

# **THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF URBAN BLACK MEN**

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for  
the degree of

**DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY**

in the subject

**PSYCHOLOGY**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**JUNE 1996**

## ***ABSTRACT***

The purpose of this study is to provide a groundwork for the understanding of the psychosocial development of black South African men. This need stems from the limitation of current models of psychosocial development, which have a white, middle-class bias, and from the dearth of research relating to black psychosocial development in South Africa.

Questions which have guided the present study include the following: What is the nature of the psychosocial development of black men? What are the main developmental tasks that they have to negotiate, especially in relation to family and career? How do sociocultural, political and economic factors influence development? How does the development of black South African men compare with other conceptualisations of adult development?

Daniel Levinson's (1978) theory of the life structure was used as a framework to explore these questions. This involved a series of in depth qualitative interviews with eight men between the ages of 29 and 41, from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds. The grounded theory approach used to analyse the data involved the simultaneous process of data collection and data analysis. Similarities and differences in the men's evolving life structures were identified through a process of coding, or organising the data into categories and themes.

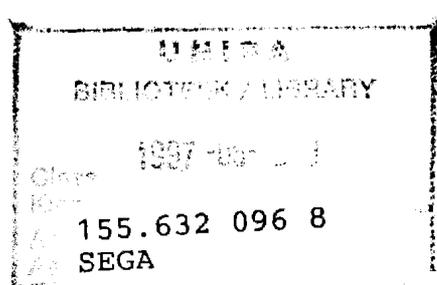
The findings highlighted the importance of understanding the dialectical nature of development, the role of life events, and the significance of role strain across the life span of black South African adults. Discrimination, economic constraints, traditional values, and the sociopolitical context were found to have an impact on the important developmental tasks. The coping strategies employed to deal with external barriers had an especially influential impact on the men's evolving life structures. A model of psychosocial development was proposed which addresses these factors, and which is thus more relevant to the lives of black South African men, than stage models such as Levinson's.

Important implications on a societal and theoretical level, and for the professional practice of psychology emerged. It is hoped that these findings will enrich developmental theory in psychology training programmes, and guide career and personal counselling in the South African context.

Psychosocial Development; Early Adulthood; Adult Development; Black Adult Development; Life Structure; Career Development; Life Span Development; Psychobiography; Qualitative Research; Levinsonian Study

*In loving memory of my parents,  
Mark and Helen Segal*

*And to my wife, Ruth*



01677362

## ***ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS***

I am especially grateful to my supervisor, Prof Cora Moore, and co-supervisor, Dr Elsje Cronjé, for providing such rich and incisive input, without imposing their views onto the research process, and thus allowing me to tell my story.

I would also like to thank the following people:

- \* The eight men, for letting me enter their lives, and so humanely telling me their stories.
- \* My wife, Ruth, for her enthusiasm and commitment to this project; and for her love, support and vital input (from typing to editing) throughout this project.
- \* Melanie Burman for her valuable help and interest.
- \* David Burman for the generous use of his computer.
- \* The Unisa library staff, and James Kitching in particular, for opening up a wealth of information to me.
- \* Claudette Nöthnagel for her valuable technical guidance.

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"Those were the hard years ...."

(F, second interview, 2 June 1993)

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

### General Introduction

The study of adult development is "surprisingly undeveloped" in the field of psychology (Newman & Newman, 1988, p.213), and has until recently been treated with "benign neglect" (Wrightsman, 1994a, p.1). While most research in the recent past focused on development during infancy, childhood and adolescence, very little research explored development during adulthood (Nemiroff & Colarusso, 1990; Newman & Newman, 1988; Schaie & Geiwitz, 1982; Williams & Willie, 1990). Moreover, it seems that while the periods of old-age and middle-age have received modest attention by developmental psychologists (Havinghurst, 1973), research has only focused on important issues and themes in early adulthood in the last 10 to 15 years (Gerdes, Moore & Van Ede, 1988).

The paucity of research on psychosocial development during adulthood, in the past, has been greatly due to the perception that most personality growth and development occurred in the younger years, with very few age-related changes during adulthood (Nemiroff & Colarusso, 1990; Settlege, Curtis & Lozoff, 1988; Williams & Willie, 1990). Much of the early work in the field of developmental psychology was influenced by the work of Freud who conceptualised development as a number of psychosexual stages ending in adolescence (Nemiroff & Colarusso, 1990; Settlege et al., 1988). In contrast the adult years were viewed as being static and lacking developmental potential (Nemiroff & Colarusso, 1990). It was only with the realisation of the effect that the social, cultural and technological contexts have on a person's life, that psychologists have begun to investigate the psychological development of adults (Schaie & Geiwitz, 1982; Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992).

With the realisation that there is indeed change and growth during the adult years, has come a dramatic increase of research in the field

of adult development overseas (Birren & Birren, 1990). Slagle (1992, p.33) expresses it well when he says we are now entering "the century of the adult" in terms of developmental research, while Stevens-Long and Commons (1992) assert that it is now impossible to cover all the new research with confidence. Unfortunately, most of the research, including the research of Levinson (1978), upon which the present research is based, has been conducted from the perspective of white, middle class Americans. Herbert (1989, p.xv), writing from an American perspective puts it blatantly when he says: "There is almost no research that considers developmental and life issues of black male adults." Ross (1984, p.418) concurs with this by exclaiming that, "in spite of this interest in adult development, I was unable to find relevant research examining the similarities and differences between various cultural groups".

Similarly, writing from a South African perspective, Freeman (1993) points out that there is a gap in knowledge on psychological development in the South African context. Dawes and Donald (1994, p.262) have also emphasised that psychology in the South African context, has had little contact with black developmental concerns. This is borne out by the almost complete lack of research of black adult development in South Africa. To be sure there has been some research concerning psychosocial development during adolescence and youth (Freeman, 1993; Myburg & Anders, 1989; Myburg & Smith, 1990), and even during middle adulthood (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993), but no comprehensive research could be identified which has focused on the period of young adulthood.

Psychosocial development in the South African context remains, therefore, to quote from Newman and Newman (1982, p.4) "clothed in research darkness". The fundamental purpose of the present research is to bring light to this darkness by exploring the psychosocial development of black South African men.

The rest of this chapter will outline the basis, framework and process of this exploration.

## Definition of Terms

### The Life Structure

The present research is based on the influential work of Levinson (1978) and more particularly his concept of the evolving life structure. Just as Levinson's research was directed to the general question: "What does it mean to be an adult?", so too will this research address the question: "What does it mean to be a young black adult?" in the South African context. This will be facilitated through an exploration of the life structure of black South African men.

The life structure is the pivotal concept of Levinson's theory. It refers to the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time, "a meshing of self-in-world" (Levinson, 1986, p.278). The life structure, thus, has both internal (psychological) and external (social) aspects. The external aspects include the significant people, social systems and sociocultural world with which the person interacts. The internal aspects include the person's desires, anxieties and conflicts that are lived out in these relationships, as well as the ways of coping with these conflicts. The most important relationships, or the central components of the life structure, are the person's marriage, family and occupation.

The life structure evolves through a series of structure building (or stable periods), and structure changing (or transitional periods). The nature of the choices, issues and commitments are different during the different periods. The developmental tasks that the person has to negotiate are integral to these periods.

Life structure, as used in the present study, thus includes the meaning certain relationships have for the person during his psychosocial development (including relationships with significant others and the sociocultural world); the nature of the choices, and developmental tasks that the person has to negotiate; as well as the values, beliefs and priorities that the person has during his development.

### Early Adulthood

Although the definition of early adulthood depends on cultural perceptions and the sociohistorical context (Kimmel, 1990; Neugarten & Datan, 1973), it is generally considered that a person has reached early adulthood when issues of establishing emotional, personal and economic independence become paramount, as well as the acceptance of the responsibilities relating to adult roles regarding occupation, marriage and parenthood (Gerdes et al., 1988; Papalia & Olds, 1995; Santrock, 1985; Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992). The age when this occurs varies slightly according to different authors, but most agree that early adulthood stretches from the late teens to the late thirties.

Levinson (1978), whose work the present research stems from, stipulates the ages from around 17 to 40, as the era of early adulthood. This includes the Novice Phase of development (from around 17 to 32), in which the person is faced with the challenge of developing a viable life structure, and the Settling Down period (from around 32 to 39) in which the person works hard at completing the era of early adulthood.

While the era of early adulthood will be the focus of the present research, the era of pre-adulthood must also be considered because of its impact on later development.

### **Research into Adult Development**

Levinson (1978), whose work was initially published in his book "The Seasons of a Man's Life", has been described as a pioneer in the field of adult development (Manganyi, 1991). Many researchers concur with Slagle (1992, p.39) that Levinson has made a "major contribution to the theory of adult development by providing a rich and comprehensive theory of the process of development".

The richness and comprehensiveness of Levinson's theory is evident in the way in which he has managed to combine influences from divergent perspectives (Wrightsmann, 1994a). Levinson's work is based on the

ideas of Erik Erikson, and Robert Havighurst (Santrock, 1985; Sugarman, 1986). Erikson's (1968; 1982) psychosocial model, with its emphasis on development as a series of stages, with concomitant crises that have to be negotiated, has had a particularly powerful influence on Levinson's theory. Havighurst's (1972) ideas are apparent in Levinson's emphasis upon developmental tasks that the individual has to negotiate during the evolution of the life structure. There are also many similarities between Levinson's work and other contemporary stage theorists such as Gould (1978), Vaillant & Vaillant (1990) and Sheehy (1976).

Moreover, there is also evidence of the influence of other non-stage theories on Levinson's (1978) conceptualisation of adult development. For instance dialectical ideas are evident in Levinson's theory (Wrightsmann, 1994a). The notion of a dynamic struggle between opposites, which is the cornerstone of the dialectical approach, is especially evident in the struggle between opposing forces, or choices, during middle adulthood in Levinson's scheme. Levinson's model also has important elements of the life events framework (Brown & Harris, 1989). The external events which are fundamental to shaping development, according to the life events framework, are synonymous with the external aspects of the life structure in Levinson's model. Even the constructivist model of adult development (Berzonsky, 1992; Nurmi, 1993; Viney, 1992), which might seem to be radically different to Levinson's model, can enrich our understanding of Levinson's scheme. The constructivist paradigm highlights the person's mental representations, or subjective construction of reality, which is an integral aspect of the life structure.

While Levinson's (1978) theory is both comprehensive and rich it (and indeed the other stage models of adult development) has been fervently criticised for being based on white middle class men (Bee, 1987, 1994; Gooden, 1989; Ross, 1984). Levinson's research can thus "be seen as manifesting a narrow white perspective on adult development" (Herbert, 1989, p. xvii). This means his findings are culture specific and sex specific (Bee, 1987) in the sense that it is difficult to generalise his findings to other cultures, to other classes, or to women.

Some overseas research attempted to address this limitation. Thus research, based on Levinson's framework, has considered the evolution of the life structure of black men (Gooden, 1989; Herbert, 1989), black women (Ruffin, 1989), and women in general (Adams, 1983; Droege, 1982; Furst, 1983). Research has also focused on other cultures (Hogan & York, 1989; Lim, 1986; Ross, 1984). The research conducted with black American men and women has clearly indicated the negative effect of social forces, societal restrictions, and discrimination on the formation of a viable life structure. Moreover, research conducted with other cultures has indicated that there are important cultural differences in adult development (Hogan & York, 1989; Lim, 1986).

Although the above-mentioned studies focused on different cultures, they were still conducted overseas, and their findings cannot be generalised to the South African context. This is due to the fact that the psychological development of the person must always be considered in relation to the sociocultural background, the values and norms of the time, and the political and economic system (Gerdes et al, 1988).

However, the study of adult development in the South African context (as has already been pointed out) has received very little attention. There is thus a pressing need for research in this direction.

#### **Reasons for Focusing on Black South African Men**

While the focus on black adults was decided upon with this knowledge gap in mind, the inclusion of only men in the sample, is in line with the trend evident in other life structure research, that men research men, and women research women. This trend was initiated by Levinson (1978) and continued by other researchers in the field. Thus, the doctoral research concerning the life structure of women has been conducted by women and has included **only** women in the sample (Adams, 1983; Droege, 1982; Furst, 1983; Stewart, 1977). The study of the evolving life structure of professional black women was also conducted by a woman (Ruffin, 1989). Similarly, research that has explored the life structure development of men has been conducted by men and has

included only men in the sample (Gooden, 1984; Hogan & York, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989).

A reason for this trend can be found in Levinson's contention that although he wanted to include women in his sample, he did not because he assumed that men's and women's development would be different enough, so that without the resources to do a larger sample, studying a small group of each "would do justice to neither" (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p.154). Similarly, the present study focused on men because it lacks the resources or time to study the lives of both men and women in such a way that "justice" can be done to both.

Other life structure researchers have also argued that the intense, exploratory nature of life structure research requires small samples, of between eight to ten respondents, so that their lives can be examined in depth (Adams, 1983; Gooden, 1984; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989). Thus, if the present research was to include women, the sample would have to be doubled. The present study - as has been pointed out - lacks the resources to explore the life structures of such a large sample in depth.

Recent psychosocial research in South Africa, such as the studies by Du Toit (1991) and Radebe (1993) did include both men and women in their samples, and did use larger samples, because their studies focused on one period (middle adulthood); included only professional adults in the sample; and relied on a single interview with each individual for data collection. In contrast, the present research, like other research into the life structure, focuses on the entire era of adulthood; includes adults with pre- and postmatric educational levels; and relies on two to four interviews with each informant.

Levinson (1978) advances another reason for focusing on men only, which is relevant to the present study: He wanted to understand himself better. Wrightsman (1994a, p.125) quotes him in this regard: "At 46, I wanted to study the transition into middle age in order to understand what I had been going through myself." Levinson (1978, p.91) more directly adds: "I chose men partly because I wanted to

deeply understand my own adult development." The choice of men only in the present research also stems from this motivation.

While the present research will only include men in the sample, for the reasons mentioned above, there is still a pressing need to explore the psychosocial development of black women. It is hoped that the present research will provide the impetus and framework for a future study in this direction.

### **Aim and Rationale of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to lay the foundation for the understanding of adult psychosocial development of black South African men. Like Levinson (1978) the task of the present researcher will be to reconstruct the individual life course of the men, and to search for common themes, as well as differences. In this way, the applicability of Levinson's model to black South African men can be assessed. Through this process, it is hoped that new understanding relevant to the psychosocial development of black South Africans, will be generated.

The motivation and rationale for the study can be summarised as follows:

1. The lack of information on important issues and themes in the personality development of young black adults, and the fact that most research in this area is based on white middle class American samples, indicates that there is a need for research in this area.

2. This need is all the more pressing, considering that South Africa is in a process of flux and transition, a context which could greatly bare on the psychosocial development of, amongst others, young black adults.

3. An awareness of concerns, issues and processes in the development of the young black adult is of exceptional importance at a time in South African history where communication and understanding between the various racial groups is so essential. Kotze, (1993, p.v)

expresses this need for understanding well: "The lack of interpersonal understanding in South Africa is everywhere; in the streets, in private houses, in the workplace ...."

4. The present research also stems from a compelling need for psychology in South Africa to become more responsive in terms of academic curricula and research to the African context (Dawes, 1986, Rock & Hamber, 1994), or to the African "world-view" (Freeman, 1991, p.145). Berger and Lazarus (1987) have recently criticised the training that psychologists undergo for being decontextualised and being based on an "imported" (p.8) non-African psychology. This study can help in this regard by guiding developmental theory at university level, and adding "new knowledge" (Herbert, 1989, p.xv) about personality development during adulthood, and knowledge which is relevant to the South African context.

5. This new knowledge will facilitate understanding about important aspects of the life structure, such as the formation of work, and love and marriage in the lives of black men.

6. It is hoped that this study will guide counselling and therapeutic practice. Awareness of important issues and aspects of the young adults' lives should certainly assist practitioners in the field to better understand and work with their clients.

7. This study will also highlight similarities and differences in the early adult life structure of black South Africans and people from other sociocultural backgrounds, by means of a comparison of the results of this research to that obtained from research conducted in other countries.

8. Levinson (in Wrightsman, 1994a) has remarked that he explored adult development in order to understand what he was going through. In the same way this research stems from a need for self-understanding by the researcher. Through awareness of similarities and differences in the psychosocial development of other cultures, we can learn more about ourselves.

9. Lastly, an important purpose behind this research was to test out the applicability of a qualitative research method, based on Levinson's approach, in the South African context. It is hoped that this research will develop this approach so that it can be utilised in the field of psychology within the South African framework.

#### **Some Research Questions**

The research questions that the research will attempt to answer are based on the questions raised by other researchers of the life structure, and include the following (Herbert, 1989; Ross, 1984).

- What is the nature and character of the men's life structure over time?
- What are the main development tasks that the men have to negotiate?
- How does the experience of being black in the South Africa context affect the negotiation of those tasks, and the evolution of the life structure?
- What has been the effect of apartheid (and the sociocultural and political context in general) on the evolution of each man's life structure?
- How does the evolution of the life structure of the black men compare to other cultures (such as the men in Levinson's (1978) study)?

#### **The Design of the Study**

The use of eurocentric methods based on quantitative approaches has been criticised in the South African context (Holdstock, 1991; Rock & Hamber, 1994). Strümpfer (1993, p.217), expresses it well when he says that the psychological discipline "has probably paid dearly for the obsession with rigor in the choice of methodology". He then goes on to stress that researchers in the South African context should make

more use of qualitative methods in order to explore the "problems" of black people.

This is in line with the recent trend overseas of moving away from quantitative methods to qualitative methods when exploring adult development (Datan, Rodeheaver & Hughes, 1987; Stewart, Franz & Layton, 1988; Stewart & Van der Water, 1992). This trend has been accompanied by the realisation that structured methods, such as psychological testing and structured interviews, are too limiting and artificial for this kind of research, where the focus is on human experience (Osborne, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1991; Searight, 1989). Moreover, the psychological tests available in South Africa are unsuitable for a multicultural setting (Abrahams, 1994).

A qualitative method was chosen for the present study because of its power to explore the "internal black frame of reference", in the absence of comprehensive "baseline" data on psychosocial development (Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990, p.2). As this is a new field of research in South Africa, and it is cross-cultural in nature, the researcher should be very careful not to impinge upon the individual subject's conception of reality. This will be facilitated by keeping the research as open as possible, and not imposing excessive structure onto the individual.

It was for these reasons that the psychobiographical approach was chosen in the present research. Psychobiography involves the application of methods and concepts from the field of psychology, to the study of human lives (Manganyi, 1991; McAdams, 1988; Runyan, 1980; 1982). Phenomenological and constructivist thinking provides the foundation for the psychobiographical approach in the present study. The emphasis is on human experience or the subjective construction of "stories" and narratives facilitated through an interactive process involving the researcher and the participant (Barrell, Aanstoos, Richards & Arons, 1987; Hoshmand, 1989; Tesch, 1990).

The psychobiographical method of biographical interviewing (Levinson 1978) will be used to gain data in the present research,

while a qualitative method, the grounded theory approach, will be used to analyse the data.

### The Research Instrument

Biographical interviewing will be the method of data collection, as its main purpose is to explore developmental processes, and uncover meanings and experiences that are not always apparent (Cherniss, 1991; Herbert, 1989).

Manganyi (1991, p.72), a South African academic, writes that Levinson's biographical method is "the most down-to-earth contribution from psychology to the art of biography that has emerged in recent years". This is borne out by the amount of researchers (overseas) who have used this interviewing method to explore psychosocial development (for instance Adams, 1983; Gooden, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989).

The primary task of biographical interviewing in the present research, is to construct the story of each man's life. The interviews will be directed towards both internal and external aspects of the life structure. To achieve this, two to four interviews will be held with each participant. After each interview, the interview will be transcribed by the researcher, in preparation for the analysis of the data.

### The Analysis of the Data

The aim of the grounded theory approach used to analyse the data, in the present research is to construct a theory that is grounded in the data that emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this approach, data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. The purpose of the analysis is to identify underlying patterns or themes that emerge from the data. This is achieved through a process of coding the data or organising the data into categories or themes. Categories are generated through open coding, which involves the identification of categories, and axial and selective coding, which involves adding richness and density to the categories (Miles &

Huberman, 1984). This involves two important processes: making comparisons and questioning the data (Beck, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through this process a theory of the life structure, which is grounded in the data that emerges, will be developed.

### The Sample

The sample in the present research consists of eight men between the ages of 29 and 41, which falls within the era of early adulthood. A small sample is conducive to a qualitative study, such as the present one, because the focus is on the richness of information collected, and a thorough in-depth exploration of the phenomenon (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990). This sample size is consistent with other research into the life structure (for instance, Carey, 1984; Gooden, 1989; Herbert, 1989). The men were chosen in accordance with the principal of theoretical sampling (Kuzel, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A fundamental issue in theoretical sampling concerns which participant to turn to next and for what purpose (Brannen, 1992a). This meant that a diverse group of subjects who could contribute most to the emerging theory were purposefully chosen. Thus, the sample consisted of men from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. In accordance with the principles of theoretical sampling, sampling was continued until a point of saturation, or when sufficient evidence was obtained concerning themes or categories (Seidman, 1991).

### The Format of the Study

This thesis consists of both a theoretical and a practical component. The aim of the theoretical part is to lay the basis for the exploration of the life structure of black men. In chapter 2 the stage theories are explored with specific reference to the work of Levinson (1978). The work of Erikson (1968, 1982) and Havinghurst (1972), who have influenced Levinson considerably, as well as stage theories, which can enrich our understanding of Levinson's model, are also discussed. "Levinsonian" research, or research based on Levinson's model will also be presented.

Chapter 3 will focus on non-stage theories and research which can enrich our understanding of the life structure. This will include the influential dialectical view of development, the interactional perspective, the life events framework, and the constructivist approach of adult development. The chapter will show how these theories, although fundamentally different to the stage approach, can enrich our understanding of the life structure.

Chapter 4 will focus on research relating to the central aspects of the life structure, or the crucial tasks of early adulthood according to Levinson - namely the formation of marriage, family and work.

The purpose of chapter 5 is to explore the little research available in the South African context, relating to the psychosocial development of black people.

The research methodology to be used in the present research is addressed in chapter 6, while chapter 7 through to chapter 14 will contain a biography and analysis of each man's life. This will be followed, in chapter 15 and chapter 16 with an integration, and discussion of research results. The final chapter will contain an evaluation of the study, with recommendations for future research.

### **Conclusion**

It should be clear from this introductory chapter that the field of adult development is a relatively new field, and has received very little attention in the South African context. The purpose of the present research is to address this vacuum in knowledge, by exploring the evolution of the life structure of black men. This will be facilitated through a qualitative method based on the method used by Levinson in his analysis of the life structure.

## STAGE THEORIES OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

### General Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the more important and recent research pertaining to adult development. The present research is based on the work of Levinson (1978). The main thrust of the present chapter will therefore be on the work of Levinson, and work upon which Levinson's research is based, such as Erikson, Havinghurst and Gould (Rybash, Roodin & Santrock, 1991; Santrock, 1985; Sugarman 1986). These theories are all versions of stage theories. Stage theories assume that development is age-related and sequential with certain life tasks relating to each stage. Transitions signal the end of one stage and the beginning of another (Gerdes et al., 1988). The stage models also imply that development is universal, and that all individuals follow the same sequence of development (Bee, 1994; Troll, 1985). Papalia and Olds (1995) describe the stage theories of development as being part of the normative-crisis model, which emphasises that development follows the same built in "ground plan".

Levinson's research has inspired much research in the United States in the field of adult development. This research, which will also be reviewed in the present chapter, shall be referred to as Levinsonian research (Roberts & Newton, 1987). This chapter will thus contain a review of important stage theories of adult development, and a review of some important Levinsonian research. The chapter will end with a critique of stage theory, and some important conclusions, which are relevant to the present research.

The subsequent chapter will contain a review of the non-stage theories and research in the field of adult development.

### Earlier Stage Theories

A discussion of the stage models of development must begin with a

review of the pioneering work of Erikson (1962; 1968; 1982) whose model is a "prototype of stage theory" (Wrightsmann, 1994a, p.67), and is perhaps the most comprehensive theory of adult development available (Slagle, 1992). At the same time, the stage theories of adult development share the emphasis on life tasks, a concept expounded by Havinghurst (1972; 1973). The work of Erikson and Havinghurst will be discussed in this section.

### The Psychosocial Theory of Erik Erikson

Erikson (1968; 1982) describes eight stages of development from infancy through old age. Each stage is characterised by a central or nuclear conflict which the individual has to negotiate. According to the epigenetic principle, development follows a ground plan with each conflict having its own particular time of ascendancy, with later stages building on the foundations created by previous stages. This implies that the unsuccessful negotiation of a nuclear conflict will affect future negotiation of conflicts. The successful resolution of each nuclear conflict leads to the development of a new "virtue" or "vital strength" (Sugarman, 1986). The eight nuclear conflicts (with the emerging virtue or value indicated in brackets) are basic trust versus mistrust (hope), autonomy versus shame and doubt (will), initiative versus guilt (purpose), industry versus inferiority (competence), identity versus role confusion (fidelity), intimacy versus isolation (love), generativity versus stagnation (care), and integrity versus despair (wisdom).

While Erikson initially stressed that the nuclear conflicts or psychosocial tasks could be solved in a positive or negative way, it has recently been proposed that psychosocial health rests on the balancing of the opposite psychosocial tasks during development (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1986; Kivnick, 1988). Kivnick (1988) asserts that psychosocial health rests not on one tendency defeating the other, but rather on a continually shifting balance between the two tendencies. Thus, the task of young adulthood is to achieve a balance between being intimate, and at times, being alone. This balance will be determined by the person's "vital involvement" (Kivnick, 1988) in all life experiences appropriate

to a developmental stage, including the person's relationships to others, and in the community.

Kivnick (1988) also adds that the individual does not just struggle with the dominant tension of each developmental stage, but is also involved in "anticipating" or previewing themes which might be important at a later stage, and "renewing" or reviewing themes which were unsuccessfully negotiated or balanced at a previous developmental stage. Although the young adult devotes much energy to negotiating the crisis of this stage (intimacy versus isolation) the adult is also involved in working through the nuclear conflicts of all the previous stages, as well as anticipating those that will be faced in future developmental stages. This implies that the individual deals with each of the eight nuclear conflicts repeatedly during the life span (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1989).

This point is further clarified by Kagan (1972) and Logan (1986) who stress that earlier issues and tasks which are integral to the different stages of Erikson's model can repeat at later stages of development. For example, the task of establishing trust, which is crucial during the first stage of development, can manifest in the struggle to find a person with whom to be close to during the stage of intimacy versus isolation during young adulthood.

All these tasks are embedded in the sociocultural context. This is evident in Erikson's emphasis on the "cultural manifestation" of each stage of individual development (Runyan, 1982; Sugarman, 1986). Although Erikson (1982) does not describe this aspect of his theory as well as other aspects, it is clear that the sociocultural context influences both the specific form and outcome of the developmental crises. The emphasis on development as a function of both individual and cultural factors is especially relevant to the present research because it implies that we must understand the development of the men in terms of the wider sociocultural context.

This means that we must understand the effect that apartheid has had on the balancing and negotiation of psychosocial tasks during adult development. Kivnick (1988) stresses that apartheid interferes with the balancing process required for the resolution of the nuclear conflicts.

A study of the life structure, such as the present study, must thus take into consideration the stifling effect of the South African social context on the psychosocial stages of the black men in the study.

Let us now turn our attention to the specific psychosocial stages of development.

### The Psychosocial Stages

Psychosocial development during childhood. During childhood the individual struggles with developing trust in a world that is unknown; being responsible for his or her own actions; and becoming competent. Hope, will, purpose and competency will result from the successful negotiation of the conflicts during this period.

Although the childhood years are not the main focus of the present study, they are significant in the present research because the epigenetic principle implies that if the person is unable to develop trust, autonomy or initiative during childhood, the establishment of a viable life structure during adulthood will be difficult. It is thus important to ascertain what effect the childhood years of the men in the present research has had on their adult life structure.

The next three stages of Erikson's model revolve around the years that the present research focuses on, that is the years of early adulthood. They shall thus be considered in more depth.

Identity versus role confusion. Erikson's concept of identity is one of his most outstanding contributions to psychology (Meyer et al., 1989). The stage of identity versus role confusion involves a blending of the previous stages into an "integrated ego" (Turner & Helms, 1994, p.105). In Erikson's terms identity is a structure consisting of values and beliefs about oneself, which is reflected in the person's attitudes and perceptions on occupation, politics, religion and relationships (Wrightsmann, 1994a). Although identity formation is of crucial significance during this stage (up to the age of 25 according to Meyer et al., 1989) it is an important issue across the entire life span (Freiberg 1987; Kagan, 1972; Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985).

Bloom (1994) identifies four aspects of Erikson's notion of identity which are relevant across the life span. Individuality refers to the sense of being unique; sameness and continuity refers to the feeling of continuity in identity from birth through adulthood; wholeness and synthesis refers to the integration of the many relationships and identifications that encompass our identities; social solidarity refers to the feeling that one's identity is valued by others.

The adolescent's search for true identity is instigated by a crisis in which prior beliefs, values, life style or occupational plans are questioned, and the individual is faced with the responsibility of committing to a choice (Marcia, 1980; 1989). The main choice involves the establishment of a vocational direction and a vocational role to aspire to (Santrock, 1985).

In order to make these choices, the adolescent has to reevaluate his or her life and reality in general, and in so doing they become aware of the discrepancies between their self-perception and the perception of others. The attainment of identity involves the integration of the virtues associated with earlier stages - hope, will, purpose and competence - into a more coherent value and belief system (Sugarman, 1986). The resulting new virtue is fidelity, which manifests in the person being able to commit to these values and beliefs. Identity confusion will result if the adolescent is unable to establish a sense of self in relation to the social world, and if there is an inability to integrate various roles and experiences (Turner & Helms, 1994).

Viney (1987) has defined this stage of identity versus role confusion (and indeed the other nuclear conflicts postulated by Erikson) more thoroughly in terms of constructs within the phenomenological world of the individual. His definitions are relevant to the present research because the phenomenological world of the individual is an integral aspect of a study of the life structure. The key construct of identity is: "I am myself, the same me I was yesterday and will be tomorrow," while identity diffusion is summarised in the statement: "I am not sure who I am" (Viney, 1987, p.127).

