

A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY OF VUYISWA MACKONIE

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that *A Psychobiography of Vuyiswa Mackonie (A mother, priest wife, nurse and volunteer)* is my own work that has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University, and that all the sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by full references.

Full Name.....

Date.....

Signed.....

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Full Name..... Date.....

Signed.....

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Abstract

This is a psychobiographical study of VuyiswaMackonie's life, with the use of psychological theory to better understand and uncover her life. The choice was based on the extraordinary qualities that VuyiswaMackonie possesses. A purposive sampling was used in selecting the subject of the study. VuyiswaMackonie meets the requirements of a psychobiography study because of her extraordinary life and accomplishments. VuyiswaMackonie's life story was explored using qualitative, single case, interpretive research approach. The study was guided by Levinson's life structure theory (1996). The data for this study was collected from different sources; the researcher interviewed the subject and the community members to collect the data. According to Levinson (1996) an individual goes through a unique life structure which is characterized by sequential periods, eras, developmental periods and tasks that influence their lives at various stages.

The study suggests that while the first two eras of Vuyiswa Mackonie (pre-adulthood era and early adulthood) are similar to that proposed by Levinson (1996), some aspects of the midlife and late adulthood transition are far different to those proposed by Levinson.

Key words: Psychobiography Research, Mrs VM's life; Levinson's (1996) theory of life structure developmental stages.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Problem Statement

1.1 Introduction

The subject of this treatise grew up in a South African rural area, surrounded by poverty; however, she managed to become educated as a teacher. Her disillusionment with the teaching profession prompted her to a change in career towards nursing where her passion for caring for people would be realized. However, the backdrop of apartheid motivated her in expanding services that were not easily given particularly to those from low-socio communities and excel in quality care. Eliastam (2011) submits that psychobiographies offer a very informative experience for readers to gain a deeper understanding about the individual's exceptional work and the psychosocial dynamics that come with it. This study investigates and gives detail into the life structure development of the extraordinary Mrs Vuyiswa Mckonie. However, the reason given to choose to study the life of Mrs Mackonie, she has constantly proven to be a leader in her community in various stages of her life and that of the country. In addition, she was also chosen because of her remarkable contribution to her community, extraordinary qualities she possesses and the role she played during the apartheid era. In Port Elizabeth township communities in the Eastern Cape this woman is seen as an icon, a super woman and she is regarded as a prominent figure of moral leadership in her church. She was able to cope with the demands of motherhood, the profession of nursing, consumers of health services (patients), being a priest's wife and an apartheid activist. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the psychobiographical approach, a brief introduction to Vuyiswa Mckonie, a concise overview of Levinson's (1996) life structure theory and the structure of this research study. Simango (2006) is of the view that South

Africa is filled with many champions that have played an important role in the fight against apartheid. These champions are ordinary South Africans who have dedicated their lives to better serve their people during the apartheid era in order to create a better country for all. Therefore the underlying fascination of this study is the role played by women and the extraordinary qualities they possessed.

1.2 The psychobiographical approach

According to Runyan (1982) a psychobiography is defined as “the explicit use of systematic or a formal psychology in biography” (p. 202). This means that psychobiographers extract information from various sources and theories in psychology to better explain personality and psychosocial influences in an individual’s life. However, Runyan (1982) further explains that psychobiographers attempt to “discern, discover, formulate and understand the subject’s experiences through the application of a theory” (p. 202). Espinosa (2008) suggests that these experiences can inform and teach us about what it must have been like to live in different social and historical circumstances. Thus, individuals who are considered to have led exceptional and exemplary lives are chosen as psychobiographical subjects (Runyan, 1988a). McAdams (1994) states that a psychobiography utilizes psychological theory to provide an in-depth interpretation of the life of an individual, with the intention of gaining more insight by using theories to explain various developmental aspects of an individual. However, McAdams (2006) further states that a “psychobiography is understood to be the methodical use of a psychological theory to transform a life into a clarifying and logical story” (p. 5). According to van Niekerk (1999) there has been an increasing growth of psychobiographical studies in Southern Africa due to the spread of studies and collaboration of researchers within academic institutions. Many researchers stress the

value of psychobiographical research. Furthermore, throughout 2005 to date, a number of life history studies have been undertaken (Fouché & van Niekerk, 2009).

A few psychobiographical studies in South Africa have been developed in the departments of psychology at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Rhodes University, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of the Free State. These psychobiographical studies entailed historically significant and extraordinary individuals over their entire life span, with the aim of discovering and re-enacting their lives psychologically (van Niekerk, 2007). The increase of psychobiographical studies produced in South African universities (for example, Jan Christian Smuts by Fouché, 1999; Bantu Stephen Biko by Kotton, 2002; Nomzamo Winnie Mandela by Simango, 2006 and Mother Teresa by Stroud, 2004) confirms the development of this form of psychological research.

1.2.1. Trends in the development of psychobiography. According to Runyan (1988a) the first psychobiography began with Freud's study of "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" written in 1910. At that time, it was regarded as applied psychoanalysis and although psychoanalytic biographies were being produced, they were severely criticized. According to Elms (1994) psychobiographies have moved away from utilizing a psychoanalytic perspective. However, Elms (1994) furthermore states that psychobiographies are more theoretical diverse and not restricted to psychoanalytic theories. Lindegger (2006) suggests that case studies are generally descriptive in nature and provide a quality of well-established information about the phenomena under investigation. Yin, (2003) submits that "they have the advantage of allowing new ideas and hypotheses to emerge from depth observation" (p. 65). However, it is perhaps better to say that psychobiographical research is used to examine or critically reflect on existing theory and is used to generate new hypotheses and theories.

Psychobiographies study the frameworks and methods of an individual's psychological development. This includes the growth that occurs throughout the individual's development, and places the individual in context. McLeod (1994) suggests that biographical research differs from the case study method, although they are both a form of case research, and share fundamental characteristics.

Alexander (1988) submits that a "psychobiography is the combination of both psychology and biography" (p. 270). He further submits that, psychobiography usually focuses on lives which have already been lived and it also tends to give explanations for aspects of life history. However, these are not easily derived through the use of ordinary or straightforward psychobiographical principles. Psychology and biography have attempted to reveal the life course of individuals. Therefore, the most effective method for observing an individual's life developing, is over a period of time (McAdams, 1994), as in a psychobiography.

Furthermore, Elms (1994) states that biography tends to put more weight on what is unique, salient and apparent in the life of an individual. Cole and Knowles (2001) indicate that biography is a structured description of a written life by another, generally according to literary conventions. It employs the history by using stuff such as diaries, letters, autobiographies, existing biographies, photographs, journals and sketches.

McAdams (1988) describes psychobiography as the "systematic use of psychology theory to transform a life into a coherent and illuminating story" (p.2). However, he further explains that psychobiography studies an entire life, from birth to death, with the purpose "to discern, discover or formulate the central story of the entire life, a story structured according to psychological theory" (McAdams, 1994, p.12). Van Niekerk (1999) indicated that "an overview of various

descriptions of psychobiography suggests that at least five general characteristics are common to psycho-biographical research” (p. 4), namely:

- Psycho-biographers make use of qualitative information.
- Psycho-biographers have a preference of a broad approach to study an individual’s life span, rather than compartmentalized episodes.
- The individuals of a psychobiographical study are always identified by name. This is different from those in quantitative research, where the individuals usually have anonymity.
- Psychobiographical researchers make use of biographical data in most instances that has been collected by other researchers, such as biographers and historians.
- Psychobiographers do not collect data with the intention to resolve previous research problems but rather, because that the information is essentially interesting, important and has significant historical and psychological implication.

Runyan (1988b) is of the view that there are three concepts in defining psychobiography that should be notable. The first being that the discipline is defined by utilizing a psychological theory, which might be psychoanalytic, however, psychobiographers are theoretically diverse. The second, the use of psychobiographers must be evident in order to differentiate it from all those biographies that make implicit use of rational psychology. In relation to this aspect, Elms (1994) suggests that “psychobiography is not only a way of doing biography, it’s a way of doing psychology” (1994, p.5). The last concept being that the description refers not only to the use of personality theory, but also draws on a variety of resources in the discipline of psychology. These include psychological concepts, information, methods, as well as the theoretical understanding from abnormal, social, developmental, and personality psychology. In conclusion,

psychobiography is multi-disciplinary; it consists of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, political science, academic psychology, literature and the arts, psychohistory, anthropology and religion (Fouchè, 1999; McAdams, 1990).

1.3. The principle of psychobiographical case study research

The principles and advantages of psychobiographical case studies and life history research can be encapsulated into the following five areas:

1.3.1. *The individual case within the whole.* Psychobiography tends to focus on the development of the individual life form and, as such, emphasizes the individualism of the entire person (Runyan, 1982). This research method thus gives a holistic, exclusive description of the individual and concerns itself with understanding a person's life (Carlson, 1988; Elms, 1994; Stroud, 2004). Other researchers in the fields of psychobiography and life history (Runyan, 1982) have also confirmed the holistic and unique description provided by a psychobiographical study.

1.3.2. *The socio-historical context.* In trying to understand a person holistically, the investigation must focus on observing the person's background. However, this also identifies the individual's socio-historical, cultural experiences, ways 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 her everyday social and historical world (Roberts, 2002). The thorough deliberation of a large diversity of socio-historical contexts is allowable through this well-judged choice of life history data (Carlson, 1988). However, according to Roberts, (2002) and Runyan (1982) the exclusive description and understanding of the individual provides the researcher with a contextualized background to illustrate the individual's socio-historical culture, the ways of socialization and the family history.

1.3.3. Process and pattern over time. Psychobiographical studies tending to concentrate on the lives of extraordinary and exemplary individuals, it allows researchers to find and track patterns of human development (Stroud, 2004). Nevertheless, according to Elms (1994) psychobiographies may also be done on living persons who have freely consented to being studied and interviewed, in order to compile research for publication. This well-established research informs the researcher of life history and complete representation of human development within the particular milieu (Alexander, 1990). Furthermore, Carlson (1988) states that “it becomes possible to form a more comprehensive understanding of the personality in action” (p. 107). This, in turn, allows the researcher to document different aspects and ways of an individual’s functioning at any point in time and in any specific situation.

1.3.4. Subjective reality. Life history research provides an informative description and sympathetic awareness of the thoughts, emotions and inner experiences of the selected individual (Carlson, 1988). This allows the researcher to understand the selected individual. However, these can be changed into vibrant, clear and psychologically compelling life stories (Runyan, 1982b). However, Yin (2003) proposed that the reader should be tempted and enticed to continue reading right up to the point of exhaustion.

1.3.5. Theory testing and development. Carlson (1988) is of the opinion that different theories on development can be superlatively tested and developed with the use of life history. Additionally, according to Yin (2003) the theory acts as an outline against the research findings that are compared. Furthermore, Yin indicated that the theory plays “a significant role in data collection and analysis process through conceptualizing the data within theoretical constructs” (p. 65). However, the primary objective is to compare the case data to the theory, thereby testing it, extending it and ultimately developing it (Yin, 2003).

1.4 The criticisms of psychobiographical research

However, despite its recent popularity, like any other discipline, psychobiographical research is not immune to criticism. Runyan (1982) argued that psychobiographical research is too subjective hence it belongs to the pre-scientific phase. Furthermore, researchers such as Lafailille and Widerboer (1995) also argued that the voluminous nature of information involved in psychobiographical research is likely to prevent rigorous scientific research. The methodological strength of psychobiographical research (in terms of reliability and validity) was also put into question with some researchers (Becker, 1970) arguing that the approach places more emphasis on validity rather than reliability. Furthermore, the fact that psychobiographical research focuses on single cases raised questions in terms of its authenticity and representativeness. In this regard, researchers argued that individual accounts may not be enough to gain an adequate portrait of the society or to use the findings to understand a larger group of individuals.

