-22)**

The first era, *childhood*, covers the period from birth to about age 22 (Levinson, 1996). Levinson suggested it to be the era when the most rapid growth occurs. It includes childhood, adolescence and the early adult transition. During the period before birth up to the first two or three years, the infant develops into a separate person and these years offer a shift from birth into childhood.

During this time Levinson (1996) described the infant as separating itself biologically and psychologically from the mother. It also distinguishes an early difference between the me and the not-me. According to Levinson, this is the first step in an ongoing process of individuation and he identified it as the formative years prior to adulthood. The infant now recognizes other people as beings having their own character.

The next transition, at age 5 or 6, guides early to middle childhood when the child's social world is broadened to contain school, own age group and neighbourhood (Levinson et al., 1978). The authors proposed that puberty at about 12 or 13 years (give or take two years) offers a transition from middle childhood to adolescence. It encompasses a number of changes, including physical changes that eventually lead to adulthood. The pre-adult era is culminated by adolescence. Middle childhood and adolescence follow early childhood (Levinson, 1996).

In the sample of homemakers that Levinson researched, most of his subjects did not experience their home life as a haven, nor did they have carefree lives as children. Moreover, the sustenance and nutrition they needed for proper development did not materialize, and instead they experienced a high rate of abuse (Levinson, 1996).

### **3.3.2.2 Early adult transition (age 17-22)**

This, the first developmental period in the life structure development, is a cross-era developmental period in which the era of childhood is terminated and early adulthood commences (Levinson, 1996). A cross-era transition includes both a change in life structure and a fundamental turning point in the life cycle. Furthermore, it includes elements of both eras, yet it is not entirely contained by either, as explained by Levinson. According to him, our relationships with both family and other components of our childhood are changed during this transition.

In addition, we start developing an adult identity, and we begin claiming our position as adults in the world. As a result, this transition “represents both the full maturity of childhood and the infancy of early adulthood” (Levinson, 1996, p. 19), where one can more readily take on the responsibilities, troubles, and satisfactions of early adulthood.

Starting with and trying out new relationships is a last task, as this lays the basis for the entry life structure which follows (Levinson, 1996). The end of high school years implies being on the verge of adulthood, which basis is formed by education. Generally, women who do not further their studies were expected to take on adult responsibilities, like marriage and children or starting a job, soon after school. Finally, Levinson suggested that a woman’s educational level greatly affects the way she handles this transition.

The majority of males in a woman’s life during this period are age peers, according to Levinson (1996). Her relationship with them is of great significance for her life structure, as she is beginning to involve or not involve herself with them in a variety of attachments which include pure friendship, romantic love, sexuality and marriage. Levinson proposed that this would eventually help her to get or fail to get a better sense of herself as an adult on the home front as well as in public.

To explore the romantic ideal of marriage requires great wisdom when choosing a spouse, and as such it is a difficult task for early adulthood, as noted by Levinson (1996). In his research sample, most of the homemakers got married after a courtship of not even a year, with the vast majority of the women marrying between ages 17 to 22. Furthermore, they decided to marry as a matter of urgency, and not because of the quality of the relationship. Levinson noted that the women were not necessarily in love with their husbands at the time of their marriage. He commented that most of his sample experienced a fair to severe crisis during this transition, as they felt overwhelmed, which he referred to as “rock bottom [sic] time” (Levinson, 1996, p. 94).

### **3.3.2.3 The era of early adulthood (age 17–45)**

The second era, early adulthood, extends from age 17 to 45, and starts with the early adult transition in much the same way as the previous era concluded with this transition (Levinson,

1996). Levinson called this era “the adult era of greatest energy and abundance, and of greatest contradiction and stress” (p. 19). He suggested that the 20s and 30s are the ultimate years of the life cycle, biologically speaking. Socially and psychologically, early adulthood is the season for starting and chasing childhood aspirations, finding one’s own place in society, raising a family, and, as the era concludes, becoming an older member of the adult world. He identified this era as the one in which we struggle most with both our own emotions and ambitions, as well as with the requirements of family, neighbourhood and society. Levinson (1996) noted that, under fairly promising conditions, the rewards of living in this era can be enormous, but that the sacrifices often equate or even surpass the benefits.

Additionally, he suggested that it can be a time for intense fulfilment regarding love, family life, occupation, creativity and fulfilling major life goals. However, the stresses identified by Levinson were the responsibilities of parenthood while simultaneously starting an occupation. Moreover, he suggested that as one does not yet have the life experience and wisdom to make the best choices in a number of important areas, such choices can be very stressful.

#### **3.3.2.4 Entry life structure for early adulthood (age 22-28)**

Primary tasks include building and maintaining the first adult life structure, as well as enhancing one’s life within it (Levinson, 1996). Derived from this are the vital choices that need to be made particularly in the fields of love, marriage, family, occupation, leaving one’s family of origin, values, peer relationships and lifestyle.

Moreover, one has to arrange and manage one’s life as a young adult (Levinson, 1996). As such, it is no easy task to find the balance between the exploration of possibilities for living as an adult on the one hand, and creating a stable life structure by being more responsible, on the other hand. Levinson viewed this as a first attempt to create a place for oneself in a novel world and a new generation. He suggested that one or a few components will be central, while others will be abandoned, and still others will vary in importance, before stabilizing at the core or the periphery. He noted marriage/family to be the central component for most women, as they devote themselves mostly to their family and do not invest much of themselves in their occupation.

In Levinson's (1996) sample, he noted an evolution within this structure consisting of two phases. The phases are both divided and linked by what Levinson referred to as the age 25 shift. He noted that the first phase extends from age 22 to 25. This is suggested to be a time of building and shaping relationships, of reinforcing one's commitments. Then, at age 25, a shift occurs, similar to the transition from one life structure to the next, albeit to a lesser degree.

A woman now recognizes the problems in her life and chooses to change some of it by taking a firmer stand about the life she wants (Levinson, 1996). In this way, she is coming to a decision about which components should be central, peripheral or not included at all. This change is meant to make her life more integrated and fulfilling. Levinson (1996) explained that this shift is usually not made consciously or expressed as such. As he put it, "the Age 25 Shift crystallizes the Entry Life Structure and instigates the second phase of this period" (p. 99). The second phase is devoted to either improving a woman's life within the life structure or deciding to make a change, but then taking time to execute it.

### **3.3.2.5 Age 30 transition (age 28-33)**

Transition occurs as well in this mid-era (Levinson, 1996). It allows for and includes the following: an opportunity to re-evaluate and end the entry life structure, and to continue working on one's individuation. This includes any unfinished work on the previous transitions. Additionally, Levinson suggested that this permits one to investigate new possibilities which will be used to complete the next era. Lesser to more serious developmental problems are experienced by most women and men, as noted by Levinson.

It is important to note that a person's life structure at the end of this transition differs from that at the beginning (Levinson, 1996). Developmental work is critical, as its outcome is the culminating life structure where the aspirations of early adulthood are realized. Levinson suggested, however, that the entry life structure is inevitably faulty because we know too little about a new world and a new self to make appropriate choices.



With some confusion all people to some extent realise that their carefully constructed lives have major flaws (Levinson, 1996). He noted that life can now be simpler, as well as more interesting. The women in his sample regarded this as a period of development and personal growth.

The three periods mentioned under the three previous headings last about fifteen years, and extend from about age 17 to 33 (Levinson, 1996). Together they comprise what Levinson referred to as the novice phase of early adulthood. The move from the end of this transition to the start of the next phase is one of the vital steps in adult development (Levinson et al., 1978). The authors noted that a person can either choose new significant alternatives or endorse and confirm choices already made.

### **3.3.2.6 Culminating life structure for early adulthood (age 33-40)**

Included in this era is the second or culminating life structure which starts at the end of the age 30 transition and lasts until about 40 years of age when we make the shift to a new generation and a new era (Levinson, 1996). Here the most important task is to form a structure that will allow a person to establish a safer place in society, and also to realize youthful goals and dreams.

Furthermore, a person adopts more responsibilities and makes more profound commitments (Levinson, 1996). Levinson recorded that this entails devoting oneself to what one views as the central components of the structure, be it family, leisure time, friendships, work or community. He proposed we progress from being a novice to being a junior member of the adult world. At this stage, one's sense of wellbeing relies on one's own evaluation or the evaluation of others, depending on the progress in terms of goals accomplished.

As with the previous life structure, this is split into two phases; yet here the separation is less distinct (Levinson, 1996). The first phase continues until age 35 or 36, during which time a new life structure is developed. For some women, it may seem as if this contains the same characters and external setting as the previous structure. However, upon closer inspection, changes will have been made in the structure of the woman's life, as well as in the nature of her relationships.

Other women have different circumstances which make the building of a life structure more noticeable (Levinson, 1996). Levinson suggested that if her central components are formed by age 33, the first phase progresses without problems. Yet he indicated that the first phase may involve crises when the woman has difficulty in forming a new structure or is stuck in a current structure. He noted, however, that the hardship in forming an acceptable life structure is worth the effort. It is difficult to modify the structure after the onset of the second phase. During the second phase, Levinson proposed that an attempt is made to realize the goals of this era. It is a part of the central component, although it involves other components as well. Levinson observed that gender differences are significant during this phase.

Levinson proposed that by age 36 women have established this life structure. They need to reflect on its value in their lives which may include some of the following: What the structure allows her to do for herself or others; in what way is it limiting her? And what goals can she follow within the structure (Levinson, 1996)?

At this stage she yearns for affirmation and craves to be recognized in her own right (Levinson, 1996). Levinson fittingly called it “becoming one’s own woman” (p. 145), as a woman is seeking to become an adult instead of a child, as well as wanting to be a woman.

To become an adult, she needs to come to terms with the child within herself, as well as with the cultural belief that, although she is an adult, she is still a girl (Levinson, 1996). To become a woman she desires to be valued for her feminine characteristics. At the same time, she wants her more masculine qualities, such as intellect or ambition, to not jeopardise her feminine identity (Levinson).

Womanhood might be confusing, as Levinson (1996) observed that she is allowed to be bright, but not too bright for her own good. During this process an argument may develop between “the good little girl and the Traditional Homemaker Figure in herself” (Levinson, 1996, p. 146) where a woman may try to be more womanly but may experience protests from the internal figure. Levinson proposed that our culture has few definitions on what it means to be a woman, as most images are unclear and sometimes negative. He further noted that modern culture does not offer

much to women of this age who want to develop and grow, although they are allowed to develop on the home front.

The abovementioned tasks of becoming one's own woman are part of the nature of this life structure and happen within its context (Levinson, 1996). A woman who has always been happy to depend on her spouse now looks for more independence and acknowledgment in their relationship, be it with her husband, the community, work or children. If the structure is acceptable, Levinson observed that a woman uses it to facilitate her own growth by living more fully. He noted that this allows for a more reliable basis on which to go into the next era. However, the opposite is also true.

During the period of this structure, a woman needs affirmation for what she is doing, whether she is a wife, mother, or involved in an occupation, as this is part of becoming a senior member of her world (Levinson, 1996). If she fails to find this, she experiences disappointment in a role, specifically, and also in life generally.

Mid-life transition begins at about age 40 when this structure is concluded with the culminating event (Levinson, 1996). From this she gets messages about being a wife, mother, or worker with the most significant messages being those that are related to the central components of this structure.

### **3.3.2.7 Mid-life transition (age 40-45)**

This transition forms part of both previously mentioned eras, as it brings about both the closure of early adulthood and the beginning of middle adulthood. Levinson (1996) referred to it as a "developmental bridge" between early and middle adulthood (p. 26). Progress is made from junior to senior in the adult world by figuratively climbing the ladder (Levinson et al., 1978). The authors suggested that this transition carries with it new developmental tasks.

Levinson proposed this to be the time to accept the end of one's youth as a novel way of "being young-and-old appropriate to middle adulthood" is created (p. 26). Moreover, he viewed it as the end of the previous life structure, while an important task of this period is mid-life individuation.

Levinson et al. (1978) noted that it is especially during this transition that one needs to express more urgently those parts that have been neglected until now.

This transition, together with the previous life structure, forms the concluding phase which completes this era's efforts, as well as sending us off into the next era (Levinson, 1996). Levinson viewed the concluding phase as "a time of rich satisfactions and of bitter disappointments" (1996, p. 27). Furthermore, Levinson suggested that whatever happens in this period intensely affects the terms with which we start the following period. He concluded his research, by interviewing samples of women at this transitional stage.

Levinson suggested that homemakers now question the traditional marriage enterprise (TME) with its central issue that care giving would cease to be their main function in life. Where care giving had been a major theme of the era of early adulthood, two themes now emerge. The first is that the homemaker now wants to be more carefree, and the second that she "wanted the right to be herself, to make her own choices and pursue her own interests" (Levinson, 1996, p. 173).

Levinson (1996) noted the cost of failing significantly in self-development as the price the homemaker paid for being the homemaker. To consider what else the homemaker wanted to be or wanted to do before exploring her own resources and to begin forming a life where it could be used, presented a challenge, as suggested by Levinson. Most women in the TME experience an all-time low in their marriage and life as they felt trapped with ensuing feelings of bitterness, cynicism and disappointment. Yet they are determined to make new choices and to be more responsible for their own lives. Through personal development the homemaker has to learn to make her own choices and to enjoy her own leisure activities. This happens through individuation and developing a clearer relationship with herself and with the world. Yet this can be problematic, as individuation entails being more aware of the self and others, as well as having a stronger yearning for relationships that are clearly mutual.

### **3.3.2.8 The era of middle adulthood (age 40-65)**

The third era, middle adulthood, begins with the mid-life transition (Levinson, 1996). It includes the entry to middle adulthood, the age 50 transition, as well as the culmination of middle



adulthood and the late adult transition, as noted by Levinson. He proposed that, although a person's biological capacities are now reduced, they are usually still sufficient for an energetic, fulfilling, and socially worthwhile life. He observed that we are now responsible for advancing and developing the current age group of young adults. He proposed some of the following to be possible: to be more creative, to be more accountable for one's self and others, to be more comprehensive in one's outlook, to be more focused, as well as to be more skilled in matters of intimacy and sexuality. Levinson however noted that it is unfortunate that many people experience middle adulthood as a time of gradual decline, of increasing emptiness and as a time of lower vitality that has been unfortunately lost.

### **3.3.2.9 The entry life structure of middle adulthood (age 45-50)**

As tasks of the previous transition need to be given up by age 45, a person now needs to make choices and start the main task of creating a new life structure with which to launch middle adulthood (Levinson, 1996). According to Levinson this structure is often very different from that of the late 30s.

Although this stage may seem similar, there are noteworthy differences in the central relationships, as the person establishes "a new generation and a new season of life" (Levinson, 1996, p. 26). For some people the shift from the end of the previous transition is indicated by a critical symbolic event, such as changing one's job, the death of a loved one, or moving home.

Yet for others, no noticeable change takes place (Levinson et al., 1978). However, the authors noted that on closer inspection small changes can make a big difference. They observed that there is a vast difference in the "satisfactoriness . . . its suitability for the self and its workability in the world" of this life structure (Levinson et al., p. 61).