Erikson stresses the importance of cultural identity in one's search for personal identity. He points out that if a person has to shift to a culture which is different to the one that he or she has experienced in the past, more work is needed to deal with current nuclear conflicts (Freiberg, 1987).

In a complex society such as South Africa the person's search for identity can be very complex (Meyer et al., 1989) and is related to ethnic and racial identity (Pretorius, 1990), and must, therefore, be considered in terms of wider historical and contextual factors (Vondracek, 1992).

Intimacy versus isolation. This stage is especially relevant to the present research because it deals with the primary task of young adulthood, the development of a sense of intimacy.

Intimacy involves a merging of identities, both sexual and nonsexual. It involves a concern for others and a concern for self. If the young adult cannot establish a meaningful commitment, he or she becomes isolated and preoccupied with the self, and has little chance of developing the virtue of this stage, which is love.

Erikson distinguishes between sexual intimacy and intimacy with a capital "I" in which there is mature interaction and sharing (Papalia & Olds, 1995). Those young adults who have established a sense of identity, in Erikson's sense of the word, are more able to commit themselves to lasting relationships (Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985). In Western culture, intimacy, as defined by Erikson, is usually achieved through marriage or a committed relationship, but it can develop between people who work together or have had similar experiences (Freiberg, 1987), and can even manifest as a commitment to something such as the pursuit of a special activity (White, 1975).

The issue of intimacy is important in the present study because the life structure is formed "via interaction with significant others" (Slagle, 1992, p.57). The manifestation of these relationships in the lives of the black men, and more specifically the meaning that these relationships have for the men is thus of crucial importance in the

present study. An important concern will be how well these men can establish intimate relationships and what intimacy means for the men.

Generativity versus stagnation. Although Erikson considered this stage to span the ages of 25 to 65, it seems to occur in the thirties or forties (Wrightsmann, 1994a) which is part of the lifespan that the present study focuses on. Generativity means an awareness of the need to be needed, coupled with productivity and caring for others (Stewart et al., 1988). The virtue that can develop from this stage is the virtue of care. It is seen in such areas as parenthood, providing services for the benefit of the community, or the desire to impart knowledge and traditions to others. It implies creating something that will live on after death, something that can be carried on to the next generation, and is reflected in the construct: "I am a source of creation and construction" (Viney, 1987, p.127). A feeling of stagnation and over-involvement with the self will result if generativity is not realised. This is reflected in the construct: "Nothing good will ever come from me" (Viney, 1987, p.127).

Peck (1968) has expanded Erikson's stage of generativity versus stagnation by proposing four challenges that people face at this time of their lives. These challenges include being able to change focus from physical powers to cognitive abilities; learning to value the social aspect of relationships more than the sexual aspects; being able to form emotional bonds with other people to avoid the loneliness resulting from loss of parents and children leaving home; and, being flexible and open to new experiences.

The meaning, nature and manifestation of generativity in the lives of the men in the present research is an important issue.

Integrity versus despair. The next stage, of integrity versus despair, is the last stage of Erikson's model and involves the elderly adult coming to terms with his or her own life. This stage is not integral to the present research so it will not be expanded upon.

Robert Havighurst's Theory of Developmental Tasks

Havighurst's (1972) focus on developmental tasks, and not crises, has had a positive contribution in the field of adult development (Chiriboga, 1989). An understanding of these tasks is an integral aspect of the present research because a viable life structure is achieved through the successful negotiation of developmental tasks. It shall be shown, however, that the cultural specificity of his notion of developmental tasks has important implications for the present research.

Havighurst's (1972) idea of developmental tasks is more concrete than Erikson's notion of psychosocial tasks. Havighurst (1972) defines a developmental task as a task which arises at a certain period in the individual's life. Successful negotiation of these tasks leads to fulfillment and success with later tasks, while unsuccessful negotiation leads to unhappiness, disapproval by others, and frustration with future tasks. Tasks result from the interaction of physical, cultural and psychosocial factors.

The tasks of early adulthood include the selection of a mate, coping with marriage, rearing children, managing a home, starting an occupation, taking on civic responsibility and identifying with an appropriate social group (Havighurst, 1972). Oerter (1988), who has more recently offered a revision of Havighurst's theory, proposes that developmental tasks can include simple tasks, such as going on a first date, to more long term goals related to self-development. The important issue is not only the nature of the task, but how the person copes with the task, and what competencies develop from negotiation of the task.

Oerter (1988) also draws attention to a serious limitation of Havighurst's theory by stressing that more attention should be given to cultural and traditional expectations and influences on the meaning and negotiation of developmental tasks. Sugarman (1986) affirms this point by criticising the historical and cultural specificity of Havighurst's theory. Stevens-Long and Commons (1992) assert that Havighurst's theory is appropriate for young adults in Western capitalistic cultures, but may not apply to other cultures, such as the black men in the present research.

The present research thus demands a broader conception of Havinghurst's notion of developmental tasks. This must take into account age-related developmental influences, as well as the effects of historical changes, or nonnormative life events on the negotiation of developmental tasks (Baltes, Reese and Lipsitt, 1980). Cultural and societal expectations and influences surrounding the nature of developmental tasks must also be considered (Oerter, 1988). It should also encompass developmental opportunities which are needed for the negotiation of certain tasks (Van Aken, 1992). Opportunities implies the availability of environmental resources, which the lower social classes and many black South Africans often lack, for the successful negotiation of a developmental task. Furthermore the norms and expectations of society (Keating & Cole, 1988) and the fact that certain groups, such as the black men in the present research, are excluded from shaping these norms, must also be considered.

### Conclusion

The pioneering work of Havinghurst and Erikson are important because they lay the basis for stage theories of development, such as the model developed by Levinson (Runyan, 1982). The work of Erikson draws our attention to the centrality of psychosocial conflict during adult development while Havinghurst's ideas illuminate the importance of developmental tasks during adult development.

Both Erikson's and Havinghurst's conceptualisations of development, however, are limited by their cultural specificity. While Miller (1993) claims that Erikson's model takes into account all the levels of society, the model has been criticised for being culture bound. Vaillant and Milofsky (1985, p.299) express this important point well by asserting that "the best historical confirmation of this model is found in individualistic, economically favoured societies ...". This criticism, as has been shown, can just as well be levelled at Havinghurst's notion of developmental tasks.

The present research attempts to address this inherent limitation of these models through expanding the context of development by focusing on a group that has traditionally not been a part of "individualistic,

economically favoured society," that is black South Africans. Kivnick (1988) has alerted us to the importance of understanding the psychosocial development of black South Africans in terms of the wider sociopolitical context peculiar to South Africa, as the present study will attempt to do.

A final point with regard to Erikson's model, and its relevance to the present research, concerns the research method that Erikson used. While Erikson's method has been criticised for being vague and unscientific, Green (1989) maintains that it is unfortunate that Erikson's psychohistorical method has been ignored by many developmentalists because no other method can produce such rich and varied data for analysis. This point is relevant to the present research because the psychobiographical method that shall be used is similar in many ways to Erikson's method.

The work of Erikson and Havinghurst provide a basis for the work of Levinson and other contemporary stage theorists which will be considered in the next section.

### Contemporary Stage Theories

The central focus of this section will be on the work of Levinson (1978; 1986; 1990). However, as the work of other contemporary stage theorists can contribute much to our understanding of Levinson's model, the work of these theorists, including Gould (1975; 1978; 1980) and that of Sheehy (1976; 1981), will also be referred to, especially where it complements Levinson's theory.

Gould and Levinson have been described as the "gold dust twins" (Wrightsmann, 1994a, p.133) of stage theorising. There is much overlap between the stages proposed by Gould and Levinson. The Early Adult Transition in Levinson's (1978) scheme occurs at a similar time to the stage referred to as Leaving our Parents' World by Gould (1978). The Entering the Adult World in Levinson's model is referred to as I'm Nobody's Baby Now by Gould (1978), while the Age Thirty Transition postulated by Levinson is called Opening Up To What's Inside by Gould. There is also a relationship between the views of Levinson and Sheehy

with regard to stages. Sheehy (1976; 1981) argues that adults go through age-linked stages which are linked by "passages". The latter are similar to the transitional periods described by Levinson (1978). These stages, as well as the Culminating Life Structure (or Settling Down Period) of Early Adulthood in Levinson's scheme, are the stages which provide the focus for the present research.

Although there is overlap between Gould's and Levinson's stages, these two theorists differ with regard to the way in which individuals go through these stages. While Levinson (1978) believes that these stages are negotiated through periods of transition, Gould (1978) believes that different myths, or false assumptions have to be challenged during the different periods of adulthood so that further levels of adult maturity can be reached.

The achievement of an authentic identity is also discussed in some of these theories. Gould (1978) postulated that authentic identity is achieved through a continuous process of transformation, where an individual is prepared to examine his or her own feelings, values, beliefs and decisions, and be prepared to give up the false ideas of childhood. Sheehy (1976; 1981) also stresses that authentic identity is achieved through open and honest self reevaluation.

When considering career development the work of Vaillant (1977), and more specifically his proposal that there is a stage called Career Consolidation, also broadens our understanding of Levinson's model by highlighting the importance of the career in the lives of men during their early thirties. Career Consolidation is similar to the period of Becoming One's Own Man in Levinson's scheme (Wrightsmann, 1994b).

The present chapter will illustrate in more detail how these stage theories, as well as other relevant theories and research, can enrich our understanding of Levinson's concept of the life structure.

#### Daniel Levinson's Theory of the Evolution of the Life Structure

Levinson's conceptualisation of adult development has been described

as a "provocative elaboration and revision of Erikson's model ..." (Hart, 1992, p.37). Levinson, however, stresses the chronological progression of each phase more than Erikson does, and focuses on the specific tasks of each phase (Hughes & Graham, 1990). Levinson (1986) uses the term **cycle** to highlight the linear, ordered and sequential nature of adult development. Although the progression of development can be influenced by individual, social or cultural factors, it essentially follows the same basic sequence.

Levinson based his findings on interviews with 40 American men between the ages of 35 to 40. Each person was interviewed five to ten times over a period of three months. Use was also made of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) pictures. The men's wives were also interviewed.

The basis of Levinson's theory is the **life structure**. He describes it as "the pillar of my conception of adult development" (Levinson, 1986, p.3). The life structure is the overall pattern or design of the individual's life at a given time. This design, as Levinson (1990) has more recently pointed out, is influenced by social structure, culture, social roles, personality, important life events, gender and biology. The life structure consists of central and peripheral (or less important) components. The central components are the central parts of the person's life, in which the person invests most time and energy. Marriage, family and occupation are most often the central components. A vital life structure is characterised by balance or the integration of the important aspects of the life structure into a **coherent identity** (Howenstine, Silberstein, Newton & Newton, 1992).

The most important aspect of the life structure is the meaning that these **relationships** with the external world, or components, have for the person. These relationships "are the vehicle by which we live out - or bury - various aspects of ourselves and by which we participate, for better or worse, in the world around us" (Levinson, 1986, p.6). The life structure is formed by **choices** that are reflected in these relationships. As such the life structure involves an interaction between the person's personality system and the internal and external world, or the social system (Newton, 1983). The meaning that the external world has for the person, which is influenced by perceptions, desires, fears and conflicts,

will shape the life structure. At the same time the external world shapes or patterns the roles we choose by making certain choices more available than others (Newton, 1983).

Levinson (1990, p.43) points out that "there is an underlying order in the human life course, an order shaped by eras and by the periods in life structure development". More specifically, the life structure develops through a sequence of age-linked periods which alternate between structure-building times and structure-changing or transitional times. During the structure-building period, key choices must be made so that a structure can be formed in which the person can pursue values and goals and achieve competence in certain areas. The present life structure comes to an end during the transitional period, as the person begins to reappraise his life and makes new choices and commitments. These choices are future orientated, and usually involve drastic changes of current life patterns. Questioning and inner-searching during transitional periods can result in personal crises.

O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) elaborate upon the nature of transitions in the life structure with their five step model of transitions. Step one refers to a stable life structure characterised by established roles and relationships. Step two is marked by increasing discontent and a need to change. During step three there is a crisis which is experienced differently by different people. This crisis provides the impetus for change and redirection of the life structure in step four. The last step involves a more permanent commitment to a life structure.

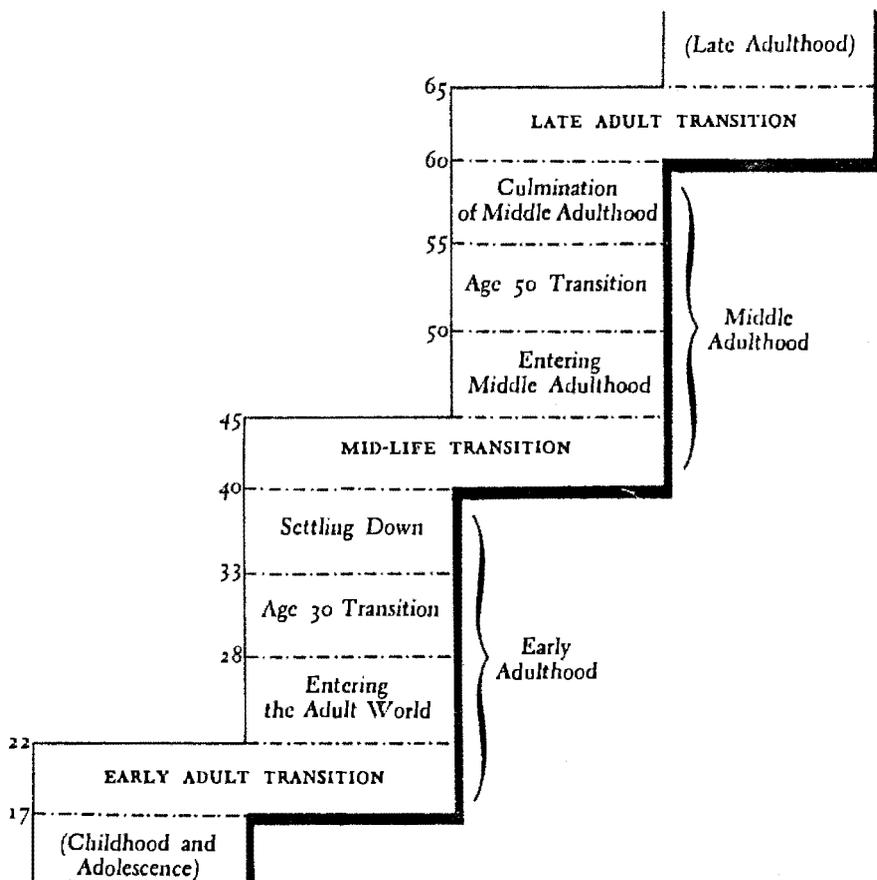
During this process certain management skills are needed (Howenstine et al., 1992). During transitions, questioning skills, and the ability to be self-critical and take risks are needed, while decisiveness, faith and perseverance are needed during stable periods.

Eastmond (1991) refers to four important characteristics of the eras and periods in Levinson's model:

- although different physiological, social or psychological marker events may trigger the onset of phases, each occurs at approximately the same age;

- each phase follows the next in a predictable, ordered pattern;
- although the phases are not hierarchical (ie. no period is better than another), the success of subsequent phases does depend upon the outcome of previous choices;
- they are universal in nature, appearing in all cultures.

The eras include, the era of pre-adulthood (0-22); early adulthood (17-40); middle adulthood (40-65); and late adulthood (60- ). The model (presented in Figure 2.1) illustrates the progression of these eras, and the periods which define the eras.



**Figure 2.1** Developmental periods in early and middle adulthood (Levinson, 1978, p.57)

The periods in early adulthood, up until, but not including the Settling Down period, constitute the Novice Phase of development. The

primary task of the Novice Phase is to create a place for oneself in the world and develop a satisfactory life structure. Flaws, limitations and inadequate choices pertaining to the life structure are reevaluated during the Age Thirty Transition. A second life structure is initiated at the end of the Age Thirty Transition. During this Settling Down period, the person completes the era of early adulthood.

As this is the era that the present study will focus on, the main concern will be with the extent to which the black men can develop a satisfactory life structure during this era; the nature and pattern of their life structure; and the similarities and differences with Levinson's scheme, which shall now be expanded upon.

#### The Early Adult Transition - EAT (17 - 22)

This is the developmental bridge between pre-adulthood and early adulthood. The major tasks of the period are to terminate pre-adulthood by modifying important relationships (including separating from the family of origin) and to initiate early adulthood by exploring possibilities and making preliminary choices. Separation involves external aspects such as leaving home, being less dependant financially, and taking on new roles and living arrangements. Internally, it involves an increasing sense of separation from the family, and less emotional dependency. Towards the end of the transition the person begins to set specific goals and make firmer choices with regard to his role in the adult world.

Like Levinson, Gould (1978) also believes that this period is a time of assuming new roles and responsibilities, and leaving the parents' world. This can only be done if the false assumption that, "I'll always belong to my parents and believe in their world," is challenged. This period thus resembles what Erikson (1982) would refer to as an identity crisis.

#### Entering the Adult World - EAW (23 - 28)

This is a stable period in which the two major tasks are to (a) explore options and possibilities and (b) create a stable life structure.

This is the first adult life structure, therefore, choices are provisional. This can be an unsatisfying period because the person is faced with the dilemma of exploring possibilities and delaying definite commitments until options are clearer, while having to establish an initial life structure which is rooted and stable. In Sheehy's (1976) terms the "trying twenties" can be frightening because the individual is caught between the need for security and the impulse to experience. Similarly, Gould (1978) describes this period, which he refers to as *I'm Nobody's Baby Now*, as a period in which the young adult struggles with being able to deal with strong parental ties while accepting full responsibility for the future. In this way he moves towards developing "his own unique perspective" (Wrightsman, 1994a, p.118).

If the first task (a) predominates, life will seem transient and useless. If the second task (b) predominates, the person might commit too soon to a life structure.

#### The Age Thirty Transition - ATT (28-33)

Towards the end of the twenties, the person reappraises the quality of his life as an adult. During this time the "provisional" commitments (including marriage and work) come up for review and the person feels a greater sense of restriction and urgency as the exploring quality of the twenties comes to an end and there is a second chance to establish a more satisfactory life structure. The developmental tasks of this period are to evaluate the first adult life structure, to determine areas for change, and make initial choices for the future stable period. There are three paths through this period: One may reaffirm present goals and life style; one might change direction in terms of personal and occupational goals; or one may move from a period of noncommitment during the twenties to a first commitment to some specific person or occupation. This period is usually stressful - indeed 62 percent of the men in Levinson's sample experienced a moderate or severe crisis during this time.

Gould (1978) and Sheehy (1976; 1981) also describe this stage as difficult and stressful. Sheehy (1976), who coins this the "catch 30" stage, points out that individuals begin to feel restricted by society and through reevaluation make new choices. This reevaluation is referred

to by Gould as Opening up to What's Inside and involves an "indepth analysis of oneself" (Turner & Helms, 1994, p.111), and the challenging of the assumption that life is simple and can be easily controlled.

### The Major Tasks of the Novice Phase

In his research, Levinson (1978) identified four common tasks that are essential to the process of entry into adulthood. These are forming a Dream and finding a place for it in the life structure; forming mentor relationships; forming an occupation; and forming love relationships, marriage and a family. These common tasks manifest differently during the periods of early adulthood, and work on each task proceeds unevenly.

Forming and living out the Dream. The Dream is a vague sense of self-in-adult-world. It is a vision concerning what one hopes to become, the life one wants to live. It contains both relational and occupational components (Santas, 1986). The Dream facilitates the establishment of goals and thus supports the effort to create a satisfying life structure. The Dream, which is normally formed at the end of adolescence, is first vague and poorly articulated. Howenstine et al. (1992) propose that the Dream derives from the core-self and it contains the person's wishes and values, and sense of how one wants to interact with other people. The task of the young adult is to further define the Dream and to begin living it out in the world. The two most important figures who assist the young adult in the realisation of the Dream are the mentor and the Special Woman.

The mentor relationship. Levinson (1978) does not define the term "mentor", but lists the various functions of the mentor which includes a teacher, sponsor, guide, advisor or provider of moral support. The mentor is usually a senior figure who the young person admires and respects and is often found in the work environment (Braun, 1992). A mentor can combine various roles such as a lover, intellectual partner as well as a guide (Handel, 1990). Although all the men in Levinson's study identified with male mentors, cross-gender mentoring can occur. The mentor enhances the young adult's development by believing in him and encouraging his youthful Dream. The mentoring relationship is transitional and lasts about three years.

Forming an occupation. Forming an occupation is a complicated social-psychological process that extends over the Novice Phase and often beyond. An initial occupational choice is usually made during the EAT or EAW. This choice is most often a preliminary choice, as the young man attempts to formulate his time, interests and potentials. Towards the end of the ATT the formative phase of occupational direction ends, and the man must make more permanent choices based on the previous years.

Forming a marriage and family. This process begins during the EAT. The first task is to be able to have relationships with women. Sexuality, emotional intimacy, romantic love, respect, and enduring qualities are some aspects of a relationship that the young man has to develop. If a man marries during the EAT (as about half of Levinson's sample did) the marriage may be affected by the task of separating from one's parents. Marriage during the period of EAW (about 30 percent of Levinson's sample) is usually tied up with the goals the young man has set for himself. Men who have not married by the ATT (about 20 percent of the sample) often experience this as a gap in their lives, and often marry because they feel pressurised to do so. Those who have already married often question and reappraise their marriage during this period. A man's love relationship with a woman often takes the form of a Special Woman. The Special Woman helps to animate the part of the self that contains the Dream.

Settling Down - SD: Building a Second Adult Life Structure (33 -39)

The preparatory phase of early adulthood ends at the end of the ATT, and the man enters the SD period. The two main tasks of this period are to establish one's niche in society and to work at advancement. The initial step involved in establishing one's niche in society is "to dig in, build a nest and pursue one's interests within a defined pattern" (Levinson, 1978, p.140). The person anchors himself more firmly in family, occupation and the community. He also strives to advance himself while pursuing goals such as more wealth, prestige, power and recognition. This is why Sheehy (1976; 1981) refers to the early thirties as a time of "rooting and extending." At the later stage of the SD period (from about age 36) there is a culminating phase called Becoming One's Own Man. During this phase, the man strives for advancement and

recognition, and may often feel that he is being held back by society. Vaillant's (1977) stage of Career Consolidation in which men become increasingly oriented towards their careers occurs at this time.

During this phase the man feels a sense of urgency as he has been given a second chance to create a stable life structure. This is why Sheehy (1976; 1981) refers to the later part of this period as the "deadline decade". The person often asks the question: "Have I succeeded or failed?" (Newton, 1983, p.447) and looks for a culminating event, such as a promotion or critical acclaim, to give significance to early adulthood. Failure leads to feelings of self-doubt and questioning of values.

#### Middle Adulthood (40-65)

Middle adulthood is not the focus of the present research, but it must be considered because some of the men in the present research will be entering this era. Levinson (1978) describes four conflicts that men have to contest during this period. These conflicts include: Being young versus being old; being destructive versus being constructive; being masculine versus being feminine; and, being attached to others or separated from them.

Wolfe, O'Connor and Crary (1990) emphasise that the conflict during the transition from early adulthood to midlife in Levinson's scheme, also stems from conflict between the individual's various life contexts. Change and growth can often be impeded by the individual's need for stability. Those individuals who are able to examine and modify their personal paradigm (or values, beliefs and expectations) are able to create a much more flexible life structure, capable of meeting a wide range of needs.

Boylan and Hawkes (1988) have added to Levinson's conceptualisation of middle adulthood by emphasising that career upward mobility lessens in priority during this period, and the achievement motivation shifts from advancement to mastery. During this era, more energy is devoted to physical and recreational pursuits.

### Evaluation of Levinson's Theory

The importance of Levinson's work has been noted by a number of researchers in the field of adult development (Eastmond, 1991; Gooden, 1989; Hogan & York, 1989). It has been described as a rich avenue for exploring personal growth (Walder, 1987), and commended for being vivid and instructive (Handel, 1990), while providing a comprehensive theory of adult development (Slagle, 1992).

Levinson's theory and stage theory in general has also been criticised because it has been based on white middle class men. It thus suffers from the same limitations relating to cultural and sex specificity as the work by Erikson and Havinghurst. Furthermore, his emphasis on the age specificity of developmental concerns (Eastmond, 1991; Hudson, 1991) and the universality of his findings (McCrae & Costa, 1990) are contentious issues. The process of development is perhaps not as predictable as models such as Levinson's would purport it to be, and is related to other factors such as individual perceptions and social expectation (Neugarten, 1980). He also does not address the question of why some people change and others do not (Sears, 1979). Furthermore, his theory has been challenged for being based on the assumption that changes in the family and work domain occur at roughly the same time (Hughes, Graham & Galbraith, 1986). Certain research has been conducted to address some of these issues. This research which can be referred to as "Levinsonian" research (Roberts & Newton, 1987) will be discussed in the next section. The value of such research and approaches to the present study will also be highlighted.

#### **"Levinsonian" Research**

##### Levinsonian Research Concerning Black Adult Development

Very little research has been conducted concerning the development of the life structure of black men and women. A persuasive finding of the research that has been done is the profound effect of social forces, societal restrictions and racial identity on the formation of a viable life structure (Gooden, 1980; 1989; Herbert 1989; Ruffin, 1989).

Levinson (1978, p.89) himself acknowledged this important point:

The struggle to remain true to his dream is never easy for a black man in this society. And a black man with heroic aspirations - literary, political, scientific or whatever - draws upon himself with increasing intensity all the destructive forces of individual and institutional racism. These forces must be part of our understanding of the adult development of black men.

Unfortunately, Levinson's sample only included a few black men, and he did not explore these "forces" in any depth.

Gooden (1989), who did explore the special problems faced by black men in their attempts to form a viable life structure, found that black men from lower socio-economic groups experienced few stable periods in their lives, and battled to maintain a sense of identity. This sense of identity was found to be closely tied to racism, minority status and discrimination in the study by Herbert (1989). These factors made the black adults more aware of their racial identity as they struggled to integrate their black identity into their adult identity, especially during the EAT.

In her study of black women, Ruffin (1989) also found that racial identity had an important impact on developmental tasks, especially on the formation of the capacity for heterosexual intimacy. She found that the majority of women pursued lives which emphasised autonomy and independence. Marriages were seen as "either unattainable, undesirable, or impossible to sustain" (Ruffin, 1989, p.56). While these women did not value marriage, Gooden (1989) found that his men did seem to value marriage but that their marriages were characterised by little intimacy and much conflict. Many of the men from the lower socio-economic class struggled with the view that being a "lady's man" is important, and all were involved in affairs. Herbert (1989) also found that only few of his men formed a relationship with a Special Woman.

The effect of societal forces was found to be especially evident in the formation of the Dream (Gooden, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989).

Ruffin (1989) found that many of her subjects' Dreams were restricted because of factors such as racial segregation and limited opportunities. More specifically, Herbert (1989) found that societal frustration, such as not obtaining a promotion, being denied a bank loan, or financial problems, stagnated the men's attempts to live out their Dreams. Furthermore, Gooden (1989) found that the Dreams of his men were vague, held together by fantasy, and revolved around monetary, materialistic gains, and the need to take care of one's family.

Another factor that made it difficult for the black adults to live out their Dreams was that they did not have mentors to guide them. The lack of mentor relationships was a striking finding from all the research. Gooden (1989) found that the few men who did have mentor relationships were with older black men, while Ruffin (1989) found that the few women who had mentoring experiences were with other black women. Lastly, Herbert (1989) found that parental figures often provided mentoring functions.

The social and racial factors that effect development and which emerged in all the above research, indicates, according to Herbert (1989), that the model of development of black people has to be expanded to include a new development task: To form an individual racial identity and positive racial self-esteem, which helps the individual cope with racism and prejudice.

The issue of coping with racism, discrimination and adverse circumstances in general is a particularly important issue which needs to be elaborated upon. The next section will explore this issue, as it relates to the stage models of black development, in more depth.

#### Coping Strategies Across the Life Span

Results from some of the research on black adult development points to the importance of coping styles in the evolving life structures of the black adults (Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989). Ruffin (1989) defines a coping style as a range of behaviours which constitute a person's pattern of coping with adverse circumstances in a racist society. Jones (1989) emphasises that coping styles across the life span will be determined by

the way in which the adult reacts to racial oppression and adjusts to the majority culture. The adult's identification and grounding in his or her own tradition and culture is important, as well as the individual's personal experiences and "endowments" (such as intelligence).

Herbert (1989) notes that the majority of black entrepreneurs in his sample were able to work well towards the task of forming an occupation, despite adverse circumstances, because of these personal endowments. He makes an important point which is worth quoting in full:

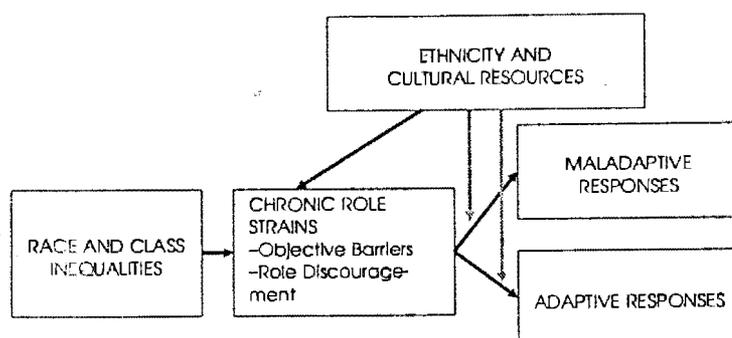
The effects of race, racial discrimination, racial prejudice, and racism are far from neutral. In the main, the effects are manifested as obstacles that often force the individual to become more reactive. Some willingly settle for whatever is their fate. The same effects sometimes cause individuals to be proactive. Rather than settle for something less, he will seek to overcome and achieve in spite of the effects of race, racial discrimination, racial prejudice, and racism. In summary, the effects of these societal forces will affect individuals differently. Our theories of adult development must account for and accommodate these differences (p.162).

Ruffin (1989) relates coping styles to racial identity. She identified three coping styles in her exploration of the evolving life structure of black professional women. The first style (which was represented by only one of the participants in her study) refers to the use of racial identity as a central organising theme for life choice. The participant who characterised this style perceived herself throughout early adulthood as an activist, and her belief in black nationalism guided all her choices.