In response to the criticisms, Stroud (2004) argued that criticisms leveled against psychobiographical research are based on an overly limited view of science which ignores the usefulness and the methodological strengths of the approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) further points out that the merit of psychobiographical research is that it aids researchers in understanding major social changes by exploring and interpreting individuals' life stories within contemporary and structural environments. In response to the criticism that psychobiographical research is methodologically weak, Robertson (2002), warned researchers not to place much emphasis on research approaches, but rather the theoretical reasoning behind them. Despite all the above criticisms, psychobiographical research remains and, has recently become the most

prevalent and effective method used to understand, observe and represent people's lives in social research (Vorster, 2003).

1.5 A brief introduction to Vuyiswa Mckonie

Vuyiswa Mckonie was born on the 8th of February 1937 in a small, isolated and remote village called Mxhelo near the small town of Alice in the Eastern Cape. She is the first born in her family which consists of four girls and two boys. Mckonie's parents were both qualified teachers and staunch Presbyterian members. Vuyiswa Mckonie's mother decided to become a housewife and take care of the family. The decision to stay home was to some extent largely due to the patriarchal nature of African society in the past that viewed women as caretakers of the family therefore they were supposed to do duties such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children while men worked and provided food for the family. Mckonie's father was the only one working and providing the family with basic needs. He used to work far away from home and would only come home during weekends.

She comes from a very strict but at the same time supportive families, with her significant contribution in the Eastern Cape, particularly in the Port Elizabeth community, people perceive her as an icon and a super woman in her community. Vuyiswa Mckonie's ability to cope with the demands of motherhood, the profession of nursing, consumers of health (patients), and being a priest's wife is a testimony of her passion to make a difference in the community. Such motivated individuals are very few in a township like New Brighton. Vuyiswa Mckonie remains motivated and committed to community outreach programmes regardless of her old age.

1.6 The research problem

The primary aim of this study is to explore and describe the human development of Vuyiswa Mckonie across her lifespan in terms of Levinson's (1986) theory of Adult Development. The nature of this study could be explained as both *exploratory-descriptive* and *descriptive-dialogic* (Edwards, 1990). According to Edwards (1990) elaborate and fruitful descriptions of human development over a lifespan constitute the *exploratory-descriptive* approach, whereas the *descriptive-dialogic* approach refers to the description of essential phenomena. This approach will allow for the possibility of shedding light on how Vuyiswa Mckonie's identity was constructed in the context of *course* and *life* (Levinson, 1986).

Additionally, the study aims to utilize this study approach in order to contribute to the small body of research in this area of psychology yet the study is not intended to generalize the findings of the research to a larger population.

1.7 An overview of Levinson's life structures theory

According to Levinson's (1996) life structure theory, individuals go through successive stages of development that begin from birth to adulthood. It provides an integrated approach to the broader understanding of an adult's development (Levinson, 1996; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978) as it is viewed as a synthesis of other theories such as those of Jung, Piaget, Freud and Erikson. It examines the overall pattern and unique structure of an individual's life, including the individual's socio-cultural context, significant relationships and roles, and features of self (McAdam, 1994).

Levinson (1996) suggested that the periods are not isolated but rather sequential, thus, he emphasized evolution and uniqueness of each stage that he proposed and how each stage leads to the development of the next stage. Central to his theory is the life structure which is influenced

by the physical and social environments to which individuals are exposed. The theory explores how an individual's relationships with others (family, friends, work, community and religious affiliation) have an impact on life structure. The theory also recognizes how the relationships between individuals and the external environment (race, socioeconomic status, political circumstances and community) have an impact on life structure.

1.8 Structure of the mini-dissertation

Chapter 2 presents Levinson (1996)'s overview of the life structure theory and his views on adulthood development. The bio-psycho-social character of each developmental era illustrates that adult lives are a story of interwoven ups and downs. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of the study. A detailed description of the research methodology, sampling method, and data collection method as well as data analysis are discussed in this chapter. The objectives and the significance of the study are also explored. Lastly, ethical considerations followed in this study are discussed. Chapter 4 discusses some aspects of Mrs Vuyiswa Mckonie's life structure and its attempt is to describe Vuyiswa Mckonie's life according to the developmental stages proposed by Levinson. Chapter 5 concludes the study with the summary of the research findings.

Chapter 2

Overview of Levinson's Life Structure Theory

2.1 Introduction

Psychology has a long history of studying human development and as thus developed developmental theory. Although earlier theorists primarily focused on understanding the different phases and aspects of childhood development, little is known about the different phases and aspects of adult development. Such a lack of an understanding of adult development erroneously implies that adults develop in a homogenous manner.

In order to address this need in adult development, Daniel Levinson and his team began early work studying men's lives (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978). This was later followed by work studying women's lives in the late 70s and early 80s. Research from these studies then informed his theory of adult development. Levinson's (1986) theory of adult development consists of 3 elements, namely:

- The concept of life course and life cycle
- The concept of the individual's life structure
- The conception of adult development

2.2 Life course and life cycle

Life course and life cycle are the essential framework of adult development (1986). According to Levinson (1986) a life course is referred to as a concrete character of a life in its evolution from beginning to the end of one's life as it unfolds over years. This includes the individual's complexities at a given time and all that is of significance to him/her.

The life cycle aspect of the framework provides a backdrop of the sequential nature of life (Levinson, 1986). Although all our lives are different and unique, we all go through similar life stages i.e. we are all subjected to the same “life cycle”.

2.3 Individual Life Structure

This aspect of Levinson theory include aspects of one’s external world as well as one’s personality and how these interact to allow one’s life structure to evolve distinctively (Levinson, 1986). Levinson (1996) proposed a theory of developmental periods during childhood, adolescence and to adulthood for women, and based on his findings of a standard series and the same sequence of age-linked developmental eras and periods as the men. Levinson (1996) further concluded that these processes are characterized by stability, continuity, discontinuity and chaos. Levinson et al., (1978) viewed development as combinations of positive and negative growth where ‘adolescent’ involves a move towards positive growth and ‘senescing’ is when one move towards old age associated with negative growth. Central to this theory are the following concepts (Levinson, 1986; Levinson et al., 1978):

- *Life span* is the chronological order of periods from birth to death. Its purpose for this study is to present an essential framework for the subject.
- *Life course* is all the stages that one goes through throughout time.
- *Life cycle and life structure* are unique patterns of life that an individual goes through. Levinson further points that while life cycle goes beyond the life course, life structure develops through an individual’s interaction with internal (personal characteristics, subjective meanings, motivations and goals) and with external aspects (social context, roles and events in the individual life).

- *Cross-era transition periods* are the periods in which one era ends and the next begins, with possible overlap of developmental tasks of the two eras.

The following three components that influence life structure have been identified (Levinson, 1986; Levinson et al., 1978):

- *Central components* refer to the most significant components in an individual's life (e.g. the most time and energy are invested in these aspects of life, such as family and career). These components influence other components.
- *Peripheral components*, according to Levinson, these can be easily changed or eliminated, thus, less time is invested in these components. The peripheral components therefore, have impact on other components.
- *Unfilled components* are components that are most imperative to individual. They are items that the person would prefer but has not managed to attain. Their absence has impacts on an individual's development.

However, the absence of any of these components influences most imperative elements of the life structure. Furthermore, the marriage, family and career are the central components of an individual's life with other components varying in importance. The family is part of a complex world involving different people, events, activities and social contexts. Moreover, the family may possibly be a nuclear family or family resulting from a prior marriage, an extended family or the individual's family of origin. The individual's ethnic group, race, occupation and culture would influence the relationship that the person has to the family.

Moreover, the importance of a career to an individual is more than the detailed work activities and rewards related to this career or belong to an occupational group of people.

Levinson (1996, p.23) posits that work "engages a person in an elaborate occupational world".

To understand the significance of work and occupation in a woman's life, the relationships within her work environment should be examined and explored to determine how they are interrelated with the other components of the life structure. Other components may include love, religion, relationships, friendships, politics, ethnicity, culture, leisure, social life and fun, use of time alone, bodily health and illness, other social relationships, and the relationship to the self.

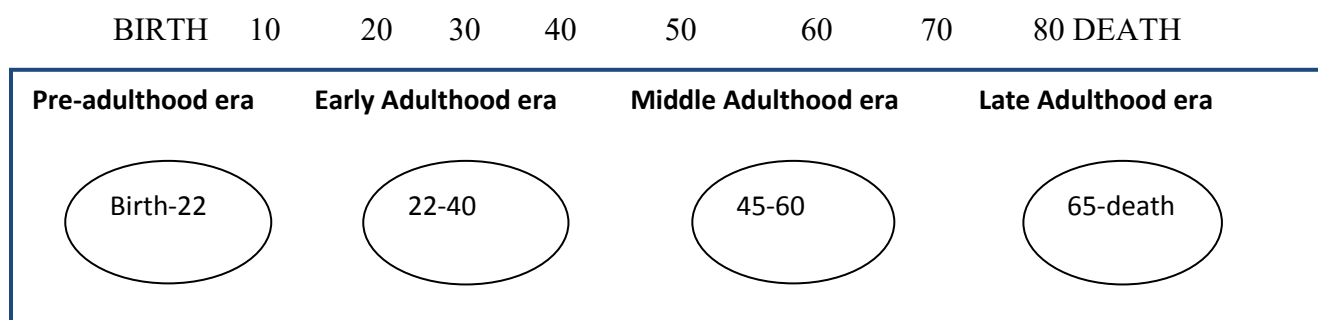
2.4 The concept of adult development

Levinson (1986) found that people's life structures developed through rather predictable age-linked sequences during adulthood. These sequences are made up of transitions, a 5 to 7 year period where we form a life structure and enhance our life within it (Levinson, 1986). It is said that about half of our adult lives is spent on developmental transitions (Levinson, 1986).

2.5 Structure of the life cycle

The life course and life cycle have a sequence of four bio-psychologically unique eras that influence an individual namely: 1. Pre-adulthood (birth to 22 years), 2. Early Adulthood (22 to 40 years), 3. Middle Adulthood (45 to 60 years) and 4. Late Adulthood (65 to death). Each era and the cross transitional last for approximately five years which starts and ends at an average age and varies per individual. Individuals experience major changes in life as they move from one era to the next within the cross-era transition. The three development tasks that characterize the transition period are termination, individuation and initiation of a new era.

Figure 2. 1 Conceptualization of Levinson's life cycle.



(Adapted from van Genechten, 2007).

The eras of development are now outlined with a fuller discussion of each of the more specific periods of development.

2.5.1 Era of Pre-adulthood (birth-22 years). According to Levinson (1978) this era has three periods and these periods are mostly influenced biological, psychological and social factors and an individual is characterized by rapid growth of physical emotional and cognitive aspects. The first period of this era is called “formative years” which starts from birth to 2 years of an individual’s age and extends from conception to roughly age of 22 years (p. 49). However, Levinson (1978) further stated that this period is the first phase of individuation because, “neonate becomes separated biologically and psychologically” from the mother and establishes the initial distinction between the “me” and the “not me” (p. 49). Levinson (1996) further states that this is a critical stage for an individual’s development. However, during this period an individual is still dependent on the family for protection and support. According to Santrock (2002) at this stage an infant is separated from their biological mother both psychologically and physically. This period is said to be important for the development of the individual’s personality. Therefore, a relationship between child and the parent plays an important role in the child’s development.

The following period of this era is called early childhood which begins from age 2 to 6 years. When the child reaches this period they start to explore the social world and start to develop sensitivity to the external world. During this era a child begins to develop relationships beyond family, for example, they start forming friendships with their school mates. According to Levinson (1978) self-discipline starts to develop in a child when they are at this period.

Furthermore, self-awareness also develops during this period as they begin to learn the basic things about themselves such as their names, their home address, gender etc. A child also develops an interest to take part in the world of work during this period.