### **3.3.2.10 The age 50 transition (50-55)**

This transition is used as an opportunity to re-evaluate the entry life structure, to further explore the self and the world (Levinson, 1996). It is also a foundation of the structure of the ensuing period. Levinson viewed it as a mid-era transition, similar to the earlier age 30 transition. He noted a higher incidence of developmental crises, particularly if the person has made few

important or unsuitable life changes in the preceding ten to fifteen years. Levinson et al. (1978) suggested that it is impossible to get through the current era without experiencing a crisis of sorts in either of the previous two transitions.

#### **3.3.2.11 Culminating life structure for middle adulthood (age 55-60)**

This is closely linked to the subsequent transition, whilst also offering a vehicle with which to realize and complete the current era's major aims, ambitions and aspirations (Levinson, 1996). Levinson et al. (1978) mentioned that this is similar to the culminating life structure for early adulthood and that it can be a very fulfilling time, provided one revitalizes and enhances oneself.

#### **3.3.2.12 Late adult transition (age 60-65)**

The tasks of this transition are viewed by Levinson (1996) as concluding this era, as well as preparing oneself for the next era. It is a cross-era transition which connects middle and late adulthood. Moreover, Levinson noted that this transition requires an intense reappraisal of the past and a shift to a new era in order to form a foundation for building a first late adulthood life structure. Levinson et al. (1978) noted that important development takes place and that this transition is characterized by a key turning point in one's life cycle.

#### **3.3.2.13 Era of late adulthood (age 60 and beyond)**

During late adulthood, the character of living is altered in fundamental ways, as a result of numerous biological, psychological, and social changes (Levinson, 1996). However, Levinson gave very little information on this era but rather referred to his earlier work which will be the focus here. Levinson et al. (1978) proposed this era to be acknowledged as a distinctive and rewarding season in life. Symbolic events, such as retirement or illness, may emphasize the end of the previous era and form the transitional process (Levinson, 1996). As we experience and realise our physical deterioration, together with intellectual and physical changes, it increases our experience of our own ageing and mortality (Levinson et al., 1978).

Our culture frighteningly refers to it as old age. In this transition every person has to deal with the loss or weakening of some previously-owned powers which include everyday aches and pains, as well as more serious illnesses or impairments (Levinson et al., 1978). Yet some people are still

active and vigorous. By age 60 a person is said to “fear that the youth within him is dying and that only the old man – an empty, dry structure devoid of energy, interests or inner resources – will survive for a brief and foolish old age” (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 35). In effect, the task at hand is to maintain some characteristics of youth, but in a form suitable to this age by terminating and changing the previous life structure.

Responsibilities need to be reduced and a person’s relationship with society and himself is altered (Levinson et al., 1978). As a person is no more the centre of attention, it can be traumatic to have less respect, influence and power. This is the time for one’s descendants to take on the power and control in the family, as failing to give this up will most likely lead to a person becoming “a tyrannical ruler – despotic, unwise, unloved and unloving” (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 35).

Moreover, the authors suggested that a person should now be able to choose more generously the way of living, while seeking a new balance where the self is more dominant without being vain or self-centred. If the primary developmental task of late adulthood - finding a new balance of involvement with society and with oneself - is realized, this era can be a season of equal richness and fullness (Stroud, 2004).

Although this era is one of decline, there is the prospect of development, as some evaluation of one’s life has to be done. Being successful in gaining integrity enables one to live without despair or resentment. It is important to deal with the lack of integrity in one’s life as one will have experienced “utter despair” (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 38) at some stage. Yet, the authors recognised that a person’s values cannot be fully lived up to, and there has to be some settlement with the multiple sources of the corruptions and failings in one’s life. To live in harmony with one’s enemies is a crucial part of this task, as this allows one to fight for one’s beliefs with less illusions and a better perspective.

Levinson et al. (1978) added the era of Late Late Adulthood in *Seasons of a Man’s Life*, and suggested it begins at age 80. If conditions are good, “there is psycho-social development as well as senescence” (p. 38). The authors viewed development at the end of the life cycle as coming to terms with the process of dying, as well as getting ready and making peace with death. A person

now realizes that his own death is looming, whether it is coming in months or years. Preparing for an afterlife implies that a person gives new meaning to life and death in general, but also to one's own life and death. Additionally, the authors recognized that one has now reached the greatest involvement with oneself. As such, one has to come to terms with oneself, know and love oneself, as well as prepare to surrender oneself (Levinson et al., 1978).

### 3.3.3 The importance of gender for women

Levinson (1996) referred to "gender splitting" (p. 38) when talking about gender differences and the rigid separation between males and females. He noted that institutional and technological changes tended to blur and adjust the traditional gender splitting which in turn has led to modifications regarding the meaning of gender. These have impacted on the relationships between men and women.

In his book, *The seasons of a woman's life*, Levinson (1996) concentrated on four essential forms of gender splitting, which is quoted:

- (1) *The splitting of the domestic sphere and the public sphere as social domains for women and for men;*
- (2) *The Traditional Marriage Enterprise and the split it creates between the female homemaker and the male provisioner;*
- (3) *The splitting of 'women's work' and 'men's work';*
- (4) *The splitting of feminine and masculine in the individual psyche (p. 38).*

Levinson (1996) suggested that women will most probably live as homemakers in a TME when gender splitting operates to a higher degree. Additionally, these women will focus their lives on the home front, do mainly women's work, and acknowledge as well as appreciate, only feminine qualities in themselves and other women. Conversely, they will most probably be limited regarding provision for and influence in the family, find it difficult to do men's work, be inferior and unimportant in the public domain, and be unfamiliar with personal characteristics which they deem as masculine.

The division between the domestic and public domains is critical in women's development, as the public domain includes the government and the economy which Levinson (1996) referred to as



the occupational sphere. Although it is customary for men's lives to have their focus in the public sphere, women may have been involved in this sphere, but as stated earlier, on inferior and separate terms. The domestic sphere, however, has at its core the household which is surrounded by the family and the social world. The author stated that the lives of women have had their focus in the domestic sphere for many generations and in almost all societies. This is the result of the domestic sphere being the main source of women's identities, the source of contentment along with discontent, as well as their most significant activity.

Levinson (1996) called the marriage enterprise one of the key products of his work. For the homemakers in his research sample, the main aim of marriage was to build and maintain the TME. The purpose of the TME was to have offspring, to create a certain family life, and to maintain or even enhance the customs of one's own family of origin. Labour is divided between the spouses, with the woman as the homemaker focusing on her children, as well as on her nuclear family.

The man, on the other hand, is the provider, dedicating himself to his outside work and using the resources resulting from his work to sustain his family (Levinson, 1996). Levinson was careful to note that homemaking and providing should not only be seen as roles in the family, but rather as ways of living involving such areas as the family and work. Additionally, in this enterprise, he viewed the man as the head of the home and that the decisive authority rested with him. By delegating household duties to his wife, it is implied that she does not have much authority and not much inner authority. In conclusion, Levinson noted patriarchy to be a worldwide theme in most human cultures.

Although both the male and the female shape and nourish the family, the partnership between the sexes in the household means that each has different types of work to do (Levinson, 1996).

Levinson proposed that the woman leads a very domesticated existence. He noted that she may connect her family to the outside world by other peripheral activities, such as working on a family farm or furthering her husband's career.

Traditionally, women are not raised to invest themselves in an occupation or a career (Levinson, 1996). If it is understood that the wife has more power or is more successful than her husband, it

can often be a source of conflict. Levinson called the home the place where we can be most fully ourselves, as it provides us with a number of satisfactions. However, he pointed out that it also has a distressing side, quoting examples such as the trouble of raising children, our own or a family member's illness or death, as well as our own misery and despondency. He concluded by noting that satisfaction and painful experiences in this enterprise come from giving and receiving care.

"Taking care" can imply either one of the following three: to give care to others, to receive it from others, and to take care of oneself (Levinson, 1996, p.41). A man in the TME takes care of his family by being head of the household and the provider. Levinson proposed that the man experiences his wife's care when she motivates and supports him. Sharing experiences regarding confusion, failures, suffering, and frustrations are often difficult for both spouses. Although a wife has an enormous share in the success of her husband's occupation, she is almost completely dependent on him in terms of providing for her and their family. It is thus imperative that he should be a good provider.

The wife, on the other hand, gives care, as this is what homemaking is all about, as she is ultimately responsible for the family's survival (Levinson, 1996). Being a mother means receiving care in exchange, in ways which Levinson (1996) calls "care-income" (p. 43).

Firstly, a mother experiences fulfilment when bonding with her newborn, as the baby's responses allow her to feel that she herself is a competent mother, valued and cared for (Levinson, 1996). When a mother nurtures her child it allows her to re-mother herself by giving herself the care and love she herself might have missed out on, as implied by Levinson. Thirdly, the author suggested that when her husband takes care of her and their children, the wife receives care from him. In summary, the traditional marriage requires the wife to give care to her husband and their family, while it also requires her to receive care from her husband in order for her to be the caring homemaker.

Levinson (1996) suggests that if a woman involves herself freely in the TME, she receives many advantages yet also has great losses (1996). In order to adapt in the TME, it is necessary for her to accept her position in it.

Levinson (1996) proposed that one aspect of the Industrial Revolution of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was the gender revolution, as it meant a transformation in the implications of gender, the place of both men and women in society, as well as the relationship between the sexes. This has led to a decline in gender splitting and a change in the TME which has made it impossible to maintain the previous division between the wife as the homemaker and the husband as the provider. As a result this splitting no longer offers a satisfactory basis for a marriage. Levinson then proceeded to illustrate the efforts of a diverse sample of 45 women in dealing with a number of questions in their life course, with the focus on both adult development and gender. Although he distinguished between what he called homemakers and career women, for the purpose of this study the focus will be on the woman as a homemaker.

### **3.3.4 Gender similarities and differences**

According to Levinson (1996), the fluctuating sequence of periods and transitional periods applies to both sexes, as it provides a general framework of human development within which it is possible to study the lives of people of all cultures, genders and status. Even so, these periods function somewhat differently in males and females, as the genders vary greatly in life circumstances, in the ways in which they proceed through each developmental period, and in their life course.

Moreover, Levinson (1996) proposed that women form life structures differently, as “they work on the developmental tasks of every period with different resources and constraints, external as well as internal” (p. 37). This makes it imperative to consider the developmental perspective of the life structure from a gender point of view.

Roberts and Newton (1987) consented with Levinson that women pass through the same developmental seasons, although they also noted differences. These included women’s dreams

being more conflictual and complex than men's. A more detailed discussion of the importance of gender in women's lives is given in section 3.3.3.

### **3.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter has reflected on the concept of the evolution of lives over time. Levinson's (1996) description of adulthood as a season in the human life cycle was discussed. Furthermore, his view of the life structure which encompasses the life cycle, eras, as well as transitions, has been described. The importance of gender for women in terms of Levinson's theory was also considered. Furthermore, the similarities as well as differences between men and women were highlighted. The life of Isie Smuts in terms of Levinson's theory will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 Chapter Preview

According to Huberman and Miles (2000), qualitative studies tend to have a peculiar life cycle that distributes collection and analysis throughout a study. Qualitative studies, unlike experimental research, call for different modes of inquiry at different moments. Additionally, qualitative studies aspire to illuminate, describe and explain a pattern of relationship between the often abstract identifying nature of people, objects and situations (Berg, 2007). This chapter describes the *primary aim, research design and method, subject, research procedure*, as well as *data collection and analysis* of this psychobiographical study.

#### 4.2 The aim of the research

The primary aim of this study is to explore and describe human development by detailing the life of Isie Smuts in terms of Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle. The primary aim is to reflect the *exploratory-descriptive* nature of the study. This involves an accurate and in-depth description of an individual case, while aiming to provide a thorough understanding of the individual case within a definite social setting (Edwards, 1990).

Additionally, in this study the descriptive-dialogic approach requires a form of conversation between the exploratory-descriptive findings on the one hand, and the theoretical proposition and conceptualisation of Levinson's (1996) theory on the other hand (Stroud, 2004).

#### 4.3 The research design

The study of Isie Smuts may be described as life history research (Runyan, 1982b; 1988b) with a *qualitative single-case research method* being used (Yin, 2003). More precisely, the research method can be categorized as a psychobiographical study of a single case over a full lifespan. This

method of inquiry will serve to change the subject's life into a logical and clarifying story through the methodical use of psychological theory (McAdams, 1998).

Edwards (1990) suggested that psychobiographies of this kind be called “descriptive – dialogic” (p. 19) as they aim to both realistically portray or illustrate essential phenomena, as well as to explain and test the content of a specific theory, such as Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle, which is highlighted in this study.

Elms (1994) described the research method used in this study as *qualitative-morphogenic* because it highlights the individuality of the whole person and not the individuality encountered in single elements (Runyan, 1983). Furthermore, Elms noted that the person is described within a specific social-historical setting.

#### **4.4 The psychobiographical subject**

Case studies are characteristically directed at gaining an understanding of the uniqueness and peculiarity of a particular case in all its complexity (Huysamen, 1994). One of the underlying reasons for selecting a particular individual for study relates to the individual's significance and interest. A literature search revealed that no previous biography or psychobiography on Isie Smuts had been undertaken to date. She was selected purposively as a suitable psychobiographical case on the basis of the interest value, uniqueness and significance of her life. Her life had, and in some measure, still continues to have, a major impact on her fellow South Africans.

Isie had every reason to have a deep-seated resentment towards Britain and its people, yet she overcame this bitterness to replace it with forgiveness and humility (Fourie, 2008). Macdonald (1946) noted how one of her birthday parties made her world famous and, as a result, introduced South Africa to the larger world. Additionally, it seems that her life story has theoretical significance and applicability to Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle, as will be explored in Chapter 5.



Sibella Margaretha Krige, or Isie as she was called for most of her life, was born on 22 December 1870. She was one of eleven children. Her parents sent her to the Bloemhof seminary where she matriculated. During these years she met Jan Christiaan Smuts. He was intrigued by her. They married in 1897.

During the Anglo Boer War, Isie was detained in Pietermaritzburg where she lost her first three children (Macdonald, 1946). In 1908 they moved to Doornkloof, Irene, and they stayed there until the end of their days. Jan was Deputy Prime Minister in 1910 with the declaration of the Union of South Africa. Jan and Isie had six children after the death of the first three. In later years she fought at Jan's side. In doing so she started the process of burying her own and her fellowman's loathing and bitterness which was a consequence of the Anglo-Boer War (Macdonald, 1946).

Isie was 69 years old in World War II when she established the *Ouma's Gifts and Comforts Fund* whereby she recruited women in large numbers to write joyful letters and to send familial comforts to the men and women in the North (Macdonald, 1946). The fund became world famous (Jaff, 1975). She was honoured by the Witwatersrand University with the honorary degree of Doctor of Law.

All of Isie's birthdays in her seventies were dedicated to national appeals for the funds she concerned herself with (Macdonald, 1946). A world broadcast was arranged by 35 British and American artists for her 74<sup>th</sup> birthday (Macdonald). As they acknowledged her unusual and great personality, *Ouma* became world news. The broadcast concert alone, as the highlight of *Ouma's Birthday Appeal*, brought in more than £76 000 for the fund (Macdonald).

Isie was a humble and simple woman. She was remarkable in that she not only conquered the bitterness she experienced after the Anglo Boer War, but also helped others to do the same. In her time she had done much for racial peace. Hardly any record of her documents, articles, essays, notes or poems has been preserved, mostly because she insisted that her husband was the historical figure and she was not important (Macdonald, 1946). During her time, she gave the people of South Africa the building blocks on which to build racial peace, thereby doing much to change the

story of South Africa (Macdonald). She died at the age of 83 on 25 February 1954 at Doornkloof (Mincher, 1965).