The second coping style (which was evident in three of the participants) refers to the use of racial identity to guide professional work. These participants felt a need to improve the well-being of blacks in their professional work. The third coping style (which was evident in the remaining four participants) refers to the use of racial identity as a background theme for various life choices. Although these

participants were aware of themselves as black people, they did not focus much energy on improving the welfare of blacks.

Bowman (1989) has proposed a role strain model of adaption across the adult life cycle, which incorporates these important aspects of the relationship between coping and psychosocial development. The model is concerned with the nature, causes and consequences of role strain on the lives of black adults. The model is presented in Figure 2.2 (Bowman, 1989, p.124).



**Figure 2.2.** Role strain and adaption model (Bowman, 1989, p.124)

Role strain in this model refers to objective barriers, such as discrimination in the work place, and the black adult's perception of these barriers. The response to these barriers will determine if the adult copes in a passive or active way. Cultural resources may often facilitate adaptive coping by, for instance, reducing helplessness and increasing support.

During the different stages of development, the black adult is confronted with the developmental task of overcoming barriers which pose a threat to the achievement of a viable life role, or life structure. During early adulthood, the main role strain stems from the work role. As the young adult confronts barriers, including educational, economic

and job related obstacles, certain questions such as the following are asked: Will I get the job that I really want? Will I cope with marriage and the responsibility of rearing children? What are the realistic chances of me being able to develop myself and achieve my goals? (Bowman, 1989). The response to such questions will have direct implications on the evolving life structure.

#### Levinsonian Research Conducted with Other Cultures

While there are few studies that have been conducted with other cultures using Levinson's framework, those that have been done illuminate some important points for the present research. Hogan and York (1989) challenged Levinson's proposition concerning age-linked behaviours by showing that different cultures have different expectations concerning the appropriateness of age-linked behaviours. For instance, he found differences in black, hispanic and caucasian students concerning expectations at which a man should reach his top job position (the BOOM phase in Levinson's scheme) and the age at which a man should have the most responsibilities. Hogan and York's (1989) study points to the importance of focusing on the perceptions of the appropriateness of age-linked behaviours, such as getting married or having a child, of the black men in the present study.

While Hogan and York (1989) found differences in age-linked expectations, both Lim (1986) and Ross (1984) found that the developmental paths of other cultural groups (Filipinos and Mexicans respectively) resembled that described by Levinson (1978). There were some important differences, however, especially in the area of mentoring. Lim (1986) found that the men in his study did not experience mentor or mentee relationships and did not do much introspection of their inner values, while Ross (1984) found that mentor figures were family members such as an uncle, brother, or father. Ross (1984) refers to this as "family mentoring," which could be associated with a strong link that the men in his study maintained with their families, even after marriage. Chavez (1986) found that close family ties in certain cultures could impede the development of the Dream through family pressures that prevent the person from leaving home to follow the Dream. These findings point to the importance of being aware of cultural influences on the

manifestation of the Dream and mentor relationships in the lives of the black men in the present research. This also raises the possibility of different kinds of mentoring experiences (such as family mentoring).

Lim's (1986) finding that the men in his sample did not do much self-questioning is also important because introspection is an integral aspect in the development of the life structure. Wolfe et al. (1990, p.971) put this well: "Progressing through transition, questioning underlying values and assumptions, and experimenting through new relationships and activities can be mutually reinforcing and help to carry the individual through the inevitable crisis and pitfalls."

Studies, which have made use of Levinson's framework, have also been conducted in diverse cultures like Japan and China. Eastmond (1991) refers to two of these studies which indicated very different patterns of life roles and stages than that depicted by Levinson. Eastmond contends that this could be due to the different perceptions concerning development and ageing between the Western and Eastern cultures.

In conclusion, these Levinsonian studies indicate important cultural differentiation in adult development. It would seem, therefore, that the emphasis upon age-linked developmental patterns are premature (Hogan & York, 1989). There is thus a pressing need to conduct more research concerning the adult development of other cultures. The purpose of this study is to address this need.

#### Levinsonian Research Concerning Women's Adult Development

Although the present study will not be focusing on the development of women, it is nevertheless interesting to consider the evolution of the life structure of women because it alerts us to similarities and differences in life structure formation.

Adams (1983), Droege (1982), Furst (1983) and Stewart (1977) explored women's development using Levinson's framework. They all focused on white women. Roberts and Newton (1987) have reviewed these studies, and noted certain common themes. The periods of stability and

change in the women's lives are age-linked, and similar to patterns of the men in Levinson's study. There is strong support for a transitional period around age 30. Most of the women spent the years from 28 to 33 reappraising their marital and career commitments. The search for a marital partner became important to those women who had emphasised occupational goals during their twenties. Those women who were more concerned with motherhood and marriage during their twenties, became concerned with individualistic goals and psychological separation from their husbands. A smaller percentage of the women who were unable to prioritise their needs, experienced this transitional period as a crisis.

The women's Dreams seemed to be more complex than the men's Dreams, and generally consisted of vague images of self in a certain kind of environment, rather than a concrete image of self in an occupational role. The Dreams also had a strong relational emphasis, and were influenced by the search for a Special Man. This differed to the men in Levinson's research who were more concerned with establishing themselves in careers than finding a Special Woman.

The women's choices during adulthood were laden with inner conflict and feelings of dissatisfaction in relation to either family life or career. They took much longer to form an occupation, and established fewer mentor relationships than the men in Levinson's (1978) sample. Although the majority of the women married, husbands were often perceived to be the greatest obstacles to the woman's development.

In general the life structure of the women was less stable than that of the men. Those women who had specific occupational goals, which were put before relational goals, seemed to have more stable life structures. Most of the women had to struggle with adapting a variety of roles, such as marriage, motherhood and career commitments, into their life structures.

Other studies using Levinson's framework have added to our understanding of women's development. Auerbach (1986) found that women's life structures were characterised by a pattern of gradual linear change over the years rather than discrete periods of stability and change. Reinke, Elicott, Harris and Hancock (1985) found that these changes were

individualised with different women experiencing different kinds of issues as creating conflict. Bonds-White (1987) found that women's lives were characterised by investments in six main areas: education, work, family, relationships with men, personal issues, and retirement.

The above studies indicate that there are important similarities and differences in the evolution of the life structure of men and women. Noting these differences is important because the life structures of men and women are connected.

#### Other Clarifications of Levinson's Theory

There have been other clarifications of Levinson's model which can add to our understanding of the life structure in the present study. This includes the cyclical expansion of Levinson's model proposed by Hudson (1991) and Hughes et al. (1986), the concept of "developmental process" proposed by Settlege (1985), which supplements Levinson's model, as well as the concept of developmental "lines" (Colarusso & Nemiroff, 1981), which highlights certain aspects of Levinson's theory.

The world, according to Hudson (1991) is marked by disorder and change and hence the evolution of the life structure does not follow a linear path, as Levinson (1978) maintains. In his cyclical reconceptualisation of Levinson's model, Hudson (1991) proposes that the evolution of the life structure is characterised rather by a continuous process that moves from stable periods to unstable periods and transitions to renewal, and so on, with a continuous flow and repetition of similar issues and themes. Similarly, Hughes et al. (1986) proposed that the roles that make up what Levinson calls a life structure occur in a cycle of four phases: initiation; adaption; reassessment; and reconciliation. The cyclical view alerts us to the possibility that the evolution of the life structure of the men in the present research is not as linear as Levinson proposes.

Secondly, Settlege (Settlege 1985; Settlege, Curtis & Lozoff, 1988) refers to the concept of "developmental process" to supplement Levinson's stage model. This concept implies that development is initiated by a developmental challenge which leads to developmental tension and then

developmental conflict. Through resolution of developmental conflict, the individual is able to achieve a change in self and identity. The nature of the developmental challenges in the lives of the men in the present research, and the ways in which they deal with developmental conflict, will be a relevant issue.

A third clarification of contemporary stage theory is evident in the work of Colarusso and Nemiroff (1981). They contend that although adult development is marked by a certain orderliness and predictability as Levinson (1978) would argue, there is much variation along each developmental "line". Lines refer to specific aspects of development such as intimacy, relationship to parents and children, mentor relationships and relationships to society.

Collectively, the above mentioned clarifications of Levinson's model, draw our attention to the importance of disorder and change, developmental challenges and developmental lines in the life structures of the men in the present study.

### Conclusion

In the present chapter the main stage theories, with specific reference to the work of Levinson and the Levinsonian studies were reviewed. Santrock (1985 p.360) points out that the main stage theories share similar themes: "All would concur with a general outline of adult development that begins with the change from identity to intimacy, then from career consolidation to generativity, and finally from searching for meaning to some final integration." These theories also have in common the emphasis on tasks, a concept initially proposed by Havinghurst (1973). For instance, the most important task of early adulthood, according to these theories, is the establishing of an identity separate from parents (Helson & Moane, 1987). These theories also share, although to a different extent, the emphasis upon the epigenetic principle, or the assumption that tasks and issues have a particular time of ascendancy (Runyan, 1982).

The stage theories and research discussed in the present chapter have enriched our understanding of adult development in various ways.

Erikson's (1968, 1982) work, and research based on his work, has illustrated the importance of psychosocial tasks during development, and the "balancing" of these tasks as a prerequisite for healthy adult development (Kivnick, 1988), or a stable life structure. Kagan's (1972) work has highlighted the recurrent nature of many psychosocial themes and tasks during adulthood, while White (1975) has broadened the conception of intimacy during early adulthood to include commitment to "something". Marcia (1980) has elaborated upon the concept of identity formation and Viney (1987) has highlighted the individual's phenomenological understanding of psychological tasks.

Gould's (1978; 1980) work is also relevant to the understanding of the life structure through its accent on the importance of openness and self-evaluation for the process of transformation or, in Levinson's (1978) terms, transition. Without these factors an "authentic identity" (Sheehy, 1976) cannot be established.

While the stage theories share many similarities, the work of Levinson would seem to be the most comprehensive and detailed stage theory of adult development (Sugarman, 1986). The uniqueness and power of his theory is achieved through his fine description of the evolution of the life structure (Manganyi, 1990). This fine description has been achieved through the method that Levinson used - biographical or intensive interviewing. Indeed, a striking feature of most of the research reviewed, is that the researchers have used intensive interviewing, in one form or another, to obtain "vivid portrayals" (Slagle, 1992) of human lives, and adult development.

A fundamental criticism of the major research and ideas which have been reviewed in this chapter, is that the research has been based on predominantly white, middle class, American men, and their findings cannot be generalised to other cultures or to women. In his recent review of research, in the field of developmental psychology in the United States, Graham (1992, p.629) concludes that, "most of the subjects were white and middle class". Erikson's model is more applicable to "individualistic, economically favoured societies" (Vaillant & Milofsky, 1985, p.299). Vaillant and Vaillant (1990, p.36) describe their sample of men as a "favoured one" because it consisted of well educated,

healthy, white men. Havinghurst's notion of developmental tasks are more suitable for young adults in "Western, industrialised cultures" (Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992, p.135). Gould's sample also consisted mainly of white men, while Sheehy's work has been criticised for not being representative of the population (Santrock, 1985).

Levinson's work has also received much criticism for its cultural narrowness (Herbert, 1989; Gooden, 1989; Roberts & Newton, 1987). Levinson (1986) himself has pointed this out. Roberts and Newton (1987) state it concisely by saying that Levinson's claim for the universality of his periods has been challenged "and often simply dismissed out of hand on racial, class and cultural and historical relativist grounds ..." (p.154). Gooden (1980) points out that Levinson's theory cannot be adequately applied to men who have not achieved economically viable life structures, while Ruffin (1989) points out that Levinson's theory misses out on the black experience.

Unfortunately, as Gooden (1989) points out, there are very few studies on black adult development. The few studies that have been done, and which have been reviewed in this chapter (Gooden, 1980, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989) have indicated that there are differences in the adult development of black and white adults. The life structures of most of these black men and women were characterised by lack of mentors, impoverished Dreams, low levels of intimacy and high conflict amongst the lower socio-economic groups. These studies have indicated that the development of a viable life structure in black men and women is impeded by the lack of mentors and societal support. Black men and women are often prevented by obstacles within society, and a lack of resources, from realising their Dream in relation to work and their own relationships. The presence of these obstacles has led Ruffin (1989) to suggest a new development task for black men and women, the development of "race consciousness".

Coupled with this, is the need to consider coping styles as an integral aspect of black psychosocial development (Herbert, 1989; Jones, 1989; Ruffin, 1989). The model of role strain across the life span (Bowman, 1989) is a particularly viable way of addressing this issue. This means that the way in which the men in the present research cope

with the barriers and constraints in their attempt to achieve a viable life structure, should be explored.

The most important implication of the research concerning black adult development, is that current models, such as Levinson's (1978), are not universal and have to be reviewed and expanded (Eastmond, 1991). Gooden (1989, p.67) sums up the situation in the field of black adult development well: "Clearly, there is much to be done." This is especially so in the South African context, where the study of psychosocial development of black adults has received even less attention. The purpose of the present research is to address this gap in knowledge.

## NON-STAGE THEORIES AND RESEARCH

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review some important non-stage theories and research in the field of adult development. Although these theories are fundamentally different to Levinson's (1978) theory, they can help to enrich our understanding of the life structure.

In the first section, the contextual approach to adult development, which emphasise the interaction between the person and environment, will be explored, with specific reference to the influential dialectical view (Dowd, 1990; Lerner, 1991; Perun & Bielby, 1980, 1981; Riegel, 1978) and the interactional perspective (Magnusson, 1987; 1990). The dialectical view differs to stage theories such as Levinson's because it emphasises struggle and change rather than stability and orderliness, and because it emphasises the dynamic relationship between the inner and outer contexts of adult development. The interactional perspective (Magnusson, 1987; 1990) will also be considered in the first section of this chapter because this perspective also focuses on the dynamic relationship between the person and the environment.

The second section will focus on the life events framework (Brown & Harris, 1989; Hultsch & Plemons, 1979) which has in common with dialectical theory an emphasis on crises and transitions during adulthood (Gerdes et al., 1988). The life events framework, however, focuses more thoroughly on the influence of specific and unexpected life events on development. The application of Levinson's theory of the life structure to the life events framework is of particular relevance to the present research, and will be discussed in some detail (Brown & Harris, 1989).

The third section will explore the constructivist approach to adult development. This approach differs from the dialectical view and the life events framework because it focuses on the active role of the individual in construing his or her own psychological development (Berzonsky, 1991,

1992; Viney, 1987, 1992). This approach is relevant to the present research because this research is grounded in constructivist thinking.

Research relating to the issue of stability and change during adult development will be the focus of the last section of this chapter because this theme runs through all the major models of development. This will include a review of recent research based on personality dimensions and variables (Costa, 1992; Hart, 1992) as well as research based on the phenomenological experience of change during the adult years (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; Markus, Cross & Markus, 1991). This research is important because the present research is concerned with phenomenological aspects of development.

The chapter will conclude by proposing a broader conception of the life structure through integrating the above research and ideas with Levinson's concept of the life structure, and highlighting the relevance for the present research.

### **The Contextual Perspective of Development**

Both the dialectical and interactional perspectives of development are derived from the contextual metamodel, which emphasises the interactive nature of the developmental process (Santrock, 1985). According to this view, the individual affects, and is affected by the context, whether this be the biological context, or the social, historical or cultural context.

#### The Dialectical perspective

Wrightsman (1994a) points out that there are different perspectives on the meaning of the dialectical view, and that it is more a point of view than a testable theory. A main aspect of the dialectical view is the notion of a dynamic relationship between opposing forces (or polarities), which is characterised by a struggle for control, resulting in constant change. Development in this view is thus not orderly and predictable (as stage theory would maintain), but marked by flux and change (Sugarman, 1986; Wrightsman, 1994a).

Although there are important differences between Levinson's stage approach and the dialectical approach, as has already been pointed out, Levinson's approach does contain elements of a dialectical approach because his conception implies a never-ending struggle with developmental tasks (Wrightsman, 1994a). However, according to Wrightsman, the dialectical view also considers the periods of stability and crisis proposed by Levinson to be mutually dependent, with the integration of the two making mature development possible. Erikson's theory also contains elements of a dialectical approach as is evident in his opposing and yet interrelated paths of development (Viney, 1992).

The dynamic relationship between opposing forces has been comprehensively captured by Riegel (1975; 1978). Riegel argued against stage theory by suggesting that the world and the person are in constant flux and conflict, and order is never achieved. He conceptualised four interacting dimensions of development: the inner-biological, individual-psychological, outer-physical and cultural-sociological dimension.

Conflicts between the four dimensions produce developmental change. A major change in one dimension can result in the other dimensions becoming "out of sync". Unlike stage theory, the direction of change can never be predicted as the person is continuously changing, while interacting with a changing world.

Perun and Bielby (1980; 1981) have expanded upon this idea with their timing model of the life course. They propose that adult development consists of many "temporal progressions" including physical changes in the body during adulthood, changes in the family life cycle and changes in work roles. Each of the progressions moves at a different rate for each individual. Synchrony exists when the progressions support one another, while asynchrony occurs when a dimension is "off-time" or unsynchronised with another dimension. By way of example, Wrightsman (1994a) points out that a woman's need for childbearing during the early twenties might be off-time or in conflict with her career needs.

Similarly, according to Ford and Lerner (1992) and Lerner (1985) development is a continuing dynamic process which is marked by a struggle by the individual to establish a "goodness-of-fit" between personal

characteristics and environmental variables. In this view development is multidimensional and multidirectional with constraining and facilitating factors, making development open-ended, and not predetermined (Ford & Lerner, 1992). Dannefer and Perlmutter (1990) and Mulark (1991) affirm this point by emphasising that development is a multidimensional process stemming from an interaction between the environment and forces within the individual.

While this view acknowledges the important role of the individual in development, an implication of this view (and indeed the dialectical view in general) is that human development depends very much upon social policies and social institutions which are conducive to change (Lerner, Perkins & Jacobson, 1993). Dowd (1990) expands upon this point with his sociological view of dialecticism which asserts that developmental opportunities are linked to socio-economic factors, such as social class and economic resources. Limited opportunity to develop through a lack of resources (social, cultural or economic) will stagnate the developmental process. This is an important point to bear in mind as the focus of the present research is on a group who have suffered discrimination, and have experienced a lack of resources and opportunity, which can be expected to influence the evolution of their life structures.

The importance of understanding the role of the environment in human development is also emphasised by the interactional perspective, but this approach seems to focus more on patterns of order and regularity over the life span. The interactional approach also focuses more on the individual than the dialectical approach.

#### The Interactional Perspective

The interactional perspective implies that human development is a reciprocal interactive process in which both the individual and the environment change across time (Magnusson, 1987). Magnusson (1987; 1990) and Magnusson and Allen (1984) criticise variable-orientated approaches to the study of human development, where the main focus is upon the development of specific variables. They argue instead for an approach which is person-orientated and focuses on the structures and processes

involved in the total functioning of the individual. The individual, in turn, is embedded in the total context. Development, in this view, is conceptualised as the manifestation of stability and change within the total individual embedded in the total context. Developmental psychology attempts to explain the "lawful continuity" (Gustafson & Magnusson, 1991, p.3) of this change and stability.

This lawful continuity can be ascertained by studying individual "patterns" in development (Gustafson & Magnusson, 1991). Gustafson and Magnusson raise a very important question in relation to these patterns: "Will similar patterns emerge from one culture to another?" (p.193). The present research shall focus on the patterns that constitute the life structure of black men.

#### Implications of the Dialectical and Interactional Views

The dialectical and interactional views have important implications for the present research. Both these views imply that the understanding of the life structure of the black men in the present research must be considered in terms of the dynamic interaction between the inner dimensions of the person and the outer cultural sociological dimension, which Levinson fails to emphasise. We should not "ignore the dialectical relationship that exists between individual South Africans and the unique sociopolitical context within which behavior is manifested" (Anonymous, 1986, p.81). In interactional terms, we must understand the structures and processes that characterise this interactive relationship.

These views (and especially the dialectical view) also adds to our understanding of the life structure by emphasising change and conflict. South Africa is a country beset by change and conflict. An important issue that will be addressed in the present research is how this change, reflected in the sociocultural and political context of South African society, has affected the life structure of the black men.

The dialectical view also draws our attention to the contradiction between the individual and society (Viney, 1992), a contradiction which is so evident in South Africa, especially for black people who have had to contend with discrimination and oppression during their development.

A study of the life structure of black men must thus take this contradiction into account by considering the total person in the total context (Magnusson, 1987; 1990).

In order to do this we must understand the effect of both constraining and facilitating factors peculiar to the South African context on the development of black men (Ford & Lerner, 1992). We must understand what impact a lack of economic and social resources (Dowd, 1990) as well as the negative effect of social policies and social institutions (Sigelman & Shaffer, 1991) can have on the formation of a viable life structure.

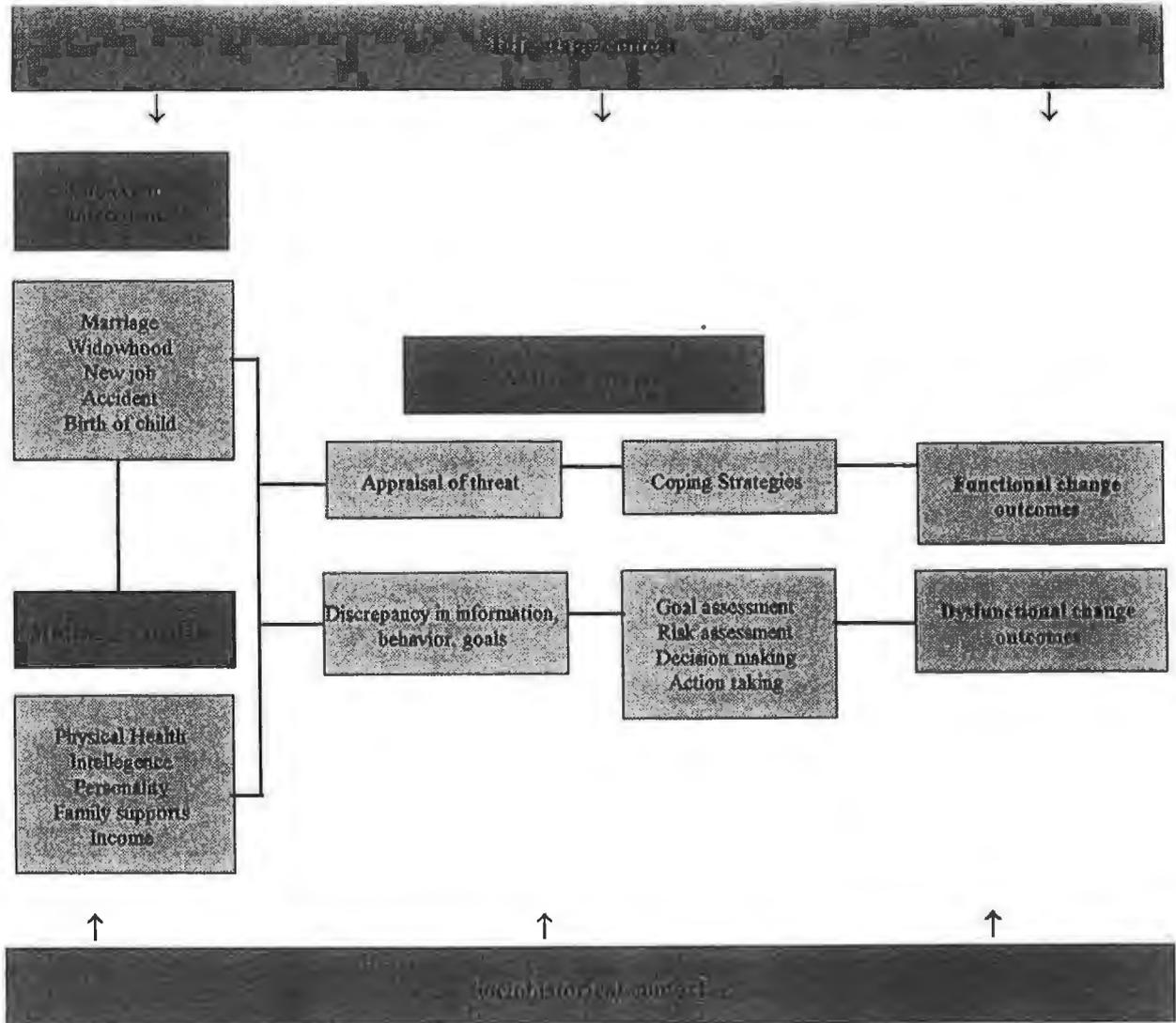
Institutional repression and lack of resources has made it difficult for black adults to establish a "goodness-of-fit" (Ford & Lerner, 1992) or "synchrony" (Perun & Bielby, 1980) between their personal needs and society, or the internal and external aspects of the life structure. In terms of the interactional perspective we can only understand the "patterns" (Gustafson & Magnusson, 1991, p.193) of the life structure of the black men if we take the above factors into account.

The life events framework (Brown & Harris, 1989; Hultsch & Deutsch, 1981) focuses on the external aspects of the life structure, that constitute these patterns.

#### **The Life Events Framework**

The impetus for the life events perspective on adult development is found in the work of Holmes and Rahe (1967) who proposed that certain life events (such as marriage, starting a family, and finding a job) produces stress which results in developmental change. Since Holmes and Rahe's conception of life events, more sophisticated and modified versions of the life events framework have emerged such as the model proposed by Hultsch and Plemons (1979) and the integration of this model with Levinson's theory of the life structure by Brown and Harris (1989). The work of Neugarten (1980) also adds depth to the life events framework.

Hultsch and Plemons's (1979) model illustrates the relationship between life events and development across the life span. Their model, which is represented in Figure 3.1, has four components: the life events themselves; mediating factors; an adaptation process; and the resultant functional or dysfunctional outcome.



**Figure 3.1.** Hultsch & Plemons' life events framework (adapted from Santrock, 1985, p.372)

According to this model, all life events are potentially stressful, including events usually perceived of as negative, such as divorce, and events usually perceived of as positive, such as promotion at work.

Mediating factors, which are the resources that influence the impact of life events on the person, include social resources, such as family support and income, and psychological resources such as personality and intelligence (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978; Sugarman, 1986; Swindle, Heller & Lakey, 1988). The adaption process refers to the individual's subjective perception (Brim & Ryff, 1980) or "cognitive appraisal" (Whitbourne, 1985) of the events, and the strategies utilised to cope with life events. Coping in this sense implies the person's way of managing the stress and the emotional response produced by life events (Stone, Helder & Schneider, 1988). The coping strategies employed by the person will be considerably dependent upon the amount of perceived control over the event (Cohen, 1988). The person's coping strategies will result in either a positive or negative outcome.

Integral to this model, is the impact of the life stage context, or personal context, (Chiriboga & Cutler, 1980; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; Stevens-Long & Commons, 1990) and the sociohistorical context. For example, an event such as the death of a spouse, may have a different impact on a young adult than it does on an elderly adult, because of their different life stages. Moreover, an event such as a woman being promoted to the head of an organisation, might have a different meaning now than it did 30 years ago, because of different expectations stemming from the sociohistorical context (Santrock, 1985).

Brown and Harris (1989) have integrated Hultsch and Plemons's (1979) framework with Levinson's (1978) concept of the life structure. They refer to their model as a "two-strand" perspective of life events.

The upper strand consists of the external factors of the life structure, or the "world" in Levinson's terms. This includes events which Brown and Harris (1989) refer to as "regular events" (for instance birth and illness), "irregular events" (changes in job or residence) and "disruptive events" (assaults, political strife, etc). The lower strand are the internal, psychological aspects, or the "self" in Levinson's terms. It could include low self-esteem, helplessness, dependency, and other long term traits. The inner and outer aspects of the life structure are mutually interdependent. Thus, childhood deprivation (upper strand) may result in a lack of confidence (lower strand) which

might influence the person to take a menial job (upper strand), which may further lower the sense of self-worth (lower strand).

The external aspects of the life structure "provides a setting for the psychologically grounded tendencies of the individual to unravel" (Brown & Harris, 1989, p.380). The life structure is formed through a process of "sorting and selection", which is based on choices and the life histories interacting with wider sociocultural factors and events. True understanding will be fostered by comprehending the individual life history within the context of life events.

Neugarten (Neugarten, 1980; Neugarten & Datan, 1973) expands upon this point by asserting that life events must be understood in terms of the sociohistorical context. People develop expectations of what the major life events and turning points will be and when they should occur (Neugarten & Neugarten, 1987). The "social clock" or the internalised perception of age-related norms, expectations and roles, will differ according to socio-economic class, ethnic, and racial background.

According to Neugarten(1980), events can be on-time or off-time. The on-time events are age appropriate, while off-time events are unexpected. On-time events have less impact (Brim & Ryff, 1980; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990) as people can prepare themselves through "anticipatory socialisation" (Brim & Ryff, 1980). Indeed, off-time, or unexpected events during adulthood, such as early marriage, or inadequate occupational choice, can result in a change of developmental trajectories, or developmental paths (Mumford & Owens, 1984; Mumford, Wesley & Shaffer, 1987).

Life events can also be normative or idiosyncratic. Normative events are expected changes according to the social norms for individuals from a particular culture at a particular time in their lives. Idiosyncratic events are changes in the life span that are unique to a particular individual (Lowenthal, Thurner & Chiriboga, 1975).

It would thus seem that the effect of a life event will be determined by the "self in transaction with life's circumstances and the personal and historical moment" (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990, p.42).

Evaluation and Implications of the  
Life Events Framework

While the life events framework has been praised for taking into account the significant impact of life events on adult development (Hultsch & Deutsch, 1981), it has also received some criticism.

Whitbourne (1986) criticises the life events model for not taking into account the active role of the individual in determining the course of life events. Instead, the life events model conceptualises the person as being reactive to externally determined experiences. Bandura (1982) also criticises frameworks such as the life events framework for not taking into account the prominent role of chance encounters, or events that "occur fortuitously rather than through deliberate plan" (Bandura, 1982, p.747). Such events can result in minor changes in terms of the person's development, or change the path of the person's life completely. Lastly, the life events framework has been criticised for not taking into account the influence of "daily hassles" (De Longis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman & Lazarus, 1982) or the smaller, day to day, pressures of our lives.