Immediately after that period they proceed to the Middle Childhood period which starts at age 6 to 12 years. According to Santrock (2002) at this period is crucial as the child's emotions become more sensitive as the child becomes exposed to significant circumstances of the external world. Furthermore, Bareira (2001) points out that a child becomes exposed to different experiences and this period has an influence on the development of the child's self growth.

Middle childhood period is followed by the adolescence period which starts at the age of 12 to the age of 17. According to Levinson (1996) this period is often characterized by bodily changes and sexual maturity. A child becomes independent and begins to view himself or herself as different from other people. The need to respond to the external environment such as cultural and historical content, poverty, and meaningful relationships develop in this period (Bareira, 2001).

Immediately when a child moves from this period they go through what is called an era of early adulthood transition which begins from age 17 to age 22. This is the first cross-era transition that occurs in Levinson's (1996) theory. According to Levinson (1996) this transition period marks the beginning of the early adult era and termination of the childhood life structure. During this period an individual becomes uncertain about their future. Adolescent relationships are terminated as individuals try out new relationships and satisfactoriness of adulthood (Levinson, 1996). Levinson (1978) concludes that this period represents full maturity of pre-

adulthood and the infancy of a new era, as they will be exposed to forming developments that are required in the next era of early adulthood.

2.5.2. Era of Early Adulthood (22-40) years. Levinson (1996) suggests this era is the most dramatic period than any other as this is where an individual matures physically. During this era, individuals strive to balance family demands and their inner passions. This is when an individual makes life choices and decisions regarding their career, lifestyle, sexual orientations and relationships. Levinson (1996) described this era as the era of contradictions, abundance, energy and stress. This era consist of three periods which begin immediately after the previous era.

The first period of this era is called entry to the adult world which begins approximately at age of 22 to 28 years (Levinson, 1996). An individual's structure is built and maintained, thus individuals position themselves in the generation of adults by making important life choices which eventually leads to a permanent life structure. According Levinson (1996) it is during this period when women are characterized by important life choices with regards to things such as marriage community, occupation and motherhood. Levinson (1996) further identified a first and second phase in this period of which the first one is called the structure-building phase which is a phase referred to as an "Age 25 shift" this is when relationships are secured and existing commitments are further strengthened. The second phase consolidates decisions made during the age 25 shift.

The age 30 transition (28 to the age of 33 years) according to Levinson (1996) this transition is characterized by significant life changes; this is where an individual explores an opportunity for a new life structure. This is when an individual discovers that their life structure is no longer suitable; they begin to find ways to rectify their choices. Possible events that

characterize this period are promotion, marriage and pregnancy. As with developmental period of culminating life structure for early adulthood (settling down) follows which begins at age 33 to age 40 years. During this period an individual's attempt to make important life choices so that they could settle down or create a more secure life structure. There are two phases which are identified within this period, the first phase which begins after the age of 30. This is when an individual attempts to question the subjective meaning of life by setting new goals for themselves. During the second phase of this period an individual attempts to achieve the goals that they set during early childhood. Furthermore women are said to become affirmed by their own world and thus, they strive to become independent. The choices that women make during this phase determine their future development, and are often influenced by the internal and external environment.

The next period is called a Middle Life transition and this period begins at age 40 to age 45 years and Levinson (1996) describes this period as middle life 'individuation' where an individual creates balance between youthfulness and ageing. The period is also described as "developmental bridge" (p. 26) between early to middle adulthood. During this period, individuals attempt to find answers to questions revolving around their needs and wants. Upon discovering that they have failed to achieve their goals, individuals experience a developmental crisis which is characterized by fear of the unknown. The period is described by Levinson (1996) as the middle life crisis. Of which, it brings about termination of early adulthood the beginning of middle adulthood.

2.5.3. Era of Middle Adulthood (45-60 years). The era of middle adulthood begins at 45 and this is the era in Levinson's (1996) theory which is encompassed with four periods. This era is called an early life structure for middle adulthood which begins at age 45 to age 50, an

individual commits to new tasks and spent time reflecting on past achievements and regrets, and making peace with self and others. According to Levinson (1996) an individual during this period becomes psychologically and emotionally stable, thus they begin to make choices aimed at developing the future. Levinson (1996) further stated that as relationships form a central component of the life structure but they are perceived differently. However, many individuals in this period still lead an energetic, social and personally satisfying life.

The following period is called Age 50 Transition which begins at age of 50 to age 55 years. According to Levinson (1996) during this period an individual reach the conclusion of that season and begin the shift to the next era. However, developmental crises are common especially those who have failed to make significant changes or unsuitable changes.

The next period is called culminating life structure for middle adulthood which begins at age of 55 to 60 years and concludes this era. According to Levinson (1996) successful individuals start to enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Levinson (1996) furthermore points out that individuals who manage to achieve satisfactoriness are those who attained Middle Adulthood goals. The period is characterized by rich satisfaction and bitter disappointment as individual do self-assessment to see if the era has given them what they expected. When individuals feel that the era has not given them what they expected, they are likely to be bitter and become disappointed. The opposite is true if individuals feel that the era has given them more than what they expected.

The next period is called the late adulthood transition which begins at age 60 to 65 years and this period marks the boundary seasons between late adulthood and the end of the middle adulthood era. During this period an individual evaluates their past and prepares for the future.

According to Levinson (1978) individuals develop a sense of despair as well as irrational self-accusation sometime during this era.

2.5.4 Era of Late Adulthood (65 years – death). This era is the last era of all four eras of Levinson's theory and begins at the age of 65 to death. According to Levinson (1978) this era marks the significant changes that take place in an individual's life cycle and life structure such as physical, psychological and social changes that characterize this era. The era is also characterized by episodes of decline as they receive less recognition from family, community and opportunity for development. Levinson (1978) furthermore argued that individuals are likely to suffer from aches and pains and some form of impairment which to some extent has an effect on the changes in one's lifestyle.

This period can be traumatic to individuals as they move out of centre stage and establish a new sense of self. Individuals will also begin to assess their involvement in the society and the need to improve their lives. The desire to contribute positively to the society during this period stems from one's creativity not from the external environment. In order to create a sense of involvement and belonging, individuals find ways of contributing, for example, giving back to the society. Levinson (1978) concluded by hypothesizing and speculating about a Late Adulthood period that stretches to 80 years and above. During this period, ageing becomes inevitable, thus more energy will be directed towards bodily needs. The end of the life cycle is coming to terms with the realities of death.

Table 1 (Appendix D) summaries of the different eras and transition periods that appear from Levinson's (1996) theory of adult development of women. Of which, the developmental periods in Vuyiswa Mckonie's life will be identified and applied in the exploration and description of her life course.

Table 1 Levinson's (1996) Periods in the Eras of Development

Era of Pre-adulthood (0-22) (1937-1959)	Era of Early Adulthood (22-40) (1959-1982)	Era of Middle Adulthood (45-60) (1982-2002)	Era of Late Adulthood (65-death) (2002till date)
Infancy (birth- 2 years)	Entry life structure (22-28)	Early life structure for middle adulthood (45-50)	Era of late adulthood (65-death)
Early Childhood (2-6)	Age 30 transition (28-33)	Age 50 transition (50-55)	
Middle Childhood (6-12)	Culminating life structure (33-40)	Culminating life structure for middle adulthood (55-60)	
Adolescent (12-17)	Middle life transition (40-45)	Late Adulthood transition (60-65)	
Era of early adulthood transition (17-22)			

2.6 Levinson's Theory as it applies for women

Levinson's developmental theory consists of universal phases that extend from the infancy stage to the elderly stage. He also developed "multi-method approaches to study individual lives over time, such as his technique of intensive biographical interviewing"

(Levinson, 1978; 1996). Levinson (1978) stated that “life course includes patterning events, relationships, achievements, failures and aspirations that distinguish each person’s life and the interaction between the individual and the world” (p. 6). For Levinson, relationships were the start of development, and the “interpretation of self and the world” in order to understand a life (Levinson, 1978, p. 47). Levinson (1978) further stated that the “life course evolved through a standard sequence of developmental periods which he termed the life cycle” (p. 48). In *Seasons of a Woman’s Life*, Levinson (1996) concluded that both genders, as well as individuals of varying occupations and lifestyles, move through the “same sequence of eras in lives and at the same age” (p. 6). Levinson (1996) further stated that there were also “wide variations between and within genders and in concrete ways of traversing each period” (p. 18). Furthermore, in order to make a clear understanding of the theory, an extensive outline is provided after which the essential concepts within the theory are defined.

Moreover, the major purpose of Levinson (1996) study was to expand knowledge of life structure and development of women from the late teenage-hood to mid-forties, his study was a comprehensively analysis of women’s life. However, in order Levinson (1996) to attain the in-depth of biographical interviews with 45 women, he divided them into three samples with 15 women per sample. The sample “consisted of 15 homemakers, 15 women with careers in corporate-finance world, and 15 women with careers in the academic world” (p. 77). In addition, Levinson (1996) the interviews total to 20 hours per woman studied, conducted, and audiotaped over a period of up to 3 months. Therefore, this equipped Levinson (1996) to be capable of obtaining the uniqueness of each life, and to present a vivid picture of developmental principles that predominantly describe women’s life. However, the Levinson (1996) theory of adult development on women will serve as a guide to this research study. Furthermore, this chapter

seeks to present an image to the person who reads it with classifications and certain concepts in order to entirely understand Levinson's theory (1996). Moreover, these concepts can be matched up and applied to Vuyiswa Mckonie's life course and conditions. These are as follows:

2.6.1. Termination. According to Levinson (1996) this phase of termination implies to complete or end of a relationship. In addition, termination probably is of better significance if the relationship is the most constituent of an individual's life (Levinson, 1996). Furthermore, Levinson (1996) viewed that the majority traumatic termination involves the ending of contact with others, such as an extinct loss, unplanned permanent relocation and separation from the family of origin. However, these experiences may trigger the feelings of sorrow, rejection, anger, and hopelessness.

2.6.2. Individuation. According to Levinson (1996) this phase is when "an individual becomes more independent, self-generating and self-responsible, and capable of more mutual relationships" (p. 25).

2.6.3. Initiation. According to Levinson (1996, p. 25) referred to initiation phase as a process of exploring new possibilities, making a series of choices, some are difficult or easier than others. For instance, choosing a career and a friend might be easier than when a person opted to go into a relationship with someone, often without the realizing that he or she is making a crucial decision. However, Levinson (1996) further states that the most complicated choices in life put a person in making choices through a conscious and unconscious exploring process.

2.6.4. Gender splitting. Levinson (1996) concluded that "gender splitting is considered as the most significant form of conflict that pertains to create inequalities existing amongst the sexes, such as masculine and feminine" (p. 76). However, Levinsons (1996) further states that

the genders vary with regard to life circumstances, in the life course, and in ways in which each gender goes through and deals with developmental periods. He further states that there are four common forms of gender splitting: the domestic sphere, the traditional marriage, the place of work, and individual consciousness (Levinson, 1996). However, Levinson (1996) states that these implies to women's lives as they revolved in all that is considered domestic, also they hold jobs that are obligatory to be for women. However, this becomes a challenge if a woman desires a life that does not revolved on the domestic sphere. In addition, men have always dominated the public sphere and if women get involved in this field, then it would be done under segregated terms (Levinson, 1996).

2.7 Conclusion

Levinson (1996) formulated a theory of life structure and developmental stages which can be applied to the life cycle of individuals. However, this theory identifies and illustrates some eras which explain the development of a human life. In addition, the main concepts that emerge from Levinson (1978) adult developmental theory was utilized, discussed and further will be applied and compared to Mrs Vuyiswa Mckonie's developmental stages.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The researcher has a number of methodological items that must be addressed before research is conducted in psychobiographical studies. This chapter will present an interpretation of the research design, sampling method, the data collection method as well as the data analysis. The objectives and the significance of the study will also be explored. Lastly, ethical considerations followed in this study will be discussed.