#### 4.5 Data collection

The data collected regarding the subject of this study was mostly from *secondary sources* (documents produced by others), as the subject had requested her children to destroy all *primary sources* (documents produced by her) (Macdonald, 1946). The secondary sources include books written about Isie and her husband, local and international newspaper and magazine articles, information obtained from the Internet, as well as information obtained from the Smuts museum, the subject's home for most of her life. Although these are indicated in the Reference List of the study, the most important sources are listed here: Beukes (1992); Crafford (1946); Fourie (2008); Hancock (1962; 1965); Jaff (1975); Kock (2001); Lean (1964); Macdonald (1946); Millin (1936); and Mincher (1965).

The limitation regarding biographical data about the research subject was taken into consideration when deciding on this research subject. Yin (2003) proposed the use of published materials in psychobiographical studies for a number of reasons. Firstly, they are stable resources that can be frequently and repeatedly reviewed. They can also be used to substantiate any information.

Huberman and Miles (2000) proposed that a portion of raw experience be captured as *still* or *moving images*, as these images could be used in various ways, mostly involving a connection or conversion to words. In concurrence with Huberman and Miles, Yin (2003) supported the use of published material in dealing with psychobiographical studies, as these materials are established sources of data since they can be viewed continually. They are a way of verifying information from other sources, are reasonably accessible, are valuable in corroborating dates and the proper spelling of titles and names, and are convenient for the researcher to access in her or his own time.

This use of multiple sources will both minimise the potential impact of author bias and will allow for *data triangulation* or cross-referencing (Yin, 2003). Data triangulation is proposed by Yin as a

way of overcoming author bias. Additionally, multiple sources assist in enhancing the *internal validity* of the data collected (Yin).

## **4.6 Data analysis**

The data will be analysed according to a predetermined analytical strategy in this study, as they will enhance the reliability of the study's findings. As a framework for data analysis the approach suggested by Huberman and Miles (2000) will be used. According to the authors, data analysis includes three related sub-processes, namely data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing or verification.

These sub-processes interact reciprocally throughout the research as they occur before collecting data, during research design and planning, during data collection, during early analyses, as well as after data collection. Alexander's (1988) method of analysing personal data entails asking the data questions in order to obtain core-identifying units (i.e., themes or scripts) that have significance in untying and attaining the objective of the study (Stroud, 2004).

The questions are based on the academic approaches to the study, and the objectives or aims of the research. Moreover, Alexander (1988; 1990) suggested nine guidelines for the successful extraction of salient data which offer an overall impression or suggestion of the importance of the information or depictions. Both the three sub-processes for data analysis, as suggested by Huberman and Miles (2000), and relevant aspects of Alexander's method (1988), will be explained.

### **4.6.1 A description of Huberman and Miles' approach (2000)**

#### **4.6.1.1 Data reduction**

*Data reduction* refers to the procedure used by the researcher to reduce the data. Initially, data reduction takes place through the choice of a conceptual framework, in formulating the research question(s) and when selecting the case(s) to be studied (Huberman & Miles, 2000). Miles and Huberman consider a conceptual framework as the "current version of the researcher's map of the

territory being investigated” (cited in Rudestam & Newton, 1992, p.37), and warned that the framework of the study may change as the study develops.

By assuming a provisional theoretical framework, though, the researcher is obligated to the study in terms of who and what will be studied, as well as who and what will not be studied. In the proposed psychobiographical study, Levinson’s (1996) theory of the *Human Life Cycle* has been chosen as the theoretical framework for the exploration and description of the human development of Isie Smuts.

Theoretical approaches can be used, both during data collection and afterwards, as data are organised and analysed, to guide the determination of the significance of the data in meeting the primary aim of the study (Yin, 2003). This can be accomplished through questioning the data (Alexander, 1988) so as to identify core themes or scripts linked to the aim of the study. In this study, the following general question will be used in approaching the collected data:

*Which section of the data will allow for the exploration and description of human development as reflected in the life of Isie Smuts?*

To answer this question, the constructs of human development must first be understood and be prepared. This will be achieved through a complete theoretical and literature review of the theoretical framework of Levinson (1996). These will then function as a guide to assist the researcher in determining which of the data acquired are relevant.

#### **4.6.1.2 Data display**

Data display involves assembling the data in an organised, concise structure that allows for conclusions to be drawn as a second essential part of the analysis (Stroud, 2004). To facilitate the accurate display of data, the researcher needs to view a reduced set of data as a basis for exploration (Huberman & Miles, 2000).

The strategy of developing a descriptive framework will be used in this study to organise and integrate the psychobiographical data obtained (Yin, 2003). This will be utilised to record,

understand and operationalise the development of Isie Smuts. Once the data related to salient aspects of Isie's life have been identified, they will be recorded and conceptualised within a systematic evocative framework (Stroud, 2004). This timeline is graphically presented in the appendix.

The timeline, as well as the identifiers of data salience, were used to remain systematic and consistent during the process of data analysis. The data were also cross-referenced, as the process of theoretical triangulation (that is, substantiating information by using multiple sources of data) permitted more valid results through the indication of unique or contradictory information (Yin, 2003).

The study used a form of *investigator triangulation* as the research supervisors of the study would offer comments and feedback on the data collection and analysis procedures. Furthermore, the use of a systemic theory would improve the auditability or reliability of the study (Fouché, 1999).

#### **4.6.1.3 Conclusion drawing and verification**

This refers to the researcher making interpretations and drawing meaning from the data in the descriptive framework (Stroud, 2004). Several strategies can be applied and these include the following: contrast, comparison, the use of metaphors, noting patterns and themes, the use of triangulation, clustering, as well as checking results obtained with the respondents (Huberman & Miles, 2000).

As many methods are used, we refer to data transformation, as information is summarized, condensed, sorted, and connected over time (Gherardi & Turner, 1987). Additionally, the researcher once more used the strategy of questioning the data, as proposed by Alexander (1988), with the focus on the following:

*To what extent do the biographical data compare with Levinson's (1996) conceptualisation of the Human Life Cycle?*

To answer this, the relationship between the theoretical perspective of Levinson and the data collected regarding Isie Smuts must be made possible. Firstly, the extent to which facets of Levinson's *Human Life Cycle* are supported in Isie's life, need to be determined through a cautious examination of the category-specific organised data (Stroud, 2004).

Secondly, ways need to be found to generalise the findings to the applied theory by relating the case data to Levinson's theory through informal testing (Stroud, 2004). This process is of significance, as it may generate hypotheses about the theory which could bring about the additional development of the theoretical framework.

The importance of data verification is emphasised by Huberman and Miles (2000). The authors suggested that, if data verification does not occur during the data analysis process, it may well cause some important limitations. The limitations include (1) data overload, leading to admissions or overvaluing particular findings, (2) the prominence of first impressions or dramatic occurrences, (3) selectivity in data, particularly when trying to confirm a finding, (4) co-occurrences which could be understood as causal associations or correlations, (5) incorrect base-rate proportions, (6) information from particular sources could be unreliable, and (7) over-adjustment of information which may cast doubt on provisional hypotheses (Stroud, 2004).

To guarantee internal validity, Guba (1981) suggested strategies to be used to promote the trustworthiness and internal validity of qualitative findings. These are credibility (i.e., assurance that the subject has been described truthfully), conformability (i.e., corroboration of findings by another researcher), dependability (i.e., explaining changes in the research topic or design as the researcher gains more clarity) and transferability (i.e., demonstrating the applicability of a set of findings to another context (Huberman & Miles, 2000; Stroud, 2004).

Statistical inference is not used when doing case study research and Runyan (1988a) noted that the most common criticism is the difficulty to generalise from them. As a result, external validity is determined by a process referred to by Yin as analytical generalisation. This is a coherent process whereby the psychobiographer does not inevitably intend to generalise to other case studies or to the population, but rather to generalise the findings to the particular theory.



Data management implies the storage and retrieval of data for analysis and can be accomplished with an easily understandable work plan. Failing to do this may result in data being miscoded, mislabelled, mislinked, and mislaid (Wolfe, 1992). Ballard (1994) noted the importance for researchers to find the most effective way to narrate stories, as the research product must be viewed as a combined effort of the researcher, the researched, and the observer (Ashworth, 2003).

#### **4.7 Ethical considerations**

As indicated by Runyan (1982a), the practice of psychobiographical research presents a number of challenging ethical issues. It includes the invasion of privacy, as well as the potential embarrassment or harm to the subject, to her relatives and associates (Stroud, 2004).

Consequently it is essential that the researcher make a determined effort to treat and record all intimate details obtained with empathy, compassion and respect (Elms, 1994). The researcher strictly adhered to this principle in this study. Another primary ethical issue is informed consent, but as the subject of this study had already died more than 50 years ago, and only second and third generation family members were still alive, Elms proposed that no verbal permission needed be obtained to undertake such a study.

However, consultations with some of the living second and third generation family members produced approving and supportive responses. Additionally, the academic nature of the study, as well as the researcher's intention not to publish the study, made the principle of informed consent less significant. Nevertheless, the researcher reminded herself constantly of her ethical duty to treat life history information with respect, and to maintain the psychologist's ethical code of conducting research. Moreover, most of the information to be used for this study was already in the public domain (Elms, 1994).

#### **4.8 Chapter summary**

This chapter highlighted the research design and method, as well as the psychobiographical subject of this study. Additionally, the primary aim, the research procedure, the data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures used were explained.

The qualitative researcher has to make decisions at the onset, middle and the end of the study which result in the design being adjusted, modified and redesigned as the study progresses (Stroud, 2004). All decisions regarding the design eventually relate to description and explanation. To verify this a system using various types of triangulation, such as data triangulation, theory and investigator triangulation, methodological triangulation, and interdisciplinary triangulation are used. These permit several ways of framing the problem, as well as choosing research strategies. It also broadens discussions across a number of fields of study. The following chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **5.1 Chapter preview**

Sheehy (1997) noted that anything is possible, and nothing is certain in our post-modern world. Levinson (1996) identified a fundamental and generic progression in the life course of both men and women which acknowledges the distinctive elements in each individual life. The chronological stages of the life of Sibella Margaretha Krige (Isie) will be offered according to Levinson's four eras of development.

Information applicable to Isie's development during each era and transitional period will be offered in accordance with the age at which she encountered certain life experiences, as well as when important life events transpired. Her life history is portrayed over a period of almost 84 years, from her birth on 22 December 1870 until her death on 25 February 1954. In conclusion, closing thoughts and criticisms will be offered.

#### **5.2 The developmental periods in the life of Isie Smuts**

As explained in section 3.3.2, Levinson (1996) proposed the four overlapping eras in adult development as being the eras of pre-adulthood (age 0 to 22); early adulthood (17 to 45); middle adulthood (age 40 – 65), and late adulthood (starts at age 60). Cross-era transitional periods link the eras, namely the early adult transition (age 17 – 22); the mid-life transition (age 40 to 45), and the late adult transition (age 60 to 65).

The eras and transitional periods, together with a biographical account of Isie Smuts' life, will be discussed, as it unfolds in sequence throughout her life cycle. Additional information regarding Isie will be introduced in each era and transitional period.

Based on a literature review of the historical (biographical) life of Isie Smuts, a chronology of noteworthy periods, as well as the interrelationship of significant events and pertinent systemic

influences across her lifespan will be composed. A timeline, graphically represented in the appendix, portrays human development in her life. This timeline will also be used as a conceptual framework, as well as a guide, when presenting and discussing the findings of this study. The interwoven discussion of the biographical life of Isie Smuts and Levinson's (1996) description of human development follows in the sections below.

### **5.2.1 Era of childhood or pre-adulthood (age 0 to 22): Klein Libertas**

Although Levinson (1996) gave little information on this period, he identified the process of individuation. It involves one's relationship with oneself as well as with the external world. In terms of the two fundamental components comprising this era within Levinson's theory, Isie's relationship with Jan Smuts, religion, literature and music, as well as her relationship with friends, will all be looked at even though they emerge as peripheral components. Her family of origin and her education are identified as the central components.

Isie Krige was born on a wine and dairy farm called Klein Libertas in Stellenbosch, on December 22, 1870. She was the second oldest of eleven children, of whom two died in infancy. Her father, Japie Krige, was a sober, solid and authoritative figure. Her family called her Isie, a shortened version for Isabella, from which her name was derived. This pet name stayed with her for the rest of her life. Her parents were thrifty, smart farming people who went to church whenever there were services (Macdonald, 1946).

The same author called Isie's parents "puritans, dressed in black, regular church-goers to whom Calvinism was the only true religion on earth" (1946, p. 13). He later noted that "Religion was real to the girl [Isie]" (p. 14). This sentiment was echoed by other authors who stated that Isie was fondly remembered by her siblings as being very religious. It seems that this religious instruction was instrumental in her outlook on life of always putting others first.

The Kriges were an old Cape family, and although many of them were opponents of the English and the English ways, they were called the English Kriges (Macdonald, 1946). Isie's parents were adamant that their children should be skilled in English, although they were Afrikaans-speaking.

Isie was also fluent in the High Dutch of Holland (Macdonald). Moreover, she could read and write German and French, as well as being able to read the original Old Testament in the Greek translation (Jaff, 1975; Mincher, 1965). Beukes (1992) noted that Isie qualified in a seventh language, Latin. This was the tradition in which Isie was raised.

During this era the appropriate place for a girl was in the home, and more specifically, in the kitchen. However, Isie was not ordinary in this respect, as she loved books. Sending daughters to school was unusual in those days. As Isie was a bookworm, her parents sent her to the Bloemhof Seminary in Stellenbosch from 1876 to 1888, where she matriculated in the eighth position on the Cape merit list (Kotze, 2005). Jaff noted that "...she made history by being the only girl at the time to achieve this distinction" (1975, p.70).

Macdonald (1946) and Mincher (1999) noted Isie's parenting of her siblings, with the role she played as the perfect elder sister, as she would make their beds, and tidy their clothes every morning before she would leave for school. This resulted in Isie spending much of her younger years taking care of her siblings. Hancock (1962) also mentioned her excellent capabilities and willingness to help in the family. Apparently Isie took care of the many babies in the Krige household from an early age. Isie would later say to her brother, "You had more time than I - the babies had to be cared for!" (Macdonald, 1946, p.18)

It was during this time in Isie's life when she separated biologically and physically from her mother, in order to establish the first distinction between the me and the not me. According to Levinson, this was the first step in the development her life structure, as well as in a continuing process of individuation. Moreover, if we take into account Macdonald (1946), Jaff (1975) and Mincher's (1999) accounts of Isie's relationships with her family and siblings, both her parents and her siblings played a very constructive, positive role in her childhood years.

Another significant, albeit peripheral relationship, was a loved place of hers, Klein Libertas, the farm where she grew up as a child. The farm was named after Libertas, the home of Adam Tas, who named it to signify that freedom had been won. To some extent Isie's relationship with Klein Libertas gave real meaning and shape to her life course. Such was her love for Klein

Libertas that, as first lady, she named the home built for the Prime Ministers of South Africa, Libertas, as a reminder of her own home. In a way, her life was a symbol of liberty, as it was at this state home that Isie assembled the women workers in years to come.