Nevertheless, the life events framework has much to add to our understanding of the life structure in the present research. Brown and Harris (1989) have shown how the internal world of the individual and the external world of life events interact to create the life structure. These events, which can be referred to as milestones, marker events (Gerdes et al., 1988) and turning points, are integral to an understanding of the life structure in the present research. It is these events which mark the beginning and end of the periods in Levinson's scheme. They include events such as getting married, having children, and entering an occupation, as well as broader cultural events, such as paying of labola (sum paid by the groom to the bride's family in a traditional marriage) and sociopolitical events such as the 1976 riots and the recent democratisation of South Africa.

Factors that influence life events, and that must be taken into account in the present study, include the person's unique sociohistorical circumstances, socio-economic class, ethnic and racial background (Fiske

& Chiriboga, 1990; Hultsch & Deutsch, 1981; Neugarten, 1980) and the person's perception of the event (Brim & Ryff, 1980; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990). The impact of on and off time events, normative and idiosyncratic events (Neugarten, 1980) and especially disruptive events (Brown & Harris 1989) such as political strife and unemployment which are so prevalent in the South African context, must also be considered.

A study of the life structure must also take into account the impact of chance events (Bandura, 1982) and "daily hassles" (De Longis et al, 1982), on the evolution of each person's life structure.

In conclusion, it should be evident that the life events framework and the dialectical model of development emphasise change during adult development, as well as the role of the sociopolitical contexts on development, while the stage models reviewed in the previous chapter emphasise stability and predictability in development. It has been shown that both these views add to an understanding of the life structure.

At the same time these models of development neglect another important aspect of development - the role of the individual in construing and planning his or her own development. The constructivist approach, and the role of planning in human development shall be the focus of the next section.

#### **Constructivist Model of Adult Development and the Role of Planning During Adult Development**

The constructivist model is grounded in the work of Kelly (1955), who proposed that people perceive and interpret the world in terms of bipolar constructs that are formed through past experiences, and that can change. More recently, a number of developmental theorists have proposed a constructivist model of adult development (Berzonsky, 1992; Dannefer & Perlmutter, 1990; Nurmi, 1993; Viney, 1987; 1992). These models are especially pertinent to the present research as the present research is grounded in constructivistic thinking. Indeed, a main focus of the present research will be on how the black men construe their own development.

Viney (1987, 1992) has been at the forefront of constructivist thinking in the context of adult development. Viney proposes that adult development is based upon mental representations or constructs that change over time. The individual thus plays an important role in construing his or her own psychosocial development. The individual - to paraphrase Viney (1992) - is continually testing out constructs, and through a process of selection and rejection, maintains those constructs which are developmentally functional. This process is also fostered by the validation and invalidation of the construct system by others. Too much invalidation by others will influence the developmental process negatively. A developmental transition is a signal that the individual must change his or her way of construing things. This is done through invalidation of present construing. Thus, human development is envisaged as a process of continually negotiating constructs in order to make sense of our lives and develop a sense of identity.

Berzonsky (1992), commenting on Viney's model, points out that people differ in the way that they disconfirm and revise self-constructs and in the way they react to change and transition. Some people are open to change and continuously revise their personal constructs, while others are resistant to change and defensive, and thus find it difficult to revise their personal constructs, and hence do not experience much change during the life span. Furthermore, the constructs will be different in different cultures (Viney, 1987).

The role of planning and control over the life span is an important aspect of constructivist thinking. According to Nurmi (1993) adults select goals by comparing their own motives to age specific developmental tasks and then construct plans to realise their goals by considering the possibilities in different areas, whether it be in relationships or in the wider society. These plans will also be influenced by the adult's "cognitive generativity" according to Dannefer and Perlmutter's (1990) model of adult development. Cognitive generativity refers to "the kind of development that occurs when the individual is actively recombining experience with logic, memory and imagination" (Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992, p.57). Cognitive generativity allows the person to reflect on oneself and experience, and ultimately to change the effect of environmental factors on development.

The link between this self-reflection and Levinson's theory of the life structure is illustrated by the triple helix model of adult development proposed by Juhasz (1989). According to this model, through self-appraisal and appraisal of other's valued opinions, the person will direct energy towards choosing a role that will enhance self-esteem and self-respect. The roles which make up the person's lifestyle at a particular point in time will thus combine "in order of priority determined by the esteem needs, to form the parameters of what Levinson calls a 'life structure'" (Juhasz, 1989, p.312).

Control across the life span will be affected by cultural factors, socio-economic status, educational levels and race. It would seem that racial minorities and people from lower socio-economic and educational levels have lower levels of internal control (Lachman & Burack, 1993). Furthermore, Rodin, Schooler and Warner-Schaie (1990) point out that planning and efficacy over the life span must be understood in terms of the values of the culture and society, and more specifically, the extent to which the culture values individualism. It would seem, they continue, that those societies and cultures which emphasise individualism also emphasise attributes of control and direction. Syme (1990) points out that socio-economic status affects control and direction during the life span because the lower the socio-economic status of people, the less control they have over the "conditions" of their lives, and hence their own development.

#### Implications of the Constructivist Model, and the Role of Planning

This section has broadened our understanding of the life structure by highlighting the active role that the individual plays in his or her own development. If, as Viney (1987, p.126) asserts, "psychological development can be assessed through analysis of the constructs they (ie people) use to describe their life experience," the task of the present research is to identify the nature of the constructs of the men in the present research. This requires a focus on the internal aspects of the life structure, that is their mental representations or perceptions (Berzonsky, 1992; Viney, 1987, 1992).

These perceptions will in turn be influenced by each man's reflection of himself and his past, and his self-esteem (Dannefer & Perlmutter, 1990; Juhasz, 1989). This is an important point for the present research because self-esteem and self-appraisal are embedded in the sociopolitical context of discrimination and oppression that has characterised the lives of many black men.

The present research must also take into account the role of cultural factors, socio-economic status, educational levels and opportunities on the planning and goals of the men (Lachman & Burack, 1993; Syme, 1990).

### Stability and Change Across the Life Span

This section will address some of the important research and issues relating to change across the life span. This will include research that has dealt with this issue by focusing on personality dimensions (McCrae & Costa, 1990), personality traits (Haan, 1990), personality types (Block, 1981) and facets of personality (Hart, 1992), as well as research which has focused on the subjective perception of change during adulthood (Cross & Markus, 1991; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990).

In a recent review of studies relating to the issue of the stability of the personality over time, Schuerger, Zarella and Hotz (1989) found strong evidence for stability over the life span. Hart (1992) points out that the most striking finding by Schuerger et al. (1989) was that all the research reviewed, irrespective of the research methodology, indicated stability over time. He goes on to say that the best work of this type is the work done by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae.

In their longitudinal research pertaining to the lives of men, Costa and McCrae (1978, 1980; McCrae & Costa, 1990) showed that there was little change in what Wrightsman (1994b) refers to as the "Big Five" personality factors (extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience) over the life span. They did find, however, that men who scored high on openness to experience were more likely to experience changes in their lives (Costa & McCrae, 1980). A similar finding was obtained by Whitebourne (1986), who found that

identity flexibility was significantly related to life change. Tesch and Cameron (1987) found that openness to experience was positively correlated with current and past identity exploration.

At this point it should be noted that the meaning of openness to experience is still debated. Recently, Goldberg (1994) has pointed out that this fifth personality factor should be described not as openness (as McCrae would argue) but rather as Intelligence, Imagination and Introspection. Goldberg (1994) also makes the important point that the cross cultural applicability of any of the five personality factors has not been demonstrated.

Haan (1985, 1990) disagrees with McCrae and Costa's finding that personality is relatively stable during the adult years. She found that people, especially young adults, change in terms of specific personality traits (for example, men become more conventional and less open as they age). According to Block (1981), the amount of change will be determined by the person's personality type.

Based on intensive longitudinal studies, Shanan (1991) also emphasises that developmental change and continuity depends very much upon the personality type and personality pattern of the person. Integral to this pattern, is the way in which the person interacts or copes with the world. The active copier is in more control of personal functioning, while the passive copier gives in to external pressures.

In his recent and comprehensive longitudinal study, Hart (1992) also found evidence for stability and change in the course of development from adolescence to adulthood. He identified important "facets of lives," such as certain aspirations and moral judgement, which tended to remain stable over the life span. On the other hand, transitions during adulthood, such as leaving home, starting a job and a family during early adulthood, brought about a change in values and adaptional style in the lives of the men he studied. This finding, he suggests, is similar to that of Levinson.

A crucial issue in the stability versus change debate is whether people perceive themselves changing. Costa and McCrae (1978) addressed

this issue by asking their sample of adult men to describe, in their own words, their experience of change in the last ten years. Most of the men perceived no significant changes during the life span.

More recent research has also focused on subjective beliefs, or the perception of change during adulthood (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; Cross & Markus, 1991; Heckhausen, Dixon & Baltes, 1989). Fiske and Chiriboga (1990) found evidence for the subjective experience of change during the life span (for example many adults felt that they had matured and become more tolerant). Rigidity, or being set in certain ways, and flexibility, or being open to new experiences, were found to be important issues when addressing change. For instance, those adults who were more rigid tended to choose a life that was based more on stability.

Heckhausen et al. (1989) focused on another subjective aspect of change during adulthood, the expectations or belief systems concerning future development. They found that adults at all age levels expected that their lives would change throughout their life span. The adults were generally optimistic in that they expected there to be more positive than negative changes throughout adulthood. The adults viewed development as increasingly multifaceted and were able to be specific about expected onset of developmental changes.

Cross and Markus (1991) coined the term "possible selves" to describe these expectations of change across the life span or more specifically "those elements of the self-concept that represent what we could become, what we would like to become, and, very importantly, what we are afraid of becoming" (p.231). In this sense, possible selves shares elements with Levinson's concept of the Dream, and could include the powerful or leader self, the fit self, or the alone and unwanted self. In their research concerning possible selves, Cross and Markus (1991) found that young adults were able to generate a diversity of possible selves.

#### Implications of Stability and Change Across the Lifespan

A fundamental question in the present research will be whether the

men feel that they have changed in any way over the life span, and in what ways they have changed (Costa & McCrae, 1978; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990). Special attention must be given to those aspects or "facets of lives" that the men perceive as having changed, and those that have stayed the same (Hart, 1992). We must also consider the men's expectations and belief systems concerning future development (Heckhausen et al., 1989), or the nature of their possible selves (Cross & Markus, 1991).

Furthermore, while a study of personality variables is not the main focus of the present research, the effect of personality types on change during adulthood must be considered (Block, 1981; Haan, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1990; Shanan, 1991). The patterns of coping with and interacting with the world during the evolution of the men's life structures is especially important in the present research (Shanan, 1991) as is their openness to change (Goldberg, 1994).

#### **Conclusion: Towards a Broader Conception of the Life Structure**

While there are fundamental differences between the stage theories of adult development reviewed in the previous chapter, and the non-stage theories of development discussed in the present chapter, the non-stage theories can enrich and broaden our conception of the life structure in a number of ways.

The dialectical view (Ford & Lerner, 1992; Perun & Bielby, 1980; Riegel, 1975, 1978), interactional perspective (Magnusson, 1987, 1990) and life events framework (Brown & Harris, 1989; Hultsch & Plemons, 1981) all emphasise, to varying degrees, the influence of the external context or environment on adult development. In Levinsonian terms these perspectives highlight the significance of the external aspects of the life structure, that is the external social and cultural world, on the evolution of the life structure.

More specifically, the dialectical view emphasises the dynamic, dialectical relationship between the inner and outer aspects of the life structure; the interactional perspective emphasises the total individual

embedded in the total context, while the life events framework emphasises the significance of external events on the evolution of the life structure.

The dialectical view and Levinson's model share an emphasis on transitions during adulthood. In dialectical terms a stable life structure is one in which there is a "goodness-of-fit" between internal and external aspects of the life structure (Ford & Lerner, 1992). Unstable periods and transitions in the life structure are precipitated by the internal and external aspects of the life structure becoming "out of sync" with each other (Perun & Bielby, 1980).

The emphasis on the struggle between the internal aspects of the life structure and the external aspects, or outer cultural dimensions, is extremely pertinent to the study of black men in South Africa. A study of the life structure of black men must consider the role that the external aspects such as a lack of economic and social resources (Dowd, 1990) and negative social policies and institutions (Sigelman & Shafer, 1991) have had on the evolution of the life structure of the black men.

The dialectical view demands that we understand the dynamic relationship between the person and both constraining and facilitating factors peculiar to the South African context, which affect the evolution of the life structure (Dowd, 1990; Lerner et al., 1993).

The interactional perspective (Gustafson & Magnusson, 1991) also adds to the understanding of the life structure by highlighting the importance of identifying "patterns" that characterise individuals in a certain domain. The present research attempts to identify patterns in the evolution of the life structure of the black men, by focusing on the reciprocal interaction between the individual and the outer environment.

The life events framework broadens our understanding of the life structure with its emphasis on the influence of important events on the formation of the life structure. The periods of stability and transition in Levinson's model are usually marked by specific life events, from leaving home to retiring. The life events framework (Hultsch & Plemons, 1979) implies that the impact of the life events on the life structure

must be considered in the present research. This impact will depend upon the stage of development of the person, the unique South African sociocultural context, the nature of the event itself, and the internal and external resources at the person's disposal. A study of the effect of events on the life structure must also consider the unique sociohistorical circumstances of the black men, and the influence of these circumstances on their expectations and perceptions.

The life events framework proposed by Brown and Harris (1989) indicates more specifically how the life events framework and Levinson's model can be integrated. Their two-strand perspective emphasises the mutual independence of the inner, psychological aspects of the life structure, and the external world of life events. Brown and Harris' model also draws our attention to the effect of irregular and disruptive events (such as loss of a job, changes in residence and political strife) on the formation of the life structure.

While the models already discussed emphasise the external aspects of the life structure, the constructivist approach emphasises the internal aspects of the life structure, that is the mental constructions of the person (Berzonsky, 1992; Nurmi, 1993; Viney, 1992). In Levinsonian terms this view holds that the evolution of the life structure is characterised by the continuous renegotiation of constructs in order to make sense of our lives and develop a sense of identity. A transition, in Levinson's framework, is an indication that the individual must change his or her construct patterns.

The constructivist model of development is relevant to the present research because the present research is concerned with the black men's perception and construction of reality, or their stories.

The role of planning and control during the evolution of the life structure is also relevant to the present research (Rodin et al., 1993; Scholnick & Friedman, 1993). The sociocultural context (Sansone & Berg, 1993) as well as the availability of institutional and societal options will affect the planning needed for the establishment of a viable life structure. This point is especially relevant to the present research because institutional and societal options have been lacking in the lives

of black men, and thus can be expected to influence their sense of planning and control, over the evolution of the life structure.

Research that has focused on the issue of stability and change across the life span addresses the internal aspects of the life structure, or the role of personality during the evolution of the life structure. The studies by McCrae and Costa (1984, 1990) would seem to indicate that the personality dimension, "openness to experience", is an important indicator of how the person will approach developmental transitions and changes which are fundamental to the establishment of a stable life structure. More "open" and less neurotic people are ready for change and ready to undertake the challenge and introspection that is required of a life transition.

The work by Block (1981), and especially Shanan (1991), further highlights the importance of understanding the unique patterns of personality and modes of interacting, or coping with the world, in the lives of the men in the present research.

Personality also plays an important role in the development of the life structure via the person's subjective belief system. Heckhausen et al. (1989) highlight the importance of perceptions and beliefs that people bring to their life structures, while Cross and Markus (1991) stress the importance of the future as a component of the life structure through their description of "possible selves." Possible selves implies that an understanding of the life structure of the men in the present research must take into consideration the person's future orientation and expectations, or in Levinson's terms, his Dreams.

In conclusion, the dialectical model of development, the interactional perspective and the life events framework have enriched our conception of the life structure by highlighting the interplay between the person and the external aspects of the life structure. In the same way, the constructivist model of adult development and research pertaining to the issue of stability and control across the life span has focused on the internal aspects of the life structure.

A task of the present research would be to focus on the interactions, patterns, and specific constructions of reality of the men, through an analysis of the evolution of their life structures.

## THE CENTRAL ASPECTS OF THE LIFE STRUCTURE DURING EARLY ADULTHOOD

### Introduction

A study of the life structure, during early adulthood, implies that attention must be given to the central components of the life structure, namely marriage, family and work, during this era of development (Levinson, 1986). The formation of love relationships, marriage and family, and the formation of occupation are the crucial tasks of the Novice Phase of early adulthood, according to Levinson.

These components can be referred to as the "contexts of development" which include the inner context of development, or physical and intellectual change; the personal context, or intimacy and marriage; and the expanded context, or work, occupation and career (Evans & Poole, 1991; Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992). These components are interlinked because they affect and are affected by each other (Okun, 1984; Schein, 1978).

The present chapter contains a review of recent research and theory relating to these central aspects of the life structure during early adulthood, that is the personal and expanded context of intimacy, marriage, parenting and work.

The chapter will begin with a focus on the transition to adulthood - the process of the youth becoming an adult - as this is a pivotal point in the development of the adult life structure, where an individual is confronted with critical decisions concerning all aspects of the life structure, especially work and family roles.

Recent research concerning these two roles will then be examined. First, research relating to love, intimacy, marriage and parenthood will be presented, with reference to the tasks, meaning and impact of these

processes. This will be followed by a discussion of career development across the life span, including a focus on the stage models of career development, which share similarities with Levinson's (1978) model of development. After a critique of stage models of career development, an alternative contextual view of career development will be presented, which could provide a useful framework for understanding career development in the lives of the black men in the present research. This will be followed with a brief discussion of the different ways in which individuals cope with career changes and transitions. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the relationship between the two important domains of work and family.

Although much of the research and theory to be reviewed is limited by its cultural specificity, being more relevant to white middle class adults, it is useful research because it raises some important issues and questions appropriate to Levinson's model and this research. These questions and issues will be highlighted at the end of each section.

#### **The Transition to Adulthood**

This section will discuss the transition to adulthood with reference to the timing of this transition and the tasks that the young adult has to confront. Reference will be made to the specific tasks and difficulties that black adults have to confront during this transition.

Gerdes et al. (1988, p.76) point out that it is difficult to define youth, or the period of transition into adulthood, precisely, but volunteers the following definition:

Youth is the period during which individuals prepare themselves for adult responsibilities and roles relating to their occupation, marriage and parenthood, and define their identity, values and goals in respect of these. This period extends from approximately 18 to 22 years.

The timing of the entry into these roles during the transition to adulthood is influenced by many factors (Marini, 1985; 1987). These include the person's educational attainment, and the age of leaving

school. Lack of financial resources often forces the person to enter the role of full-time worker relatively early. Opportunity also influences the taking of a role during this transition - a role change can only occur if the opportunity is there (for example a full-time job can only be obtained if there is a job opening). Lastly, the individual's expectations and orientation towards a particular role will affect the timing of the entry into the role (for example, a positive orientation towards education will influence the person's desire to pursue education).

Rangell (1990) refers to the transitional age of 17 as the "portal of adult life" as it is a crossroads in which the person has to make active and critical decisions concerning all aspects of the life structure, including work, family and other relationships. This crossroad is marked by a "rush ... to find a place in the world" (Chamberlain, 1989, p.8) which involves the negotiation of various development tasks. These tasks are grounded in the crucial development challenge of leaving home, and establishing a sense of individuation. The key issue is the extent to which the young adult can replace emotional involvement and dependency on parents, with a sense of autonomy (Crawley, 1985).

This sense of autonomy can take various forms (Frank, Avery & Laman, 1988). The "individuated" young adult feels affirmed by parents, and often seeks their advice while still feeling separate from them. The "competent connected" young adult is very independent, and has different views and beliefs to parents, but is able to understand and empathise with them. The "pseudoautonomous" young adult will avoid conflict with parents by disengaging from them. The "identified" young adult views parents as being supportive, identifies with their values and beliefs, and feels close to them. The "dependent" young adult has an insecure relationship with parents, but cannot cope without them. The "conflicted" profile, which emerged in relation to fathers, is marked by contradictory feelings of wanting to be close to the father, but feeling ashamed of the father at the same time.

The establishment of autonomy during this transition involves the negotiation of specific development tasks including the following (Bockneck, 1980; Gerdes et al., 1988; Levine, 1989):

- the establishment of identity,
- development of values and moral standards,
- development of psychological and economic independence,
- preparation for occupational choice,
- capacity to adjust to the adult world,
- development of the capacity for self-reappraisal.

The first task - the establishment of identity - is crucial throughout the evolution of the life structure, but takes on special significance during the transition to adulthood. Marcia (1980, 1989, 1992) has emphasised that the establishment of a mature identity during this period involves the presence of two processes which she refers to as crisis and commitment. A crisis occurs when the person's beliefs are questioned or challenged, whether it be in relation to the person's values, occupational aspirations or religious beliefs. Commitment involves the making of a choice. On the basis of these two qualities, Marcia defined four types of identity statuses:

- Identity confusion: the person has not experienced a crisis, and has not made a commitment.
- Identity foreclosure: the person has made a commitment without experiencing a crisis; this commitment is often forced onto the person by the parents (Wrightsman, 1994b, p.9).
- Identity moratorium: the person experiences a crisis, but has not made any commitments. Keniston (1977) refers to this as a psychosocial moratorium, or a period of "time out," in which the person experiments with new roles and responsibilities.
- Identity achievement: the person has explored possibilities and made a commitment, whether this be to certain values, or a way of living.

Pretorius (1990), after a review of the literature, elaborates upon other aspects of identity that are relevant to the transition to adulthood. These aspects include the personal self, social self, historical self, ideal self, ethnic and minority self. The personal self is constituted by the person's self-esteem and sense of who they are, while the social self refers to how the person is experienced by others, and how the person perceives self as different from others. The historical self refers to the person's perception and integration of past aspects of identity, while the ideal self refers to the person's conception of what he or she should be like. The ethnic and minority self refers to the person's sense of belonging and identification with a particular ethnic group or minority group. The person's self-concept as a minority as well as the person's perception of the dominant group, is determined by minority identity and racial identity.

The last-mentioned aspect of identity - the ethnic self - is especially important for black people during the transition to adulthood (Bowman, 1989; Downing, 1989; Herbert, 1989). Developing a positive racial identity is an integral aspect of the ethnic self, especially as the young black adult confronts barriers, including hostility, discrimination and prejudice, which disrupt the smooth transition into the adult world (Bowman, 1989).

Downing (1989) expands upon this by asserting that black adults enter the transition to adulthood with a "dual mind set" (p.274) as they struggle to integrate the reality of the larger society with their own cultural heritage.

Phinney (1989, 1992) and Rosenthal (1992) describe three stages in which a positive racial identity is achieved during this transition. In the first stage, the young person's sense of self is derived from external sources. During the second stage the young person begins to make independent judgements by comparing his or her own ethnic group with others. In the third stage, which is similar to Marcia's concept of identity achievement (Bee, 1994), the young person begins to resolve the conflicts and contradictions. Many young people from minority groups seem to be caught in "foreclosure" according to Marcia's scheme (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990). This means they have not reached the third

stage of Phinney and Rosenthal's (1992) model, and have not explored aspects of their racial identity.

Besides achieving a positive racial identity, the transition to adulthood involves other specific developmental tasks for the black person (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Ramseur, 1989), including the following:

- maintaining a positive self concept,
- maintaining positive ties and commitment to the black community and culture,
- maintaining an accurate perception of external circumstances,
- maintaining a sense of competence,
- adapting and being able to cope with the black and white community.

The implications of the above is that the tasks that the men in the present research have negotiated during the transition to adulthood must be expanded to include not only the "normal" tasks associated with this transition (Bockneck, 1980; Gerdes et al., 1988), but also the tasks specific to black adults (Ramseur, 1989; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992).

South African black adults have had to confront many barriers which could threaten the formation of a positive identity at such a pivotal time of adulthood. This includes impediments in the form of inadequate education and lack of financial resources and opportunity. The nature of the transition to adulthood, and the way the men cope with the transition (as well as transitions throughout the life span) must be considered in terms of impediments and constraints in the wider South African context.

The manner in which the young black men separate from their parents and establish autonomy in their lives is also an important concern (Crawley, 1985; Frank et al., 1988), as is the impact that lack of financial resources and opportunities has on the timing of role changes during this transition (Marini, 1985, 1987), especially family and work roles. Let us now look at the formation of these roles during early adulthood in more detail.

## Forming Love Relationships, Marriage and Family

Marriage is an integral aspect of the adult life structure because marriage is the way that adulthood is validated in our society (Gelles, 1995). Forming intimate relationships and a marriage is a fundamental task of early adulthood according to stage theorists (Erikson, 1968; Havinghurst, 1973, Levinson, 1978). It is thus important to understand the meaning and significance of marriage in the life structure of adults. At the same time it is important to understand the nature of love and intimacy which often provides the foundation for marriage (Gelles, 1995).

### Love and intimacy

Love and intimacy during adulthood has been defined in different ways. For example both Reiss (1980) and Karp and Yoels (1992, p.135) define the development of intimacy as a process which is guided by cultural expectation and which is "like a slowly turning wheel" that emerges through a sequence of phases.

These phases which Reiss (1980) refers to as the "Wheel of Love" includes the phases of rapport, self-revelation, mutual dependency, and personality need fulfillment. Couples initially assess each other to determine if there is mutual rapport. They then begin to reveal deeper feelings and intimate facts about themselves. This can lead to a phase where the two individuals become interdependent, followed by a phase in which important personality needs, such as the need for love and support, are satisfied.

An integral aspect of Reiss' (1980) model is the influence of "sociocultural background" and "role conception" on the development of love and intimacy. All four phases are influenced by role conceptions, or the expectations of appropriate behaviour in a relationship. Similarly, the sociocultural context refers to factors such as ethnicity, socio-economic status and education which shape the development of love.

Murstein (1988) talks about stages of love and intimacy. He points out that love moves from a stage of passionate love (in terms of feelings and sexual desire) to romantic love (where the idealised version of the

other is accentuated) to conjugal love (which forms the basis for a more permanent relationship). This is similar to Sternberg's (1986) proposition that "consummate" love occurs when there is intimacy, passion and commitment.

An important issue regarding love and intimacy during early adulthood is the issue of mate selection. Rice (1990) proposes that mate selection is a process consisting of filters and stages. The filters that the person moves through, includes the propinquity filter (or choosing somebody who lives near us); attraction filter (or choosing on the basis of physical attributes and personality); the homogamy filter (where age, education and socio-economic class become important); the compatibility filter (where needs, roles and values become important); the trial filter (which results in cohabitation and engagement); the decision filter, and finally marriage.

Coner-Edwards (1988) relates mate selection to psychological needs. This refers to the instrumental needs and expressive needs that the person brings to a relationship. Instrumental needs are the needs for security and economic sufficiency, while expressive needs include the need for love, nurturance and emotional attachment. Coner-Edwards points out that among the lower socio-economic strata, instrumental needs are often emphasised in the selection process. Structural constraints such as unemployment, financial problems, and generally impoverished conditions interfere with the meeting of expressive needs, and the development of intimacy. The process of mate selection often culminates in marriage.

### Marriage

A review of the literature indicates that marriage, as a developmental phenomenon, can be considered in terms of stages, (Hansen & Hansen, 1990; Kovacs, 1988) and as a dialectical process (Dym & Glenn, 1993; Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1993).

The stage-like process of marriage formation should be seen in the context of broader stage models of adult development, such as in the work of Gould (1978) and Levinson (1978). These theorists describe the

twenties as a chance to experiment with and achieve intimacy; the late twenties and early thirties as a time in which marriage and relationships come under review, followed in the mid-thirties by a period of marital and family stability. Marriage itself follows a broad sequence from courtship, through the early years of a marriage, the childbearing years, the post childbearing years, to the ageing couple and widowhood (Santrock, 1985).

Kovacs (1988) and Coleman (1988) add on to Levinson's (1978) scheme by proposing a set of developmental tasks at each stage of marriage with transitional periods between stages. The major task during the first stage, which Coleman (1988) refers to as the "happy honeymoon" phase is to create a basis for a caring relationship and separate from the family of origin. Transition to the next stage is marked by one partner's move towards differentiation. Other tasks that the marital couple might have to confront revolve around issues of "disillusionment and regrets", where the couple have to accept their differences while developing new patterns of relating to each other (Coleman, 1988), and issues of independence and autonomy from each other (Kovacs, 1988).

The dialectical nature of the developmental tasks and demands during marriage have also been emphasised (Dym & Glenn, 1993; Hansen & Hansen, 1990; Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1993). For instance, Sarnoff and Sarnoff (1993) assert that newlyweds struggle with the issues of being with each other physically and emotionally, while having to protect themselves from emotional and physical threats. In a similar way, Hansen and Hansen (1990), drawing upon Erikson's stages of identity development, assert that newlyweds struggle with issues of self-absorption versus identity-fusion. Dym and Glenn (1993) expand upon this by emphasising that it is the resolution of these dialectical issues which underlies the process of development in an intimate relationship.

A relevant issue that is raised by these models of marital development, whether it be a stage, dialectical or cyclical model, is what contributes to marital satisfaction or well-being over the life span.

A number of dimensions have been identified that contribute to marital satisfaction or marital well-being. In their longitudinal studies of newlywed couples Crohan and Veroff (1989) and Ruvolo and Veroff (1989) found that marital well-being is the result of positive feelings concerning each other and the marriage in general, a feeling that each spouse benefits equally from the relationship and feelings of competence in the roles of husband or wife.

Similarly, in their interviews with couples who had been married for 30 years, Robinson and Blanton (1993) found that the main aspects of marital stability included intimacy, or the capacity to share with each other; commitment to each other and the marriage, and positive communication and interaction with each other. In younger married couples positive interaction (which is perhaps the main characteristic of marital well-being) is juxtaposed with a high level of negative interaction as the couple adjust to each other (Gilford & Bengston, 1979).

On the basis of an extensive longitudinal study Kurdeck (1993) has proposed more specific distal and proximal variables which put the marital relationship at risk. Distal risk factors which put the young adults' marriage at risk include interpersonal distal factors (such as dysfunctional beliefs and expectations regarding relationships) and dyadic distal risk factors (such as differences between spouses concerning the value of autonomy). Proximal risk factors include interpersonal factors such as low involvement and low commitment to the relationship, as well as dyadic risk factors which stem from differences between the spouses concerning their motives for being married.