3.2 The research objectives

The primary aim of this study is to explore and describe the human development of Vuyiswa Mckonie across her lifespan in terms of Levinson's (1986) theory of Adult Development. The secondary objective of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of Mckonie's life structure development within her socio-historical context thereby a more cohesive life structure. Levinson's theory was chosen to explore and describe the life structure development of Vuyiswa Mckonie using the four eras of Levinson's theory. Additionally, the study aims to utilize this study approach in order to contribute to the small body of research in this area of psychology yet the study is not intended to generalize the findings of the research to a larger population.

This study was qualitative in nature with an exploratory-descriptive approach. The aim of qualitative research is to explore social phenomena from the perspective of participants (de Vos, 2005).

3.3 The research design

A detailed plan “blueprint” on how a researcher plans on conducting a research study is called a research design (Thyer, 1993). Interviews are commonly used in psychology as a survey method because of their relative ease in administration and minimal costs involved, however interviewees could be inclined to want to impress the interviewer (Whitley, 2002).

Exploratory descriptive studies aims to understand the studying variable as it occurs naturally by using some measuring system but it does not concerned about relationships between variables (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). Using such an approach to study the life of Vuyiswa Mckonie will allow for new understanding of such a lived life through the context of life structure theory, thereby contributing to psychological knowledge.

This study made use of semi-structured interviews as a means of measuring/gathering data guided by an interview guide. Although de Vos (2005) warns that interview guides in semi-structured interviews can be long, other researchers prefer this method as it allows the participant to say more with the researcher saying very little (Delpont & Fouché, 2005).

However, the study of Mckonie can be described as life history (Runyan, 1988a). This current psychobiographical study utilizes a qualitative single case research design method (Yin, 2003). Single case designs focus is on the interested individual case rather than in a method of inquiry. Therefore the focus is on what can be learned from the individual case. Such a case maybe simple or complex (de Vos, 2005). Psychobiographies study the frameworks and methods of an individual’s psychological development. This includes the growth that occurs throughout the individual’s development, and places the individual in context.

The study of Mckonie can be described as life history research (Runyan, 1988a). Elms (1994) refer to this approach as a morphogenic research method, in which the subject's characteristics are highlighted in a holistic manner rather than in terms of isolated events. This is to say that the emphasis is on the uniqueness of the whole person rather than on single elements (Runyan, 1988b).

This study attempts to reconstruct Mckonie's life into an illuminating story through the application of a formal psychological theory (Schultz, 2005). Thus, this study aims to provide a holistic description of Mckonie within her socio-historical context.

3.4 Participant and sampling method

The study is a single-subject qualitative psychobiography, with the subject having been selected via a purposive (i.e. non-random) sampling based on interest value and the significance of her life (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The reasoning behind using purposive sampling is that the researcher knows that the characteristics of the subject meet the purpose of the study; however the participants from purposive sampling are not representative of the broader population.

Additional interviews were conducted with significant others in Vuyiswa Mckonie's life through the method of snowball sampling. According to de Vos (2005) chain/snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that identifies cases of interest by sampling people who know that cases are information-rich and are good for the study.

The research utilizes an ordinary person that makes a difference in an extraordinary way in her community and in her profession in general. Vuyiswa is well known in her community and is a well-respected individual whose life story is inspirational and extraordinary, thus meeting the

criteria for a psychobiographical study. Case studies are typically directed at gaining an understanding of the uniqueness and idiosyncrasies of particular individuals in all their complexity, and one of the rationales behind selecting a particular individual for study is related to the individual's social significance and general interest (Stroud, 2004).

Vuyiswa Mckonie's life story is well known in Port Elizabeth township communities such as New Brighton, KwaZakhele, and Motherwell for her inspirational and extraordinary qualities that she possesses. She was chosen because of her remarkable work which contributes to the theme of activism for the disadvantaged in Port Elizabeth. That means, she meets the criteria for a psychobiographical subject, as well as generating researcher interest. There are no psychobiographies on Vuyiswa Mckonie and this study attempts to understand Vuyiswa using psychological theories. Therefore, this study is intended to add to the body of psychobiographical research in South Africa.

3.5 Data collection method

The data collected were obtained from several information sources. Yin (2003) further stated that multiple sources of data, allowing for cross-referencing of information, are considered to enhance the internal validity of the information collected. The researcher directly interviewed the subject to gain more rich information from her. The researcher further conducted interviews with family members and a friend. Both primary data (documents produced by subjects) and secondary data (interviews produced by others) were utilized in the study of Vuyiswa's life development.

The researcher was aware regarding the sensitive and insignificant information as well as the biased material which may negatively influence the outcome of study. Therefore, conducting

a psychobiographical research study poses the challenge of examining, extracting, and analyzing vast amounts of available material on the subject (Alexander, 1988). The selection of sources used provided quality and assisted in discarding insignificant information. Interviews were utilized to collect data. According to De Vos (2005) interviews are the predominant mode of data collection or information in qualitative research. Kvale (1996) describes interviews as an attempt by researchers to understand the world from the participant's point of view in order to tap the true reflection of people's real life experiences. The researcher was involved in the actual collection of data. Interviews tend to illicit the social desirability effect from participants. Langdridge and Hagger-Johnson (2009) suggest that to counter this effect researchers should use language that is not threatening to the participants, and focus on building rapport with the participants.

Interviews were held five times for about 60 minutes for each interview session with Mrs Vuyiswa Mckonie. The interviews were semi structured even though we used the Interview Guide (Appendix A) and were conducted in both IsiXhosa and English languages. For, Mckonie it was not difficult to conduct interviews as she can well-expressed herself in English but sometimes she was using IsiXhosa to reply to some questions for thickened description of her life events such as family deaths. The privilege and opportunity of conducting an interview with Mrs Mckonie was something Anderson (1981) calls "the ultimate possibility for research" (p.471). However, Alexander (1988) stated that "the richest sources of data are those which deal with the spontaneous recollection from memory of various aspects of life already lived, as in a freely produced autobiographical essay or directed interviews focused on lived life" (p.266). Furthermore, as interviews progressed Mrs VM was quite happy for her identity to be identified in the research study thus not remaining anonymous. She said: *I am well known as "Mama*

Vuyiswa Mckonie” by many in my community, at the church and by my former colleagues”. She further stated that: “As long my name it is has been identified for the good course (especially in education) and this study will inspire and motivate many young women of South Africa”.

Furthermore, she strongly echoed that: *‘each profession has its own ethics and as a health worker I therefore understand what it is entailed by Appendix B (Letter for Participation) and Appendix C (Consent Form) and in terms of confidentiality, it was clearly discussed with me and I find it humbling to participate in this study’*. Therefore, it made easy for Vuyiswa Mckonie to tell her story and willing to participate in the study. Furthermore, to get a greater sense of her context and to ensure validity, information was also obtained from Mrs Mckonie’s friend (Mrs Milase Majola) and family members. Permission to record the interview was sought from Vuyiswa Mckonie.

3.6. Data procedure

The study met the ethical standards of the Department of Psychology and the UKZN Research Ethics Policy. Participants in the study were contacted by the researcher and they were informed about the nature and purpose of the study (Appendix B). Upon receiving their informed consent (Appendix C). Permission to record the interviews was received from the participants. The participant interviews were transcribed verbatim. The data was coded and then analyzed.

3.7 Data Analysis

De Vos (2005) defines data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the data that has been collected. According to Eliastam (2011) this involves letting the data set reveal itself and asking the data a question. Several strategies were utilized as a means to organize, analyze and interpret the data.

Two approaches were used for data analysis. The general analytic approach proposed by Huberman and Miles (1994) was followed as a framework for analysis the written archive material obtained about Vuyiswa Mckonie and Content analysis for analysis of the interviews.

3.7.1. General Analytic Approach. This approach consists of three linked sub-processes, namely: 1) data reduction 2) data display 3) conclusion drawing and verification. These processes are not limited to only the analysis stage of research but are utilized throughout the course of the research. Thus, these sub-processes occur before any data is collected, during the research planning stage, during data collection when initial analysis takes place, as well as after data has been collected when the research is being collated into cohesive whole.

3.7.1.1. Data reduction. This process takes place throughout the course of the research and entails condensing information into a manageable entity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The reduction of data collected was necessary to sort relevant from irrelevant material and also to organize and display the data, and draw final conclusion (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Eliastam (2011) the information not deemed vital for the enhancement of the study and which might detract from the main purpose of the study, was discarded. However, a relevant conceptual framework was required to guide the analyses of information. Therefore, the life structure theory of development by Levinson (1996) provided the conceptual framework for this research study.

3.7.1.2. Data display. This is an organized and concise assembly of information that allows for conclusion drawing in viewing a reduction set of data, the researcher is able to consider its meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Relevant data will be displayed using Levinson's (1996) four eras of development and Vuyiswa's life will be displayed in close approximation to these eras of development as in Appendix D. In this way, the exploration and

description of development that emerge can be identified. However, Levinson's (1996) three components of life structure were employed to highlight certain aspect of Mckonie's life. Also, making the information more accessible, the process of data display aided in condensation and understanding of data. In addition, the identification of Mckonie's developmental patterns and unique life structure were facilitated. Thus, selecting the data to be displayed, the researcher could simultaneously engage in the process of data reduction and data analysis.

3.7.1.3. Conclusion drawing and verification. This sub-process involves the researcher in making interpretations from the displayed data and then formulating the meaning from it. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that verification entails checking for biases that can occur in the process of drawing conclusions. If data verification does not take place during the data analysis process, a number of shortcomings can arise. These may include: data overload, which lead to the researcher missing the important information or skewing the analysis; salience of a first impression or a dramatic incident; overconfidence in some data, especially when one is trying to confirm a key finding; unreliability of information from some of the sources. The conclusions drawn were made within the framework of Levinson's (1996) life structure theory.

3.7.2 Content analysis. The first step in analysis interviews is turning audio material into written material (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). These researchers further suggest that the researcher personally transcribes the interviews verbatim in order to obtain a better feel of the collected data. Content analysis provides steps of coding and drawing out themes from transcribed interviews, such were followed in this research. Such, patterns and themes were able to be drawn out from the data. This continued until such time that the no new themes were emerging. The Tesch (1990) model of data analysis was used and the process was documented. An independent coder was employed in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and to

curtail researcher bias. The researcher further maintained her objectivity by following the Guba (1981) model of trustworthiness.

3.8. Validity and Reliability

According to Denzin (1989) validity is the ability to narrate stories throughout the discourse, or talk, just as there can be discourse about the text of a story. According to Lafailille and Widerboer (1995) validity and reliability are very important themes for any methodologically sound biographical study. In biographical research it is important for the researcher to understand the subject's perspective, as people are all authors of their own identity. Moreover, to maintain validity of the findings, the themes will be interpreted according to the participant's narrative of her life story. However, Neuman (2006) pointed that the quality of a biographical is often measured by the following concepts:

3.8.1. Construct validity. This refers to the utilization of the correct operational measures (Neuman, 2006). According to Yin (2003) the researcher must carefully select the concepts under investigation by sticking to the objectives and the theoretical framework of the study. To ensure construct validity was achieved in this study, the concepts relating to Levinson life structure were clearly defined and conceptualized. The concepts were then used as a framework to provide answers to the research questions.

3.8.2. Internal validity. According to Neuman (2006) this refers to causal relationships between variables. When internal validity is achieved, the researcher must be able to infer that there is casual relationship between variables in question. To ensure internal validity, Vuyiswa Mckonie's one community member was also interviewed. This allowed the researcher to assess if the information obtained from Mckonie is similar to that of Mrs Majola.

3.8.3. External validity. This refers to the degree to which the findings from a study can be generalized to other populations (generalizability of causal relationships, Lafailille & Widerboer, 1995). To ensure external validity, the life story of Mckonie was interpreted using Levinson theory. The researcher assessed the extent to which Levinson's life stages are similar to Vuyiswa Mckonie's life stages.