All things considered, it seems that Isie and her siblings had a stable, solid family background, wrapped in the protection and love of the family, as they received the materialistic and psychological sustenance needed to grow into dependable, well-adjusted adults. This is in contrast with Levinson's (1996) findings, that a large minority of children and adults are living under conditions that are hostile to their development.

### **5.2.2 Early adult transition (age 17 to 22): Young love and studies**

The central components identified in Isie's life, at this stage, were her post-Matriculation studies, her family, her home base, as well as her relationship with Jan. Peripheral components included literature, languages, religion and poetry, with the unfilled components being other friends and the lack of a student life.

During 1886, Jan Christiaan Smuts (born 24 May 1870) boarded across the street from her home, and they met. Isie, being a book lover, intrigued him, and she in turn respected him. In those days it was unheard of for girls to attend college, as they were supposed to get married and settle down to home life, but Jan persuaded Isie's parents to send her to college (Macdonald, 1946). Beukes (1992) mentioned that Isie, having had a mind of her own, was adamant that she would continue her studies. In 1887, she one day simply walked to college and sat down in the classroom. This was deemed to be an audacious act for a woman in those days. She stayed there, and this was how Isie with her energy and talents commenced her studies, as one of the first five female students at Stellenbosch University, at the time called Victoria College (Crafford, 1946). However, her family's size and corresponding prudent use of money, thwarted her ambition for studying medicine, and instead she trained as a teacher.

What followed was an intellectual courtship. Jan and Isie would spend their evenings together, with her behind the piano, singing with him the German *lieder* which she appreciated and loved.

Crafford (1946) noted their courtship as being demure and respectable. During this period, Jan and Isie seemed inseparable, walking to and from the College together in the mornings, and in the evenings, with Jan calling at the Krige home every evening (Jaff, 1975). She inspired him to share her love of German literature, and he encouraged her to appreciate Shelley's poems. According to Beukes (1992), neither of them mixed with the other students, nor did they join in any of the sporting activities. It seemed that they used this isolation to focus on their studies of literature, languages and poetry. Although both had extraordinary cognitive abilities and were responsible, they were also romantic. This resulted in Jan starting to write poetry to his beloved.

When Isie turned seventeen, she received her first letter from Jan, indicating his love for her:

*You are the only one to whom I feel myself drawn by every tie of sentiment and Nature. You are the only one in whose society I feel alone, by myself, as if there is no second one, as if we two are one . . . . I love you as my own soul. (Jaff, 1975, p.70)*

Isie admired and loved Jan almost to the point of hero worship. She seemed to be always at his beck and call, such as writing his translated poems from Schiller out in copy-hand (Beukes, 1992), as well as copying out his 72 000 word book for presentation to a publisher (Millen, 1936). A number of authors have observed Isie's impressive intellect, with Jaff (1975) remarking on her being an exceptionally well read, cultured young woman, having a photographic memory until the very end.

As for her physical appearance, Crafford (1946) called her "a pretty girl with finely moulded [sic] features and wide-awake, intelligent eyes in her oval face" (p. 11). Lean (1964) noted her curly brown hair with blue eyes and her small build, while Beukes (1992) mentioned her modest appearance. (1962) not only mentioned her prettiness and charm, but also her immense mental and physical energy, as well as the fact that she was viewed by others as being eccentric because of her unusual character. Several authors observed her seriousness, her deep faith and her love of German poetry.

Referring to Levinson's (1996) proposal of basic developmental tasks in transition periods, it is clear that Isie had taken two bold steps during this boundary period between childhood and early



adulthood. To begin with, after finishing school at the age of 16, she proceeded to further her education, where she began to form her adult identity. This allowed her a better understanding of who she was and what she wanted. The termination of her school years can be interpreted as both an outcome of her past and a starting point for her future. This indicates not as being an ending, but a turning point.

Additionally, this permitted her to be more self-generating, more independent and self-responsible, which supports Levinson's theory in this regard. Lastly, after completing her studies, she terminated her years of study and initiated a new period in her life when she started to teach, thereby initiating a new structure. Moreover, she was exploring new possibilities, as well as altering her existing relationship with her parents when she left home. In so doing, she was laying the basis for building the first adult life structure in the next period.

It is interesting to note that it was very rare in those days for women to get married at such a late age as Isie did, as women tended to marry even before their coming of age. This is in contrast with Levinson's (1996) findings which were based on research done almost a century after Isie's marriage. Yet it is unclear whether Isie viewed marriage as inevitable or desirable. Nevertheless she immersed herself in her studies and teaching. In effect, she took more responsibility for her personal construction of meaning although it involved making choices as proposed by Levinson (1996).

Moving out of her parental home upon completion of her studies was a mixed blessing, as she wished to be more independent, but realized that this also entailed protecting and taking care of herself, including her own finances. Contrary to Levinson's (1996) findings, she did not form her own home base during this transition, as she studied from home. She did, however, transform her childhood relationship with her family into a more adult pattern.

Isie did not start or try out new relationships during this transition, opposing Levinson's findings. She knew Jan for almost ten years before their marriage, as opposed to the one year proposed by Levinson. In contrast, their marriage, when it happened, was not an urgent matter, but rather based on the quality of their relationship. Even at this age, Isie declared that she was in love with

Jan, which is also in contrast with Levinson's findings. There is nothing in the literature to suggest that Isie reached an all-time low during this transition, disputing another finding of Levinson's (1996).

From the above it is clear that this period in Isie's life both corresponds and conflicts with the theoretical descriptions given by Levinson (1996). However, it could be argued that Isie had not yet reached a fundamental turning point, as suggested by Levinson.

### **5.2.3 Era of early adulthood (age 17 to 45): Young life and love**

The social and psychological issues of following one's ambitions, establishing one's place in society and bringing up a family, as described by Levinson (1996), are evidenced in Isie's life at this time. Isie did experience rich fulfilment in love, sexuality, and family life, as Levinson (1996) indicated for this era. However, at the same time the burdens of parenthood weighed very heavily on her shoulders with the birth of all nine of her children during this era. This was the result of Jan being mostly absent during these years, forcing her to cope on her own with the many adversities she experienced in this time, including the unfortunate deaths of their infants, the hardships surrounding the Anglo-Boer war, Jan's increasing involvement in politics and military matters, as well as the advent of World War I.

Levinson also noted this to be the time of making very important choices. These are all clearly reflected in Isie's life. For Isie, this included her choice of spouse, moving away from the family home, establishing her own home, as well as coping without her husband. Added to these, were the uncertainties and hardships during the war, not hearing from her husband during the war, the birth of three infants, coping with the loss of her babies on her own, raising their children almost single-handedly and being interned. All of the above-mentioned choices were stressful, concurring with Levinson's suggestion. Additionally, Isie did not yet have the wisdom and life experience to make the best choices.

Although conditions were anything but favourable and this was an era of stress and contradiction for Isie, as suggested by Levinson (1996), it seemed as if Isie was relatively happy during this

stage (Macdonald, 1946). Moreover, Isie displayed the energy proposed by Levinson, as this was perhaps the only way she could have coped with the enormous stress and the contradictions this period held for her. She did not have the opportunity, however, to experience much of the abundance Levinson referred to. Although she briefly experienced intense fulfilment in love and family life soon after her marriage, the sacrifices she had to make because of both the wars with the concurrent stresses far exceeded these advantages.

An example of the contradictions Levinson referred to became evident in Isie's life when she experienced a spiritual conflict, as she appeared to be questioning her faith at the onset of this era. According to Hancock (1962), Jan enclosed some verses in a letter he sent to Isie for her seventeenth birthday, where he questioned a verse she had included in an earlier letter to him suggesting that she was not sure whether she was a Christian. The letter concluded with Jan declaring on her behalf: "You *are* a Christian" (p. 18).

#### **5.2.3.1 Entry life structure for early adulthood (age 22 to 28): Teaching and marriage**

The central components identified were Isie's teaching career, her family of origin, her religion, as well as her relationship with Jan. Marriage is included as central, although it was an unfilled component and it only later evolved to become a central component. Based on the limited personal information available, peripheral components during this stage included her love of music and literature, as well as her numerous letters to Jan. The unfilled components are identified as her loneliness, as well as her limited finances.

After finishing her studies in 1891, Isie was compelled to take a post as a farm school mistress from 1891 to 1896 (Crafford, 1946). Hancock (1962) mentioned that she taught at a little country school, earning an insignificant wage of £5 a month. Being this poor, she considered herself lucky if she picked up sixpence (Beukes, 1992). Meanwhile Jan furthered his law studies at Cambridge, England from 1891 to 1895.

Hancock (1962) indicated that Isie had a hard life during Jan's absence. However, there is nothing to indicate that she formed friendships with other men during that time, as she felt that Jan was the only man for her, and therefore she was prepared to wait for him (Beukes, 1992). Jan

and Isie continued their relationship through correspondence, although none of the letters survived (Fouché, 1999).

Jan practised as an advocate on his return to Cape Town in 1895. Isie was at the quayside, waiting for him. He moved to Johannesburg in January 1897. Jan could not afford to marry Isie at the time, and a long-term romantic commitment followed. After a courtship lasting a decade, he arrived unannounced at the Krige home in April 1897, where he told Isie's parents of his wish to marry her the very next day. The marriage took place on 1 May (Fouché, 1999). Suddenly Isie found herself at a cross-era transition period when she not only experienced a change in life structure, but also a turning point in her life cycle, when they left for the Transvaal the next day, where Jan was practising as an advocate. From then on, Isie signed all documents as Isie Krige Smuts (Mincher, 1965). However, during the last decades of her life, she signed her documents as Ouma Isie K. Smuts as it was this name she was most fond of (Macdonald, 1946). One of the first things Jan did was buying a piano for Isie so they could sing the German *lieder* as well as German and French love songs. They were happy (Fouche, 1999; Macdonald).

With this first entry into the adult life structure, Levinson proposed that vital choices are made. This is evident in Isie's life, and was appropriately illustrated in Isie's life when she left home to start teaching and later married Jan. It should be noted, though, that this choice was made at the end of this life structure. For her it meant separating from her family of origin, and leaving her home base. Additionally, her lifestyle and life had to be reorganized, first while teaching at a farm school, and later as a married adult, in order to make a place for herself in a new world and a new generation.

In Isie's initial phase in this life structure, work was the central component. It had a major place and served important functions in her life, like reducing her dependency on her parents. It allowed her to develop some competence, while at the same time actively experiencing the public world. The literature reviewed gave no indication of whether Isie considered teaching as a long-term commitment. The extent to which she invested herself in her teaching is also unclear. However, at a similar age the large majority of her female contemporaries were expecting to become homemakers sooner rather than later.

Deciding which components would be central, peripheral or unfilled, allowed Isie to have a more fulfilling and integrated life, as Levinson (1996) suggested. This indicated the age 25 shift, as she started to make deliberate choices about the life she wanted, in line with Levinson's proposal. Initially, her teaching job was a central component, as she invested herself in it. Although teaching made it possible for her to live more independently, she willingly, and without hesitation, gave it up when the time came. Later on, her marriage became the central component, although it probably remained unfilled until soon after the age 25 shift.

In the first phase of the age 25 shift, Isie felt the need to fill the thus-far unfilled components. This resulted in her marriage at age 27. During the second phase Isie had her first children. The changes in her circumstances and social roles were dramatic, although it happened within a secure framework. Isie now had the life structure she had perhaps wanted at the beginning of this period.

At this stage Isie had successfully built an entry life structure within a TME. However, she could not have been prepared for the changes in the transitional period which was to follow.

#### **5.2.3.2 Age 30 transition (age 28 to 33): Love, loss and loneliness**

Although the documents reviewed indicated that Isie was happy during this time, to leave her home base abruptly in order to move to another province and into her own home must have been challenging. It seems, though, as if she used the new possibilities to form the next structure, as Levinson (1996) suggested. This resulted in the central component identified as her internment during the second Anglo-Boer War and her marriage. The unfilled components during this period were loneliness, her sorrow and neglect, as well as her ill health. Isie made significant changes during this period, as the central and peripheral components were not the same as in the previous period.

Isie soon realized that Jan was "a hasty, energetic, virile male with a strong healthy sexual urge" (Beukes, 1992, p. 158). She became pregnant and on 5 March 1898 premature twins, Koosie and Jossie, were born. Unfortunately both passed away within a month (Millin, 1936). According to Beukes, this was to be the first of many tragedies in Jan and Isie's life together. Although this

was a time of deep personal sorrow, political matters soon overtook them. This links with Levinson's (1996) earlier suggestion that this is the era of the greatest stress. In June 1898 the Smuts family moved to Pretoria, as Jan was appointed State Attorney under President Kruger. She fell pregnant again.

In 1899 Jan was regarded as the leading political figure in the Transvaal after Kruger. However, this accomplishment was hardly noticed by Isie, as for her his achievements turned to years of bitterness, loneliness and anxiety. In April 1899 another Koosie was born. Isie was hardworking and loyal. As Jan's time was occupied by government and political matters, as well as the global event of the lurking Anglo-Boer War, Isie assisted and supported him wherever she could. In 1899 year Isie translated from Dutch into English Jan's book, *Een Eeuw van Onrecht*. Moreover, it was the beginning of the Anglo-Boer War and Jan joined General De La Rey's troops. There is ample evidence to indicate that Isie gave Jan her untiring support throughout the suspense of 1899 (Hancock, 1962).

According to Hancock (1962), Jan left for the war in June 1900. Isie completed her tasks of safeguarding the house against the invasion by enemy soldiers and preserved their secret telegrams by rolling them up and stuffing them into the bamboo curtain rods, to be still well-preserved half a century later (Beukes, 1992). Jan had given her 200 gold sovereigns with which to take care of herself and Koosie. These she sewed into a money belt to be dropped into the kettle with boiling water whenever the enemy troops approached. She cut up all Jan's letters to her except the first one and stuffed it into a cushion. After the war, however, the cushion could not be found (Hancock, 1965; Smuts, 1952). The British troops searched the house three times, the first time the day after Jan had left (Beukes, 1992). Although Isie was merciless in her hostility against the English, she was humane enough to give the British soldiers who ransacked her house and took their belongings, freshly baked bread.

From June 1900 until August the following year, Isie received no letters from Jan, although he wrote to her. Even though Jan and Isie had shared joy earlier in their married life, they also shared sadness, when Koosie, too, died tragically in August 1900 while Jan was on commando fighting the war (Beukes, 1992). This loss must have been difficult for Isie, as she was alone

when Koosie fell ill and died. At this stage, Isie had no idea where her husband was, and with her family in Stellenbosch, she had to deal with the death of their third child in the course of two years. Moreover, she had to endure both Jan's and her own sorrow alone.

Isie had to make a number sacrifices in the interests of her husband and his career. Beukes (1992) noted that she suffered in silence and rarely thought of herself and her own happiness. Most women would resent being left alone with a dying child, but Isie never tried to influence Jan to return to her. Instead, she suffered in silence for longer than a year before she heard from him. She did not pity herself as seen in her gracious answer to Jan's letter she received more than a year after their son's death: "Don't worry about me, Boetie. I am quite well and my spirit is as strong as ever" (Fourie, 2008, p. 45), to which he replied: "We shall go through life hand-in-hand and soul-in-soul . . . without you I would not care to live . . . I am prepared for all losses except the loss of you" (p. 45). The last statement should be viewed in the light of Jan's mother also passing away during this time. Isie carrying her grief alone made a deep impression on Isie for the rest of her life.