Gelles (1995) includes another factor which can put the marriage at risk, which she refers to as socio-economic adequacy and economic hardship. Such hardship can increase the husband's hostility in a marriage, and result in decreased warmth and support and a decline in marital satisfaction.

The research and theory relating to intimacy and marriage has some important implications for the present study. The present study must take into account the meaning and process of love and intimacy, and mate

selection within the life structure of the black men (Murstein, 1988, Sternberg, 1986). The cultural expectations concerning love and marriage are important (Karp & Yoels, 1992) as are any structural constraints the men might experience (Coner-Edwards, 1988; Gelles, 1995). Special attention should be given to the "filters" (Rice, 1990) that are important to the men in their relationships and the influence of sociocultural factors on this process.

We must also address the specific developmental tasks and issues (Coleman, 1988; Kovacs, 1988) relating to relationships and marriage that the black men are confronted with during their life span. For instance, the manner in which the men negotiate the task of establishing a caring relationship while separating from their family of origin, is an important issue. The presence and nature of marital conflict in the lives of the men must also be considered (Hansen & Hansen, 1990; Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1993). Moreover, in terms of dialectical theory relating to marriage (Hansen, & Hansen 1990; Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1993) special attention should be given to the interaction between sociocultural and sociopolitical and economic forces (including the effects of apartheid and discrimination) and the men's relationships. Black people have had to struggle against negative sociopolitical forces which could put their marriages at risk. The nature of risk factors that could put a marriage at risk (Crohan & Veroff, 1989; Kurdeck, 1993; Ruvolo & Veroff, 1989) should thus be expanded upon in the present research to take into account the negative effects of broader sociopolitical risk factors on the men's marriages and intimate relationships.

### Parenthood

The transition to parenthood is an important, and pivotal stage in adult development (Gerdes et al., 1988; Gerson, Berman & Morris, 1991). This transition, which is only recently being understood, entails a major development change which affects the parents as individuals, as a couple, and the relationship between the parents and the child (Osofsky & Culp, 1993). Parenthood carries with it the potential for growth and change, or stagnation and decline (Crawley 1985; Thomas, 1992).

This decline is characterised by a decrease in romantic intimacy and affection, and an increase in ambivalence and conflict (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Hawkins & Belsky, 1989; Wallace & Gottlib, 1990). It is often accompanied by a focus on tasks in the relationship at the expense of emotional interaction (Belsky, Lang & Rovine, 1985). Dissatisfaction during parenthood is also linked to unrealistic expectations of parenthood, problems at work (Van der Zanden, 1993), loss of freedom, concerns about uncertainties for children and financial problems (Hoffman & Manis, 1978; Van der Zanden, 1993). Dissatisfaction also seems to be higher in younger, less educated parents (Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992).

However, not all couples experience dissatisfaction as a result of parenthood. Parenthood can improve certain "qualitative aspects" (Gerdes et al., 1988, p.340) such as feelings of love and partnership, and bring couples closer together (Andersen, 1984; Hoffman & Manis, 1978). It provides new challenges, tasks, responsibilities and opportunities for growth, which can increase the parents' feelings of competence and self-esteem (Hoffman & Manis, 1978; Koumans, 1987), and sense of meaning and purpose in life (Russell, 1974). Parenthood can also provide for many a "symbolic extension of our lives into the future, a concrete contribution to the continuity of the community to which we belong" (Koumans, 1987, p.427).

While the transition to parenthood can have a profound effect on both men and women, the transition from husband to father is often more difficult because roles and expectations are more vaguely defined in Western culture (Crawley, 1985). This is an important issue in the present research because the focus is on men. Fatherhood produces conflicting reactions such as ambivalence and excitement, and tenderness and jealousy (Thomas, 1992). Fathers seem to experience their most profound role confusion in relation to family and work roles (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988; Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992) and often cope with parenthood by devoting more energy to their occupational commitments (Robinson & Barret, 1986) and by becoming closer to their own fathers (Cowan, 1988).

The effect of parenthood on the father must be seen in terms of the "context of each man's life" and his "unique understanding" of fatherhood

(Daniels & Weingarten, 1988, p.50). This unique understanding of what Daniels and Weingarten refer to as the "fatherhood click" will depend on a number of individual, interpersonal, and circumstantial factors. These include the father's perception of what he considers the cultural expectations to be, his preference for one developmental stage or another, and his relationship with his child and wife.

Cowan (1988, p.24) points out that fatherhood signals a qualitative life change in which men begin to redefine themselves and add "a significant new piece to their identities". As men grapple with their status as a father and family provider, they begin to ask the question: "What kind of person am I and how do I relate to the world?" (Cowan, 1988, p.25). In Levinson's (1978) terms, the life structure of men during the transition to parenthood is characterised by self-scrutiny and questioning. If the young father is able to deal with the challenges and demands of this transition he might begin to evaluate himself positively and benefit from learning new skills and methods of coping.

This evaluation during the transition to fatherhood is accompanied by the negotiation of various tasks. Gerdes et al. (1988) summarises these tasks:

- Mourning: fatherhood involves the loss of some personal freedom and attention from the spouse.
- Empathic responding: the expectant father should be able to care for his wife.
- Integration: the father has to allow the child to be integrated into the family.
- The delimitation of the family and the differentiation of the extended family.
- Synergising: "synergy" is reached when the father has completed all the developmental tasks, and is ready to initiate parenthood.

The timing of parenthood during the life span is also a relevant issue (Crawley, 1985; Daniels & Weingarten, 1982; Lerner, Belsky & Lerner, 1983). Belsky, Lang and Rovine (1985) point out that the experience of parenthood will be different at different ages, and will

depend very much on social expectations concerning the right time to have a child. Daniels and Weingarten (1982) note that the advantage of having children when younger (20 - 35 years) are that parents are more adaptable, flexible, and open to different approaches to parenthood. The disadvantages include the early stress on the marriage, and the fact that the younger parent may not have a strong sense of personal identity.

Papalia and Olds (1995) add to this by asserting that the advantages of having children when younger is that the parents will be more "psychologically intune" with their children as they develop. An advantage of having children at a later age is the time that has been available to clarify life, family and career goals.

During the stage of young adulthood, parents will witness the birth of children, their entry to school and, most probably, their movement into adolescence. These events will affect parents in different ways, depending upon their life stage (Crawley, 1985). For example the feeling of loss that parents might experience with their children's departure to school might coincide with the reassessment of goals and priorities during the Age Thirty Transition postulated by Levinson (1978). Furthermore, the major task of the Settling Down phase in Levinson's model, which is to establish one's niche in society, entails a focus on home life and the family, and hence the crucial role of parenting (Crawley, 1985). Generativity and an increase in community awareness as outlined by Erikson and Levinson are simulated by the presence of children (Koumans, 1987).

In conclusion, the nature of the tasks that have to be negotiated (Gerdes et al., 1988) as well as the questions and issues which the black men are confronted with during this pivotal transition (Van der Zanden, 1993) must be considered in terms of the "context of each man's life" and their "unique understanding of fatherhood" (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988). This means that unique societal, cultural and familial influences (such as the role and effect of extended families on parenthood) must be considered, as well as specific cultural expectations and the timing of parenthood (Crawley, 1985; Daniel & Weingarten, 1982; Koumans, 1987). We must also take into account the effect of such factors as work strain, financial problems, and low educational level (Hoffman & Manis, 1978;

Koumans, 1987) - which is so prevalent in the South African context - on the experience of fatherhood. Moreover, we should understand the "qualitative aspects" (Gerdes et al., 1988) associated with parenting, the developmental stage of the parent, and the timing of parenthood (Crawley, 1985; Daniels & Weingarten, 1982; Koumans 1987). In essence the "fatherhood click" (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988) must be considered from the perspective of the black men and the effect on their identity (Cowan, 1988).

### Forming an Occupation

The young person's entry into full-time work marks a central material and symbolic life transition (Blakers, 1991; Cavanaugh, 1990; Colarusso, 1992). Work provides the person with a social anchor (Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992), and is a basis for the individual's sense of identity and self-worth (Evans & Poole, 1991). Work structures the life cycle during adulthood and influences all aspects of the life structure such as the person's relationships, attitudes, financial well-being, social class and social status (Thomas, 1992). Work has the potential to satisfy the adult's needs in a way that no other situation or context can (Roe & Lunneborg, 1990).

The role of work through the life span is a central aspect of Levinson's (1978) theory. His model shares similarities with stage models of career development on a process level and a content level. On a process level Kanchier and Unruh (1988) point out that the "disengagement" periods in career development are similar to the transitional periods in Levinson's scheme. Disengagement, like the transitional periods in Levinson's model, refers to the self-appraisal and questioning of career and life goals, as well as the willingness to take risks to achieve these goals. Disengagement is crucial to the development of a viable occupational identity.

Levinson's (1978) model has been described as an organismic conceptualisation of career development because of the assumption that career development follows a universal sequence, which is independent of the social context (Dannefer, 1984). This section will begin with an exploration of stage models of career development which share this

assumption. The exploration will revolve around the work of Super (1984; 1990), a pioneer in the field of career development. The contextual model of career development (Vondracek, 1992), which addresses some of the limitations of stage conceptualisations of career development will also be discussed, because this model might be more appropriate for understanding the career development of the men in the present study.

### Stage models of career development

A number of writers have conceptualised career development in terms of stages (Greenhaus, 1988; Super, 1984, 1990; Okun, 1984). Okun (1984) shows the similarities in the stages postulated by Levinson (1978) and Super (1984). The stage during adolescence, when the initial occupational choice is made, is called the Specification stage by Super (1984) and the Entering the Adult World stage by Levinson (1978). The entrance into the world of work during youth occurs during Implementation stage and Levinson's Early Adult Transition. Career establishment is referred to by Super as the Stabilisation stage and occurs during Levinson's Entering the Adult World and Settling Down stages. The stage which Super refers to as Consolidation includes the phase Levinson refers to as Becoming One's Own Man (or the BOOM) phase.

Bejian and Salomone (1995) have added another stage to Super's (1984) model, which they call Career Renewal. This stage is characteristic of Erikson's stage of generativity versus stagnation and occurs during middle adulthood in Levinson's (1978) scheme. It involves introspection, appraisal and reorganisation of personal and career priorities. It often manifests in increased risk taking and innovation in planning new career paths.

The tasks and developmental issues of the different stages of career development, shall be briefly discussed.

### The Initial Choice

During this stage the young adult is faced with the task of developing an occupational self-image and developing and implementing an initial career plan (Levinson, 1978; Greenhaus, 1988), or occupational

Dream (Levinson, 1978). Important factors which could influence the initial choice include the family of origin, socio-economic constraints and appropriate training or education (Krumboltz, 1979; Okun, 1984). Issues of exploration and commitment are thus important issues during this stage (Super, 1984; 1990).

Commitment involves the selection of an occupation based on accurate information (Greenhaus, 1988). Holland (1985; 1987) proposes that career choice is based on the congruence between self-knowledge and knowledge of the world of work. The person will select a career environment which is consistent with his or her personality type. Ginzberg (1984) offers a more dynamic view of career choice which emphasises that career choice is a continuous process in which the person attempts to match changing career goals with the demands of the world of work. Similarly, Super (1957) stresses that career choice involves the matching, or synthesising of the "self-concept" with the world of work.

Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman (1984) discuss two components of career choice, which they refer to as "personal reality" and "common reality". Common reality refers to family and societal expectations, which influence career choice, while personal reality refers to a career decision stemming from what the individual wants and feels is right. The degree of satisfaction in the work setting will be determined by the extent to which the person has implemented the personal reality and self-concept (Super, 1957) into the work environment.

### Entering the World of Work

During this phase of "organisational entry" (Greenhaus, 1988), which Super (1984) refers to as the Implementation stage, the young adult is concerned with beginning the job and acquiring the necessary skills required of the job. Tasks include being able to relate to the culture of the organisation, finding a mentor, and being able to deal with frustrations, success and failure. The development of responsibility, and commitment and skills in areas such as decision making are also crucial issues (Levinson, 1978; Greenhaus, 1988; Okun, 1984).

### Establishment

The main tasks of this stage include being able to make a significant contribution in a special area in the work place; to take on increasingly more responsibility; to work more independently; and to plan future career paths (Dalton, Thompson & Price, 1977; Okun, 1984). This involves the development of a more differentiated occupational identity (Levinson, 1978). During this stage the person may be concerned with specialisation, projecting a competent image and improving satisfaction and productivity at work (Okun, 1984). Sanford (1971) refers to this as "competence formation".

### Consolidation

The main task of this stage is to Become One's Own Man according to Levinson (1978). This involves becoming an independent, self-sufficient, and contributing member of the organisation (Okun, 1984). More specific tasks include renegotiating and balancing increased responsibilities at work with family and personal needs; and, integrating skills and goals into a long-range career plan; as well as deciding on career goals and strategies to meet these goals in the next decade. It thus involves the person being able to pursue the Dream (Greenhaus, 1988; Levinson, 1978). Two issues which the individual may confront are being able to exercise power, and delegate responsibility (Dalton et al., 1977).

An integral aspect of these stages is what Super (1984; 1990) calls career maturity. Career maturity refers to the readiness of an individual to learn the developmental tasks in a way that demonstrates that he or she is mature enough to arrive at a meaningful career choice (Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990). It also involves being able to deal with the specific tasks associated with later stages of career development (Fouad & Arbona, 1994; Phillips & Blustein, 1994). This involves the ability to plan ahead, explore possible options stemming from knowledge of self and the world of work, and commit to a career decision (Phillips & Blustein, 1994).

Super (1990) has more recently conceptualised a stage model of career development, which he points out, is schematically similar to the

model proposed by Levinson (1978). Super (1990) asserts, however, that this model is radically different to the broader psychosocial model proposed by Levinson because the transitional periods are flexible and each transition involves a minicycle, or a recycling through one or more of the stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. This minicycle is brought about when socio-economic and personal events bring about instability in the person's career. Such trial or unstable careers involve new growth, reexploration and reestablishment (recycling).

Super's (1990) model is pertinent to the present research because it emphasises change and flexibility, and it recognises the role of external socio-economic factors on career development. Perhaps the career paths of the men in the study are not as ordered and predictable as Okun (1984) and Levinson (1978) propose, due to the effect and influence of external factors (such as sociopolitical conditions) on career development.

However, while Super (1990) has begun to address the dynamic interaction between the individual and the external context, stage theories of career development have received vocal criticism for neglecting this interaction. Other related criticisms have also been voiced.

#### Criticisms of Stage Models of Career Development

One criticism of stage career development theories such as those described above is the assumption that career development is linear, uninterpreted and smooth, which involves the negotiation of certain developmental tasks during specific periods (Perun & Bielby, 1981; Wrightsman, 1994b; Skorikov & Vondracek, 1993). Stage models may be appropriate for career development in Western capitalistic societies, which are based on economic stability, but may not apply to systems undergoing flux and change (Skorikov & Vondracek, 1993). This point is all the more compelling when one considers that many ethnic groups have not been included in the samples used to generate these theories of career development (Luzzo, 1992).

Wrightsman (1994b) also contends that stage theories of career development cannot adequately address the issue of changes in career path. Instead of being linear and predictable, career change might be the result of "dialectical tugs" between intrinsic needs (such as the opportunity for growth and development) and extrinsic factors (such as salary, job security). A person might change jobs because he or she is feeling stifled - even though the job may offer a good salary.

The process of choosing a career described by stage theorists has also been criticised. For instance, Stevens-Long and Commons (1992) and Bandura (1982) point out that career choice is often not based on a rational process of matching oneself with the world of work. Rather luck, chance and circumstances often guide career choice; and socio-economic conditions during childhood and adulthood might restrict these opportunities.

The limitations of stage theories of career development in the South African context has also been voiced. Both Naicker (1994) and Stead and Watson (1994) have argued that career development theories have to be adapted to be more relevant to the South African context. Naicker (1994) contends that the stage models of career development emphasise individual values too much. More emphasis should be given to cultural, educational, economic and sociopolitical factors in the South African situation which influence the process of career development. The structural and societal constraints (such as lack of opportunities) which influence career development should also be addressed. In short, the emphasis, in the South African context, should be on the interaction between the individual and social forces which shape the career development process (Naicker, 1994).

The developmental-contextual model of career development addresses some of these concerns, and in doing so might be more pertinent to the career development of the men in the present research.

#### The Developmental-Contextual Model of Career Development

Vondracek (in Skorikov & Vondracek, 1993; Vondracek, 1992;

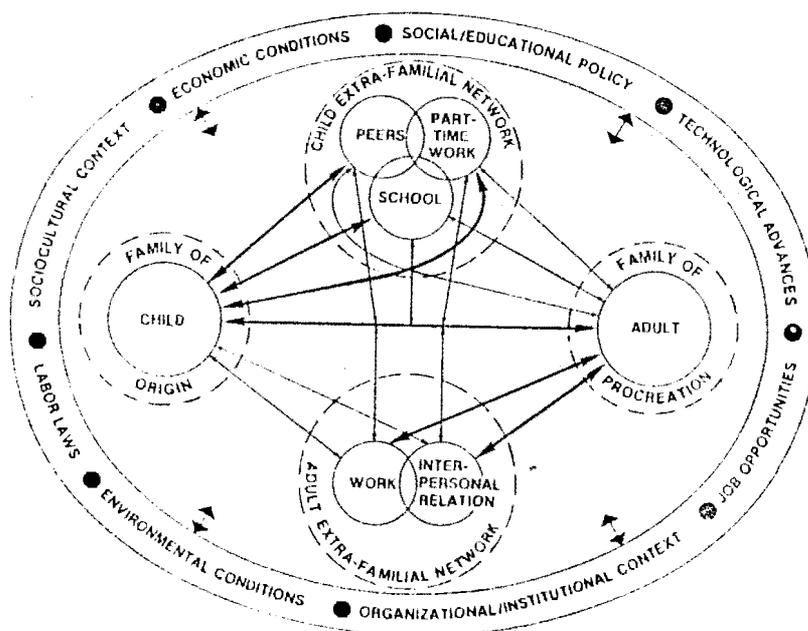
Vondracek, Lerner & Schulenberg, 1986) has provided perhaps the most elaborate view of the dynamic interactional nature of career development, with the developmental-contextual model of career development.

The development of a vocational identity, according to this model, is characterised by a reciprocal relationship between the developing self and the developing identity, on the one hand, and the ever-changing environment, on the other. Skorikov and Vondracek (1993) affirm this point by emphasising that career development theorists must take into account the dynamic interactions between the individual, institutions with which the individual interacts, and society.

Vondracek et al. (1986) refer to the impact of the microsystem and macrosystem on career development. The microsystem includes the influence of the family, the school, and the peer group on career development. The macrosystem refers to wider sociopolitical and cultural influences. Different cultural groups might have different beliefs and expectations concerning career development. Furthermore, limited job opportunities and lack of financial resources might impinge on the career development process. Historical changes, or cohort effects (for example the impact of the Great Depression on career development) should also be considered, as well as the active role of the individual in choosing and directing his or her career path. These contexts influence and are influenced by each other.

Vondracek et al. (1986, p.79) have proposed a "goodness-of-fit" model to explain this interaction. This model is presented in Figure 4.1. (on page 89).

Integral to this model, is the notion that the settings with which the individual interacts, places certain demands on the individual, and vice-versa. For example, the expectations of the employee might be different to the expectations of the family, or the behaviour required in the work setting may be different to the behaviour expected by the person's cultural group. Problems at work, at home, and in the cultural setting might result as a lack of match or goodness-of-fit between the settings.



**Figure 4.1.** Goodness-of-fit model (Vondracek et al, 1986, p.79)

The contextual model of career development has important implications. It implies that Super's (1984) notion of career maturity should be expanded to include contextual factors (Fouad & Arbona, 1994; Phillips & Blustein, 1994). The ability to respond to changing circumstances, rather than being able to deal with prescribed career tasks at different stages, should be the focus of career readiness. Career readiness should also be considered within the specific cultural context (Phillips & Blustein, 1994).

Being able to develop a sense of ethnic identity may also be an integral aspect of career readiness according to this perspective. Career development theories, such as Super's (1957, 1984) emphasise the importance of the self-concept in career plans. Ethnicity and race are integral to the young person's sense of self, and is thus likely to have an impact on the development of a vocational identity (Fouad & Arbona, 1994).

A contextual view of career development also has implications for theories of career choice such as Holland's (1985; 1987), which

conceptualise career choice as being based on the match between the person (interests and personality) and the world of work.

For instance, Gottfredson (1981) underscores the role of the social environment in career choice through the constructs of "circumscription" and "compromise". Circumscription implies that certain factors, such as level of education and social class, limit career choice because of constraining environmental variables, and particularly lack of opportunities. Gottfredson points out that exploration of job options ends with the implementation of a satisfactory choice, and not necessarily the best potential choice. The individual might have to compromise his or her career choice due to environmental constraints and lack of opportunity.

The implication for the present research is that we must be aware of the effect of constraining variables, such as educational disadvantages, and broader sociopolitical, cultural and economic factors, on the men's occupational choice; the process of beginning their professions; and the establishment and consolidation of their careers. Langley (1989) elucidates this point by noting that one of the key universal tasks of career development is the identification of environmental, socio-economic and cultural factors that influence this important process.

More specifically the guiding question, in terms of the formation of the career will be the following: What is the meaning and nature of career development in the lives of the men in the present research, and how do external factors affect this process? An important issue will also be how the men cope with any career changes or transitions that they might experience.

#### Coping with Career Transitions and Changes

Both the stage perspective of career development and the contextual view described above imply that career development is characterised by change and transition. While the stage perspective assumes that change is more predictable and sequential, the contextual view proposes that change is the consequence of the dynamic interaction between the

individual and the environment. For example, the individual might make a career shift because of the realisation that personal goals, or the Dream in Levinson's (1978) terms cannot be reached in that particular environment (Wrightsmann, 1994b). The way in which the individual copes with change thus becomes an important concern. While the research has generally addressed the issue of coping with career transitions during middle adulthood, the findings are applicable to coping with career transitions and crises across the life span.

Thomas (1982) and Morgan, Paton and Baker (1985) have identified four different ways in which individuals respond to career changes, pressure and crises. They classified adults into four groups including the "miserables," the "marginals," the "movers," and the "motivators".

The miserables have a negative view of themselves, and feel helpless, powerless and unable to change. They are viewed negatively at work, and are often dismissed from the work organisation. While the marginals are usually competent at work, they feel insecure and become self-centred in the work environment. They often have family problems. The movers are unhappy and dissatisfied with their relationships and careers. They complain often, change jobs frequently, or remain in their careers as "dry wood". The motivators deal with transitions positively, through introspection and realistic appraisal of circumstances.

The motivators are similar to what Kanchier and Unruh (1988) refer to as "changers". Changers are interested in challenge, growth and autonomy. They make career changes based on questioning of their career and life goals, and have a strong internal locus of control. In contrast the "non-changers" are similar to the movers. They are externally motivated, and are more concerned with security and stability.

Strümpfer (1993) refers to four styles of coping with career transitions. The depressive style is similar to Morgan et al.'s (1985) definition of the miserables. This style is characterised by passivity and impotence. The defensive style is characterised by defensive ploys such as denial, or refusal to admit the inability to reach unrealistic career goals. The underachieving style is characterised by passivity and an absence of the need to restructure one's life. Lastly, the

constructive style, which is similar to the motivators (Morgan et al., 1985), implies an ability to make a realistic decision based on mature insights. This often results in constructive career changes.

A pertinent issue in the present study will be the manner in which the black men cope with career transitions and crises, as well as any other obstacles to their career development.

### **The Relationship Between Work and Family Roles**

While this chapter has considered the formation of work and family roles, it has not explored the relationship between the two, as shall be done now.

Stage theories such as Levinson's (1978) are based on the assumption that the negotiation of the tasks in the family and work setting occur concurrently. Hughes and Graham (in Hughes & Graham, 1990; Hughes et al., 1986) challenge this approach with their critique of Levinson's (1978) model and their proposal for a multifaceted role approach to adult development.

They propose that development in family and work roles is not ordered and linear, but is constituted by a cycle of four phases, comprising of initiation, adaption, reassessment and reconciliation. An adult can be in different phases in relation to work and family roles. For instance, the adult might be established at work and be involved at working for advancement (adaption phase), while being a new parent (initiation phase of the family role). A person who resigns from work will be in the initiation phase when starting a new job, but may also be in the reassessment phase - which involves deepening the relationship - in the family role.

While work and family roles may develop separately according to the multifaceted approach, they still interact and affect each other. Many theorists refer to this mutually interactive nature of work and family roles (Gelles, 1995; Kimmel, 1990). Kimmel points out that aspects of work and family life may add to or compensate for dissatisfaction in

either sphere, while Savickas (1991) asserts that disequilibrium between family and occupation will decrease life satisfaction.

Papalia and Olds (1995) cite recent research in this regard which indicates, contrary to the popular view, that family roles are just as important for men as work roles, and these roles are related. For instance, a strong relationship that a man has with his wife will often compensate for frustration and stagnation at work. Conversely the work domain may often be used as an escape from frustrations at home (Kimmel, 1990).

Kimmel (1990) and Gelles (1995) refer to some more specific ways in which work affects the family. These include the following:

- the person's self-concept in the family, as well as status in the community is affected by employment status,
- stress at work may carry into the family,
- material resources, in the form of income from work, may have a direct influence on the family,
- the person's personality is affected by work experiences, which in turn impacts on family functioning and parenting styles,
- excessive time and energy devoted to work might reduce involvement in the family,
- stress produced by work or family demands can have a negative effect on all aspects of family life, especially the marital relationship.

Gelles (1995) asserts that role strain has a direct impact on family life. Role strain refers to "overload," where work and family pressures overwhelm the person, and "interference," where the demands of work and family contradict each other.

The way in which the adult deals with this strain will depend on a number of factors. Wildrich and Ortlepp (1994) propose that the interaction between work and family should be considered from an open system, multi-stressor perspective, which takes into account stressors, moderators and mediators in the work and family system, and outside these

systems. This means that the family-work interface must take into account mediating factors such as the individual's subjective response to role stress; the contribution of other stressors or events on the interaction; as well as moderator variables such as the social support available, and the level of the job.

An important moderator is personality. On the basis of their study, Hazan & Shaver (1990) propose that secure individuals feel confident at work, and do not allow tensions at work to interfere with family relationships. Anxious and ambivalent individuals fear rejection at work and often allow family issues and concerns to interfere with their work functioning. Avoidant individuals use their work to avoid confronting family issues and general social interaction.

In the present study, it will be important to understand the way in which work and family roles impact on each other in the lives of the men, and the way in which the men cope with any role strain in terms of these roles.

### Conclusion

The present chapter has highlighted some important features of the central aspects of the life structure, with special emphasis on the contexts of marriage, parenting and formation of a career.

The transition to adulthood is a crucial point in the evolution of the life structure as it involves preparation for the adult responsibilities associated with these important aspects of the life structure. The meaning and manifestation of this transition in the life structure of the men in the present study must be considered in terms of the general tasks of this transition (Bockneck, 1980; Gerdes et al., 1988; Levine, 1989), as well as the unique tasks that black men may negotiate (Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Ramseur, 1989). The nature and timing of any role changes that the black men experience (Marini, 1985; 1987) is also an important issue. An understanding of the process of leaving home and establishing independence in the lives of the men (Levine, 1989), as well as the presence or absence of a psycho-social moratorium phase, will be pertinent issues (Keniston, 1977).

An understanding of the life structure of the black men also means that we must address the significance of love, intimacy and marriage during the evolution of their life structure (Karp & Yoels, 1992; Murstein, 1988). Special attention should be given to the nature of the developmental tasks associated with their marriages (Kovacs, 1988) as well as the nature of conflicting demands they might have to deal with (Hansen & Hansen, 1990; Sarnoff & Sarnoff, 1993). An understanding of the nature of the factors that cause tension in the marriages of the men, will also broaden our understanding of the life structure (Crohan & Veroff, 1989; Ruvolo & Veroff, 1989). The impact of structural constraints, such as limited financial resources, on these processes must be considered (Gelles, 1995), as well as the influence of the sociocultural context (Karp & Yoels, 1992).

The process of becoming parents and the effects that it has on the life structure of the men is an important issue. The psychological and social implications of parenthood should be explored (Koumans, 1987; Van der Zanden, 1993) with reference to the effect the birth of children has on the marital relationship (Belsky & Rovine, 1990; Hoffman & Manis, 1978). The place of their "fatherhood click" (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988) in the evolution of the life structure must be considered in terms of the individual, interpersonal, and circumstantial factors unique to each man in the South African context.

The meaning of work and career development in the lives of the men is also an integral aspect of a study of the life structure. The stage models of career development have highlighted certain issues and tasks that could be prominent at different times during the evolution of the life structure (Greenhaus, 1988; Okun, 1984). The contextual model of career development (Gottfredson, 1981; Vondracek, 1992) has illustrated the importance of understanding the career development of the black men in terms of the dynamic interaction between vocational identity and the changing environment. This model can offer a useful framework for understanding the career development of the men in the present research.

In conclusion it should be evident that the present chapter has enriched our understanding of the life structure by emphasising the central aspects of the life structure. It should also be clear that

these aspects can only be considered in terms of the unique circumstances of each person in relation to the unique South African context.

The following chapter will focus on developmental research in the South African context.

## DEVELOPMENTAL RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

### Introduction

Freeman (1993, p.157) has recently emphasised the following concerning developmental research in South Africa:

Missing from most African initiatives ... is a focus on psychological development. This could be different in South Africa. If this is to be the case, appropriate theoretical models will need to be developed, advanced or adapted. Very little of this has thus far been done - especially in terms of understanding the individual psyche of South African youth.

A review of the literature reveals that while very little research has been conducted concerning the psychological development of South African youth, there is even less research concerning psychological development during adulthood.

The lack of psychological research in the South African context is related to the sociopolitical context (Dawes & Donald, 1994). This includes the racist past of the psychological profession in South Africa, which has ignored the needs of the majority of black people. Holdstock (1991, p.123) expresses this point well: "Not only is there no understanding or need to understand and know about the psychological principles underlying life in Africa, but psychology seems to be oblivious to the immense human drama being enacted within the borders of our country." Apartheid has served to entrench the separation of the black and white worlds so that psychology has had little contact with black developmental issues (Dawes & Donald, 1994).