3.8.4 Reliability. This is the ability of a measure to produce similar results in different settings. The records of data collected were kept to ensure replication of the study in future for reliability purposes.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Elms (1994) highlighted the limited existence of ethical guidelines for psychobiographies, but suggested that information obtained be treated, and documented, with respect. Some ethical issues that have been noted include the invasion of privacy as well as the potential embarrassment to the subject, and to his or her relatives and associates (Runyan, 1984). This study was conducted in accordance with the 1976 ethical guidelines set out by the American Psychology Association that states "it is the ethical duty to take care of life-history information with respect, and to maintain the psychologist's ethical code of treating all individuals with respect and maintaining confidentiality at all time, this code also applies when conducting research too" (APA, 1976). "What makes research 'ethical' is not a characteristic of the design or procedures, but of our individual decisions, actions, relationships, and commitments" (Haverkamp, 2005, p. 147).

Every research design follows a strict ethical guideline, these guidelines assist researchers in following ethically sound procedures and these ensure everything runs smoothly (Elms, 1994). According to Elmes, Kantowitz & Roediger (2006) qualitative method is recommended to follow

ethical guidelines and that will ensure that researcher has not been biased. Furthermore, these authors have identified five issues that often needed to be dealt with when making ethical considerations. Firstly, the issue regarding informed consent, when dealing with people it is vital that the researcher informs participants about the research procedure and to obtain consent from them regarding their willingness to participate in the study, before data collection. A second step, a researcher should always ensure that the research participant(s) do (es) not feel obliged to continue participating in the research and the researcher should always ensure that the participant is aware of their right to withdraw at any time during the research.

In this study Vuyiswa Mckonie was assured that the information she provided will be kept confidential and will only be used for academic purposes only. Informed consent is one of the essential requirements of any form of research. Researchers are obliged to inform the participants about the content, type of questions, purpose of the study and scope of the study (Elmes, Kantowitz & Roediger 2006). Of importance is assurance about the voluntary nature of the study. In the study at hand, Mckonie was asked to sign a consent form to confirm her willingness to take part in the study (Appendix D). However, according to Willing (2001) indicate that there has been a lack of emphasis with regards to ethics in qualitative research in the past. This was largely due to the belief that qualitative research does not carefully considerate participants. Willing (2001) further identified the possible risk factors that participants are likely to face when taking part in qualitative research namely:

3.9.1. Anxiety or distress. Probing of sensitive topics or information may, result in provoking of anxiety or distress (Etherington, 2001). The open ended nature of qualitative research allows participants to freely express their feelings, hence, topics that may cause anxiety and distress are difficult to avoid.

3.9.2. Misrepresentation and misinterpretation. According to Etherington (2001) it is important for researchers (biographers in particular) to ensure that participants' personal information is not misrepresented or misinterpreted. To ensure that the views are not misrepresented, researchers often engage in what is known as 'respondent validation', the allowance to participants to go through the finished study before it is submitted for publication. In the study at hand, Vuyiswa Mckonie was given the opportunity to go through the final study and she was satisfied with its contents.

3.9.3. Scientific soundness. One of the essential requirements of research ethics is scientific soundness. For a study to meet ethical requirements it must be methodologically sound, as such the research ethics committee must ensure that the study is properly designed and it must be delicate with participants. The research at hand was approved by the research committee at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

3. 10 Location of the study

The study was conducted in New Brighton (approximately 8 km north of Port Elizabeth city centre). Established in 1903, New Brighton was the first black residential area in Port Elizabeth. The majority of the people who moved to New Brighton were displaced from other areas due to apartheid policy that promoted racial segregation. In 2011, it was estimated that New Brighton was home for 47,915 people. The township has a great political history given that the first cells of Umkhonto weSizwe (the armed wing of ANC) were formed there. Because of this political history, Mrs Mckonie and her husband became actively involved in politics by virtue of being residents of New Brighton.

New Brighton is a quiet and peaceful township (an ideal place for pensioners like Mrs Mckonie). Besides being a peaceful township, New Brighton is one of the poorest townships in

South Africa with an estimated unemployment rate of around 80% (bbc.co.uk). In 2009, HIV prevalence in South African townships was estimated to be 30% (bbc.co.uk). Given such socio-economic challenges, Mckonie, despite being a retired nurse, is working tirelessly to improve the lives of the economically disadvantaged in Port Elizabeth. The fact that she grew up in a rural area, Mckonie enjoys township life as it enables her to reach out to many people and make a positive impact on their lives.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed plan of how the study was executed. The procedures followed by the researcher when conducting the study were clearly outlined. To ensure that the study is scientifically sound, procedures to ensure the study is valid and reliable were put in place. The researcher also ensured that all ethical considerations were followed.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Levinson's life structure theory (1996) was discussed in chapter two and it is used in this chapter in an attempt to describe Vuyiswa Mckonie's life structure according to the developmental stages as proposed by Levinson. The interviews that were used to collect data will be used in this chapter to describe and illustrate Mckonie's life.

As it was mentioned in chapter two, Levinson's (1996) theory is a developmental theory that consists of universal stages that progress from the infancy state to elderly state. Levinson (1978) emphasized that "life course" includes relationships, achievements, failures and aspirations that distinguish each person's life and the interaction between the individual and the world. In *Seasons of a Woman's Life*, Levinson (1996) found that individuals who differ because of their occupation and lifestyle move through the same sequence of periods at the same age. These stages will be discussed further using Vuyiswa Mckonie's life.

4.2 Pre-adult hood (birth-22 years)

The pre-adulthood period forms the basis for development (Levinson, 1996). While the study at hand will largely dwell on Mckonie's continued development throughout her life her fascinating and enriched childhood will be briefly outlined to provide a clear picture of how she became the person she is today.

Mrs Mckonie was born and bred in the lonesome village of Mxhelo which is situated close to Alice in the Eastern Cape, on February 8th 1937. She is the first born child of Sanna

(mother) and Livo (father) Caga and she has four younger sisters and two younger brothers. The family's clan name is Rhadebe, according to the Xhosa culture. She was raised from a reasonably stable home with both of her parents being qualified educators and devoted members of the Presbyterian Church. As it was customary at the time, her mother had to stay at home to take care of the children, cook and clean while her father worked to meet the basic necessities of his family.

Mckonie's father was the only one working and providing the family with their basic needs. He used to work far away from home and would only be at home during weekends. Mrs Mckonie said in the interview, when she was young she used to spend more time with her granny and she used to spoil her with goodies such as sweets and cakes. In addition, she was her best friend. Therefore, at the age of 2 years, Mckonie felt the absence of her father as she spent most of her time with her paternal granny who she described as caring and her mother as well. According to Levinson's (1996) notion of infancy period, a child's personality is developed and a relationship between a child and its parents is critical. It was evident that her relationship with her father was compromised because of his work and she felt his absence.

During this period, Mckonie used to spend time with her mother and granny who provided protection, socialization and support. She admitted that she was one of the few lucky children who had parents who had jobs in Mxhelo Village. Mrs Mckonie said on the interview: *"My parents were among the few who had decent houses in Mxhelo. Since most people were not employed, they used to live in shacks. The gap between the poor was too big. Only teachers and nurses could afford to build a decent house those days"*. The fact that Mckonie's father was working meant that she had a relative advantage compared to other children of her age. Her father could afford to buy her toys and nice clothes. Many of her childhood friends were poor.

Mckonie was fortunate to live in a decent home. It therefore follows that Mckonie lived in an environment characterized by social inequality. Although she was not directly affected by poverty in Mxhelo village, she had first-hand experience of extreme poverty in her village. This in turn might have influenced her ambitions (of making a positive contribution in the society) at a young age. However, according to Levinson's notion of central components, he referred to as the most important components in an individual's life and it was evident in Mckonie's case that her grandmother and mother were influential in her life during this time and the fact that her family had financial security that had an influential role in her upbringing.

Mckonie described this era as captivating and as she was prepared to engage in the satisfactoriness and taking the responsibilities of adulthood. Her mother was strict and hardworking and always wanted her to be a hardworking and responsible child. During this period, her mother taught her to do "womanly duties" such as cleaning the house and cooking. Mckonie said in her interview: "*My parents used to own a lot of goats, pigs and chicken. I used to wake early in the morning to milk the goats and feed the pigs and chicken. I used to enjoy it. It was nice experience for me*". Since, she was the only child at that time she had to do some duties that were primarily done by boys and this was caused by the absence of her father. According to Levinson's (1996) notion of this period, a child becomes more complex as they experience different emotions and become sensitive to the external world.

She further said: "*My father used to work as a teacher far away from home. I used to see him during the weekends hence we didn't have time to bond. I used to be afraid of my father because he was quiet and reserved; he used to be home for short periods of time. The father and daughter bond was lacking and even he is at home he will be reading the newspaper*". Although she enjoyed manly duties such as milking the goats and etc, Mckonie narrated how she

eventually began to feel the absence of his father. Furthermore; she narrated how she used to be afraid of her father when he came back from work during weekends. This did not necessarily mean she was scared of him but rather shy and he showed little of emotional support. However, they had a firm familial foundation and her father would sometimes cherish her as his only little daughter. In addition, for her this allowed her to feel safe and get her needs met without being frightened by her father, even though she did not know him very well.

At the age of six, Mckonie enrolled for Sub A (equivalent to Grade 1). This was an exciting, yet sad period for Mckonie as she had to spend most of the day at school without her caring granny. Going to school meant she had to move out of the zone of being spoiled by her granny and adjust to the new world with new people (children of her age and teachers), and a new set of rules at school. Her school was far away from home. She recalled how she used to walk bare foot to school because she used to wear shoes only when she goes to church or during rainy day to school and she did not feel ashamed as most of the children walk to school bare feet.

She said in the interview: *“I used to walk to school every day. It was very far from home. We had no option since there was not transport to get us to school. Very few people had cars in our village”*. It was evident in this case that her schooling years were a crucial and important central component as Levinson’s (1996) theory suggests, she had to adjust to a new environment, routine and had to spend minimal time with her granny. This new adjustment was a challenge for her but eventually she accepted the changes and got used to it. According to Levinson’s notion of this period, a child becomes independent as they go through body changes and sexual maturity. It was evident in Mckonie’s case that she was becoming independent as she had to face the world alone and was introduced to new life experiences.

4.3 Early Adulthood (17 to 45 years)

According to Levinson (1996) this period begins with the Early Adult transition. He further states that, that it is adult era of greatest energy and abundance and of greatest contradiction and stress. According to Levinson (1996) this is the season for forming and pursuing youthful aspirations, establishing a niche in society, raising family and as the era ends. During this period Mckonie had developed new relationships at school. According to Levinson this would be evident once an individual moves to a new stage in their life as she formed new peer relationships etc. Mckonie enjoyed her newly formed friendships with her high school friends. As she was working towards completing her high school, she began to think more about her career. According to Levinson at this stage an individual's influences would be determined by the important components during the era that they are in. Mckonie admits that there was no one to assist her in terms of career guidance. The jobs that were common in Mxhelo village in those days were teaching, nursing and policing. She recalls that she always wanted to be a teacher. Social influences came into play at this stage in her life as she did not have any guidance to choose a proper career but she dwelt on what the black society perceived to be worthwhile careers for black young females. She said in her interview: *"When I grew up, the most popular jobs were teaching and nursing. Teachers and nurses were the most successful people in the community. Since both my parents were teachers, I began to like teaching."* In a village set-up like Mxhelo few people were formally employed. This was exacerbated by the fact that education was not easily accessible and valued.

According to Levinson's (1996) notion of this period, an individual becomes exposed to new kinds of development, and this was evident in Mckonie's case as she was faced with life decisions that she had to make. There was a need for her to respond to the external world as she

had to choose a career to follow. However, she had influence from her parents who were both teachers by profession and the teaching experiences of others were the only context she came from.