It is interesting to note that the Smuts couple corresponded in English during this time. It contradicts their practice of using Afrikaans as their medium of communication with one another and their children after the war. Perhaps they thought writing in English would speed up the passage of letters through the British censorship or that it would demonstrate true Boer character. During early 1901 Isie was joined by Ella de Wet, wife of Justice de Wet, as well as Isie's eleven-year old sister, Queenie, and she was kept in detention in Pietermaritzburg (Hancock, 1962). Kock (2001), however, noted that Lord Kitchener sent them to Albert Falls in Natal where they stayed in detention until August 1902, after Isie had had surgery in a sanatorium in Pietermaritzburg. No specific reason could be found for not sending her to a concentration camp, despite her attempts to go there like the other Boer women. Millin (1936) corrected a previous misconception by confirming that Isie was not detained in a concentration camp but that she was interned in a house. Millin also noted that the twins and Koosie died in the Transvaal.

During her confinement, Isie spent her time doing the usual housework, as well as making garments like scarves for the women interned in the camps, for which she received several letters



of gratitude from Olive Schreiner. During this time she was tormented by reports of Jan being pursued, wounded, captured and perhaps killed (Hancock, 1962). Despite this, she remained hopeful. She was overjoyed when she received her first letter from him in June 1901, and wrote back: "I have read and reread it so often that I know almost the whole letter by heart, and now I shall be able to live on those loving words for the many weary weeks to come" (Jaff, 1975, p. 74).

Isie and Jan could see each other for twenty-four hours during a pause in the fighting. Isie was ill at that stage, and had to spend the day in bed. The loss of her babies, Jan's absence during this lonely period, as well as the hardships of war took their toll on her health and she now weighed 98 pounds (Millin, 1936). Hereafter she would call herself a "Boer woman, just a Boer woman, like my ancestors" (Millin, 1936, p.188). On account of Isie's ill health, Jan requested that she be transferred to Stellenbosch to be with her parents, but the request was refused by Lord Kitchener. Eventually, more than twenty-six thousand women and children would pass away in the concentration camps (Jaff, 1975). The tragedy of the concentration camps was felt acutely by Isie and resulted in her becoming completely anti-British. For quite a number of years to come she remained hostile (Smuts, 1952). She went to great lengths in demonstrating this, for example to stick English stamps upside down on envelopes, so as to make the King of England stand on his head. Jan warned her that as punishment for her bitterness, their children would probably marry Englishmen.

During the Anglo-Boer War Jan distinguished himself as a military strategist and he became a general in the Republican Forces. Isie's experiences at the end of the war, when Jan became famous both locally and internationally, must have been more exasperating. This was due to Jan's letter to Isie when peace was declared on 1 June 1902, explaining that he could not come to her as yet, but that he would attend to his burghers before personal concerns. Isie was not well at the time and once more, she must have felt abandoned and disgraced. They were separated for three years when she made the journey to Pretoria, their home, to unite with him. Although Isie could not have foreseen the grief, abandonment and disgrace she would suffer during this period in her life, she would in all likelihood still have married Jan despite this. In retrospect, however, her willingness to serve and to sacrifice herself carried her through the tough times and eased the pain.

Contrary to Levinson's (1996) suggestion, Isie did not explore the new possibilities with which to form the next structure, as the unfortunate event of the war prevented this. In terms of re-evaluating the preceding life structure which include the work of earlier transitions not completed, Isie had ample opportunity to re-evaluate the choices she had made in the previous life structure. She certainly had more than enough time to question her choices. However, since this period coincided with the war, she had little opportunity for exploring new options with which to form the next structure.

As for Levinson's (1996) proposal of developmental difficulties during this transition, he could not have foreseen how appropriate this statement would be for Isie. In contrast with his suggestion of life now being simpler, and less interesting, it could not be further from the truth for Isie's life at this stage. She had to accept where she was and what she had in order to start building the next structure. Her life at this stage concurred with Levinson's (1996) idea of this being a period of development and personal growth, as she had realized some of her initial goals. Yet, she also experienced great sorrow and hardship.

Her life structure was now very different from that in her twenties, with the major changes described above. Due to the war, she was much less involved with her family of origin. Moreover, she had had the satisfaction and obligation of bringing three babies into the world only to have them cruelly and suddenly taken away from her. She then ploughed the care, love and devotion into other suitable channels, as explained above. During the war years and her time of isolation, Isie had learnt to cope on her own, as did the other Boer women in the concentration camps.

Isie concluded the novice phase of adulthood by truly growing up from being a girl to a woman – something that would have not been possible earlier. Levinson et al. (1978) suggested that this shift is a vital step in adult development. Thus, at this stage Isie confirmed and endorsed the choices she had already made.

### 5.2.3.3 A culminating life structure for early adulthood (age 33 to 40): Motherhood

The central components discovered included the birth of more children, her marriage and her home, whereas peripheral components included her scrapbook activities. These components differ from those of the previous period as the war was no longer identified as a central component, but was replaced by her family and her home. Sleeping alone, her resentment of the British, her ill-health, as well as Jan's women friends can be viewed as unfilled components.

Four more children were born within this period, with Santa born in August 1903, exactly a year after Isie's arrival back home after her internment; this was followed by Cato 16 months later in December 1904. Eighteen months later Jacob Daniel (Japie) was born in July 1906, to be followed by Sylma in July 1908. Despite the precarious state of her health, Isie gave birth to seven children over an eleven-year time span. The couple had separate bedrooms, as Jaff (1975) noted that Jan did not like the disturbance of babies crying during the night.

Although the British flag, the Union Jack, was flying over Pretoria, Isie insisted on giving birth under the Vierkleur, the flag of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek (later known as the Transvaal), by having it unfurled over her bed at the time of the births. The Smuts couple became close friends with the British commander, Lieutenant General Lord Methuen when he stayed with them. In the years to come, Lord Methuen would help Isie overcome her bitterness against the British. Jan devoted his energies towards achieving a political union of the four British colonies in South Africa. He was mainly responsible for the drafting of the constitution of the Union of South Africa.

During this time Isie commenced her beloved pastime which was very time-consuming and a real labour of love, which she referred to as *plakking* (translated as pasting) as she cut out every single account, report, cartoon, article and speech referring to Jan, and these she pasted into large scrapbooks. She carefully dated and referenced each entry. She did this especially at night time after the family had gone to sleep, and worked on this at times until the early hours of the morning. When she was almost 80 years old, she had completed more than 150 albums.

At this stage Emily Hobhouse introduced an exciting chapter in Jan's life, as she played a large role in making him famous. Although the admiring women she brought into the Smuts family's life would delight Jan, they put a severe strain on Isie. This led him to sometimes ignore or even forget his wife's needs. Isie kept her feelings regarding Jan's attachments to herself (Beukes, 1992). Isie this was devoted and obligated to him for life. Moreover, it was part of her role in the TME.

Margaret Clark-Gillet was considered to be one of the most important women in Jan's life, judging by the more than 2 000 letters Jan wrote to her (Fourie, 2008). When Margaret came to visit in 1906, she and Jan would wander around Doornkloof. They would discuss matters important to Jan, like world events and botany, while Isie stayed at home. Jan also wrote letters to Margaret's two sisters, to Francis Lamont, to Lady Daphne Moore and her daughters, as well as to Princess Frederica of Greece (Fourie). All in all, these amounted to a collection of 25 000 letters to women (Beukes, 1992).

While Jan admitted being attracted to other women, he denied that these relationships were sexual, stating "I have a weakness for women, not in the sexual sense, but from some inner affinity and appeal" (Beukes, 1992, p. 7). Even more upsetting and testing for Isie were the number of women Jan himself generously invited into their home (Beukes). Although most women would find it difficult to observe from a distance the fuss and excitement made about their husbands by so many others, Isie was a remarkable woman, as she knew early in their relationship that theirs would be no ordinary marriage.

The question remains whether Jan's relationships with his female friends were platonic. Different authors vary in their opinions. Beukes (1992) maintained that Jan only used endearing terms such as *my dearest*, *ever yours*, *mamma* as well as his nickname for her, Mia, when writing to Isie. He did not use such names when corresponding with the others. Moreover, the author noted that Jan's letters to Isie disclosed a distinctive intensity of emotion, love, passion and affection. Letters to Isie, as compiled by Hancock and Van der Poel (1966), almost invariably included political news, but also household arrangements and personal messages to Isie and the children. The tone of the letters was often lighthearted and gentle.

Whilst there was no scandal during their 53 years of marriage, it should be realized that Isie had to make many significant sacrifices to put up with Jan and his numerous activities, as well as his friendships with other women. This resulted in Isie taking care of their children, their home and the bulk of the farming activities. It is difficult to know how much heartache Isie experienced and how much she missed Jan's companionship.

During the first phase of this structure, Isie did not have the same external setting, as during the entry-life structure. This corresponds with Levinson's results (1996). She now had her own nuclear family with her family of origin two provinces removed from her. Her circumstances were very different: she got married; she was living in a new community; and she was no longer involved in her teaching career.

In her case, the building a life structure was more obvious. The first phase, which for Isie ended at age 35, was a time of tension, anxiety and crisis for her, mainly because of the war. During the second phase of this structure, Isie did realize some of her dreams by tending with loving care for her growing brood, in accordance with Levinson's (1996) findings. Moreover, she had more responsibilities and made more commitments, in line with what Levinson proposed for this period.

The literature review did not indicate whether she had other formal occupational ambitions apart from wanting to become a medical doctor. By all accounts she invested much of herself in motherhood, despite her earlier disappointments and heartbreak in this regard. Putting her family first and investing in them allowed her to establish herself in the TME. All in all, Isie was now truly moving from junior to senior in the adult world.

The culminating event of Isie's early adulthood is represented by the outcome of her early adulthood with its messages about aspects of herself. With her central components being a wife and mother, she would now have had a sense of how well she had accomplished these roles, as well as examining her future possibilities. Isie committed herself to the TME with more than her fair share of disappointments in her domestic life. Homemaking was a full-time job for her and took up most of her time.

However, she increasingly spent more time with her scrap book activities which gave her much satisfaction. Perhaps this was her way of dealing with the increasing attention Jan was getting from other women, as she viewed her family as the rock on which this life structure was built. Moreover, it was another way of quietly coping alone. Isie had built her life structure around her marriage which she experienced at times to be painful. In the same breath, marriage permitted her to carry on being a home maker.

Isie's life structure was viable, in the sense that she could live out those aspects she thought important, concurring with Levinson's (1996) suggestion. Conversely, it was less feasible in that Jan's attachments to other women caused her some insecurity. Her life was not very comfortable, as she had four additional infants to take care of during this period, although this helped her with the process of individuation in becoming more competent. If she was dissatisfied with her marriage, she dealt with it by focusing on the positive aspects and by making her and Jan's life more separate, like sleeping in different rooms. This corresponds with what Levinson et al. (1978) proposed. Motherhood supplied Isie with the affirmation she needed.

The literature review supplied evidence of Jan acknowledging her support and devotion to him. Isie used this to live her life more fully, as well as using it as a basis with which to launch the next era, in agreement with Levinson's (1996) suggestion.

#### **5.2.4 Mid-life transition (age 40 to 45): Home affairs**

The central components are identified as marriage, expanding the family, and setting up the family in a new home. The central components are largely the same as in the previous period. Peripheral components include the advent of World War I and the time spent with her scrapbooks, with Jan's involvement in the war being an unfilled component.

In 1909, Isie's dream of living on a farm became a reality when the couple bought a corrugated iron building which had previously been used as the British Officers' Mess for £300 and had it dismantled to be re-erected on Doornkloof, near Irene (Millin, 1936). Doornkloof was close to Pretoria where Jan worked. The couple immediately started planting thousands of trees on the

Doornkloof 2 000 morgen property. Their move overlapped with the formation of the Union of South Africa on 31 May 1910.

At Doornkloof another son, Jannie, was born in August 1912, with a daughter, Louis, following in November 1914. She was named after Louis Botha, who was the Prime Minister of the Transvaal from 1907 to 1910, and later became the first Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa from 1910 to 1919. Botha was a close friend of the Smuts couple until his death in 1919, when he was succeeded by Jan.

It was suggested that Isie was a proper housewife, taking care of the housework, knitting, ironing, sewing, and caring for the children and their pets, such as her husband's swarms of bees (Kock, 2001; Mincher, 1965). Although her love of knitting, sewing and general housework is never identified as a central or peripheral component, it is viewed as being part of her central family component. All their children grew up in the Doornkloof home.

The above-mentioned years coincided with the mid-life transition in Isie's life. As stated earlier, Isie was content at Doornkloof. Although she did not experience a developmental crisis, she did experience an adaptive crisis, as she had to cope with the new home, as well as giving birth to two more children. Moreover, this period in her life coincided with the onset of World War I in 1914.

It should also be noted that Isie gave birth to the last two of their children when she was well over 40 years of age and could perhaps be considered too old for motherhood, especially during an era when women had their children at a much earlier age. Jaff (1975) noted that she created a home of tranquillity and harmony for herself and her family. This corresponds with Levinson's (1996) suggestion that the benefits of a transitional period involve forming a new life structure more fitting for the self and more feasible for the world.

Two culminating events indicated Isie's mid-life transition. The first was their move to Doornkloof, and the next was the onset of World War I together with Jan's involvement in it. In line with Levinson's (1996) suggestion, Isie yearned for a more carefree life with less

responsibilities and more time to cater for her own needs. Furthermore, she wanted to be herself and to take up her own interests. She had dedicated her married life to being a mother and a wife, with the understanding that she, in return, would be loved and taken care of. However, at this stage she must have felt deceived and trapped, as her burdens did not decrease, nor did she have better benefits as Levinson (1996) suggested. On the contrary, she had more children and moved house to set up a new home in the countryside.

This was compounded by Jan's increased involvement in the political and military fields, as well as the onset of World War I. If Isie was disappointed and resentful, as suggested by Levinson (1996), she was also determined to be more responsible for her own life. Questioning who she was and what was of importance to her had to raise the probability of terrifying changes. Becoming more individuated and catering more for her own needs did not mean that she was not responsible for her family anymore, but rather that she was more aware of her responsibility to them as well as to herself.

With this concluding phase, Isie ended the previous life structure and built a basis for the life structure of the next era. Furthermore, she moved from the TME to a new type of married life shaped by the development of marriage and motherhood, as discussed in the previous period. At this stage, she was moving from the junior to the senior generation.

Whereas the women in Levinson's sample felt more liberated during this period with their children preparing to leave home, Isie's family was still growing, which instead of liberating her, meant more child care and other responsibilities. Additionally, moving house, setting up a new home, and living on a farm required an increase in household management and home making which left her with less time to enjoy her own pastimes.

On the marriage front, Isie had hoped that Jan would be able to devote more time to the marriage by spending more time together, but this was thwarted by World War I. As a result, their relationship within the TME had not developed much since their marriage. Although she might have tried to improve it by making the marriage a central component of both their lives, it was



very difficult because of Jan's political career. This was partly addressed by their ongoing correspondence.