Furthermore, psychology in the South African context is largely eurocentric (Rock & Hamber, 1994) and has been oblivious to the impact of the broader sociopolitical context on the phenomena being investigated (Berger & Lazarus, 1987; Dawes, 1985; 1986; Lichtman, 1982). The

emphasis on eurocentric methods of logio-deductive reasoning and objectivity in South Africa has resulted in a "dehumanised psychology" (Holdstock, 1991, p.123) which has not addressed real human issues and which is inappropriate for the reality of black people (Hickson, Christie & Shmukler, 1991). The unwillingness of psychology to address the real issues has resulted in missed opportunities and stagnation in the profession (Manganyi, Marais, Mauer & Prinsloo, 1993).

This stagnation is reflected in the paucity of research in the field of black adult development. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and integrate the little research that has been done by identifying relevant themes that emerge from the research.

These themes and issues include identity development during adolescence and youth (Freeman, 1993; Myburg & Smith, 1990), phenomenological research relating to middle adulthood (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993), research from a dialectical perspective (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Freeman, 1993) and life events framework (Turton, Straker & Moosa, 1991; Magwaza & Bhana, 1991), and research focusing on the quality of life experience (Möller, 1988; Ostroot & Snyder, 1985) and "life world" (Fassaert, 1992) of black South Africans. Research focusing on the formation of marriage and family (Stones & Philbrick, 1989; Van der Vliet, 1982), as well as career development (Hickson & White, 1989; Nel & Mkhabela, 1987) will also be considered, because these are the two integral aspects of the life structure.

The relevance of the research to the present study will be pointed out when applicable, while the chapter will conclude with a brief overview of the research and its relevance to the present study.

### **Psychosocial Development Across the Life Span**

Although there is a paucity of research concerning psychosocial development in the South African context, two trends emerge from some of the research that has been conducted. The first trend relates to the research which highlights similarities and differences between aspects of black and white psychosocial development without emphasising the impact of the sociocultural environment (Du Toit, 1991; Freeman, 1993;

Myburgh & Smith, 1990). The second trend refers to research which emphasises the dialectical nature of psychosocial development, or the dynamic interaction between the individual and the sociocultural and historical context (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Freeman, 1993; Kivnick, 1988).

The first trend is especially evident in research relating to identity development during adolescence and youth (Freeman, 1993; Myburgh & Anders, 1989; Myburgh & Smith, 1990; Thom, 1988), and phenomenological research during middle adulthood (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993).

Research relating to identity development during adolescence and youth has highlighted some important similarities between the identity development of black and white adolescents. For instance, both black and white adolescents have a need for independence during this stage (Myburgh & Smith, 1990), have relatively high self-images (Myburgh & Anders, 1989), and experience adolescence as a difficult period (Thom, 1988). Important differences were noted, however, especially with regard to relationships with parents. Black adolescents seem to regard their parents as being more authoritarian and less democratic than their white counterparts (Thom, 1988) and begin the process of psychologically separating from their family at an earlier age (Myburgh & Smith, 1990). Lastly, black adolescents seem to value their peer group less than white adolescents (Myburgh & Anders, 1989).

Two recent phenomenological studies relating to adulthood have also emphasised important similarities in the midlife experience of black and white adults (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993). Both Radebe (1993) and Du Toit (1991) used a phenomenological method to explore the midlife experience of South Africans. While Du Toit chose a heterogeneous sample of black and white university lecturers, Radebe (1993) concentrated on a sample of black professional men and women between the ages 35 and 45. Both researchers found evidence for a "shared human ontological, midlife experience" (Du Toit, 1991, p.151) which included some of the following themes:

- a sense of time urgency,
- an increase in introspection and existential questioning,

- an increase in spiritual pursuit and a change in religious outlook,
- an awareness of physical limitations,
- an increase in concerns relating to family and career,
- a tendency to reassess the past,
- the presence of a crisis during this period.

Radebe (1993), however, also found some significant differences relating to culture and gender, which she says, seems to contradict the findings of Du Toit (1991). For example, she found gender differences relating to personality changes, marital satisfaction, and sexual interest (for instance more women than men seemed to experience marital dissatisfaction during this period).

With regard to themes unique to black adults during this period she found that they tended to have a different and unique conception of time, with some focusing on the past and others focusing on the future. She also found that preoccupation with the body in an attempt to retain youthful appearance was not important for her subjects. Lastly, those of her subjects who had extramarital relationships did not experience inner conflict relating to these relationships.

Together these studies concerning the midlife experience, as well as the studies on identity development during adolescence, are pertinent to the present research as they highlight important similarities and differences in the psychosocial development of black and white adolescents and adults. The research concerning the midlife experience of adults is especially relevant because an essential focus of the present research is on the experience of early adulthood from a phenomenological perspective. However, both Radebe's (1993) and Du Toit's (1991) findings are limited by the inclusion of only educated, professional adults in their sample, and for not underscoring the impact of the external sociocultural and political context on development.

The importance of understanding the dialectical nature of development, and the dynamic interaction between adverse external circumstances and psychosocial development has been highlighted by a few writers and researchers in the South African context (Dawes & Donald,

1994; Dommissie, 1986; 1987; Freeman, 1993; Kivnick, 1988). Dawes and Donald (1994) have provided what they point out to be perhaps the first comprehensive focus on the effect of adversity on psychosocial development during childhood. In their edited book they draw together research and writings on the experience of adversity on the quality of childhood of black South Africans. Contributors to their volume have highlighted the detrimental effects of poverty, political oppression, racism, violence, educational deficit, and familial strain on psychosocial development.

Similarly, Bloom (1994) explored social fragmentation amongst South African children and the development of identity. Using Erikson's (1968; 1982) concept of identity, Bloom (1994) stresses that the process of establishing a sense of individual identity and forming a "True Self" from an early age, has been complicated by adverse political, economic and social policies which have ignored the development of children. Role confusion is compounded by lack of possibilities and social limitations inherent in the South African context.

This research confirms Dawes and Donald's (1994, p.10) important point that any account of psychosocial development during childhood, particularly in the South African context, must focus on the "complex interaction of contextual inter-individual and intra-individual factors shaping the child's personal and scholastic experience - and no doubt his life's future path". This implies that a study of the life structure, such as the present one, must take into account the effect of these factors - and more specifically the impact of adversity - on the evolution of the life structure.

Freeman (1993) further affirms this point with his dialectical analysis of psychosocial development among township youth. Using "Erikson's dialectic" (with its emphasis on the historic-cultural context) as a framework, Freeman shows that personal development is integral to social development. More particularly, his analysis - which is based in part on interviews - illustrates how adverse external circumstances (political, social and economic factors) have made the possibility of developing a positive identity, in the Eriksonian sense, extremely difficult for black youths.

Freeman (1993) points out that the fight against oppression has meant that personal identity has been tied up with the fight against change. In this context the normative issues of identity formation as postulated by Erikson (1968; 1982) became secondary. Adolescents could not experience normal identity crises that are associated with the transition to adulthood. Socio-economic obstacles such as unemployment, as well as violence and crime have further made the possibility of developing a positive identity difficult.

Kivnick (1988), using an Eriksonian framework based on empirical observations, also shows how apartheid interferes with healthy psychosocial development in South African blacks during adulthood and old age. Apartheid "wrenches and twists black peoples' development of the capacities for responsible caring and appropriate self absorption" (Kivnick, 1988, p.429) which is fundamental to the negotiations of psychosocial concerns during adulthood. For instance, the psychosocial issue of generativity as expounded by Erikson (1982), is made difficult for black people who are so cut off from resources and opportunities that they have little to offer their children. Furthermore, the "stifling effect of apartheid" ensures that later adulthood for the black person is characterised not by a sense of integrity, but rather by dread, hopelessness and despair (Kivnick, 1988).

The result is that "personality development is skewed along racial lines" (Dommissie, 1987, p.749). Through apartheid, identity (in the Eriksonian sense) becomes clearly tied with racial categorisation, and a lack of privileges and power. Raubenheimer (1987) affirms this point by stressing that discrimination, coupled with the black person's inferior position in society, determines, to a great extent, their "world views".

It is the subject of world views, or more particularly the "life world" and the "quality of life" experience to which we now turn our attention.

#### **Quality of Life and Life World Research**

A number of studies have focused on the perceptions that black

people have concerning their quality of life in the South African context (Möller, 1988; Möller, Schlemmer & Du Toit, 1987; Möller, Schlemmer & Strydom, 1984; Ostroot & Snyder, 1985) and the nature of their life worlds (Fassaert, 1992; Hickson et al., 1991; Mathibe, 1992).

"Quality of life" is a complex term which is difficult to define and changes from community to community (Möller et al., 1987). It does, however, share many similarities with Levinson's concept of the life structure. It is concerned with the effect of adverse external conditions, or the external aspects of the life structure, on people's "outlook on life", and their meaning and experience of these social conditions, or the internal aspects of the life structure (Möller & Schlemmer, 1980). The term "life world" is also similar to Levinson's concept of the life structure because the focus is on thoughts and feelings concerning the relationship of self to the external world.

A major area that quality of life research has addressed is the effect of what Möller and Schlemmer (1980) refer to as the controlled urban system on the quality of life experience of black people. Möller and Schlemmer describe the effect of this system on the quality of life as follows:

Every aspect of urban life for blacks: The world of work, the residential environment, the sphere of leisure and recreation, the sphere of education, are all subject to the legal restrictions which limit choice and social mobility. For this reason, one must expect that the need and aspirations in all life domains are influenced by the controlled urban system (p.15).

A relevant issue in the present research will be how the black person's external reality (which includes this controlled urban system) has affected their needs and aspirations, that is the internal aspects of their life structures.

Influx control laws and the migrant labour system have been an integral aspect of this controlled urban system, and has had a negative impact upon the quality of life of black people (Magwaza & Bhana, 1991;

Schlemmer & Möller, 1982). In their study Schlemmer and Möller found that the quality of life experience among migrant workers was characterised by feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and hopelessness.

It is not surprising then, that quality of life studies have clearly indicated that black people have a lower perceived level of satisfaction with their lives than white people. The lower perceived general well-being seems to be directly related to the effect of inadequate living circumstances and material conditions, as well as other "depressed external conditions" (Möller, 1988, p.74) on perceived well-being. For instance, in their interviews with township residents, Möller and Schlemmer (1980) found that most of the respondents were dissatisfied with their living circumstances, including the quality of their homes, lack of privacy, and living space. They report that the depressed conditions of township living result in resentment, inferiority, anger and frustration (Möller & Schlemmer, 1980). These feelings will have important implications for the evolution of the life structures of the men in the present research.

Studies which have focused on the "life world" of black adolescents have also demonstrated that black adolescents perceive human nature and their life world negatively (Fassaert, 1992; Hickson et al., 1991; Mathibe, 1992). Hickson et al. (1991, p.306) offer the following important explanation for this:

One explanation of this finding could be that in comparison to these white adolescents who have lived a sheltered and privileged existence, the black adolescents have suffered both humiliation and oppression in apartheid South Africa. Consequently, as a result of such negative life experiences, people in general may not be viewed as "good" and "victimization" may become the lens through which human experience is filtered.

Similarly, Fassaert (1992), in her analysis of the diaries of black South African adolescents, found that their life worlds were characterised by what she refers to as an uninvolved description of a threatening life situation. Violence and crime, which the adolescents

observed, but were not necessarily involved in, were the main contributors to this feeling of threat.

Another aspect of the life world that Hickson et al. (1991) examined, and which has been addressed by others in the field (Coldwell & Moerdyk, 1981; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990) concerns orientation to human relationships. Hickson et al. (1991) found that her respondents placed a high value on community life, but that they also scored high on individualism, or the value placed upon individual goals and ambitions. This high score could reflect the "ethos" of the private school her sample of black adolescents attended, and is surprising because there is considerable support for the notion that the black person's life world is characterised by a collective communalistic orientation to relationships which places more importance on the group than the individual. Bulhan (1990) uses the words "systemic" and "relational" to describe this world view, while Kotze (1993) refers to this relational aspect of the black person's life world as "collective consciousness". The black person explains the world in terms of molar rather than analytical, and relational rather than intrapsychic processes (Bulhan, 1990). This collective world view stems from child rearing and socialisation practices which emphasises group awareness, communal responsibility and the role of the extended family, and community above individual needs (Hickson & White, 1989; Moerdyk & Coldwell, 1982; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990).

Mjoli (1987) highlights other aspects of the black person's life world. For instance, the black person places more emphasis on affirmative needs than achievement motivation, does not feel comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, avoids competition and does not enjoy taking risks.

Bodibe (1987, p.588), however, criticises studies such as Mjoli's (1987), saying that "when Western spectacles are worn to have a clearer vision of African life, problems of misperception, apperception, and misunderstanding invariably arise". Constructs, such as those used by Mjoli, continues Bodibe (1987), are eurocentric, and based on Western values.

This highlights the importance in the present research of being sensitive to the quality of life experience and life world of the black men from their perspective, or through their "lens". This sensitivity will be aided by understanding the nature of the life events that the black men may experience. This is the subject of the next section.

#### **Research Focusing on the Impact of Life Events**

Although very scant, the psychological impact of life events has received attention in the South African context (Bluen & Barling, 1987; Bluen & Odesnik, 1988; Magwaza & Bhana, 1991; Turton et al., 1991). This research is pertinent to the present study because it provides us with a black South African perspective of life events, and makes us aware of the kind of events that black men have to negotiate in order to achieve viable life structures.

A study by Kamfer (1986) identified broad events that have an impact on the lives of black people. These include political forces (stay-aways); sociological forces (inadequate, over-crowded accommodation); and economic forces (unemployment).

According to Bluen and Odesnik (1988) studies, such as the one by Kamfer (1986) cited above, are limited because they do not address the internal impact of life events. They developed a scale to measure stressful events related to township life which they called the Township Life Events Scale (TLES), while Bluen and Barling (1987) developed a similar scale which focused more on events within the work setting, which they called the Industrial Relations Event Scale (IRES). These scales were directly based on the life events framework as developed by, for instance, Holmes and Rahe (1967) and draw our attention to specific events that black people may have to confront in order to achieve a viable life structure.

Some items which were rated by urban blacks as occurring relatively frequently and having an "extremely unfavourable" impact upon them, included dangerous aspects of township living, racial discrimination, transport problems, being prevented from buying property, and unemployment (Bluen & Odesnik, 1988). Items (that is events) which were

listed as having a significant impact in the work place included unfair labour practices, victimisation, retrenchment, conflict with superiors, resistance to black advancement, and inter-group conflict (Bluen & Barling, 1987).

Turton et al. (1991) broaden our understanding of events within the South African context by focusing more on life events in "community settings". They found that events relating to material hardships and deprivation, as well as crime and violence, were rated by black youth and adults as factors which made living in the township "hard". Their results seem to indicate that many black people may find it difficult to look beyond their material deprivation in order to be open to more positive life events.

An area where life events scales have been applied in South Africa is in the measurement of the impact of stress. De Kock and Schutte (1994) report on a study which employed the Township Life Events Scale to investigate stress among young black adults. The study indicated that young black people, who were from different areas, experienced above-average levels of stress, due to undesirable circumstances similar to those described above.

The psychological impact of immigration on blacks has also been assessed with a life events scale (Magwaza & Bhana, 1991). These researchers found that migrants perceived more stress as a result of immigration. The main stressor revolved around the event "loose home". This stress was further related to being forced to migrate, having to adapt to changed circumstances, and having inadequate psychological and social support systems.

The lives of the migrant workers were characterised by feelings of helplessness. Their inner directedness began to decrease, and they had a high external locus of control (Magwaza & Bhana, 1991). Locus of control is a pertinent aspect of the life events framework in the South African context, and shall now be discussed in more depth.

### Research Concerning Locus of Control

The issue of locus of control is pertinent to the life events framework because it is concerned with how people construe the causes of events. Internality refers to the attribution of the cause of events to self, while externality refers to the attribution of the cause of events to the external environment (Riordan, 1981; Theron, 1994).

There has been considerable debate regarding the locus of control of black South Africans. Riordan (1981) found that blacks have a high external locus of control, while whites have a high internal locus of control. Riordan qualifies this by asserting that blacks believe more in control by luck, fate, or powerful others than whites do. Theron (1994) asserts that this external locus of control is related to socio-economic status and, to the experience of helplessness and powerlessness, that has been a part of black life. The results of a study with black university students by Erwee (1988), however, suggest that the students believe that they have more control over personal goals, and less over political events. Furthermore, a study by Charoux (1985) found no evidence for a high locus of external control among blacks.

It will be interesting to observe how locus of control manifests in the lives of the men in the present research and how factors such as socio-economic status, helplessness and powerlessness influence the negotiation of life events.

#### **Aspects of the Life Structure: The Formation of Family, Marriage and Career**

The purpose of this section will be to highlight two integral aspects of the life structure - namely the formation of marriage and career, from the perspective of research conducted with black South Africans. Again there is a paucity of research in this area, but certain themes can be identified.

The Formation of Marriage and FamilyLove and Intimacy

Love and intimacy form the basis for marriage and is thus an integral aspect in the evolution of the life structure. Stones and Philbrick (1989), however, point out that prior to their research, there was no research concerning the meaning of love in the lives of black South Africans. Their study, which focused on the love attitudes of Xhosa adolescents, found that romantic love did not feature significantly in their relationships. A possible reason for this, they advance "is that the Xhosa's sociopolitical position within the framework of apartheid leaves little room for idealism in the affairs of love" (Stones & Philbrick, 1989, p.132). Referring to an early study by Mokoatle, however, Richter, Griesel and Etheridge (1986) point out that modern marriages among black people are based increasingly upon personal choice, love and companionship.

With regard to the reason for getting married, Viljoen (1984) found that the main motivation for getting married among urban black men included tradition and having children. Furthermore, with regard to choice of wife, Van der Vliet (1982) found that there were no universal themes regarding an "ideal wife" among urban blacks (the concept of "ideal wife" is important because it is similar in many ways to Levinson's concept of the Special Woman). However, the characteristic "respectability" was indicated by all the men in her study as an attribute of an ideal wife. This included aspects such as "non-drinking", "well-behaved", and "church-going". Other characteristics which were deemed important by a significant number of respondents were a "good housewife" (for example being hardworking and able in running the house) and the woman's ability to have children. In terms of an "ideal husband" most of the women in Van der Vliet's study mentioned the role of provider and breadwinner.

### The Meaning Attached to Labola<sup>1</sup>

Qualitative research has indicated that labola is still considered important by urban black men (De Haas, 1987, Van der Vliet, 1982, Viljoen, 1984). In her research concerning the current attitude of black men towards labola, De Haas (1987) found some important positive values attached to labola. This includes the strong cultural and traditional value that men place upon labola. They perceived it as conferring value upon the wife, and responsibility upon themselves, and a sign of compensation and appreciation to their wife's family. Furthermore, Van der Vliet (1982) found the labola was perceived as validating the seriousness of the relationship, and having a stabilising effect on the marriage. Viljoen (1984) also found that labola was considered important as a means to provide for children and educate them. Richter et al. (1986) found that lack of financial resources for the labola often resulted in marriage being delayed.

The present study must take into account the possible significance of the traditional marriage in the lives of the black men.

### The Meaning of Marriage and the Quality of the Marital Relationship

Viljoen (1984) found that the meaning of marriage among her respondents was strongly related to social acceptance and respect. In urban areas the issue of harmony in marital relationships was emphasised. Moreover, she found that in terms of the quality of marital relationships, and the division of power in marriage, socially acceptable responses were furnished. Van der Vliet (1982) also found that although decision making was perceived by her respondents as being a shared duty, they provided what they perceived to be the correct or ideal response when questioned about these issues. This meant that "a picture of the real situation could not be formed" (Viljoen, 1984, p.24).

An important issue in the present research will be the meaning of marriage in the lives of the men. It will be interesting to see how free

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<sup>1</sup> A sum paid by the groom to the bride's family in a traditional marriage

the men feel about talking about their relationships. Will it be difficult, as Viljoen (1984) observed, to form a real picture of the situation?

### Fatherhood

Viljoen (1984) found that the affectional element of having children (happiness, pleasure and love) was emphasised by most of her respondents. Many also felt they had a duty to provide for their children, and educate them. Similarly, in their study of fatherhood Edwards, Borsten, Nene & Kunene (1986) showed that both rural and urban men attached primary importance to their role as breadwinner (this included their role as economic provider, protector and defender). The urban men, however, attached more importance to family responsibilities (for example, the role of husband, educator, and emotional supporter) than the rural fathers. Edwards et al (1986) conclude that this could indicate urban fathers have accepted Westernised values, such as individual achievements through education, and duties, such as being an emotional supporter.

The meaning and impact of fatherhood on the lives of the men in the present research is a significant issue as this is an important milestone in the evolution of the life structure.

### Marital Breakdown

Marital breakdown among urban blacks should be considered in the context of broader disruptive changes in the black family. A number of factors have contributed to these recent disruptive changes in the black family (Maforah, 1987, Rautenbach & Kellerman 1990; Sachs 1990; Steyn, 1991). These factors which Van der Vliet (1982) refers to as macrosocial constraints, have been grounded in apartheid and political exploitation and include the migratory labour system, racial segregation (and influx control laws), economic underdevelopment, and problems of poverty.

The migrant labour system, the pass laws and the creation of black locations on the outskirts of urban areas has resulted in the "splitting" of families (Sachs, 1990, p.42). Lack of jobs also forces the husband or wife to leave their families in order to find work elsewhere, which

further "disrupts the family's unity" (Thekiso, 1990, p.6). Homelessness, the lack of housing, problems of poverty, and other problems resulting from industrialisation and urbanisation have also impeded the process of creating a stable family life (Sachs, 1990; Steyn, 1991).

There are also a number of sociocultural factors that increase the risk of marital breakdown among urban blacks (Allen, 1978; Radebe, 1983; Thomas, 1987). On the basis of her investigation, Radebe (1983) points out that a lack of preparation for marriage is a main factor. This includes poor socialisation in early life as a result of poor parental modelling; unrealistic expectations of marriage as a result of poor socialisation; and an inability to deal with in-law relationships. A further reason, she points out, concerns difficulties some black men might experience in adapting to Western style marriages.

Thomas (1987) focused more on the black family's experience of township life. He found that the unrest situation and the general conditions of township living disrupted the family's life world resulting in feelings of frustration, uncertainty, powerlessness and impotency. Radebe (1993) also points out that some of these conditions (including housing shortages, overcrowding, inadequate facilities) can indirectly contribute to the failure of a marriage.

A further factor which has a disruptive effect on marriages are extramarital relations. Radebe (1993) found that the majority of the men that she interviewed did not feel guilty about having an extramarital relationship, while Viljoen (1984) reports that most of the respondents she interviewed felt divorce was on the increase because of these affairs. Many of the younger respondents she interviewed felt that a man is free to have extramarital relationships and, in fact, a man who does not have "another woman" is not a "man". Similarly, Van der Vliet (1982) reports that many men in her study used the customary emphasis on virility and manhood as a justification for their extramarital relations. A common remark from the men she interviewed was: "Men regard it as legitimate to have girlfriends - it is associated with prestige and virility" (Van der Vliet, 1982, p.198). Extramarital affairs, also meant for many men an escape from the realities of township life.

It is important, in the present study, to be aware of the macrosocial constraints that bear on the marriages of the men, as well as the sociocultural factors that influence the quality of their marital relationships.

### The Formation of Career

Although there is a lack of research concerning aspects of career development in the lives of black people, certain themes can be identified. This includes the issue of the meaning of work in the lives of black people (Möller, 1992; Van der Walt, 1994) and the issue of career maturity as it relates to black youths embarking on their career paths (Hickson & White, 1989; Nel & Mkhabela, 1987; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990). Some studies have also considered the barriers and impediments that black people face once they enter a career (Hofmeyer, 1981; Lear, 1988; Mkwanazi & Rall 1994), as well as the experience of unemployment which has affected so many South Africans (Hall & Mabitsela, 1994; Möller, 1989, 1992).

### The Meaning of Work, and the Initial Career Choice

Möller (1992) makes the important point that the black person's social identity is closely related to work, regardless of the intrinsic satisfaction that the work confers. Van der Walt (1994) explored the work values of South African youth in more depth. While the majority of the sample consisted of black people, all racial groups were represented. The findings indicate that South Africans place a high value on work. However, the family domain seems to have a higher value than the work domain. After family and work - religion, leisure, and community involvement were valued by the respondents. The sample attached the highest priority to economic gain (salary) in relation to work, followed by the status that work can provide, and then contact with people.

While these studies have indicated the high priority and meaning that work has for young black adults, research conducted in South Africa has indicated that there are a number of factors which make it difficult for a black person to make a realistic career choice (Hickson & White,

1989; Nel & Mkhabela, 1987; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990). This is important, because career choice is a vital step in career formation.

Obstacles to realistic career choice include the inferior education system that black pupils have experienced, as well as socio-economic and political factors. For black youths the concept of a personal "career identity" is meaningless because the majority of adolescents have lacked positive role models, and have seen their parents in low status, menial jobs (Hickson & White, 1989,; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990). This, together with the limited job opportunities that have been available to black people, and their limited exposure to the world of work, result in a lack of knowledge about the self in relation to the world of work (Hickson & White, 1989; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990). This lack of knowledge about the self in relation to the world of work could also stem from the black person's sociocultural background which emphasises collectivism and family responsibility and involvement in decision making. Such a background could inhibit introspection and individualism which is required for the process of matching self with work (Hickson & White, 1989; Reid-Van Niekerk & Van Niekerk, 1990).

After entering a career there are a number of other impediments that the black person has to confront in the work environment.

#### Impediments to Career Development

A number of impediments to black career advancement have been identified (Hofmeyer, 1981; Lear, 1988; Mkwanzazi & Rall, 1994). Mkwanzazi and Rall (1994) contend that the root cause of these impediments are the past discriminatory laws of the apartheid era. These laws have had a direct, negative impact on the black person's education, training, occupational choice, and general career development (Charoux, 1980; 1985). This was clearly evident in a qualitative study by Hofmeyer (1981), in which black interviewees cited inferior education, discrimination, and antagonism in the work place, as well as a work climate which did not encourage black peoples' growth and development, as the main impediments to their development. In his study, Franks (1987) also found that prejudice and discrimination in the work place had

its roots in the view of black people as being incompetent, lacking initiative, and in fear of black development.

Lear (1988), referring to Lombard's (1986) study into discrimination in the work place, further defines discrimination by specifying overt and covert discrimination. Overt discrimination occurs when a worker is treated differently because of attributes not normally linked with productivity. Covert (or institutional discrimination) occurs when a worker is discriminated against for not exhibiting socially acceptable patterns of behaviour.

These differences in perceptions are often related to the different "world views" of blacks and whites (Coldwell & Moerdyk, 1981; Erwee, 1988; Kotze, 1993; Nzimande, 1986). Erwee (1988) points out that the Protestant work ethic of most white organisations might conflict with the humanistic work value systems of most blacks. Nzimande (1986), highlighting a confidential survey, points out that black and white people might have different conceptualisations of career advancement. For the black respondents in this confidential survey, advancement was associated with an improved quality of life, including good housing, educational assistance and community development. In contrast, Nzimande points out that white management emphasises advancement and promotion based on the American ethic of "each person for himself/herself" (p.106). Similarly, Moerdyk and Coldwell (1982, p.75) note that blacks have to struggle with "dissonant cultural paradigms" stemming, for instance, from this conflict between the traditional value of "ubuntu" (with its emphasis on community), and the individualistic, competitive, Western attitudes found in the work place.

Other obstacles to black career development which have been identified include the effects of "petty apartheid" on career development. This includes factors such as a lack of adequate studying facilities, or problems with transport. Other obstacles include having to communicate in Afrikaans or English, and the absence of black models in senior positions (Hofmeyer, 1981).

The important point is that discrimination and prejudice in the work place results in despondency and demotivation (Hofmeyer, 1981). A climate

is created that is not conducive to self-development (Mkwanazi & Rall, 1994), or in Levinson's (1978) terms, to the development of a viable life structure.

It is important, in the present research, to be aware of the meaning and effect of career impediments on the life structure of the men. This implies an understanding of the effect of factors such as racism, discrimination, and the different world views and cultural paradigms between blacks and whites, on the formation of their careers (and the evolution of their life structures in general).

### The Meaning of Unemployment

The meaning of unemployment should receive some attention in this section because unemployment has affected the lives of so many black people, and can be expected to have a powerful effect upon all aspects of the black person's life structure. Möller (1992) points out that unemployment in South Africa has been tied to the apartheid system, with its emphasis, for example, on job privileges for whites and influx control laws.

Möller's (1989) studies are especially pertinent to the present research because they focus on the **experience** of the black unemployed, an area that has received "scant" attention in the past (Möller, 1992, p.v). More recently Hall and Mabitsela (1994) also explored the experience of unemployment in South Africa.

The results of Möller's (1989) study (which was based on a survey conducted in 1988) indicates that unemployed, black South Africans perceive life to be significantly less satisfactory than other township dwellers. (These township dwellers, in turn, report a significantly lower level of well-being than white South African urban dwellers.) Only a very small proportion of the black urban unemployed reported feelings of happiness with their lives in general (Möller, 1992). This depressed subjective quality of life was often characterised by feelings of depression, anger, nervousness, as well as disturbances in their concentration and sleeping patterns. Significantly though, the unemployed did not, in general, experience a loss of self-esteem. They did,

however, feel a sense of shame related to their poverty and unemployed state. They often swung between feelings of powerlessness and feelings of competence. Möller points out that economic poverty is the cause of most problems experienced by the unemployed. This is best expressed in the view of one of her respondents: "All problems are based on money" (Möller, 1992, p.190).

Hall and Mabitsela (1994) add to Möller's (1989) findings of the experience of unemployment, with their research based on interviews with predominantly black youth. Like Möller, they found that the sense of shame that unemployed youth experience stems from the stigma and sense of inferiority which is reinforced by society, and increases feelings of worthlessness and frustration. While most of the black respondents valued education, they viewed the education system as racially biased and inappropriate for finding employment. They also perceived lack of career guidance as constraining them from searching for work.

Another important finding by Möller (1992) is that the meaning of unemployment changes during the life course. For instance, she found that the older respondents experienced more damage to their self-respect than the younger respondents. While many of the older respondents still maintained a sense of usefulness, the young, unemployed, black men experienced extreme frustration and boredom relating to the inability to contribute to society and prove themselves. Furthermore, unemployment can frustrate the negotiation of certain developmental tasks across the life span, such as marrying and starting a family (Hall and Mabitsela, 1994).