In 1956 when she was 19, Mckonie attended teachers' training at Healdtown College in Fort Beaufort in the Eastern Cape. After completing her training, when she was 21 years old in 1958, she started working as a teacher at Hillside Primary School, the same school that her father was teaching in. She acknowledged that her parents had a significant influence on her liking teaching. According to Levinson's (1996) this is the period of rich satisfaction in terms of love, sexuality family life, occupational advancement, creativity, and realization of major goals. However, the idea of a central component which has an influence on an individual's important life decisions was evident in Mckonie's case, as she had to make important career decisions which in this case were mostly influenced by her parents. During this period Mckonie became financially independent. According to Levinson's notion of this era, individuals strive for balance with family demands and their inner passions. It was evident that Mckonie did not enjoy her job and that this according to her was not her ideal career but rather her parents' influence. She later realized that teaching was not her passion and was not as interesting as she had anticipated. This was exacerbated by the nature of the job itself. She said in the interview: "*The work was too much for me, learners were lazy, they were not serious with their work and my job was boring. I didn't enjoy my job at all*". Mckonie also realized that teaching would not fulfill her dream to make a positive change in people's lives regardless of their age, race and language. In order to achieve that she had to pursue a career that gave her chance to fulfill her ambitions. After reviewing her options she realized that nursing was the only career that would make her happy and fulfill her dreams. It was evident that Mckonie needed a career change and this was

important to her. During this time she was confronted with making important career decisions and how she wanted her life to be.

Described by Levinson (1996) as the most dramatic era, during this the era individuals experience contradictions and stress as they make important decisions about their future (such as marriage, career, and lifestyle). According to Levinson (1996) if these decisions are not compatible with the context or individual, they are likely to cause maladjustment. Three periods that constitutes this era are:

1. Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood
2. Age 30 transition
3. Culminating life structure for early Adulthood

In 1958, at the age of 21, Mckonie decided to quit teaching and enrolled as a professional nurse at Livingstone Hospital Nursing College in Port Elizabeth for three and a half years. This was an important decision to make for Mckonie as she was to embark on one of the almost stressful of careers. Despite the fact that nursing is stressful and demanding, Mckonie believed that the career would make her happy.

However, according to Levinson (1996) this implies to as initiation phase and during this era an individual attempt to make choices, according to the life style that will make them feel at ease. It is evident in Mrs Mckonie's case as she had to follow her dreams of making positive changes in people's lives by becoming a nurse and in 1959 she started her training as a professional nurse at Livingstone Hospital. The absence of her parents and granny meant that she had to look for other 'significant others'. During this period Mckonie was now a grown woman and she felt the need to have a soul mate, a person who could always be there when she needed

support. Although finding the ‘right one’ was not easy, she finally fell in love. Mckonie narrated how difficult it was to tell her parents about her affair with her boyfriend (Welcome Mckonie).

She said: *“It was a taboo for a girl to tell her parents about her affair in those days. Remember my parents were very strict. It took time for me to tell them”*.

Mckonie’s boyfriend (Welcome) finally proposed marriage and the wedding took place in 1961. Her parents were very proud of her. According to Levinson this was a central component that would change an individual’s life drastically.



New beginnings: Vuyiswa Mckonie (second from left) poses for a photo after her wedding in 1961 in Port Elizabeth. Vuyiswa Mckonie’s husband (Welcome) first from left and Vuyiswa Mckonie’s parents.

According to Levinson (1996) in the early adulthood transition to marriage and to start a family has implications. During this period, Mckonie became a wife, mother and nurse. She said in the interview: *“It was chaotic; I had to take care of my husband and my two children”*. During this phase she had to deal with multiple caregiver roles. As she was now married she had

to adjust to the new life. According to the Xhosa culture, when a woman is married, it is expected that she will abide by the rules of her husband's family and Mr Mckonie has paid the lobola by this period. However, Mr Mckonie knew he has a calling to become a priest, thus it was important for him to get married. Since her husband was a member of the Ethiopian Church (Known as 'Ityalike Yomzi waseTiyopiya' in isiXhosa) she had to join her husband's church. She said during the interview: *"I grew up going to Presbyterian church, my parents used to go to that church. When I was married, I had no choice I had to join the Ethiopian Church, my husband's church. It was easy to adjust for me; I had no problem with that"*. The first Ethiopian Church branch woman's Manyano in South Africa was formed by Reverend Mangena Makone on the 1st of November in 1892. The church played a significant role in fighting against apartheid. The teachings of the Ethiopian Church Movement might have somewhat influenced Vuyiswa Mckonie spiritually, socially (in order to understand her clients in nursing she is expected to be accommodating and sociable), morally (doing the right thing) and politically (Ethiopia was viewed as an agent of change as it fought against any form of domination of one race by the other).

After completing her training as a nurse in 1962, she began to work as a qualified nurse at Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth. Mckonie admitted that she had to deal with new and unique problems every day. After seeing the plight of black mothers when giving birth, she decided to pursue another short course in midwifery in 1964. This course helped her to assist a lot of mothers in the community since there were only a few black nurses at that time. Staying far from her parents also meant that she became more independent. According to Levinson's notion of this period, an individual makes important life choices and possible events that characterize these periods are promotions, marriage etc. It was evident in Mckonie's case as she

became more involved in her career and pursuing it. Furthermore, Levinson's notion of this era is that women at this stage in their lives strive for independence and this was seen in Mckonie's case as she was earning and making her own life decisions.



Fond memories: *Vuyiswa Mckonie (right) shares a joke with another student nurse at Livingstone Hospital in 1964.*

However, according to Levinson's (1996) notion of this era, individuals settle down and create a more secure life structure. This was evident in Mrs Mckonie's case, as she got married and gave more attention to her personal needs as well her husband's needs.



Family time: *Vuyiswa Mckonie and her husband (Welcome) holding their babies*

However, according to Levinson (1996) women from his sample of women with careers in the academic world, during this era they made a huge effort to overcome gender splitting and also to pursue their dreams to become involved in the academic world. During this period, Mckonie realized that she could not assist patients who required services of an orthopedic surgery. Driven by the passion to assist such patients, Mckonie decided to further her studies in orthopedics nursing. In addition, in 1971 Mckonie moved to Cape Town to study for her diploma in Orthopedics for two years, thus we could say she belongs within this sample of women with careers in the academic world. This was a difficult decision to make since she had to part ways with her husband and 3 children. However, as indicated in Levinson (1996) women from this sample of women with careers in the academic world wanted to fulfill their desires and not to be centred on domestic sphere. Furthermore, Mckonie was committed to pursue her dreams as well as her personal growth and moreover during apartheid era there were very few black professional

nurses with specialized course. When she arrived in Cape Town she caught up with the realities of apartheid. She said: *“I had better qualifications than our facilitator....but, the fact that she was white that gave her an advantage. Things were different in Cape Town. Apartheid was bad for black South Africans”*.

After completing her diploma in Orthopedics, she returned to Port Elizabeth where she did another course in Spinal Cord Injury Nursing. Furthermore, Levinson (1996) regards this stage as important and is called individuation phase, during this period a person finds a greater sense of self-awareness, also brings more sense of balance into other people’s lives and becomes more independent as well as focused to the external world. Alternatively, this stage can be time of stress due to parenting, and career responsibilities, as mentioned that Mckonie was pursuing with her studies. In addition, Levinson (1996) further indicates that during this stage, it is the time when an individual is stable in achieving her goals and creativity. According to Levinson’s notion of this era, individuals strive for balance between their youthfulness and ageing. Mrs Mckonie found balance in her career life as she did something that she considered meaningful to her and she further has found the love of her life and started her own family.

4.4 Middle Adulthood (40 to 65 years)

As Mckonie was working as a professional nurse she faced new challenges every day. She was touched by the fact that sometimes she had to deal with mentally disturbed patients but she couldn’t assist them since she was not trained to deal with such cases. These challenges were a threat to her ambitions of making a positive difference in her community. However, in 1972, she decided to pursue her diploma in Psychiatry in Queenstown. A passion to make a difference in her society was the driving force behind Mckonie’s commitment to her work. According to McAdams (2004) this period may bring opportunities concerning new goals to increase an

individual's potential as regards the future. One of the greatest achievements during this period was getting a driver's licence on her 40th birthday. During those days, having a driver's licence was viewed as an achievement especially among black females. Besides that, a car was viewed as a status symbol. Only rich people could afford to own a car.

She said in the interview "*During those days it was believed that only men can drive cars. I was one of the few black women to drive a car in our community. A few people could afford to buy a car in our community*". After completing her Psychiatry course in 1979, Mckonie returned to Port Elizabeth to pursue her career. Now that she was driving, Mckonie was able to reach out to many people in her community especially the victims of apartheid. During this period, many youth in New Brighton were brutally assaulted by the police when they protested against the apartheid government. Mckonie played a significant role in providing medication to those who were injured during the protests. As mentioned earlier, New Brighton was one of the strong bases for *Umkhonto weSizwe*. Inspired by her husband who was a staunch ANC supporter, Mckonie risked her career and life by providing assistance to the victims of apartheid. This era consists of the following periods:

- Entry Life structure for Middle Adulthood (45-50 years)
- Age 50 Transition
- Culminating life structure for Middle Adulthood (55-60 years)

During this time Mckonie had completed all the courses that were necessary for her to fulfill her dreams. She started enjoying her work since she now had the necessary skills. However, according to Levinson (1996) the phase of traumatic termination implies to complete loss of get in touch with loved ones and this may trigger feelings of sadness, grief and heartache. According to Vuyiswa Mckonie, she describes this period as 'emotionally draining'. Besides

work related challenges, she had to deal with the realities of death. This was a painful period for Mrs Mckonie. Her son was involved in an accident and died on the spot. She said in the interview: *“One day we were sitting at home and my son was playing with his friends outside. A few minutes we received the bad news that my son was hit by a car just in front of our gate, it was painful. It was not easy to cope with the loss of my first born child, nevertheless I remained strong.”*

According to Levinson’s (1996) notion of this period an individual becomes psychologically and emotionally stable as they make choices aimed at developing their future. It is evident that Mrs Mckonie’s career was taking off and she also took necessary steps that would allow her to get where she wanted to be. With that being said she also had to face heartaches and pain as she had to come to terms with her child’s death.

This period was more painful for Mckonie. On her 50th birthday, she received bad news. Her mother had died after a short illness. This was another blow after the death of her son. This time it was too much for her. During the interview, it was clear judging from her facial expression that the loss of her mother was the most traumatizing event in her life. She further said: *“It was difficult to come to terms with the death of my mother. She was very healthy when she died. I was shocked to receive the news that she passed away after a short illness.”*

Mckonie’s mother died at a time when her father had lost his arm in an accident. The fact that her father was no longer working meant that she had to take care of her young sisters and brothers. This was an additional burden given that she had to take care of her own family as well. Her job was demanding too. Despite all these challenges she remained focused and motivated to make a positive change in people’s lives. When asked how she managed to balance

her family and work demands, Mckonie indicated that the desire to make a difference in the society made her feel strong every time when she did something meaningful for her community. Mckonie described how she discouraged her father from marrying another woman. Due to fear of the unknown, Mckonie was not sure what would happen to her young sisters and brothers if her father was going to marry another wife. She also said: *“One day I found him (her father) with a woman in the house. I chased the woman. I didn’t want him to get married again. I told him that my mother was the only woman in his life”*. Mckonie’s father had no choice but to agree to the demands of her daughter and he decided not to marry again.

According to Levinson’s notion of this period, individuals attempt to make some changes in their lives. This was evident in Mckonie’s case as she found something meaningful for her when she helped those in needs in her community. Despite the challenges that she had to face at this period in her life, she had attempted successfully in finding ways to cope with the demands and challenges that she went through at the time.

During this time, Mckonie’s husband was ordained as a priest. This was another addition to Mckonie’s responsibility besides being a nurse, mother and custodian of her siblings; she had to support her husband. As the priest’s wife, Mckonie used to accompany her husband within Eastern Cape Province in areas such as Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage and Grahamstown. Being a priest’s wife also provided Mckonie with an opportunity to contribute positively in her society. She said: *“Being a priest’s wife was very demanding; I had to make sure I had to support my husband. We used to travel around Eastern Cape visiting parishes”*.