For Isie, marriage was the basis of security and constancy as it symbolized the couple's accomplishments in bringing up a family. It allowed her a certain identity and place in society. Since Isie's marriage, she had remained a full-time homemaker, thus preserving the model of the provider-homemaker split as proposed by Levinson (1996). She committed herself fully to the TME. Approaching the end of this transition, she was still hoping for a more carefree life, but it escaped her, as she was tasked with the never-ending requirements of her husband, their infants and toddlers, as well as the demands of running a home and a farm. Although her scrap booking allowed her some leisure activity, it was not clear what new enterprise she would create for her marriage in the next era while yet struggling to establish a better life for herself.

### **5.2.5 The era of middle adulthood (age 40 to 65): Family life and politics**

Generic character traits and peculiarities of Isie were identified in the literature reviewed. As these were not dated, a description of the important and interesting aspects of her personality will be the main focus here.

Although Isie wrote Jan numerous letters throughout their married life, it was her specific wish that nothing about her be preserved for posterity. This was because she viewed herself of no importance compared with him (Macdonald, 1946). Consequently, very little of her correspondence has been preserved. However, it is viewed as part of her central marriage component.

In 1922 a girl called Kathleen was taken in by the Smuts couple and raised as their own child (Macdonald, 1946). Kathleen produced a book in 1965, *I lived in his Shadow*, based on her life as part of the Smuts family. She was never legally adopted, although she was treated in all respects as one of the couple's own children. Macdonald noted that the Smuts couple also adopted the daughters of a friend when she passed away.

Isie was a very frugal, economical housewife, believing nothing should be discarded. Numerous examples of her sparing nature became evident in most of the books and articles reviewed, such as Isie always cutting her own and her family's hair. Additionally, *padkos* (meaning food for the road) was packed for all road and train trips, although she did not like leaving the farm she loved, and she loathed train trips. Isie was so humble that she would first investigate the price of a gift before she would accept it as she was adamant about not receiving extravagant gifts (Mincher, 1999).

She undid packages in brown paper tied up with string and ironed the brown paper to be used again later, while the string would be loosened and rolled up for later use, as Isie lived by the motto of waste not, want not. Doornkloof had a box room where used boxes would be stored for re-use later. Practical and methodical as she was, Isie would cover some of these boxes with scraps of fabric to be used for extra storage. She always made her own clothes, as well as those of her daughters, usually in dark, practical colours. The last two instances serve as testimony to her creative abilities.

With her sense of neatness, practicality and saving others from extra work, she wore an apron to protect her dress and she filled the front pocket with her daily necessities, like a pencil, scissors and safety pins. It was customary for women in those days to wear a hat, but Isie did not like it, and she owned only one hat which she wore whenever it was expected of her. From the start of the Anglo-Boer War, until the end of her years, Isie collected magazines, periodicals, and newspapers which she sent to hospitals, tuberculosis sanatoriums and leper colonies (Macdonald, 1946).

Isie treated her house maids and farm labourers with the same polite respect, irrespective of age, race or colour, and she taught her children the same. She did not like anyone serving her and insisted on tidying her own and her husband's rooms, while expecting their children to do their beds, as well as to wash their own underwear and socks. She was adamant that the kitchen be left spotless at the end of the day. This reflected her philosophy of not making work for others, but rather considering others above oneself.

The Smuts children were not allowed luxuries. When Kathleen won a Shirley Temple doll complete with full wardrobe and bedroom suite, Isie decided that it should go to an orphanage (Mincher, 1999). Of course Kathleen was devastated, but Isie was unyielding. Even though Mincher noted that Isie demanded high standards of behaviour from her children, she also observed how gentle and tolerant Isie was with her own children, as she hardly ever raised her voice or lost her temper (Mincher, 1999; Kock, 2001). Moreover, both authors state that Isie was there when her children and husband needed her. This was reiterated by Macdonald who stated that Isie made a point of welcoming and saying farewell to her husband and other members of the family on the stoep whenever possible.

Jan once referred to Isie as being, “the real cement of the house, and without her, house and family would fall to pieces, and then what would happen to me?” (Jaff, 1975, p. 77) From this we can deduce that she was the person essential to the success of their home, as Jan was absent from home with his campaigns in German South-West Africa and East Africa, as well as serving on the Imperial War Cabinet during this time (Hancock, 1965).

From the above, it is evident that Isie’s life during this era followed Levinson’s (1996) proposal that we are at this stage responsible for the development of the present generation of young adults. Furthermore, Isie became more responsible for herself and for others. This became apparent in her prominent role as wife of the First Minister which had her travelling to the farthest rural areas to address women in particular (Kock, 2001). Conversely, Levinson (1996) pointed out that this can be a time of increasing emptiness and loss of energy, but no evidence to support this could be found by the researcher, as it rather seemed that Isie filled the emptiness, if it existed, when they adopted Kathleen.

#### **5.2.5.1 Entry life structure for middle adulthood (age 45 to 50): Effects of World War I**

For Isie, there appear to be no significant changes in the central components during this period, as her marriage and family continue to be recognized as the central components, with the peripheral components being World War I and Jan’s increasing involvement in it. Added peripheral components are identified as her charity efforts, scrapbook activities, as well as her

correspondence with others, apart from Jan. The unfilled component is identified as Jan's absence from home.

The critical symbolic event which Levinson (1996) suggested would indicate the shift from the end of the previous transition has to be World War I, as it took Jan away from home for the greater part of this period in Isie's life. During the previous war Isie was never sure of Jan's whereabouts. In 1914 he made her a promise that he would write to her at least once a week for the duration of the war.

Jan was separated from Isie and the children for a long period during the German East Africa Campaign. He continued writing to Isie and the children. Between 1916 and 1919 he was away from home for three and a half years (Jaff, 1975). By this time he was an international statesman. Although she must have been lonely, Isie did not complain and tolerated this separation (Macdonald, 1946). Early in 1917, when she and then Prime Minister Louis Botha both hoped that Jan would be home by May 1917, she said to Botha: "Altyd vir die beste!", meaning what Jan decided was always right (Hancock, 1962, p. 424). However, Jan did not return home until July 1919. Ingham (1986) noted 1919, when Jan took over from Botha, as being one of the most difficult periods in South Africa's history. When Jan became Prime Minister in 1919, the family had to move to Groote Schuur in Cape Town, as it was the home of the Prime Minister at the time.

During this period Isie devoted much of her time to working for soldiers' comforts and in the military hospital, as well as war relief work. In this way Isie campaigned at Jan's side. Additionally, she had to take care of household duties. Although Levinson (1996) suggested important differences in the relationships that formed the central components of her life structure, Isie's central and peripheral components remained much the same as they had been in her previous life structure. However, World War I caused Jan to be increasingly involved in political and military matters, and this was an added peripheral component. Furthermore, the vast difference in the way Isie spent her days during this period compared with the previous period, corresponds with the satisfaction suggested by Levinson (1996).

During this period Isie spent much of her time trying to relieve the effects of the war on South African soldiers and other fellow South Africans affected by it. In line with Levinson's (1996) suggestion, her workability was thus increased, as she carried out the charity efforts which she saw as fitting and essential for the self (Levinson, 1996, p. 61). This links with his earlier proposal that what had happened in the previous period, would intensely affect this period.

#### **5.2.5.2 The age 50 transition (age 50 to 55): Loss and gain**

The central components in Isie's life structure continued to be her marriage and family, with the peripheral components her husband's political life, her scrapbook activities, her charity efforts and her correspondence. The crises Isie had experienced in the previous two transitions have been discussed. It is in accordance with Levinson's (1996) finding that it is not possible to proceed through this era without a crisis in either of the previous transitions.

With Louis Botha's death in 1919, Isie became the Union's official first lady when Jan became Prime Minister of the South African Union until 1924 when he lost the next election. Although Jan's election as Prime Minister was to be expected, losing the election five years later was not. It is thus viewed as an adaptive crisis for Isie, as it was a worrying time during which she must have felt that their future as leaders of the country was at stake. However, Joseph (1969) commented that Isie and the children were secretly glad about the defeat, as it would allow Jan to spend more time at home.

If Kathleen's adoption allowed Isie some fulfilment and satisfaction, Jan's loss of political power did not. This must have had an impact on Isie, as it did not allow for a safer place in society, as predicted by Levinson. Moreover, at the time it shattered Jan's political dreams and aspirations. Yet Isie adjusted emotionally and behaviourally as she saw her life in broader terms, and did not have difficulty with current developmental tasks. This prevented her from experiencing it as a developmental crisis.

As noted earlier, it was during this transition that Kathleen was adopted by the Smuts family (Mincher, 1965). Although the literature does not indicate Kathleen's exact age at the time of her adoption, Mincher (1965) called herself "a small girl" at the time of the adoption (p. 15). At the

time Isie was in her 50s with her youngest child being eight years old at the time. Generally, most women her age would start preparing themselves to have a more relaxed life style, to expect their children to leave the family home, and to invest less of themselves in the TME. For Isie, however, it was different, however. All of their children were still of school-going age and demanded her attention.

Jan himself did not play a major role in the education and rearing of their children. On the contrary, it seemed as if he had very little to do with their upbringing or other household matters (Fouché, 1999). Like many other Boer women with strong personalities, Isie allowed her husband to think that he was the honoured patriarch in all matters, as this allowed the order not to be disturbed. She always maintained that the children's education and family life should not be interrupted (Cameron, 1994).

This transition was negative in terms of Jan's failure in the political arena which caused them hurt and a loss of satisfaction. However, it allowed Isie to further explore herself and the world, as well as creating a more fitting life structure for herself in the period to follow.

### **5.2.5.3 A culminating Life Structure for Middle Adulthood (age 55 to 60): The after-effects**

Levinson's (1996) suggestion regarding realizing goals and ambitions is reflected in Isie's life with the adoption of Kathleen, as this revitalized and enriched their lives. It contrasts with the increasing emptiness which Levinson (1996) indicated as part of middle adulthood, as this was instead a time of satisfaction and fulfilment for Isie, at least on the home front. However, the after-effects of losing the election, must have affected Isie.

During this period, Isie's marriage and family continued to be the central components, together with her charity work which included her correspondence in the periphery. The adoption and raising of Kathleen is in accordance with Levinson's (1996) finding of taking on more responsibilities and more intense commitments during a life structure. For Isie it involved devoting herself to what she viewed as her central component, her family. She evaluated herself partly in terms of this gesture.

### **5.2.6 Late adult transition (age 60 to 65): Life**

Although very little information exists on Isie during these years, no developmental crisis is considered when her life is reflected on more broadly. The suggestion made by Levinson et al. (1978) of development taking place could not be verified due to lack of suitable information.

Isie's marriage and her family life, which by now included her grandchildren as well as her scrapbook activities, continued to be the central components. The peripheral components identified were her relationships with others, as well as her correspondence with others.

### **5.2.7 Era of late adulthood (age 60 and beyond): The spoils of war**

This was to be Isie's final era. The central components during this era included her extended family and marriage, as well as her war work. Peripheral components identified included her charity work, scrapbook activities, Jan's political career and correspondence. The unfilled components were the death of their son with her ensuing ill-health, as well as Jan's women friends. Included in the unfilled components was Jan's death.

This period includes the late adult transition mentioned above. For Isie the shift into this era came soon after World War II was declared in September 1939, when she became known for her war work (Jaff, 1975). Jan was Deputy Prime Minister from 1933 to 1939, when he became Prime Minister until 1948.

Although she never accompanied her husband on his overseas trips, as she loathed flying, she did accompany him to Rhodesia in 1940, as well as to Egypt to visit the South African Forces. She referred to these as her "boys and girls" (Jaff, 1975, p. 84). She was passionate about them. When descending the aeroplane in Cairo, one of the South African soldiers called out: "Hello Ouma", which established a new name for her that would resound around the world (Jaff, p. 84). She became so popular that the soldiers called their brandy ration "Ouma's Stuka juice", while the Africa Star Ribbon was commonly known as "Ouma's garter" (Jaff, p. 84). This resulted in Isie becoming one of the best known and best loved women, not only in South Africa but in the

Commonwealth as well. As such, she inspired women's war efforts on the home front. The troops loved her and she received many a cheering welcome whenever she visited them. Moreover, the troops appreciated all the gifts and comforts they received, as every person in active service received a Bible, and at Christmas time each of them would be sent a tin of chocolate or toffee presented with a photograph and message from the Smuts couple.

Jaff (1975) mentioned her numerous platform speeches at meetings of the Women's South African Party, as well as being the much-loved patroness of the men and women of the Union Defence Forces. Additionally, Isie started with recruitment gatherings all over the country, as well as lending her name to several fund-raising efforts for the South African troops.

During World War II, Isie founded Ouma's Gifts and Comforts Fund for the South African forces in North Africa, or 'up North', as it was then called (Macdonald, 1946). Isie became the link between her husband and the people, as she had a gift of approaching ordinary people. She resented publicity, but her devotion and loyalty to her husband and her country's people propelled her into the spotlight to become the best-known woman in South Africa at the time (Kock, 2001). She accepted this role. Isie's fund started to become more widely known as American and British troops started enquiring as to who the person driving it was. Isie had absolute faith in the youth of South Africa. She did not distinguish between race or colour when distributing the proceeds of the fund. This resulted in her helping to build racial peace and harmony.

Most South African women, and especially those in Cape Town and Pretoria where work sessions were being held, participated by knitting khaki socks and scarves, and numerous fund-raising events were held all over the country. Isie herself was rarely seen without her khaki wool and knitting socks, so much so that she was once very nearly removed from Parliament for this reason. She helped to plan and to pack what were called the glory bags to be sent to the troops up North. Her enthusiasm inspired others to write letters to the Boys and Girls up North, and she sent children who had lost a father due to the war, a letter and a small gift. Isie referred to this fund as "my baby" (Jaff, 1975, p. 82). Moreover, she devoted her energy to the fund. All the



Smuts children joined the war effort at different stages, and as a result all eventually wore khaki uniform. Isie was very proud of this achievement.

During her lifetime, Isie received many letters. She felt obliged to respond to them herself, although Kathleen assisted her by typing some of her correspondence. Invariably, Isie also replied in writing, as she apparently said: "It didn't seem right to send an impersonal, typed letter" (Mincher, 1999, p. 166).

Isie became the first woman in South African military history to present the ceremonial wings to air force pupils in 1942 (Kock, 2001). She suffered a mild stroke at the end of that year and although she recovered, she remained frail. At this stage her family persuaded her to slow down, but she fought back.

Jan's relationship with other women put an additional strain on Isie during this time. Although the general public, both locally and internationally, were not aware of Jan's relationships with other women, this changed with the arrival of Princess Frederica of Greece in 1941 (Fourie, 2008). In 1943 when Isie was awarded an honorary doctorate and Jan wished to invite the princess, Isie was adamant that she would not allow it, by saying: "No, all eyes will be on you and her. It is my day and I am not going to be humiliated" (Fourie, 2008, p. 47). However, Jan noted in a letter to Margaret Gillet about Isie receiving the degree that she will be "accompanied by her husband who will share in her reflected glory. Isie will be the first woman to be thus honoured since Queen Wilhelmina" (in Van der Poel, 1973, vol. VI, p. 591). It was the only time Isie publicly disclosed her inward struggle and feelings of bitterness.