These studies provide us with a basis from which to assess the experience and effect of unemployment on the life structure. It will thus be important, in the present research, to interview a participant who is unemployed.

#### **Conclusion: Towards a More Relevant Definition of the Life Structure**

It should be evident from this chapter that very little research has directly addressed the psychosocial development of black adults. To be

sure, some research has focused on psychosocial development during adolescence and youth (Freeman, 1993; Myburg & Anders, 1989; Thom, 1988), and the period of middle adulthood (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993) but there seems to be no comprehensive research on the period of early adulthood. The little research which has been conducted, and which has been reviewed in this chapter, can enrich and add to our conceptualisation of the life structure in the South African context in a number of ways.

The research concerning identity development during adolescence and youth (Freeman, 1993; Thom, 1988), as well as the phenomenological research relating to middle adulthood (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993), has provided us with valuable insight into certain similarities and differences in blacks and whites concerning some aspects of psychosocial development. Issues such as establishing independence and psychologically separating from the family of origin, which the research on identity development highlights, is very relevant to a study of the life structure. Research relating to middle adulthood has also provided us with valuable insight into the experiential world of blacks during middle adulthood, a stage of life which some of the participants in the present study will be in. However, the present research will focus on the entire life span, up until middle adulthood, and will take into account broader concerns and issues that are pertinent to the definition of the life structure.

One of these concerns is the dialectical relationship between the individual and the broader context. An exploration of the life structure of black men, such as the present one, must take into account the complex interaction between the individual and the broader political and sociocultural context (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Freeman, 1993; Kivnick, 1983). The work of Dawes and Donald (1994) alerts us to the negative impact of adversity on psychosocial development during childhood, and the child's "future path" (Dawes & Donald, 1994, p.10). The effect of adverse conditions (for instance poverty) during childhood, on the evolution of the life structure during adulthood, is a relevant issue in the present research.

Freeman (1993) and Kivnick (1983) have further illustrated the impact of apartheid on the evolution of the life structure during adolescence and the adult years. Their analysis illustrates the importance of understanding the difficulties and restrictions emanating from the political, economic, and social context, which the black men in the present research may have to confront in their attempts to establish a viable life structure. It is important that we understand how these external conditions impact on the tasks that the black men have to negotiate during the evolution of their life structure, as well as their sense of identity. Freeman (1993, p.57) expresses it well when he says, "personal development is central to social development".

Research that has focused on the quality of life experience (Möller, 1988; Möller et al, 1984) and the life world (Hickson et al., 1991; Mathibe, 1992), further enriches our understanding of the life structure in the present research through its emphasis on the black person's perception and meaning (that is the internal aspects of the life structure) attributed to these external social conditions (or the external aspects of the life structure). Such research indicates that black people have a lower perceived level of satisfaction with their lives than white people (and may view their world more negatively). This research provides us with valuable insight into the "lens through which human experience is filtered" (Hickson et al., 1991, p.306). A central challenge for the present research is to understand this lens, and how it impacts on the negotiation of a viable life structure. Certainly, the feeling of inadequacy, frustration and hopelessness, which many black people have experienced, will have a direct bearing on this lens.

Research that has adopted a life events framework (Bluen & Barling, 1987; Magwaza & Bhana, 1991; Turton et al, 1991) is pertinent to the present research because it highlights events which are relevant to the South African context, and possibly to the men in the present study. It is quite evident from the research that urban living, and more specifically township life, is characterised by unique life events that have an impact on the person at home and at work. It is important that we understand the nature and significance of these events in the lives of the men in the present research.

This implies that attention should be given to the issue of locus of control, or whether the men attribute the cause of life events to internal or external factors (Charoux, 1985; Theron, 1994). While research in this area is far from conclusive, the issue is pertinent to the present research.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of research relating to two integral aspects of the life structure, namely the formation of marriage and career. Although it is not the focus of the present study to explore the themes that emerged from this research in depth, they do represent important issues in the evolution of the life structure. Thus, the present study should address the meaning and manifestation of love and intimacy in the lives of the men (Stones & Philbrick, 1989). Consideration should be given to the meaning of an "ideal wife" (Van der Vliet, 1982), or a Special Woman in Levinson's terms. The meaning that labola, or the traditional marriage, has on the formation of the men's marriages is also important (De Haas, 1991), as is the meaning of marriage, and the quality of the marital relationship (Viljoen, 1984). Attention should also be given to the meaning of fatherhood (Edwards et al., 1986) and the experience of marital breakdown (Allen, 1978; Radebe, 1993).

The place and meaning of career formation, in the lives of the men, is also an important issue. Career identity (Hickson & White, 1989) is an essential aspect of the evolving life structure. It is important to address factors which impinge upon the career identity during the evolution of the life structure. This implies that we should understand the meaning of the career in the lives of the men, the initial process of career choice and factors which influence this process (Hickson & White, 1989; Nel & Mkhabela, 1987), as well as further impediments to career development (Franks, 1987; Mkwanazi & Rall, 1994).

Finally, attention should be given to the meaning of unemployment in the lives of the men, as this is a condition which has affected so many people in South Africa (Möller, 1992).

A point should also be made with regard to the research methodology of the research reviewed in the present chapter. Much of the research has

relied on phenomenological and qualitative research strategies, based predominantly on in depth interviewing. This was evident in the phenomenological research of middle adulthood (Du Toit, 1991; Radebe, 1993); some life world research (Fassaert, 1992; Hickson et al., 1991), and research concerning the quality of life experience (Möller & Schlemmer, 1980). It was also evident in research relating to the meaning of marriage from a black perspective (De Haas, 1987; Viljoen, 1994), as well as aspects of career development (Hofmeyer, 1981).

Qualitative research has been an appropriate tool in the research that has been reviewed, due to its power in exploring human experience without the imposition of a eurocentric framework. This point shall be elaborated upon in the next chapter, which is concerned with the research methodology to be applied in the present research.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

There has been much debate regarding a definition of qualitative research, and the term has often been used as an umbrella term encompassing different approaches (Van Maanen, 1983; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1994). Qualitative research is essentially associated with human science, and not with natural science. Giorgi (1985, 1992) stresses that human science is concerned with quality not quantity, meanings not measurements. It is not concerned with identical repetition of experiments, but is concerned with the "varied manifestations" of phenomena (Kruger, 1979, p.54). The end product of qualitative research is not control and prediction but the understanding of human experience (Beck, 1990).

This kind of data has often been referred to as "soft data" (Mathews & Paradise, 1988). Soft data is able to provide powerful and complex descriptions of human experience but the data is not easily quantified for analysis. A main feature of qualitative research is that the data is expressed most frequently in words and not in numbers (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Thus it is not the incidence and frequency of a phenomenon that is important in qualitative research, but rather the rich concepts and categories that are generated by the research process. McCracken (1988, p.17) suggests, that "qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it. It is, in other words, much more intensive than extensive in its objectives".

As part of a new and alternative paradigm, qualitative research draws much from phenomenological and constructivist thinking (Hoshmand, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1994; Tesch, 1990). The phenomenological paradigm is concerned with describing or illuminating human experience (Barrell et al., 1987; Giorgi, 1992; Hoshmand, 1989). Human experience, according to constructivist inquiry, is illuminated through the subjective construction of "stories" and narratives, in an interactive

process - or in such a way that the researcher becomes part of the story-telling process (Becker, 1992; Hoshmand, 1989; Tesch 1990). Hermeneutics is an aspect of the constructivistic process according to Guba and Lincoln (1990) because hermeneutics involves the depiction of individual constructions as accurately as possible. More specifically, hermeneutics refers to the science or theory of interpretation. While hermeneutics was originally associated with the interpretation of biblical texts, it is now associated with the interpretation of any text or transcribed narrative (Ashworth, 1987; Barrell et al., 1987; Hoshmand, 1989; Halling & Leifer, 1991).

Knowledge is thus a subjective human construction (Guba & Lincoln, 1990; Wrightsman, 1994b) that is "hermeneutically co-constituted" (Addison 1989, p.29), and leads to a greater understanding of ourselves and the world (Polkinghorne, 1994).

A fundamental reason for the increase in interest in qualitative methods is that standardised quantitative methods have not been able to generate adequate understanding of the complexities of human experience (Polkinghorne, 1989). Instead, these experiences have often been dismissed as being out of the reach of scientific research (Searight, 1989). While quantitative methods have often claimed to be more rigorous and perhaps objective than qualitative methods, researchers in this tradition have been reluctant to accept reduced meaning as a result of objectivity (Osborne, 1990). Instead of scientific objectivity qualitative research has as its focus the **whole person**, and not just certain pre-defined parts of the person. The emphasis in qualitative research is on generating "new vision and insight" and not just proving existing hypotheses (Wells, 1991, p.39).

#### Qualitative Research with Reference to Adult Development

The task of describing personality development in adulthood is among the most difficult that we face (Wrightsman, 1994a), but it is this search for new vision and insight which has motivated researchers in the field of adult development, and indeed the present research, to make use of qualitative research methods. Datan et al. (1987, p.154) cite Meachen

in this regard by suggesting that researchers in the field of developmental psychology are,

moving away from testing hypotheses derived from theory, and towards more systematic use of autobiography, biography, storytelling and conversation, diaries, literature, clinical case histories, historical fiction, and the like, with a new emphasis upon the person's construction and reconstruction of the "life story" rather than upon what might be considered a more objective account of what happened.

Researchers in the field of adult development are moving away from quantitative or statistical approaches to more qualitative, or "tender" (Stewart & Van der Water, 1992) approaches, because quantitative approaches (such as surveys and structured interviews), "cannot do justice to an individual's life experiences" (Datan et al., 1987, p.156). Statistical approaches often ignore the fundamental issues and do not provide a comprehensive, holistic exploration of development (Datan et al., 1987). Quantitative approaches are artificial when applied to the development of a person (Stewart et al., 1988). Datan et al. (1987, p.156) cite Kastenbaum in this regard, who claims that researchers in the field of development psychology are becoming dissatisfied with "phantom cohorts" or artificial constructions of people based on statistical profiles.

Furthermore, researchers in the field of adult development have become uneasy with quantitative methods which impose constructs onto their research endeavours. They have argued rather for approaches which focus on the individual's subjective belief or constructs about his or her development (Hart, 1992; Heckhausen et al., 1989; Rodehever & Datan, 1985).

The qualitative research methodology used in the present research was chosen with this in mind. It represents an attempt to move away from artificial, statistical constructions of human development, to a study of human development "from the inside out" (Markus et al., 1991, p.251).

The following section shall provide an overview of the qualitative approach to be used in the present study, and then the approach shall be discussed in more depth.

### The Qualitative Approach in the Present Study

The focus of the present research is essentially about how the person perceives or constructs his life, that is the life structure. The approach is psychobiographical. The qualitative grounded theory approach will be used to analyse the person's life structure as revealed through personal narratives. Versions of this approach have been used extensively in research concerning the life structure (Adams, 1983; Chavez, 1986; Droege, 1982; Gooden, 1989; Herbert, 1989).

Biographical interviewing (Levinson, 1978), which is a qualitative form of interviewing with a specific focus on the life structure, will be the data-gathering instrument. This method of data collection was chosen because it is effective for an explorative study; it has as its main focus long term developmental processes; and is able to explore deep meanings and experiences which are often hidden from others (Cherniss, 1991). The main focus of the interview will be on what McAdams (1992) refers to as "nuclear episodes", which are symbolic high points, low points and turning points in the person's life.

The interview protocols will be analysed by various coding procedures which form the bases of the grounded theory approach. These procedures were originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and then expanded upon by others (Addison, 1989; 1992; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; 1994). Coding will be used in the present research to identify important patterns and themes which characterise the life structures of the men, through a process of questioning the data and making comparisons. More specifically, this will be achieved through open, axial and selective coding. Open coding involves the initial breakdown of data into categories that are relevant to the life structure. These categories will be developed through axial coding, which involves a thorough examination of changes and differences in the manifestation of categories. Lastly, the data will be integrated through

selective coding so that the ground work can be laid for the theory of the life structure of black men.

In order to understand this process it is essential that we understand the main thrust of qualitative research, and especially the distinction between interpretation and description.

### Qualitative Research

With its focus on the "insider's" perspective (Ary, Jacobs & Razaviech, 1990) or the individual's subjective view of the world, qualitative research draws much from phenomenological thought. The cornerstone of phenomenological thought is evident in Husserl's (1962) famous words "to go back to the things themselves".

This implies that psychology is not an objective, factual science but rather the study of "lived experience" (Barrell et al., 1987; Kruger, 1989), the understanding of people's experiences in their worlds (Giorgi, 1970). Indeed, this approach stresses that a phenomenon can only be understood in relation to its context: "Reality is both construed by the subject and mirrored from the object out there" (Osborne, 1990, p.80). The focus of phenomenological research then is on the description of the immediate experience of the person in the lived world.

Description, according to Giorgi (1992), involves the researcher staying with the evidence or the "givenness" of the situation. Qualitative research requires a descriptive attitude, where "the focus is on the phenomenon, specifically understood as that which appears, exactly as it appears to whom it appears" (Barrell et al., 1987, p.8).

Description implies that little use is made of pre-determined research designs and hypotheses (Miller & Crabtree, 1992; Mathews & Paradise, 1988). Qualitative research is rather inductive and hypotheses are generated and refined as the research proceeds and data is accumulated. During this process of moving from data to hypotheses to theory, the researcher develops "working hypotheses" (Ary et al., 1990, p.449), or "rolling hypotheses" (Wells, 1991, p.4) which are hypotheses that are continually developed and rejected as the research proceeds.

This process, which resembles a hermeneutic circle, implies a departure from the "givenness", and therefore moves from mere description, towards interpretation. The hermeneutic circle refers to a continuous process of data collection and interpretation, resulting in an ever-increasing understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Barrell et al., 1987). During the research process new data emerges and the researcher is able to return to the original problem or question with a new perspective and different questions. The hermeneutic circle does not have an end point or conclusion as such; rather it continues to deepen and expand the researcher's understanding of the topic under investigation.

Although this process of qualitative research is flexible, it is not haphazard. Qualitative research is systematic and purposive (Sykes, 1991). While the researcher should be open-minded and flexible (Shaffir & Stebbins, 1991), he or she should function with "disciplined spontaneity" (Giorgi, 1985, p.14) as he or she continually selects subjects and refines data which illuminates the phenomena under investigation. Constructivism plays an important role here, as the researcher becomes an integral part of the story-telling process.

As qualitative research is so flexible, and aims for in depth analysis of human experience, it can effectively be used to explore new areas and make new discoveries (Shaffir and Stebbins, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is for this reason that qualitative methods have often been the choice with research involving minority groups and other cultures (Searight, 1989), as in the present study. Let us look closer at the reasons for choosing a qualitative approach in the present study.

#### Motivation for Choosing the Qualitative Approach

1. The limitations of structured methods, such as questionnaires and tests, for a study of the life structure, has already been pointed out. This point is especially relevant in the South African context, where very few culture-fair tests have been developed. After a review of previous research, Abrahams (1994) points out that most psychological tests in South Africa are unsuitable for a multicultural setting.

2. The essential focus of the present research is on human experience. A research approach which can access the complexities of the life structure, and grasp the deeper psychological meaning for the individual, in as holistic a manner as possible, is thus required.

3. Related to this is that the present research is concerned with the description of soft data. The soft data, in this case, are the narratives provided by each subject, through the interviews. These narratives are best expressed in words and not numbers, qualitatively and not quantitatively. This study is intensive, not extensive.

4. The main concern of the present research is with the description of the important components and processes of the life structure of each subject. This research is concerned with description because this (as the literature review has shown) is a new area of research in South Africa and there is a need to develop a groundwork, and lay a basis for theory building. Du Toit (1991, p.83), asserts that "one manner in which theory building begins is with description". A descriptive approach helps to lay a groundwork for theory development by identifying themes, patterns and emerging relationships, as will be the focus of the present research.

5. It must be pointed out that while the present research is essentially concerned with description, it does entail a degree of interpretation, as defined by Giorgi (1992). This is due to the inclusion of certain categories derived from Levinson's theory of the life structure into the analysis of data, and the comparisons which will be made with the findings from Levinson's research.

6. A new and exploratory field of research, as well as research with other cultural groups, such as the focus of the present research, lends itself well to a qualitative "rolling hypotheses" approach that is open, flexible and does not impose categories or constructs onto the research process, or pre-empt the research findings with rigid hypotheses. The hermeneutic circle (Addison, 1992; Barrell et al., 1987) is an essential aspect of this process because it involves a continuous process of data collection and analysis, resulting in an ever-increasing understanding of the life structure of the men.

7. The present research also lends itself well to a constructivist approach because constructivist inquiry is so suitable for storytelling (Miller & Crabtree, 1992) and this study makes use of stories (or narratives) to understand the complexities of the life structure. During this process the participants construct their stories, and the researcher becomes part of the process of co-constructing meanings with the participants, and then constructing stories of the stories.

#### Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

Qualitative research has often been criticised for neglecting scientific discipline and for lacking reliability, validity and objectivity. Validity as applied to quantitative research is concerned with the extent to which an instrument measures what it proposes to measure, while reliability is concerned with the consistency of the measuring instrument. Validity and reliability must be considered in terms of the focus of qualitative research, which is the description of human experience, and not the control and prediction of variables (Sandelowski, 1986).

Sandelowski (1986) contends that qualitative inquiry involves a mix of scientific rules and artistic imagination. While qualitative research is concerned with rich, perhaps "artistic" descriptions of human experience, it will be judged by two criteria: The soundness of the methodology used; and the usefulness of the research findings (Polkinghorne, 1994).

This will be greatly determined by the role of the researcher, and the transparency of the research results (Ashworth, 1987; Guba & Lincoln, 1990; Sykes, 1991).

#### The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is best understood in terms of the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm has its roots in the early proposition by Merleau-Ponty (1962) that meaning is formed in the exchange between the person and the object - it is thus co-created. In this view then, theory is a cognitive construction

originating from the interaction between inquirer and inquired into (Guba & Lincoln, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1994). As such the constructivistic inquirer adopts a "subjective position" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p.146); and constructivistic inquiry retains a "perspectival dimension" (Polkinghorne, 1994, p.510). Constructivist inquiry "celebrates" subjectivity because, "if realities exist only in respondents' minds, subjective interaction with them seems to be the only way to tease them out" (Guba & Lincoln, 1990, p.146).

Qualitative research is thus in a unique position because the researcher is the data gathering instrument (Ary et al, 1990). The researcher functions as a "participant observer" (Stones, 1986, p.118), or a "collaborator" (Edwards, 1993) as the lives of the researcher and the subject "intersect" (Kruger, 1979, p.55) throughout the research process. Without this sense of intimacy the researcher is unable to enter the experiential world of the subject (Wallace, 1989).

Seeing the subjects as collaborators or co-researchers entails what Ricoeur (1979) refers to as the hermeneutics of meaning-recollection. That is, it is concerned with allowing the meaning to emerge from the text, through a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the subject.

While the qualitative researcher strives for trust and collaboration, he or she also has to "manufacture distance" (McCraken, 1988, p.22) so that his or her values and preconceptions do not influence the research process too much. Ashworth (1987, p.40) quotes Heidegger in this regard: "Every inquiry is a seeking. Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought." The researcher always brings "foreunderstanding" into the research process. Foreunderstanding refers to the researcher's values and expectations, and feelings concerning involvement in the research process.

This point is further elaborated upon in the phenomenological tradition. Husserl (Osborne, 1990) asserts that understanding occurs when the researcher adopts a "transcendental attitude". This is achieved through "bracketing" or "phenomenological reduction" (Hoshmand, 1989), which involves an open attitude and the suspension of one's biases and

preconceptions. Through this process of self-awareness and careful scrutiny, the researcher should allow the text to challenge his or her foreunderstanding, so that the experience of the subject can reveal itself in an unbiased way (Ashworth, 1987; Giorgi, 1985).

Bracketing should continue throughout the research process, as the researcher becomes aware of other biases and assumptions impinging upon the research process. Although the researcher should be aware of his or her biases during the research process, he or she is never free of all biases (Kvale, 1983).

The researcher must also be aware of the subject's definition of the research situation, or what Greenberg and Folger (in Steier, 1991, p.120) refer to as the subject's "phenomenological definition" of the research situation. This includes the subject's biases and preconceptions concerning the research process.

The above points are especially relevant in the present research which involves a white researcher and black subjects. The task of the researcher, as a white middle class male, is to be aware of his own preconceptions and stereotypes, or his own role in co-constructing reality, which in the present case is the reality of the black men's lives. In this way he can bracket his foreunderstanding so that it does not impinge upon the research process.

At the same time the researcher must be aware of the perceptions and feelings that the subjects (who have experienced a different cultural, social, economic and political background to that of the researcher) bring into the research situation.

#### Transparency in Qualitative Research

The task of the qualitative researcher is to strive to communicate the whole research process in a "transparent" manner (Sykes, 1991). This implies that the researcher must be constantly aware of the entire process of arriving at research conclusions and be able to communicate these conclusions in a clear, logical fashion. Transparency is also important to the reader of the research results. The reader should be

able to relate to and interact with the research process as outlined by the researcher.

The foundation of transparency is "descriptive adequacy" (Ashworth, 1987). Descriptive adequacy refers to findings which are based on sound, unambiguous, explicit argumentation (Lythcott & Duschl, 1990). Descriptive adequacy forms the basis for "reasonable extrapolations" (Sykes, 1991), or speculations concerning the applicability of findings to similar situations.

These arguments, or the findings in qualitative research will be strengthened if the internal validity of the research project is high. Internal validity in qualitative research refers to the fit between the data and the findings (Sykes, 1991). Internal validity has the potential to be high in qualitative research because the researcher is able to be flexible, and question and check the emerging data. To maintain a high level of internal validity, it is important that the researcher does not select data, while ignoring other data, to fit his or her own argument.

A further way that the validity of qualitative research can be improved, is to compare the findings of one research project with the findings of a similar research project. This kind of "instrumental validity" can involve comparisons between samples from different studies, so that similarities and differences can be highlighted. Validity can also be improved by "triangulation", or the use of data from multiple sources to validate the research (Jick, 1979). If another researcher can follow the process and logic of the study from beginning to end, the research will have "auditability" (Sandelowski, 1986) or "synchronic reliability" (Kirk & Miller, 1986). From a constructivist perspective, one would say that consensus of meaning is reached between different observers.

These procedures enhance the "trustworthiness" of the research (Licoln & Guba, 1985). The research will be trustworthy if the researcher ensures the credibility, transferability and confirmability of the research project. Credibility refers to the accurate description of the phenomenon or subject under investigation. Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings can be replicated in another setting,

while conformability addresses the question of whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by somebody else (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Let us now consider some of the ways that the trustworthiness of the present study will be established.

### Reliability and Validity of the Present Research

The trustworthiness of the present study will be achieved in the following ways:

1. The data will be analysed by means of grounded theory. Grounded theory, as shall be shown, ensures that the method of data collection and analysis is explicit and transparent. Grounded theory also ensures the bracketing of the researcher's biases and assumptions by allowing the findings to emerge from the data.

2. The researcher shall furthermore bracket his own biases and preconceptions by being constantly aware of his own influence on the research process from beginning to end. A "personal statement" or synopsis of the researcher's own foreunderstanding will also be presented at the end of this chapter.

3. Grounded theory increases the validity of findings by allowing for the continual questioning of the data. A fundamental question will be: "Does the data support the interpretation, or is more data needed to allow an interpretation?" (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p.58).

4. Transparency will be increased by using the participant's own words during the process of analysis so that the reader can make his or her own judgement concerning the validity of the researcher's enterprise (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

5. The data will be analysed by the researcher in conjunction with the supervisors of the research project. Triangulation will thus be achieved by working in a team.

6. Instrumental validity will be improved by comparing the findings of the present research to the findings of similar research in the field, and noting similarities and differences. Internal validity can also be improved by using an instrument which is flexible and adaptable, such as the qualitative biographical interview, which will be used in this research. The next section focuses on this method.

### **The Psychobiographical Framework and Biographical Interviewing**

The present study employs the psychobiographical framework to analyse the life structure of black men. The general psychobiographical framework will first be discussed with specific reference to the cultural location of psychobiography and the use of psychobiography in the field of developmental psychology. Then the application of Levinson's (1978) psychobiographical approach in the present study will be expanded upon.

The main instrument used for data collection with Levinson's psychobiographical approach is the biographical interview. It is for this reason that the method of biographical interviewing, which is the method to be employed in this study, will be discussed in conjunction with the psychobiographical framework. Biographical interviewing is a form of qualitative interviewing, with a specific focus on the life structure. Thus, the important attributes of qualitative interviewing, which are relevant to the present research, will be highlighted before the specific features of biographical interviewing are discussed. This will be followed by a discussion of some of the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative interviewing, which apply to biographical interviewing as well.

### **Psychobiography**

Psychobiography involves the systematic application of methods, concepts and data from the entire psychological spectrum to the study of human lives (Manganyi, 1991; Runyan, 1982). Through psychobiography we are able to explore narrative aspects of adult development, and understand people in their context (Josselson 1993; McAdams, 1988; Ochberg, 1988).

Crosby and Crosby (1981) assert that psychobiographies reflect two types of observations: Causal and coherent whole. Causal explanations are concerned with the reasons why people behave in a certain way. Coherent whole explanations are concerned with compiling an account of person's life based on different data, as will be done in the present study.

Psychobiography, or the "personal narrative", involves a dialectic between the researcher and the subject (Freeman, 1984), and a juxtaposition between the subject's subjective story and the theory that guides the interpretation (Tappan, 1989), which, in the present study, is Levinson's theory of the life structure.

The dialectic between the psychobiographer and the subject is influenced by the "cultural location" (Bruner, 1990, p.348) of both participants. This means that the psychobiographer must be aware of and understand how his or her own cultural background and life story might prejudice the psychobiography. This is important because the psychobiographer is at risk of succumbing to cultural stereotyping (Manganyi, 1991) and "psychological imperialism" (Wrightsman, 1988), which is the tendency to ignore the impact of sociocultural factors on the psychobiography.

Manganyi (1991), a South African academic, sees psychobiography as involving a search for the truth, or a "kind of witnessing" (p.73) which takes the psychobiographer into new territories. In seeking the truth, Manganyi continues, the psychobiographer must understand the particular stage of the individual's life, as well as the circumstances of the subject's community at the time that the psychobiography is being compiled. The psychobiographer must also be aware of the subject's family structure, religious, political and economic background, as well as the political and ideological context (Cohler, 1994). Manganyi (1991) furthermore contends that the psychobiographical approach developed by Levinson (1978) has been the "most down to earth contribution from psychology to the art of biography that has emerged in the recent years" (p.72), because it addresses these factors so well.

The issue of cultural location is important in the present research because the researcher is a white man brought up in a privileged community, studying black men, who are mostly from disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, the broader social and political location of South Africa at present must be taken into account, for the country is beset by social and political turmoil and change. This will naturally affect each person's psychobiography.

The strength of Levinson's psychobiographical approach lies in his use of biographical interviewing. The next section shall focus on qualitative interviewing which forms the basis for the biographical interviewing method which will be used. Thereafter the specific features of biographical interviewing will be presented.

#### Qualitative Interviewing

Although the interview as a method has been used considerably in the field of psychology, it has not received much scientific or critical attention (Kvale, 1983; Lee, 1993). This is surprising because the qualitative interview is "one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury" (McCracken, 1988, p.9). Its power lies in its potential to convey the deep meaning of the subject's lifeworld, or in its great potential to help us understand "other people's stories" (Seidman, 1991, p.1).

The interview method and the process of data collection go hand in hand. The way the interviewer defines the problem, and interacts with the interviewee and evaluates the responses, will influence the nature of the data being elicited (Jorgensen, 1991). This section shall focus on the interview as a method in qualitative analysis while the next section will focus on the actual analysis of qualitative data.

The best way to define the qualitative interview as used in the present research is to highlight the important features of this method:

1. The main focus of the qualitative interview is the "life-world" of the person (Kvale, 1983). It enables us to experience the world as

others do (McCracken, 1988). The "life-world" in the present research is the life structure.

2. Through the qualitative interview the researcher attempts to describe the central or recurring themes of the subject's life world (Wertz, 1983; Wrightsman, 1994b). The task of the interviewer in the present research is to identify the relevant themes pertaining to the evolution of the life structure.

3. While the interviewer guides the subject to explore various themes, it is important not to influence the subject's views of those themes in any way. The interviewer must be especially aware of issues of power and control when dealing with subjects who lack power, such as subjects from minority groups or subjects who have been discriminated against (Brannen, 1988). The subjects in the present research are from a group that has been discriminated against by formal and informal racism.

4. An essential feature of the qualitative interview is that the interviewer does not direct the subject by asking leading questions or imposing categories (Brenner, 1985; Walton, 1988). A main reason for choosing a semi-structured interview format in the present study is that the standardised interviews, with closed questions and a rigid format, limits disclosure (Lee, 1993).

5. While the interviewer should be careful not to direct the subject as outlined above, the interviewer will be guided by appropriate, **focused questioning**. More specifically, the qualitative research interview in the present research will begin with descriptive questions which aim to initiate the subject's exploration of the phenomena under investigation. As the interview progresses, the interviewer will ask more focused questions, or "questions of inclusion" (Gilchrist, 1992, p.82) which aims for a more thorough description and elaboration of themes and patterns. Furthermore, questions will be used to explore areas that are unclear, and to follow up on what the participant says (Seidman, 1991).

6. Qualitative research often focuses on "sensitive topics", or topics that are threatening and laden with emotion (Lee, 1993). The qualitative interview, unlike the structured interview or questionnaire, is especially powerful with sensitive research because it allows the researcher to deeply probe the complexities of personal experience, while exploring wider sociocultural influences. A main reason for choosing qualitative interviewing in the present research, is that many areas covered will be of a sensitive nature, whether this be a political, personal, social or financial concern.

7. The foundation of an effective, in depth, qualitative interview is a sound, trusting relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer's task in the present research, is to create a safe, non-judgmental atmosphere which accentuates respectful concern and genuineness (Edwards, 1993; Halling & Leifer, 1991; Osborne, 1990).