In 1993, when she was 56, her father passed away. At the time of his death, her father was now staying with her in Port Elizabeth. She said that *“my father died in this house”*.

However, Mrs Mckonie further reports as she pointed to the bedroom where her father was sleeping at the time of his death. This was another painful blow to Mckonie who had to deal with the realities of being an orphan, first born, priest's wife, mother and a nurse. As if that was not enough, her second born son also died the same year in a bus accident. Despite these challenges she remained focused on her career. According to Levinson's notion of this period, individuals enjoy the fruits of their efforts. It is also characterized by rich satisfaction and bitter disappointment. Mrs Mckonie enjoyed being a nurse and the satisfaction that came from doing her job. So many of her close family members died, and when she was asked about what death meant to her at the time, she said this was painful but there was nothing she could do about as it happened to other people too. Despite all the sorrow this did not kill her spirit nor demotivated her in helping those who were in need. However, according to Levinson's notion of this period, individuals evaluate the past and prepare for the future. This was an age where she started preparing for the future as she was close to retirement.

4.5 Late Adulthood (60 to death)

In 1997, Mckonie retired from nursing at the age of 60 years. Despite having retired from nursing, she continued to pursue her dreams (making a positive change in her community) by working as a volunteer for various health institutions in Port Elizabeth. Mrs Mckonie played an instrumental role in coordinating HIV awareness campaigns in Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality (New Brighton clinic, Zwide, Motherwell and Uitenhage). During this period Mrs Mckonie was also involved in research projects that were being conducted by Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

However, when she was asked about her lifestyle as this era is recognized as a final one in human development, Mckonie had this to say: *"What keeps me young is that I exercise a lot. I*

wake up every day in the morning and do exercises. I am 77 years old now but if you look at me you might think I am still young. Most people of my age are now struggling to walk". Mckonie recalled her encounter with one community member who warned her about running alone early in the morning in the township. However, this did not discourage Mackonie. After seeing her commitment in living a healthy life, Mckonie was elected as the Chairperson for HOZA Golden Age Club – a Sports Recreation for the Metro. As the chairperson she has the opportunity to change people's lives by encouraging people to be involved in sports as a way of living a healthy life. At church, her role as a mentor for young couples and the youth is also recognized.

Similarly, in 2008, just before the Easter holiday, death visited her house again. This time it was her best friend and husband, Mr Mckonie. Her husband died of a heart attack. This was a difficult period for her since she had to face the realities of staying alone and yet remain strong as a mentor to her community. In recognition of her work, Mckonie was given a car by General Motors in Port Elizabeth so that she could use it to make a positive difference in the community. According to Levinson (1996) the era of Late adulthood is characterized by episodes of decline and opportunity for development. It appears Mckonie's late adulthood era was characterized by opportunity for development rather than episodes for decline as suggested by Levinson's theory. Despite the fact that her husband passed away during this period, Mckonie remained focused towards making a difference in her community.



Leading by example: Mckonie (Chair lady for HOZA, standing) poses for a photo during a meeting at their venue in New Brighton

Even during this era, Mckonie did not lose touch with people despite her retirement; in fact she had the opportunity to interact with many people in her community. As the pastor's wife and volunteer, Mckonie managed to use her counseling skills to provide mentoring and coaching to the youth in church and community. Using her midwifery expertise Mckonie became more involved in assisting pregnant mothers in the community.



Making a difference at Ethiopian Church. Vuyiswa Mckonie (middle) together with other elders listens to words of wisdom from the Bishop. The elders, who act as mentors, are responsible for providing advice to the youth on various issues affecting them.

Furthermore, in her teachings she followed the constitution of Mother's Union (uManyano IwaManina) **Senze Thixo sibengabafazi abakholelekileyo**, further explanation is entailed in Appendix E and was compiled by Rev M.W. Gcule in 1923 at Gribira Village in Middledrift, in the Eastern Cape, by implementing all what it entails to groom women of African tradition. Mckonie further explained how she employs her leadership qualities in church, firstly by being a priest's wife one has to be emotional matured because you meet people from different environments with different mindsets. For instance, she mentioned that from 1995 to 2004 (that is for 10 years period) she was appointed to be the chairperson of the Girl's Guild at Diocesan level of the Eastern Cape and it was a challenging position because nowadays children have bigger challenges than children of the past. However, she has assisted them by initiating support groups and offers them with awareness programs, and counseling sessions, she named few major obstacles that the youth of today is face with, however she managed challenges and others she referred them for social worker intervention. They are namely: Family - role of parents, Peers -

peer pressure and substance abuse, Schools - high rate of pregnancy and absenteeism, Neighbourhood - problematic behaviors, Spiritual – community involvement and church values, Media and Cultural norms. In addition, Mckonie further explained that our church continues to play an important role in shaping building our society, influencing government policy, and improving the lives of people in our communities. Today we acknowledge and applaud the efforts our church and church leaders for the positive role they are playing in our communities often taking the lead in social. Despite all, it is an honour and privilege for her to take part in such special occasions, where young women of “Umzi wase Tiyopiya iTyalike” are gathered to remind the young women of their role and significance in today’s world. For true authentic African values and principles, by stood for what they believed in, that Africa knew God before the missionaries came here. Mckonie further explains that their fore fathers and mothers wanted Africans to know and experience their God in their own way, and not to be brain washed by the western mentality, which said that everything that was African is inferior.

A member of the community Mrs Majola was interviewed to find out more about Mckonie’s life story. Mckonie did not follow the sequence of Levinson (1996) stages of development completely at this stage. However, Levinson (1996) implies this period as traumatic to individuals as they move out of centre stage and establish a new sense of self. Individuals will also begin to assess their involvement in the society and the need to improve their lives. According to Mrs Majola, this stage for Mackonie was more energetic even though it was a period of decline in health as indicated in Levinson’s (1996) theory. Mrs Majola describes her as someone who is selfless, humble and emotionally attached to her community.

Her friend said: *“Mrs Mckonie is a very active and hardworking woman. At her age, she is still very actively involved in sports. She likes having fun with her colleagues at HOZA. But*

when it comes to work she means business. As the chairlady she is someone with a vision to lead.”

The club under the leadership of Mckonie has attracted the attention of the media and the government in Port Elizabeth and Eastern Cape. In November 2013, the club’s initiatives made headlines in most newspapers in Port Elizabeth. In that same year, the club attracted the attention of the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture which donated



Fulfilling her dreams. Mrs V.Mckonie (middle) donates jerseys to more than 50 disadvantaged students at Stephen Mazungula in Port Elizabeth



Second from left Mrs V.Mckonie and her colleagues donating jerseys to the disadvantaged at Missionvale Health Centre

bowling equipment after being impressed by the club’s initiatives. Asked what the club is doing for the community, Mrs Majola further reports that lives of many have changed due to Mrs Mckonie’s positive ideas in building their community. She also mentioned that: *“Under the leadership of Mrs V.M, HOZA has changed the lives of many in PE and Eastern Cape Province. The club so far has donated more than 50 jerseys per school in the Metro. The jerseys are donated to disadvantaged learners in PE as well as at other schools outside Port Elizabeth.”*

“The club has become very popular. We have around 40 members now but unfortunately we can’t take more members since our venue is very small. A lot of people are interested and appreciates our work and they are willing to support whenever we need support.”



Making headlines. Mrs V.Mckonie with a maroon Cap (far right) receives a prize from the chairperson of sports and recreation in 2012.



Celebrating love. Mrs V.Mckonie second from right with other HOZA members.

Mrs Majola also gave testament of how Mackonie is still using her expertise as a professional nurse to make a difference in her community especially among the elderly. Mrs Majola highlighted that Mckonie has assisted many people to live a healthy life in New Brighton (testing blood pressure for free and providing advice on how to stay healthy). Mckonie has also been involved in New Brighton clean-up campaign projects that are aimed at keeping the township clean.



Granny and the kids. Mrs V.Mckonie (far right) poses for a photo after donating jerseys at Mboniselo Primary School in Motherwell, Port Elizabeth

Recognizing her efforts in making a difference in the community, Mckonie was awarded a certificate of recognition in 2012. The certificate is a form of acknowledgement and appreciation for her contributions to the community by the Golden Age Club and Algoa Bay Council.



Certificate of Recognition awarded in 2012 to Mrs V.Mckonie

The narrative provided by Mrs Majola reinforces the driving force behind Vuyiswa Mckonie's ability to balance energy for caring which is a sense of purpose and the hunger to make a positive difference in the community. One word can perfectly describe Mrs Vuyiswa Mckonie 'Extraordinary'.

However, according to Levinson's notion of this era, individuals move out of the centre stage and assess the desire to contribute positively to society. It was evident when Mrs Mckonie retired she got involved in so many projects in order to contribute to society positively.

More interviews were conducted with family members. According to Vuyiswa, Mckonie's niece, her teachings changed the lives of the youth who lacked career guidance due to lack of educated people who could act as agents of change in their society. Her resilience despite the death of family members and stress associated with multiple care giver roles (being a nurse, mother, priest's wife and a volunteer) proves beyond doubt that Mckonie is an extraordinary person whose life story will be a living testament even after her death. Asked how she remained physically and emotionally strong despite losing family members and a stressful career, Mckonie was keen to share her secret, which is, exercising and the ability to move on.

She said during the interview: *"I exercise every day; I am actively involved in various sporting activities. I am still very strong. Some grannies of my age are now struggling to walk now. Well, when it comes to coping with life challenges, I have to admit my life was tough but I always told myself that I have to move on. If you can't mend it forget it and move on."*

Lastly and more importantly, Mckonie all through her life has been multitasking all her roles. Her daughter, (Babalwa) and grandchildren describe her as a loving, warm, caring and very strict mother but who is always there for her family. For instance, Babalwa further reports

that when her family or family friends have bereavements or any other events her mother will attend even if it's outside Port Elizabeth. Her granddaughter (Siyamthanda) reports that she even attends her school functions and she does not mind even if it's during the evening as she is there to support her family member. Her grandson (Sibusiso) said she is a role model to him and too many in her community because she loves education, and he is one of the graduates from their family through her inspiration, encouragement and support. However, after her retirement as a fulltime nurse, one could have expected her to take a rest given that nursing is a demanding and stressful profession. However, Mckonie after her retirement had a different meaning towards life as compared to other people of her age. In other words, upon her retirement she was involved in various projects (as mentioned earlier) aimed at improving people's lives. As put by Mabbett (1987), people who engage in multiple caring roles (like Vuyiswa Mckonie) are driven by an extra-ordinary sense of purpose and passion to improve the lives of their communities.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed plan of how the study was executed. The procedures followed by the researcher when conducting the study were clearly outlined. To ensure that the study is scientifically sound, procedures to ensure the study is valid and reliable were put in place. The researcher also ensured that all ethical considerations were followed.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Revisiting the purpose of the study

This is a final chapter of which it addresses and provides the summary, limitations and recommendations of this study. This is psychobiographical study with an aim to document and explain the life of an unsung heroine, Vuyiswa Mckonie within the framework of Levinson's life structure theory (Levinson, 1996). This study is based on the premise that development of individuals is a progression of four eras, namely: Pre-adulthood, Early adulthood, Middle adulthood, and Late adulthood, and three transitional periods (early adult transition, midlife transition, late adult transition) as suggested by Levinson.

The study at hand brings similar perspectives and hypothesis to that proposed by Levinson (1996), and it appears that the primary components of life structure such as work, relationships, career decisions, community and religious affiliations, political circumstances all had a significant influence, particularly on Vuyiswa Mckonie's passion of making a difference in her community. Vuyiswa Mckonie's choices appear to have evolved around making a distinction in people's lives.