It is difficult to tell how Isie really felt about Jan's female correspondents. She had to share him with the world, to hear about the wonderful parts of the world he had visited, and to be his audience when he talked about members of the royal family, of the rich and famous, of political and world leaders, while she stayed at home to raise their children and run the farm (Fourie, 2008). It must have been quite a shock for Isie to realize that not only was the princess writing long personal letters to her husband, but that he answered each of these letters and painstakingly

collected them. It is no wonder then, that Isie burnt all her letters to him bar two, thereby not allowing them to become part of his collection (Fourie, 2008).

Interestingly, the letters from herself to Jan were demanded by Frederica, at that stage the Queen of Greece, days after Jan's death. Since then, Frederica has denied any knowledge of this incident (Beukes, 1992). Additionally, photographs taken of Jan and the princess during World War II were considered to be so damaging that the Bureau of State Information prohibited their publication, as this would further encourage the gossip of them having an affair (Beukes, 1992). Beukes concluded that a number of factors indicated that Jan was not a philanderer, such as Isie's loyalty, Jan's moderation in everything, and his family, as well as their religious values.

As a grandmother, Isie did not restrict or impede her grandchildren and preferred to turn a blind eye to most things. Mincher (1965) noted that Isie "spoilt our children and lavished love and attention in abundance on them" (p. 146). Although she preferred to stay in the background to devote her attention to her house, children and grandchildren, she became known worldwide. This can be attributed mainly to the Gifts and Comforts fund. In this way Isie served South Africa and the world.

Isie's dreams of becoming a medical doctor never realized, but she did receive an honorary doctorate from the Witwatersrand University in 1943 (Macdonald, 1946) for her contributions to "Life in South Africa and the war effort" (Beukes, 1992, p. 65). There she was called ". . . the woman whose image is enshrined in the hearts of South Africa's soldier sons because of her maternal devotion to their welfare" (Macdonald, 1946, p. 101). However, their daughter, Louis became a medical doctor and was later present at her father's deathbed.

Isie continued to support and assist Jan and his causes throughout her life. In 1941, when he tried to find recruits for the army in World War II, a recruiting song was dedicated to Isie (Macdonald, 1946). On a few occasions Isie was recognized by others before her husband was, and he commented on this: "Never again tell me, Mama, that it is you who basks in my reflected glory" (Mincher, 1965, p. 82). From this phrase Mincher derived the title of her unpublished manuscript on Isie, called *Reflected Glory*.

All of Isie's birthdays in her 70s were devoted to appeals for the funds she was passionate about. When she turned 74, she received a surprise birthday party in the form of a unique international radio broadcast. Many world famous entertainment stars, including Noel Coward, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Dame Sybil Thorndike, paid homage to Isie, as she listened in at home. They congratulated and honoured Isie for her war effort. As anyone could tune in, this included the South African troops all over the world, as well as the nation at home. The broadcast ended with an unexpected message from Jan. The programme was a great boost for Ouma's Gifts and Comforts Fund, as the broadcast concert alone brought in £76 000 (Macdonald, 1946). Moreover, Isie became world news. World War II ended in 1945, and in a way, Isie was a casualty of war, as she was ill for a number of years afterwards.

The British Royal family visited South Africa in 1946, and as Isie's health did not allow her to go to Cape Town for the welcoming ceremonies, the Queen insisted that they must visit Isie at her Doornkloof home. Jan replied to this: "A queen is visiting a queen", as he felt that Doornkloof was worthy of being called the tin palace (Fourie, 2008, p. 48). Apparently Isie entertained the Royal family as if they were close friends.

The Smuts' eldest son, Japie, was brilliant but he died very suddenly and unexpectedly in October 1948 from cerebral meningitis. He left behind his wife, Kitty, and five young children ranging from infancy to 13 years. Although this was a grave time in Isie's life it was made more bearable when Kitty and her children moved to Doornkloof for a while. Isie was apparently so calm and quiet in her sorrow that her family became anxious for her. Jan, in a letter, stated that Isie was "speechless with inward suffering" (Hancock & Van der Poel, 1966, p. 252). On the same page Jan called Japie the "pick of the bunch". However, Isie remarked to Kathleen: "A husband's death is very terrible, but nothing can replace the loss of a child." (Mincher, 1965, p.155). Japie's death was even more agonizing for Isie because of its unexpectedness. In addition, he was the eldest of only two remaining sons. Like so many years ago when she had lost a child, it seemed that Isie quietly coped with her grief on her own.

Although Jan lost his seat in the election of 1948, he remained in the political arena. He paid tribute to Isie when, on what turned out to be their last wedding anniversary in 1950, he wrote to

her: “I think with great thankfulness of our most happy married life . . . . When I look back at it all today it seems like a dream . . . it was all worthwhile“ (Fourie, 2008, p. 42). At this stage of their lives the couple was still very much in love, as documented by their son in his biography on Jan (1952).

Jan suffered a stroke and was compelled to stay at home, restricted to his bed. His family took care of him lovingly (Smuts, 1952). During this time, Jan called all the Smuts women together, telling them they were wonderful and reiterating the importance of family life (Doornkloof Society, 1965). Isie nursed him with care and devotion. She would spend time alone with him every evening before she retreated to bed.

On 11 September 1950, a month after Jan turned 80, he quietly passed away. Prof Elliot, the family doctor, reported later that Isie waited alone for him outside, as she said she feared she might break down which was unthinkable for her, as the new head of the Smuts family. Mincher (1965) noted that Isie remained dignified and controlled as she continued to be a welcoming hostess. She observed that Isie dealt with her grief by staying with her family, sitting in her usual place and recalling the old days when she and Jan were young. Thus, as before, Isie saw it fitting to console others also affected by grief. Mincher later observed that they, as children, gained more strength from Isie during this time than they conveyed to her. Once more, Isie was quiet in her grief and dealt with it calmly. Isie had to adjust to life without Jan. She filled her time with her children, grandchildren, completing the scrap books, as well as answering the many letters of condolence.

Mincher (1965) was the first author to note the importance Isie placed on boy children. “Boy children were of the greatest importance to Ouma, all her life” (p.20). Mincher also mentioned that Isie emphasized that “it was of the greatest importance that one’s first-born should be a male child” (p. 41). Possible reasons for this could be the three wars she was directly and indirectly involved in during the course of her lifetime, as well as males being able to actively participate in these and possibly not returning. Additionally, two of the infants they lost during the first few years of marriage were both boys. This was another factor impacting on the effect Japie’s death had on Isie.

Isie passed away on 25 February 1954, almost four years after Jan (Kock, 2001). Thousands of mourners lined the streets in heavy rain to pay their last respects, as one thousand war veterans formed a guard of honour as she was laid to rest with full military honours (Kock). Her funeral service was held in the Groote Kerk in Pretoria with the cortege driving through the streets of Pretoria and then to Johannesburg. Floral tributes, which were sent by friends and admirers from all over the world, included those from state dignitaries such as the Churchills. These were laid outside the chapel to outline the word Ouma. Later her ashes were strewn on the monolith at Koppie Smuts, together with Jan's and their three deceased infants.

Three symbolic events made Isie more aware of her own ageing and mortality during this era. It included the stroke she suffered, as well as her son and husband's deaths. Her stroke emphasized the end of the previous era and formed part of the transitional process. During this era Isie developed as her life was evaluated by the worldwide radio broadcast which resulted in her being better known than ever before. As she gained integrity from the broadcast, she was able to continue with the rest of her life without despair or resentment, which is in line with Levinson et al.'s (1978) findings.

Whether Isie viewed the other women in Jan's life as enemies, is not certain. Yet she made peace with the idea of sharing him, as this allowed her to fight for her beliefs with fewer illusions. The suggestion of development during the late late adulthood made by Levinson et al. (1978) is evident in Isie's life. At this stage of her life, and especially after her son's and husband's death, she had to know that her own death was coming. Isie was coming to terms with herself at this stage, knowing and loving herself reasonably well, and ready to give it up, as suggested by the authors. According to Mincher (1999), Isie did not fear death, but knew that she was nearing the end of her journey. As she believed in an afterlife she trusted that, following her own death, she would see Jan and Japie once more. At this stage, Isie had reached the greatest involvement with herself, concurring with Levinson et al.'s (1978) result.

### 5.3 Chapter Summary

In this Chapter Levinson's (1996) theory of development was used to thicken the psychological understanding and discussion of the important experiences and significant events in Isie's life. It has become clear through the discussion in the preceding sections of this Chapter that the developmental stages in Isie's life were naturally closely linked to her husband and his world, and their life together. At times it may even seem to the reader that Isie was content to live in the shadow of her illustrious husband, and yet she was still able to become a person and personality in her own right.

Interestingly, Isie's life both refutes and confirms the claims made by Levinson. Isie's life in the period of early adult transition supports Levinson's (1996) description of a person becoming more self-generated, responsible and dependant. However, in looking at and considering Isie's life more closely, the applicability of Levinson's theory can also be questioned and contested. For example, despite the struggle and the many challenges Isie found herself encountering, she did not experience the all time low advocated and anticipated by Levinson. On the other hand, however, the era of early adulthood largely corresponds with Levinson's (1996) suggestions. Although Isie did not experience the abundance of life the author proposed, Isie was able to build the entry life structure for early adulthood successfully, as Levinson implied.

In addition, during the age 30 transition, Isie did not explore new possibilities. This was largely due to the war. However, she confirmed her choices, and thus allowed the culminating life structure for early adulthood in her life to correspond with what Levinson (1996) suggested.

The mid-life transition period held adaptive crises for Isie. Culminating events further impacted on her life, making her resentful and disappointed. This is also in line with Levinson's theory (1996). The era of middle adulthood saw Isie matching the findings of Levinson, except for the issue of emptiness, which was circumvented to a degree by Kathleen's adoption. The entry life structure which followed saw Isie increasing her workability, to be in agreement with what Levinson proposed. She did not experience a developmental crisis in the age 50 transition, although Jan's failure in the political field would have explained this. This therefore refutes

claims made by Levinson. In the following culminating life structure, the after-effects of the election as well as Kathleen's adoption were sincerely felt by Isie. Her life both refuted and confirmed Levinson's findings as she both realized her goals and experienced a less secure place in society. In the following transition, Isie came into her own and her life was in agreement with what Levinson suggested for this period.

The impact the socio-political and cultural framework had on Isie was enormous. Moreover, the impact of gender during her time should not be underestimated. In other words, although she had to be available for Jan at all times, keeping him needing and wanting her, she was aware of the attention he got elsewhere. Furthermore, the constraints of Isie's Calvinistic upbringing seemed to suppress her development and the achievement of the goals Levinson (1996) identified as being important in human development. Thus, although she tried to fill the emotional gaps in her life with other endeavours, one is left with a question and a sad thought that Isie might have experienced an unfulfilled internal personal world. Isie was a wife, a mother, a first lady, and a matriarch to the nation, yet still she yearned for a deepened emotional relationship with Jan, something she struggled to have. Although she upheld the roles well, she was called upon to make a number of sacrifices along the way. This left her without a culmination of what she could have accomplished. Furthermore, it seems to have left her largely untapped as she was intelligent and had a lot to offer if she had been allowed to.

Isie was remarkable. She was a simple humble woman. Not only did she overcome the bitterness and resentment she experienced after the Anglo-Boer War, but she helped others to do the same. In addition, she believed in treating all people the same, irrespective of race, colour, class or gender, and as a result contributed towards establishing racial harmony.

This chapter included the findings as it appeared following the exploration of the life of Isie Smuts. Furthermore, the findings were discussed in terms of the human development theory of Levinson. In the following and final chapter, conclusions will be discussed. Additionally, the value and limitations of the study will be presented, as well as recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Chapter preview**

As the purpose of this research is revisited in this study, a summary of the human development in the life of Isie Smuts is once more provided in this chapter. Additionally, the limitations and the value of the study are discussed, as well as some recommendations made for future research.

#### **6.2 Revisiting the purpose of the study**

The primary purpose or aim of this study was to explore and describe the human development of the life of Isie Smuts, in terms of Levinson's (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle. As a result of the theoretical conceptualisation and interpretation, this study was not only explorative and descriptive in nature, but also descriptive-dialogic. This means that the findings regarding Isie's human development were discussed within the context of Levinson's theory. This allowed for a dialogue to be established between the findings of the study on the one hand and a theoretical conceptualisation on the other hand (Stroud, 2004).

A brief summary of the findings related to a biographical account of the life history of Isie Smuts within the conceptual framework are provided, according to the Levinson model. This brief summary now follows.

#### **6.3 Human development in the life of Isie Smuts**

Based on a literature review of the life of Isie Smuts, a chronology of the significant periods across her lifespan was compiled. This depicted the interrelationship between important occasions and systemic influences during her lifetime. These significant periods were Klein Libertas; young love and studies; teaching and marriage; love, loss and loneliness; motherhood; home affairs; the effects of World War I; loss and gain; the after-effects; life; and the spoils of war.



Systemic influences ranged from her family of origin, her education, her relationship with Jan, major socio-historical and cultural events, as well as other people and institutions in her life. The most important global events to impact on Isie's everyday living, as well as the quality of her life were the Anglo-Boer War, World War I and World War II. This sequence is in line with Levinson's (1996) suggestion of systemic influences being the essence from which the life structure is formed.

During the two middle eras, Isie was often alone due to Jan's other commitments. This resulted in her having to carry most of the burdens of the household, the farming activities and her family on her own. Although Levinson implied that a person's character is significantly different in the middle forties when compared to the late thirties, this seemed not to be the case for Isie. According to Mincher (1965), she was adopted as "they were wanting a child to fill the gap between their children" (p. 15). In effect, this adoption diminished Isie's growing emptiness. Isie's eras of early and middle adulthood had their struggles and pain, considering the wars and the deaths of her children. However, these were also times of fulfilment for her with her expanding family.

Although Jan and Isie's relationship continued to be the primary component of Isie's life structure, this evolved over time. It allowed Isie to live out aspects of herself, as well as to participate in the world, in her case for better and not worse. This is in agreement with a suggestion of Levinson (1996).

Even though occupation is viewed by Levinson (1996) as a major component, Isie had little formal occupational opportunities after her marriage, apart from being a full-time wife, mother and housekeeper. From the literature review it seems as if taking care of her family compensated for this lack in her life. Isie's two activities of leisure and recreation, namely her correspondence and scrapbook activities, continued to be components of her life structure after her marriage.

Although Levinson (1996) suggested that the first life structure for middle adulthood is very different from that of the late 30s, this seemed not to be the case for Isie, as her marriage and family continued to be the central components during both these periods. Furthermore, there was

no literary evidence to suggest important differences in these relationships, as Levinson had implied.

Isie's lifespan continued far into the last era, in fact well into late adulthood. If we consider Jan's attachments to other women, as well as the famous radio broadcast, Isie may well have discovered that this era gave her much more, as well as much less than she had imagined it would.

Finally, the findings of this study indicated that Isie's life both confirms and refutes Levinson's (1996) pattern of human development, as her life evolved through his suggested sequence of age-linked eras that were distinguished by certain developmental tasks. Evidence to support the significance of the developmental tasks addressed in the different eras was presented in Chapter Five (see section 5.3).

A few of the factors that have proven Levinson's (1996) findings to be not applicable to Isie's life, include her relatively late marriage of love, the adoption of Kathleen, and systemic influences such as the three events of war: one local, and the other two global.

## **6.4 The value of the study and recommendations for future research**

The value of the study will be discussed by referring to the conceptual model of human development, the psychobiographical case study research approach, as well as the subject under study, Isie Smuts herself. Additionally, recommendations for future research in this field will also be made.

### **6.4.1 The theoretical model of human development**

Levinson's (1996) theory of human life cycle proved to be valuable for this psychobiography, as it was useful in extracting and analysing the positive dimensions in the human development of Isie Smuts. It thus achieved its purpose of conducting a psychobiography from a eugraphic approach, as opposed to a pathogenic approach (Stroud, 2004). The model is theoretically

appropriate for, and can be realistically applied to, the research and understanding of human development. Furthermore, this model offers a helpful multidimensional framework to explore and describe human development as it relates to the life of Isie Smuts. Lastly, in addition it provided a useful systemic framework to explore and describe the effect and impact of the various systemic forces (e.g., life forces such as family, religion, community and culture) on the human development of Isie Smuts.

Levinson's (1996) model provided a useful framework to explore and describe the development of Isie Smuts throughout her lifespan. Levinson in particular stated that the study of adult development is in its formative years and a great effort is being made to establish it. Additionally, his model also had methodological value, in that it enhanced the construct validity and reliability of the study (Fouché, 1999). It allowed the researcher to create a conceptual framework, thereby further enhancing the reliability of the study.

In a number of ways Levinson's view of an age-linked, basic sequence of eras and developmental periods in adulthood ignores the socially accepted wisdom of our culture, and of the human sciences (Stroud, 2004). This seemingly contradicts the common finding that there is no comparable sequence of periods in the adult development of personality, cognition, occupational careers, or families (Stroud, 2004). Levinson's (1990; 1996) research indicates an age-linked sequence for life structure development.

Levinson (1996) stated that an advantage of his theory was that it provided a framework within which the evolution of more specific aspects of living could be understood. His prediction was that a more comprehensive theory would eventually be created. To summarise, Levinson's theory clearly provides a valuable framework of human development within which it is possible to study the lives of people of all cultures, classes, and genders (Sheehy, 1997).

#### **6.4.2 The psychobiographical case study method**

There is value in following a psychobiographical research approach. The reasons are highlighted below.

First of all, the study emphasizes a novel and different dimension to the life of Isie Smuts that has not previously been portrayed. Secondly, the longitudinal and life history approach confirms that the biography as a means of studying human development over the entire lifespan is valuable. A third advantage is that it illustrates the value that biography has for psychology, and in turn, the value of psychology for biography (Fouché, 1999).

Fourthly, this study reflects the value and significance of studying human lives within their socio-historical and cultural contexts (Stroud, 2004). This psychobiography has illustrated the value of uncovering Isie's human development against the background of larger societal contexts which impacted on and influenced her life. A fifth general value was made up of the various biographical sources which were available to the researcher. It enabled the researcher to cross-corroborate the most important findings, as it also enhanced the relevant internal validity. The last advantage is that this psychobiography contributed to the limited number of biographies that have been done within institutionalised academic psychology in South Africa on South Africans. It enriches the understanding of a number of developmental areas (Fouché, 1999).

### **6.4.3 The psychobiographical subject**

The inclusion of Isie Smuts had various advantages for this study, such as her exemplary personality, as she was an example of someone who is multi-faceted and well-integrated. Furthermore, she displayed exceptional resilience to various stressors, including three major wars. This made her an ideal and fitting person to use as a model against which it was possible to compare various features of human development.

The second advantage is the importance of studying great figures, as advocated by life history researchers. Such studies attempt to unravel not only why they became great, but also what lessons they can teach humanity (Simonton, 1990). In this respect Isie Smuts is a proper and appropriate choice. Thirdly, researching the wife of a prominent South African leader made the researcher aware of reframing and reconstructing the lives of significant South African women within psychological paradigms. South Africa has produced a wide variety of powerful and productive personalities. It is essential that their lives be unravelled in order for them to be

understood and presented in an alternative light. The psychobiographical study method could provide that light.

## **6.5 The limitations of the study**

This section will be used to sketch and discuss the limitations of this research study.

Recommendations for future research in this field are made. This will be done with reference to Levinson's theory of human development, the psychobiographical case study research method, as well as the life of Isie Smuts, being the psychobiographical subject under study.

### **6.5.1 The theoretical model of human development**

According to Levinson (1996), the fluctuating sequence of periods and transitional periods holds for both sexes, as it provides a general framework of human development within which it is possible to study the lives of people of all cultures, genders and classes. Even so, these periods function in a slightly different way in males and females, as the genders vary greatly in life circumstances, in the ways in which they go through each developmental period, and in their life course. It is the researcher's opinion that it is essential to consider the developmental perception of the life structure, and that it be considered within a gender context.

McAdams (2006) viewed the idea that the adult life course be viewed in terms of seasons or periods as controversial. Rossi (1980) claimed that the idea of a methodical life course in adulthood with the complete development of seasons or stages does not hold well for working-class adults, and neither does it for the lives of women. Furthermore, Rossi argued that the stages noted by Levinson et al. (1978) should be applicable to the lives of white, upper-middle class, professional men in America who went through their midlife eras in the 1960s and 1970s. Yet the stages might not generalise well to other samples.

The eras, developmental periods and stages of Levinson's (1996) theory made for difficult reading and complex understanding. This caused the analysis and application to be challenging.

### **6.5.2 The psychobiographical case study research**

As discussed in Chapter Two, psychobiographical methodology is most likely the activity in psychological research to receive the most criticism. As a result, the psychobiographical methodology is the aspect of this study that will be the most prone to criticism. The difficulties and constraints encountered with the methodology of psychobiography, such as researcher bias, reductionism, cross-cultural differences, validity and reliability issues, elitism and inflated expectations have already been discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.5).

Additionally, the methodological considerations which were applied to this study were discussed in the same section. Recommendations for future researchers planning the use of the psychobiographical case study approach have also been discussed in the section indicated. However, the study had certain limitations and these will be discussed next.

Firstly, this study has a relatively low external validity. This means that the findings regarding Isie Smuts's human development should, if possible, not be generalised to a larger population group (i.e., a statistical generalisation). The aim of this study was analytical generalisability and not statistical generalisability. This in effect means that the findings are compared with the content of the theory of human development by Levinson (1996). Additionally, the findings of this study could also be generalised to the theory to recognize insufficient theoretical conceptualisation, and to make suggestions to expand on this (Stroud, 2004).

Secondly, the level of internal validity is not high, regarding causal explanation. This is because the primary aim of this study was not to explain cause and effect issues regarding the human development of Isie Smuts. Rather, the primary purpose was to explore and describe Isie's human development. Yet, in striving towards achieving internal validity within this study, the approach of structural corroboration was used with the intention of improving the credibility of the study, as well as any inferences made by the researcher (Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004).

This was achieved by implementing a number of preventive measures. It included spending adequate time with the psychobiographical data, doing comprehensive psychobiographical

research to test for misrepresentations in the material, using several sources of psychobiographical data on Isie Smuts, and using a form of investigator triangulation. The latter was achieved through the researcher's promoters as well as the expert consultant on the Smuts couple at the Smuts museum who provided professional comments and feedback on the data collection and analysis procedures.

Thirdly, several of the researcher's reports of the findings are tentative and within the context and conceptual framework of Levinson (1996). There are various other possible descriptions and explanations which could provide further insight into human development. The descriptions and explanations provided as a result of this research should not cause any inflated claims. Instead, they should enhance other, alternative types of descriptions and explanations regarding the human development of Isie.

A fourth limitation of a psychobiographical study is that it is lengthy, comprehensive and time-consuming (Stroud, 2004). The psychobiography has a qualitative character and a storied or narrative dimension. Therefore the analysis, presentation and discussion of the findings require a great deal of time, complicated documentation and, at times, replication. This is further complicated by the longitudinal nature of life history research, as an infinite amount of data need to be collected, analysed and presented in biographical format (Fouché, 1999).

A final limitation is that the psychobiography was not as engaging and seductive as the researcher had hoped (Fouché, 1999, p. 444). Yin (1994) suggested that a good psychobiography should be seductive to the eye. However, the academic and theoretical framework of this study (i.e., it being in the format of an unpublished document) condensed its character. If a publisher wishes to publish a biography commercially, it should capture and continue to capture the interest of the reader. This would also prevent the reader from becoming bored and the study from becoming tedious.

### 6.5.3 The psychobiographical subject: Isie Smuts

The possible criticism that could be directed in response to the choice of Isie Smuts as the subject of this study has already been discussed in Chapter Two (see section 2.5.6). McLeod (1994), however, noted that the selection and inclusion of a subject for a study such as a psychobiography should be founded on the theoretical significance or interest of the subject. That is quite apart from a personal interest in the subject. It means that it is a question of whether the findings related to the subject's life will be relevant in confirming and/or refuting particular aspects of the theory, as applied in this study (Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004). In Isie's case, the findings related to her life were theoretically significant.

Furthermore, the quality and objectivity of a limited number of the biographical sources used in this study were questionable. As Jan spent most of his married life in the political and military arena, some sources could be viewed as party-political propaganda. This resulted in Jan and Isie being portrayed in an exceedingly favourable light.

The relevance of the findings of this study for the greater enhancement of developmental theory could be criticised for its potential gender, cultural and historical bias. It has been stated that psychobiographers interested in human development should consider doing biographical research on exemplary individuals from various cultures, from both genders, and who lived in different historical periods. In this regard Isie Smuts served as an exemplary and remarkable figure for this psychobiography. Whilst conducting this research the researcher, being mindful of the potential to idealise Isie, ensured the development of an awareness of human and personal flaws in her character. Some of these are described below.

- Isie did not regard birthdays or Christmas as being important in her own or her family's lives, resulting in such days being hardly remembered and not celebrated in the family context (Mincher, 1965; Smuts, 1952). She did, however, send Christmas gifts to the troops during later years.
- She put a high premium on boys (Mincher, 1965; Jaff, 1975).
- She was bitter and resentful about the British (Millin, 1936).



- Isie was practical and economical to the point of meanness and self-denial (Macdonald, 1946; Beukes, 1992).
- She would enquire about the price of gifts to her before accepting them, irrespective of who the giver was (Millin, 1936; Mincher, 1965).
- She did not regard punctuality as being important (Smuts, 1952).

As these flaws were relevant to the research findings, they were considered during the data-analysis, and also in the presentation and discussion of the findings.

Possibly another limitation of this study was the fact that, as a result of the aim and the focus of the study, matters such as feminism and discourse have not been adequately explored. As this could add more richness to the theoretical constructs it is suggested that a separate study be conducted in order to pay closer attention to these aspects of Isie's life.

Reflecting on the researcher's personal passage when working on this research project, it is important to note that Isie, as a relative of the researcher, was (and still is) very much admired by some of her surviving family members. For example, the researcher's mother-in-law often mentions her admiration of Isie. Thus, it was challenging to balance the required ethical considerations with complete objectivity as it impacted on the researcher's relations with Isie's extended family. Yet, scientific obligations had to prevail. This might result in not all family members agreeing with some of the findings of this psychobiography.

## **6.6 Recommendations for future research**

A study on Isie Smuts, focusing primarily on the psychology of women, is recommended. Additionally, as the influence of cultural context cannot be disregarded, a study considering this context is also recommended. It is within this context that Isie left her mark.

The field of personology would benefit by a comprehensive study on the different aspects of Isie's personality. An example would be to highlight her personality using a particular theory of choice such as personality traits or learned optimism.

As noted before, Isie displayed remarkable resilience. Despite numerous medical and health-related problems, she lived to an old age. This could be further explored by a study emphasizing the psychology of human wellness and health.

A psychobiography could be valuable for research as it allows for the exploration of several developmental areas. These include human potential development and leadership development, as well as career development (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005a).

## **6.7 Chapter summary**

In this chapter a summary of the human development throughout the lifespan of Isie Smuts was presented. The limitations and value of the study were considered. Additionally, recommendations were made for future research.

Isie Smuts spent most of her life thinking of others rather than herself. To fully evaluate her in all the aspects of her long and eventful life would call for much more work. In conclusion, the researcher wishes to quote the following descriptions of Isie Smuts:

- “In some ways, her life has been a gift to South Africa, and as she has given the people of South Africa the building blocks on which to build racial peace, her work is lasting. She did much to change the story of South Africa” (Macdonald, 1946, p.12).
- “Isie’s greatest quality had to be her motherliness. All over the world, and especially in the countryside, her type is to be found. Although it is easy to typify her as the gentle, considerate type, her love of books, even Greek poets, made her unique” (Macdonald, 1946, p. 110).
- “. . . His picture of Isie . . . reproduces all her vivacity and suppressed fire. . .” (in Van der Poel, 1973, vol. VI, p. 417).

- “[Isie] . . . less idealistic than I, but more human, recalled me from my intellectual isolation and made me return to my fellows” (Smuts, 1952, p. 18).

It is difficult to capture the essence of Isie, yet the words of her husband whom she supported emotionally and socially for 53 years give us an indication. This psychobiography is thus concluded with excerpts from Jan’s many letters to Isie, where he told Isie she was “a shrine radiant with Divine Light” (Hancock, 1962, p. 18), and

*“Hand in hand and soul on soul we shall go through life. . . Without you I would not care to live, with you life’s noblest treasure is still left to me. I am prepared for all losses except the loss of you. To you I owe whatever is noblest and best in my life and in my work.”* (in Hancock & Van der Poel, 1966, vol.I, p. 533).

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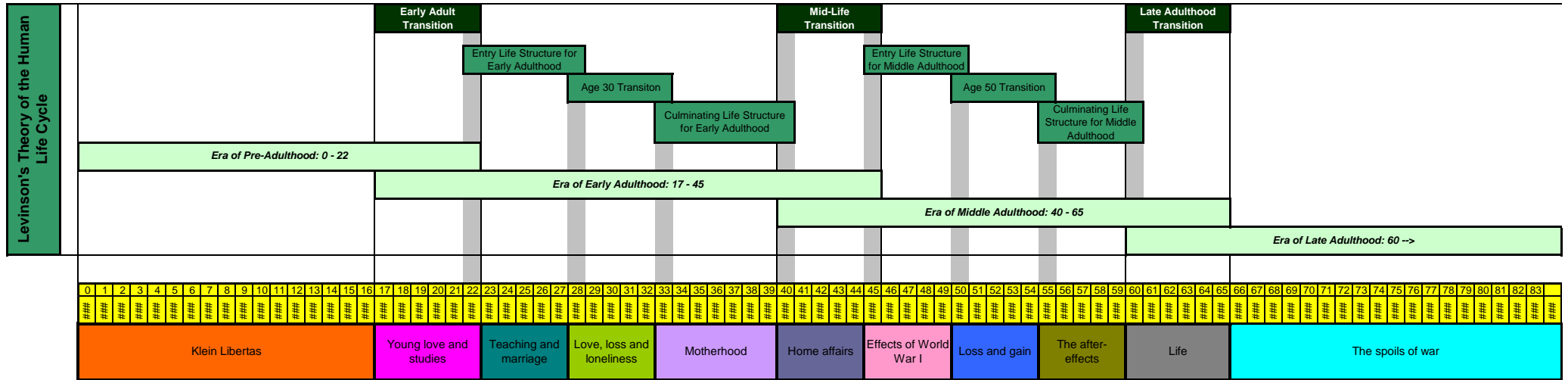


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## Appendix: A Timeline Depicting Developmental Stages in the Life of Isie Smuts



(Source: Stroud, 2004)