However, the hunger of making a difference in people's lives has motivated Mckonie to pursue further nursing courses and to work as a volunteer in her community. Political circumstances (apartheid) seem to have motivated Mckonie to be a very strong and courageous woman who sometimes drove during the night to provide medical/health assistance to the victims of shootings. Furthermore, her religious affiliation (as a staunch member of the Ethiopian

Church whose principles were anti-apartheid and were more aligned to ANC) played a significant role in motivating her to be actively involved in politics. The uniqueness of Vuyiswa Mckonie was confirmed by her resilience despite the demanding nature of her career and the loss of family members.

5. 2 Summary of the research findings

This study contributes to the literature of the unsung heroines of South Africa. Vuyiswa Mckonie has, throughout her life, worked tirelessly to make a difference in her community. The study uncovers Mckonie's life and how she contributed to making a difference in people lives using Levinson's theory. Given the history of apartheid in South Africa, the stories of black heroines (like Vuyiswa Mckonie) might have been under-estimated or deliberately ignored. Furthermore, given the patriarchal nature of the African society, the role of women is often under-valued.

Mrs Mckonie's role in the fight against apartheid cannot be ignored. Firstly, as a staunch member of the ANC in the 1980s during riots, she provided medical support to black youths who were injured while fighting against the apartheid government. Given the political history of New Brighton (where Umkhonto weSizwe, the armed wing of ANC was formed), protests, violence and shootings were the norm of the day. The majority of black youth who were injured during protests were left unattended. As one of the few qualified nurses in the community she worked overtime to ensure that the victims of apartheid received treatment. Secondly, as one of the few black nurses in New Brighton, and fully aware of the plight of her fellow black women who were dying while giving birth, Mckonie saved a lot of lives in New Brighton through her home visits where she used to assist pregnant women to safely give birth. The fact that Mckonie decided to

enroll for a midwifery course provides evidence that she was a selfless woman who was prepared to help people without expecting recognition or reward.

Thirdly, through her teachings as a mother and priest's wife, Vuyiswa Mckonie (who was the chairperson of what was known as the *uManyano LwaManina* / Mother's Union of Umzi waseTiyopiya / Ethiopian Church) became a role model for the youth.

5.3 Challenges and limitations

Psychobiographical studies have limitations that may present the researcher with certain difficulties during the process of a research study. These limitations were previously discussed in chapter 4 of this study; therefore the focus here will be exclusively on the limitations of the current psychobiography. Firstly, with many commonalities between the subject and the researcher, similarities such as gender, race, and culture, this enabled the researcher to relate with Vuyiswa Mckonie on many aspects of her life. However, this could be a limitation and a likelihood of the researcher idealizing the subject. This was addressed by consulting with the research supervisor for this study, communicating about it and being aware of this possible threat. Secondly, another limitation was the sensitive topics with rich information that Mckonie was not at liberty to share that she regarded as personal to her life story pertaining to the Entry for Early adulthood (22-28 years). Respondents may not divulge some information due to factors such as personality, religious, affiliation and culture. In addition, the information that exists about her during this time relates mainly to her career involvement and this proved to be a limitation of the current psychobiography as it mainly focused on that aspect of her life. Finally, the absence of supporting documents such as diaries and reports about her might have had an

impact on the completeness and accuracy of the information gathered for psychological interpretation as well.

5.4 The value of this study

This psychobiographical research has provided the first psychological explanation on the life of an unsung heroine, Vuyiswa Mckonie, whose contribution to the society cannot be overlooked. Her life story was evaluated through the theoretical content of human developmental stages proposed by Levinson (1996).

The human life developmental theory (1996) has served to illustrate an individual whose life stretched to late adulthood era provided. However, the researcher had the opportunity to perceive patterns, eras and transitional periods according a specific sequence. This would not have been attained if a mere fragment of Vuyiswa Mckonie's life had been not selected for the study.

This study suggest that in Vuyiswa Mckonie's case, like that of many other well-known individuals such as Mother Teresa (Stroud,2004), and Professor Chris Barnard (Van Niekerk ,2007) her extraordinary achievements are closely related to the central components of her life. Lastly, but not of the least the significance of describing and exploring Vuyiswa Mckonie's life with a formal theoretical framework has revealed both useful for human developmental theory as well as making clear the uniqueness of individuals. Therefore, the researcher is of the opinion that engaging in psychobiographical research is an exceptional exercise in the psychological curriculum.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

The researcher recommends that further in-depth research, possibly be considered on doctoral level, so as to produce a comprehensive data and understanding about the life of Mrs Vuyiswa Mackonie. The researcher was solely depending on the data collected from Mrs Mackonie, Mrs Majola and family members during interviews. However, Mackonie`s extend family, ex-colleagues, church members and some community members could be engaged so as to gain comprehensive knowledge and information about her life.

5.6 Conclusion

This study has explored and described the life story of Vuyiswa Mckonie whose work has not been fortunate to find a place in the books of history. As mentioned earlier, the absence of such heroines in South African literature could be due to the fact that apartheid regime did not recognizes the good work from non-whites. This study allowed the researcher to integrate the life of Vuyiswa Mckonie within the framework of Levinson`s (1996) theory of the Human Life Cycle. It appears the primary components of life structure such as work, community and religious affiliations, and political circumstances had a significant influence on Mckonie`s passion of making a difference in her community while some other aspects of the theory has fully confirmed the developmental stages, eras and transitions of Vuyiswa Mckonie. The study suggests that while primary components such as family might have influenced Vuyiswa Mckonie`s career choice, her passion to make a difference in her community and her resilience were her inner motivation that made her to be the person she is today. Vuyiswa Mckonie`s ability to sustain energy for caring despite her demanding roles serves as an example of an extraordinary person who was driven by a sense of purpose and passion to make a difference in her community.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

This is qualitative study which will use in-depth interviews to collect data. The interviews will be iterative and fluid, as such they will evolve around the following questions:

1. How does Mrs. VM remain motivated in adversity and other circumstances?
 - a) What were the challenges affecting the development of Mrs. VM?
 - b) What kept her motivated to be such a woman?
2. How did Mrs. VM balance work, home and social life?
 - a) What are Mrs. VM duties at home?
 - b) What are her other responsibilities at work?
 - c) How does she balance these duties with her social life?
3. How has Mrs. VM's background influenced the person she has become?
 - a) What was the background like?
 - b) How did it influence or affect her?

There may be other questions which are not listed here which might emerge during interviews.

The above is not necessarily the structure and order to be followed during an interview but a general guide to an interview.

APPENDIX B

LETTER TO THE PARTICIPANT

My name is Vunyiwe Baatjies and I am currently studying for my Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College. A requirement of my degree is to complete a research study. My study is interested in exploring and describing the life of a chosen individual with a formal psychological theory

You are being invited to participate in this research as an ordinary person, but yet possessing leadership qualities, and a volunteer in community outreach programmes. There will be no direct benefit to you if you participate in this research, but your participation is likely to help generate knowledge and greater understanding on how you stayed grounded and motivated as a mother, professional nurse and a priest's wife as the community sees you as an extraordinary person. Confidentiality will be ensured, as the research data will be available to the researcher and her supervisor. Anonymity will also be ensured by omitting any identifying characteristic such as your name in writing.

Nothing included in the research project will be shared with anybody outside the research team.

If you have any queries please feel free to contact me.



APPENDIX C

CONSENT LETTER

Introduction

My name is Vunyiwe Baatjies and I am currently studying my Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College. A requirement of my degree is to complete a research study. My study is interested in exploring and describing the life chosen individual with a formal psychological theory.

You are being invited to participate in this research as an ordinary person, but yet possessing leadership qualities, and a volunteer in community outreach programmes. There will be no direct benefit to you if you participate in this research, but your participation is likely to help generate knowledge and greater understanding on how you stayed grounded and motivated as a mother, professional nurse and a priest's wife as the community sees you as an extraordinary person. Confidentiality will be ensured, as the research data will be available to the researcher and her supervisor. Anonymity will also be ensured by omitting any identifying characteristic such as your name in writing.

Nothing included in the research project will be shared with anybody outside the research team.

If you have any queries please feel free to contact me (Vunyiwe Baatjies 0827137720/

Informed consent

I Vunyiwe Mckonic have read the information about this study and understand the explanations of it given to me verbally. I have had my questions concerning the study answered and understand what will be required of me if I take part in this study.

Signature  Date 26.03.2012

208521247@ukzn.ac.za/ nhunhusandi@gmail.com) or my supervisor (Grahame Hayes: 031 262 4374/ hayes@ukzn.ac.za/ grahame.hayes@gmail.com grahame.hayes@gamil.com).

APPENDIX D

Table 1 Levinson's (1996) Periods in the Eras of Development

Era of Pre-adulthood (0-22) (1937-1959)	Era of Early Adulthood (22-45) (1959-1982	Era of Middle Adulthood (40-65) (1982-2002)	Era of Late Adulthood (60-death) (2002till date)
1. Infancy (birth- 2 years) 2. Early Childhood (2-6) 3. Middle Childhood (6-12) 4. Adolescent (12-17) 5. Era of early adulthood transition (17-22)	1. Entry life structure (22-28) 2. Age 30 transition (28-33) 3. Culminating life structure (33-40) 4. Middle life transition (40-45)	1. Early life structure for middle adulthood (45-50) 2. Age 50 transition (50-55) 3. Culminating life structure for middle adulthood (55-60) 4. Late Adulthood transition (60-65)	Era of late adulthood (65-death)

APPENDIX E

LORD, SPEAK YOUR WORDS OF GRACE THROUGH US (WOMEN)

“So He assured them with kind words that touched their hearts” Genesis 50:21 Words can do many things. They can inform. They can amuse, confuse, lie, slander (insult) and condemn (criticize/attack). They can destroy a person’s reputation. They can also challenge, heal, inspire, build up and strengthen a person. Choosing what words to say is an art. Learning the right words to say is a sign of maturity.

When we analyze these words/ singathi: Joseph was a man with man skills. He had an insight to plan the future provision of food be the drought in Egypt. Then, he was able to manage the whole crisis. (Xa sizekelisa singathi, Abafazi/ Amakhosikazi akholelekileyo nobulumko ngabo abathi bahlangabeze ngamaxesha entlupheko elizweni). He was noble enough to forgive his brothers the hurt they had done him. And he was willing to use his power to help the very brothers who had done such evil to him. (Omama ngabadali boxolo). Then, with their father Jacob dead and their consciences painful, he could have ‘rubbed it in’ and scored a few points off them. He didn’t. (Umama akahlekisi ngentlungu yomnye instead ungumthuthuzeli). From the bigness of his massive heart he spoke kind words to his brothers, words that helped, healed and forgave. (Umlomo wakhe uwuvula ngobunono nothando akagwagwisi). He put the mess of all years behind him, and reminded them of God of their fathers and his grace. (Akayilibali imvelaphi yakhe nofefe athe uThixo wasibabala ngalo ngamaxesha obunzima).

Always remember that it is by his grace of God that you are and what you are. Ukuba sikhumbule ukuba izinto esizizo sizizo ngobabalo lwakhe). And remember from that from the cross Jesus spoke kind words- to those who had crucified him and repentant thief next to him.

Use kind words yourself, whenever you can. Restrain yourself from bitterness and revenge. Overcome strained relationships with praise, thanks and appreciation. **Words of recommendation/ praise for work well done go a long way to motivate people and build community.** (Imanyano Yomama ingumqolo wetyalike, balilitye lembombo, bangabakhi belizwe kwaye bafanelwe kukubongwa nangokuzukisa igama lomdali wethu uYesu Kristu, Amen). Let us sow the seed of goodwill, kindness and helpfulness and be the guide of GOD'S grace. **SENZE THIXO SIBENGABAFAZI ABAKHOLELEKILEYO, NOTHANDO NOBULUMKO BOKUQHUBA LENQWELO YEVANGELI YAKHO.** (Constitution of Women's Union /Umgaqo Wamanina Omzi waseTiyopiya. Compiled by Late Rev M.W. Gcule, 1923).