8. The qualitative interview usually involves more than one interview with the subject. In order to understand the meaning of the person's experience within the context of their lives, Schuman (1982) suggests a series of three interviews, which moves from a focus on the person's life history, to a more detailed description of experiences, and the meaning that these experiences have for the subject. Interviewing the subjects over a period of time ensures that the interviewer becomes immersed in the life of the subject, which is a prerequisite in the present research.

#### Biographical Interviewing

The form of interviewing to be used in the present study is based on the qualitative interviewing method, as outlined above and has been referred to as "biographical interviewing". This method was originally used by Levinson (1978) but since then has been used by a number of researchers who have studied the life structure (Adams, 1983; Gooden, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989).

Levinson points out that biographical interviewing involves aspects of a research interview, a clinical interview, and a conversation between

friends. It is like a structured research interview because the aim is to research certain areas. It is like a clinical interview because it involves warmth, empathy and the discovery of common themes. Lastly, it is similar to a conversation between friends because the relationship is on an equal basis and both participants are free to respond in their own manner.

Herbert (1989, p.82) stresses that the biographical interview is the most effective technique for the study of psychosocial development or the "reconstruction of adult life", as it focuses on major life events and critical decisions while allowing the interviewee freedom to respond.

Biographical interviewing is guided by a strong purpose or goal. The primary task of biographical interviewing is to construct the story of a person's life. The focus is thus not on a specific dimension or experience but rather the individual's entire life (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

The biographical method as a form of qualitative interviewing was applied to the present study in the following way: A series of interviews was conducted with each informant. The initial interview was more open-ended and exploratory while later interviews were used to follow up important themes and hunches. Throughout this process communication was facilitated through active listening, empathy, and probing questions. The researcher's own experience of basic counselling and therapeutic skills helped in this regard.

During the interviews the researcher was guided by the following question: What does the informant's current life structure look like, and how has it developed through his life? The interviews thus had to focus on both the internal and external aspects of the individual's life, both content and process. Content refers to actual events such as leaving home, starting a family, starting a first job; while process refers to the meaning these events have for the person. Included in this are aspects such as how the informant perceived significant episodes, milestones, turning points, and crises in his life, and how he felt he had changed over the years.

A key focus of the interviews was also on the informant's perceptions and meaning attached to significant relationships as they have changed through the years (whether this be with spouses, family or lovers). The person's childhood development and its effect on his present life structure was also deemed important, as well as the person's future orientation and expectations.

After each interview with the informant the tape of the session was transcribed by the researcher. This process of transcribing the tapes ensured that the researcher became familiar with the material and guided the preparation for further interviews. Immersion in the material in this way also laid the groundwork for analysis of the interviewee protocols.

#### The Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Interviewing

The interview as used in qualitative research has certain strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the most striking advantage of the interview is its flexibility. Questions can be repeated, additional information can be sought for, and the interviewer has access to a wide array of verbal and non-verbal cues. The interviewer is also able to follow up themes and fill in "gaps" left by missing data. As the researcher is able to adapt to the subject, and the interview situation, there is less chance of the interviewer and the subject misunderstanding each other (Ary et al., 1990; Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 1977).

Another advantage, which has already been highlighted, is that through a sound, cohesive relationship with the interviewee, the interviewer is able to gain insight into more sensitive areas of the person's life, which structured techniques might not be able to reach (Williamson et al., 1977). The qualitative interview thus provides a more in depth exploration of the phenomena under investigation than structured techniques would (Hart, 1992). It also provides for a wide variety of perspectives on information (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Critiques of qualitative interviewing have pointed out that qualitative interviewing is very vulnerable to interview bias. The interviewer may communicate, through certain subtle verbal and non-verbal

cues, personal values or wishes which could influence the subject's responses (Becker, 1986; 1992).

Another criticism is that the desire to provide the interviewer with socially desirable answers to certain questions or probes is especially problematic in qualitative interviewing. Hart (1992) points out that such factors, as the subject disliking the interviewer, might influence the process by creating an atmosphere in which the subject responds in unrevealing ways. The interviewer might also like or dislike the subject and only ask certain questions.

While the small samples used for qualitative interviewing allow for the emergence of rich, comprehensive data, it is often difficult to assess the accuracy of generalisations based on this method. The lack of standardisation in the interview process might also impinge upon generalisability. For instance the way in which a question is asked often differs from one interview to the next. Moreover, the path or process of the interview cannot be predicted because the content of the interview and the themes that are explored will depend upon the specific subject, the interviewer, and the particular context of the interview. This context will never be the same for different subjects.

Taking into account these falabilities, Seidman (1991, p.18) concludes: "Rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather data affects this process, we say the human interviewer can be a marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding."

### **The Analysis of the Data**

The method of analysis used in the present research is essentially an editing style of analysis (Miller & Crabtree, 1992) and is based on the grounded theory approach which was proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further developed by various qualitative researchers (Addison, 1992; Glaser, 1978; Miles, 1983; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). An editing style of analysis involves the purposeful search and selection of meaningful data. In grounded theory this is achieved through theoretical or purposeful sampling and the process of coding. In this section the

grounded theory approach will be discussed with specific reference to theoretical sampling and the analysis or coding of data. A framework for the integration of coding into the present study will also be presented.

### Grounded Theory

The aim of the grounded theory approach is to build or construct a theory that is grounded in the data that emerges. In this process, data collection and the analysis of the data occur simultaneously (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The core of the theory that emerges is an explanation of the social and psychological aspects of the phenomenon under study (Beck, 1990). The researcher is guided by initial hypotheses and is then continuously involved in a process of "checking" or "testing" his or her ideas as new data emerges (Schatzmann & Strauss, 1973, p.108). Addison (1992) refers to grounded research as grounded **hermeneutic** research because of the circular nature of this process.

Although Glaser and Strauss (1967) stress that this process of theory construction involves being open to the emerging data and not imposing a framework on this data, Miles (1983) believes that it is difficult to approach research with no assumptions. Miles suggests the development of an "explicit preliminary framework" (p.119) which, in accordance with the grounded theory approach, is revised as the research progresses. The important point, continues Miles, is that the researcher does not impose meaningless, irrelevant observations onto the research. This will not happen if the preliminary framework is integrated with flexibility and adequate "theoretical sensitivity" (Glaser, 1978).

Theoretical sensitivity is a cornerstone of grounded theory. The analytic process rests on the researcher being sensitive to the meaning of concepts and the relationship between the concepts, so that he or she can recognise what is relevant, and what is not relevant. Rigid preconceived constructs and hypothesis can minimise sensitivity, as well as the researcher's preoccupation with proving his or her own theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The grounded theory approach was chosen for the present research because the research is concerned with laying the groundwork for the

development of a theory of the life structure of black men during early adulthood. The research thus begins with a preliminary framework provided by the theoretical constructs and categories underlining the theory of the life structure as expounded by Levinson (1978). However, the aim is not to prove the existence of these categories but rather to allow them and other categories to emerge in whatever form or content, from the data, so that important themes and processes pertaining to the life structure can be identified.

An important step in this process is appropriate sampling procedures.

### Theoretical Sampling

Grounded theory entails the selection of data through theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is the process of data collection in which the researcher simultaneously collects, codes and analyses data, and then decides what data to collect next and where to find this data, for the purpose of developing the theory as it emerges (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The fundamental question in theoretical sampling then is "which case or group to turn to next in the analysis and with what theoretical purpose?" (Brannen, 1992b, p.9). Theoretical sampling implies that the researcher must be aware of the purpose of the research so that comparison groups can be selected which add relevance to the emerging theoretical categories.

Some important features of qualitative sampling which apply to the present research include the following:

1. The sample design is flexible and evolves as the study progresses (Kuzel, 1992). In other words, sampling increases in "depth of focus" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.177) as the researcher initially aims to collect as much data as possible, and then becomes increasingly focused on certain areas.

2. Sample cases are selected serially. "Who and what comes next depends on who and what came before". (Kuzel, 1992, p.41).

3. The sample is continuously adjusted or "focused" by the developing theory (Kuzel, 1990).

4. Selection of the sample continues to a point of redundancy. Glaser and Strauss (1967) refer to this as "theoretical saturation". This refers to a point in the research where the same aspects or themes are being generated, and the researcher is learning nothing new. Seidman (1991) also points out that sampling can discontinue when the research has met the criteria of "sufficiency," or when the sample adequately reflects the population that is being studied (Seidman, 1991).

5. In order to develop a comprehensive, rich theory, the researcher must search for negative cases, or cases that might disprove, challenge and ultimately expand the theory. The sample can also be chosen according to the principle, of "maximum variation sampling" (Patton, 1990) in which a range of people who reflect the large population are selected.

6. A crucial point in theoretical sampling is the size of the sample. Patton (1980) stresses that qualitative researchers should be less concerned with sample size and more concerned with the richness of information collected. While quantitative sampling is concerned with larger samples which are collected randomly, qualitative sampling is concerned with smaller in depth sampling procedures. This is summed up by McCracken (1988, p.17) who proclaims that "less is more". It is more important to work thoroughly and carefully with a few people, than superficially with many people. McCracken proceeds to suggest that eight people are adequate for a developmental sample, while Carey, (1984) stresses that a sample of more than eight people results in "diminishing returns" as data becomes saturated.

The sample in the present research was selected taking all the above principles into account. An initial sample size of eight informants was decided upon - but this would depend upon whether sampling had reached the criteria of saturation or at least, sufficiency. The informants were chosen through purposeful sampling, and not random sampling. Thus a diverse group of subjects, who could contribute most to the emerging

theory, were purposefully selected (this will become evident in the practical part of the study).

Diversity implies that the sample consist of black men from different educational, occupational and socio-economic backgrounds. A constant question that the researcher asked was: Which informant should be selected to be interviewed, who differs in certain ways from previous informants, but who is also similar enough in order to explore recurring themes? The selection of the sample became more focused as themes relating to the life structure began to emerge.

A crucial aspect of the research process is "gaining entry" (Johnson, 1990). This was facilitated by locating "gatekeepers" (Lofland, 1976) or people who knew the potential informant. This was deemed very important in this study because it would encourage trust between the researcher and the informant and thus facilitate the interview process. The first informant was located through a colleague of the researcher who knew the informant well.

Once an informant had been identified, the researcher arranged an appointment with the informant to explain the aims and process of the research. The researcher was careful to explain the aims of the study in a simple way without divulging information that might influence the informant's responses in any way. The researcher highlighted the fact that he was interested in exploring how the person perceived his development, including milestones and crises, in the present and in the past. The researcher stressed confidentiality, and that there was no right or wrong answer. If the informant agreed to be involved in the research an appointment for the first interview was set up. After the initial interview the process of coding the data was initiated.

#### Data Reduction Through Open Coding

Grounded theory is based on the comparative method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The basis of comparative analysis is the coding of data. The purpose of coding is to identify the underlying patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Beck, 1990). Coding involves two vital processes, namely making comparisons and questioning

the data. As the researcher codes the data, he or she asks questions (such as: What is this?; What does it mean?; How important is it?) and compares data to identify similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

This process of editing the data to make it more meaningful has been referred to as "data reduction" (Miles, 1983). Data reduction begins with the researcher attempting to make sense of, and organise the many pages of the transcribed interviews (Patton, 1990). In the present research it involves the researcher reviewing the transcripts a number of times in order to become familiar with the material. Edwards (1993) suggests a number of other points concerning data reduction which are relevant to the present study. This includes removing repetitious material from the transcript and synthesising similar material from different sections of the transcript. It also involves purposefully selecting data without intentionally omitting material, and the rendering of the data in a manner that is as "economical and succinct as possible" (Edwards, 1993, p.15).

An important step in data reduction is clustering, or grouping concepts that have similar characteristics or patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Giorgi (1970, 1989) describes a hierarchical process in which the informant's (or "co-researcher's") protocol is initially broken down sentence by sentence into "meaning units". These meaning units are then grouped together to form themes, which are then clustered together to form higher-order clusters, which define the phenomenon. Similarly, an important feature of grounded theory is to first label incidents or events in the protocol and then group these incidents together into higher level categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The categories in the present study will be generated by "in-vivo" coding (Strauss, 1987). These are words and phrases used by the informants themselves, and which forms various categories. The main criteria for coding is the relevance these categories have to the life structure. Components of Levinson's theory shall be applied to the protocols as "thinking units" (Lofland & Lofland, 1984) or "templates" to guide analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Initial coding will begin by noting evidence of such aspects of Levinson's theory as mentoring, the

Dream, a relationship with a Special Woman, and the development of occupational roles. Coding will also focus on evidence of a transition or stable period in the person's life, as well as the manifestation of any other "marker" event, such as divorce or marriage (Gerdes et al., 1988).

#### Developing the Theory Through Axial Coding

The initial coding of the data will be followed by more thorough and comprehensive axial coding. Axial coding involves adding richness and density to the categories by more thoroughly defining the characteristics of the category. Through this process, changes and differences in the emergence of categories, as well as the relationships between categories, will be explored (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

As in the initial coding, questions and comparisons, such as the following, are an integral part of the process: Is there evidence for the relevance of this category? What are the similarities and differences between this category and other categories? What conditions, and what is the context, that led up to the emergence of this category? How does this category change over time? What variables can be identified that have given the category variation? (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Axial coding, as used in the present research, will take the following form. A synopsis under the heading of each category that emerges from all the interview protocols of each informant will be written, taking into account the above questions. Thus, for example, under the category of "mentoring", all dimensions of mentoring, as experienced by the informant, will be presented. This would include the development of the mentoring relationship, the context that it appears in, and its relation to other categories, such as the development of the Dream. Axial coding will also be done by comparing the categories of each informant's protocol, so that similar themes, as well as differences, can be identified.

#### Grounding the Theory Through Selective Coding

As the conceptual framework develops, the researcher begins to

collect data in a much more selective way, so as to fill in the gaps in the emerging theory. The researcher is then confronted with the task of integrating all the data into a grounded theory.

Simply put, integration of the data involves the identification of a **story**. Again the researcher is guided by questions, such as: What is the central problem about this area of study? What stands out the most? What is at the essence of the phenomenon? To understand the story analytically, the researcher must establish a **story line**, which entails stipulating a **core category**. The core category is the central phenomenon that encompasses the whole story. Once the properties of the core category have been stipulated, the other categories, which are called **subsidiary categories** must be related to it: "The core category must be the sun, standing in orderly systematic relationships to its planets" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.124).

A central task of analysis is to uncover the patterns and relationships that exist between categories and properties of categories. Any statement regarding relationships among the categories must be validated by establishing whether the statement applies to each informant in the study. The researcher must thus continually test the emerging theory with the data that emerges from, in the case of the present research, the interview protocols.

The core category in the present research is the life structure. The subsidiary categories will be all the important categories that emerge from the interviews with all the informants. The periods of the life structure during early adulthood (Early Adult Transition, Entering the Adult World, Age Thirty Transition and Settling Down) will provide the framework for the integration of the theory.

The coding procedures mentioned above do not have to occur in sequence, but can occur at the same time. A framework, however, for the integration of coding procedures into the present study will be presented.

### Framework for Analysis

The framework for the analysis of the data, in the present study, is similar to the framework used in other research concerning the life structure. This framework has been expounded well by Herbert (1989) and involves five stages: Chronicle of marker events; narrative summary; interpretive (developmental) summary, collective analysis and comparative analysis.

#### Stage 1: Chronicle of Marker Events

In this first stage, extensive use will be made of open coding, as already described, to reduce the data to a more manageable form. Observations, insights, questions, and anything of relevance to the life structure will be noted on the left hand margin of each protocol.

The researcher will be especially aware of any important changes in the narrative, that relate to the life structure. This could be a feeling expressed by the informant, a sentence communicated with much emotion, or a comment on a milestone, crisis or turning point in the person's life.

Categories that have specific relevance to the life structure, will be labelled. This includes the Dream (Dr); mentor (Mr), evidence of a relationship with a Special Woman (SW), or evidence of a transition (Tr).

#### Stage 2: Narrative Summary

A narrative summary which is purely descriptive, and describes the evolution of the person's life structure will be written for each informant. This summary will refer to the nature and dates of marker events, such as leaving home, marriage and starting a family, studying, starting the first job, and so on.

### Stage 3: Interpretive (Developmental) Summary

More comprehensive axial coding will be used in this stage, which involves the construction of an interpretive summary of each participant's life.

The theory of the life structure, the major tasks and developmental periods will provide the framework for analysis. Special attention will also be given to concepts such as mentoring, the Dream, and the Special Woman. Questions such as the following will be asked: Is the conclusion supported by the data? Is more data needed to support an interpretation? Are the judgements made concerning the beginning and ending of periods, or the presence or absence of mentoring etc, consistent with the data?

### Stage 4: Collective Analysis

The aim of this stage is to develop a collective theory of the life structure of black men by comparing each participant's protocols, and looking for similarities and differences. Axial and selective coding will be important during this stage.

### Stage 5: Comparative Analysis

The fifth stage will involve a comparative analysis to determine how Levinson's model, and other studies concerning the life structure, apply to the present study. Other theories of adult development which have been reviewed in the first section of this study will also be applied to the analysis.

### **A Brief Personal Statement**

In terms of constructivistic thinking (Guba & Lincoln, 1990; Wrightsman, 1994b), the present researcher must be aware of how his construction of reality, or his life story, influences or effects the informants' construction of reality, or their personal narrative. If the researcher is not aware of this, there is a danger that he might impose his values and biases onto the research process. This issue becomes all

the more compelling when the researcher and the informant are from different cultural backgrounds, as in the present research. Wrenn (1987, p.326), commenting on counselling with other cultures, emphasises this when he says that it is "dangerous thinking for a counsellor (or researcher) . . . . to interpret the world to the client (or informant) from within the counsellor's particular and unique life experience," or "world view" (Raubenheimer, 1987).

A personal statement is needed in order to begin the process of bracketing biases, preconceptions, and any foreunderstanding that the researcher brings into the research process, and which stems from his particular life experience. The foundation for a personal statement should be an awareness of one's own "cultural location" (Bruner, 1990).

My<sup>1</sup> cultural location can best be summed up by the following personal statement: "I am a white, middle class, South African male, who grew up as part of the privileged minority during the era of apartheid." Perhaps because I had the opportunities and privileges that many of the men in Levinson's (1978) study had, my evolving life structure is similar in many ways to his model.

I could use the Early Adult Transition to pursue my Dream at university (like 70 percent of the men in Levinson's study) to enter the "helping profession". After compulsory national service, I could explore options in terms of my career, decide on a specific career path (psychology) and begin creating a stable life structure around this choice. During the Age Thirty Transition, I was able to "work on the flaws in the life structure formed during the previous period" (Levinson, 1978, p.84), which culminated in my marriage, career change and my decision to study further.

In contrast to my life, black South African men grew up on the receiving end of apartheid, and the vast majority did not have the privileges and opportunities that I had. This demands that I should be aware of how opportunities and privileges have impacted upon my development, and how my experience of development could be different to

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<sup>1</sup>As this is a personal statement, pronouns will be used.

the black men's experience of development due to this. This awareness will help guard against assumptions, such as Levinson's (1978), that development is a linear, orderly sequence, which is applicable across cultures.

Bracketing further implies that I should be aware of the values and beliefs that I, as a white South African, have been exposed to, and which have guided my development. This will facilitate the process of understanding the black men in terms of their world views, or their beliefs, norms and values.

On the professional level, I must be aware of the influence that my professional training and exposure to psychology in South Africa has had on my professional world view. In this way, I can counter what Bulhan (1990) refers to as "solipsism", or the belief that European (and American) psychology is the best psychology, and the only way of understanding others.

Psychology in South Africa is grounded in this tradition. I have to bracket the assumptions, implicit in the theoretical views and constructs of these traditions, to avoid imposing my professional view onto the black men.

### Summary

The present study uses a qualitative approach to describe the life structure of black men. This qualitative approach, has its roots in the phenomenological tradition, but includes constructivist thinking and hermeneutic interpretation. This allowed the researcher to co-evolve meanings with the participants, and lay the foundations for the development of a theory based on human narratives. The researcher did, however, endeavour not to allow emerging findings to be contaminated by pre-existing hypotheses or constructs.

Two issues relating to qualitative research were stressed, the role of the researcher and the issue of reliability and validity in qualitative research. The researcher in qualitative research is subjectively and intimately involved in the research process, and as such

has to bracket any biases that could influence the research process. This has special significance for the present research, which involves a white researcher investigating the lives of black men.

The subjective nature of qualitative research has implications for issues of reliability and validity. Qualitative research is concerned with descriptive adequacy and trustworthiness, not objectivity and replication. The present research attempted to meet the criteria for adequacy and trustworthiness, by grounding the findings in the data, in an explicit and transparent manner. The validity of the findings was also increased by working together with the supervisor and co-supervisor, in analysing the data.

The psychobiographical framework, in conjunction with the method of intensive or biographical interviewing, was discussed. The fundamental reason for choosing the biographical interviewing method is that this method has the potential to explore the life structure in a rich, flexible and holistic way. The biographies, or narratives, collected through the process of interviewing, were analysed in accordance with the grounded theory approach. This approach highlights the importance of simultaneously collecting and analysing data. Data is analysed through the process of coding, or developing categories and creating themes.

The chapter concluded with a framework for analysis consisting of five stages (Herbert, 1989). The next section will discuss the findings - using this framework - through a description and analysis of each informant's life structure, and then a comparison and integration of the research findings. The format for the analysis of each informant's life structure will be as follows: First, important **identifying information** and a general **introduction** (including the impact that the informants had on the researcher) will be presented. This will be followed by a **biography**; or narrative summary - according to our framework for analysis - of each informant's life. The interpretive or developmental summary, which is the next stage of analysis according to our framework, will be contained in the **analysis of each informant's life according to Levinson's framework**, and the **synopsis** of major themes that have emerged.

After each individual's evolving life structure has been discussed according to this format, the last two stages of analysis will be implemented, that is the collective and comparative analysis.

Let us now turn our attention to the individual analysis of each informant's evolving life structure.

## THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF C (INFORMANT 1)

"That's what ... brings more frustration than anything: when a man has got initiative and potential, (but) is not given a chance to prove it"

(C, second interview, 12 January 1993)

### Identifying Information

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-1
AGE	36
MARITAL STATUS	Married
CHILDREN	Two
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Two brothers and five sisters
PLACE OF BIRTH	Johannesburg
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Johannesburg
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Matric
OCCUPATION	Clerk

### Introduction

C was introduced to the researcher by a mutual colleague at work. As he was the first informant, there was no specific reason for choosing him, except that he was fluent in English, and (at the age of 36) had negotiated the full era of early adulthood. He was thus deemed an appropriate informant to initiate the process of exploration.

C was interviewed four times during the year. He was interviewed over such a long period in order to fill in gaps that had been identified in his story (these gaps became more evident as other informants were interviewed).

C chose to be interviewed in the researcher's office after working hours. His communication was characterised by a lack of feeling, and he seemed to be evasive when talking about his relationships (often resorting to very general, concrete terms to describe relationship issues). He also gave an impression that he was trying to escape an increasing sense of stagnation in his life.

#### **Biography: The Life of C**

C was born in Johannesburg, but completed most of his preparatory schooling in Transkei. His parents decided to move him to Transkei for two reasons: Firstly, they were scared he was going to become a "delinquent" if he stayed in Johannesburg; secondly, C's father wanted C to help him in Transkei because he was building a kraal there, and spent most of his time there.

He describes this period of his life (up until his matriculation at the age of 20) as a happy, carefree time: "Because all the years of my life, from childhood up to my matric level age, I was just enjoying myself, I had nothing, nobody, no worry, just enjoying myself, just like breathing, breathing air like anything."

Due to his separation from his siblings, he could not form a "close relationship" with them. He also had little contact with his mother during this period. After completing preparatory school, he had to come back to Johannesburg because his father was diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis, and he did not have enough funds to continue with his schooling. He says that this "disturbed me a bit" because he felt that he was "now already established" in the Transkei, and he was "used to the place". He had friends and relatives there, and had accepted his separation from his parents: "I had to go it alone, all by myself, without my parents."

He worked for a year in Johannesburg and then went back to the Transkei after his father managed to obtain a bursary (based on C's academic merit) for C to continue his education. C says "it was fortunate" that he received the bursary, and he "grabbed it up".

He was "ambitious" and "aiming high" in his late teens and was motivated to study at university, and perhaps become a doctor or an engineer. He also met the girl whom he would later marry. He says that at this time (and later in life) he did not have "specifically a particular woman, or a woman of my dream," but he liked her because they were at the same boarding school, and "I could see .... the background of her family, how she behaved, how she respected her family. And from that I could see she was the kind of woman I longed to be a husband to".

He learned that she was pregnant while he was living with his parents in Johannesburg after matriculating, and he was plunged into a deep crisis. He describes this period as the most difficult in his life, a "turning point," a time when "everything changed totally," when he felt as if he was in a "tight corner". The fact that he had just completed school, was unemployed and "dependant upon my parents," added to his feelings of confusion and helplessness.

He describes his girlfriend's pregnancy as "accidental, not a planned thing," suggesting that it had something to do with that "stage" of his life when he was a "teenager or juvenile." He also felt a sense of responsibility towards the child and his girlfriend:

I realised now that to run away from responsibility I'm causing more problems ... so the fact that we were not yet married by then - we were married at a later stage - didn't bother me because I knew that she's my wife, that's all.

In the meantime, C had applied to two universities, and was accepted at the one. He had no "specific course in mind," but had a tentative idea to do "a thing like engineering" although he was doubtful because he was not "that much good in physics". His plan was to obtain career guidance at the university, because he had no guidance at school.

His plans to study at university were put on hold indefinitely and he was overwhelmed with a desire to "run away" from the situation, especially as he was scared to tell his parents about the birth of his baby. He felt particularly guilty in relation to his father: "It so now disrupted the whole thing, you see, bearing in mind that now, look my

father had been pulling so hard to take me to school up to standard ten, now comes this trouble." C experienced the birth of his child at an early age as a "new transition," as he struggled to integrate the responsibility of being a father.

He felt that he had entered "another stage" of his life and he broke away from friendships with old friends as he began to focus more on his girlfriend and child. C's support for his child, at this stage, was mainly material, as his girlfriend only came to Johannesburg four years after the birth of their child.

C's difficult situation was exacerbated by the fact that he was unemployed after matriculating. He describes his experience of unemployment as follows:

Well, you become too nervous, highly sensitive to minor things because now you out of school - I mean what next? And you have to start that routine of now going up and down looking for work. In fact it makes you not relaxed, you don't feel yourself.

This situation was partially eased when C found work, soon after matriculating, at a government department. He drifted into this job by chance or by "luck" and "fortune," as he calls it, after a friend of his father's told him about a vacancy in a government department. His application to this department was transferred to another department and he has remained there ever since.

C was "extremely happy and excited" by his first job, particularly because it helped him to relieve the pressures created by the pregnancy of his girlfriend and it helped him to support his family more: "I was also going to get a cheque at the end of the month and that changed the lifestyle of my family a bit. At least I can say from nought to level one." C had no particular desire to take this specific job, but he took it for the simple reason that he would be receiving a salary at the end of the month. This job conferred upon him a sense of identity and prestige, especially since it was a clerical job - a difficult job for a black man to obtain at that time.

C felt an increasing sense of responsibility towards his family of origin at this stage of his life. Although he had his own child, his main focus was on his parents. He describes his need to help his parents after finding his first job as follows:

In fact, the people whom I concentrated most are my parents. You see, because you know I have, you know we Africans, you can say blacks, we have got this tendency to - if my parents managed to take me to school, even if it's to whatever standard .... I have to be thankful to them.

He further describes his responsibility towards his family at this time as follows: "I now had to bear all the responsibility of seeing to it that now what else can be improved in the home circumstances - just to keep the fire burning."

This sense of responsibility was deepened by the fact that he was not married:

I must give them thanks somehow. I also felt that at least this is the chance of trying to satisfy my parents, because I'm still single, no wife married me. So I've got to see to it that at least they feel relaxed.

He says he was "very comfortable" about giving them money, and that he felt "warm inside because I knew I was doing something which I thought great".

C also felt an increased sense of responsibility towards his brothers:

It only came up to a bit of a problem seriously in 1978 after I matriculated when I started with the Department, so I could see they (his brothers) were playing a lot of truants, and I had to be a bit harsh on them.

His feeling of responsibility emanated from his perception of his brothers as "blindfolded" in that they could not "predict what was ahead of them - in the future".

C spent much of his initial years at work adapting to different kinds of people. He describes these years as "very tough". Communication between black and white people was especially poor at that time and C had to cope with the situation by learning to be tolerant and accepting that he had a very slim chance, as a black man, of being promoted. C only obtained one promotion at the age of 26, which was an "automatic promotion" and meant "nothing" to him. Although he feels it has become easier for black people to obtain promotions since the late 1980s, it is still difficult due to the negative reports that previous supervisors used to write.

One of his first supervisors became a very powerful mentor figure in C's life. The person, Mr W, was "a man I can admire, who made me, in fact, the man whom I am today. He gave me all the basics". The greatest lesson that Mr W taught C was responsibility in his work and tolerance in his interaction with other people, and his influence spread to C's interaction in his social life as well.

Under Mr W's guidance, C began to feel himself maturing: "I think what he was doing was just trying to take out my schoolhood and then to transform me to the manhood, which is now responsibility, as I took it in the long run." If it were not for Mr W, C says, he would have looked for "greener pastures" long ago. He did apply for a transfer to another department in his twenties because there was a chance "of getting advancement in education, and different experience" there. This was refused, and C coped by accepting the situation.

During this period, C saw his girlfriend and child for brief intervals during the year until she came to Johannesburg to start training as a nurse, a few years after the birth of their child (C was nearly 25 at this stage). She stayed at the hospital while C remained with his parents. They continued to live separately even after getting married, and they would see each other on the weekends.

C experienced many frustrations during this period of his life as he was caught up in family conflicts: Jealousy on the part of his mother who felt that he was giving his future wife too much support and attention; the burden of having to take responsibility for his brothers (one of whom was continually jailed); and the frustration of not living with his girlfriend and child. His principal question was, "When will the time come when I will have my own place and just be away from this thing?"

This was a motivating factor in his choice to marry his girlfriend at the age of 26. An even stronger factor guiding his choice was that he felt a strong family and cultural pressure to marry as he had impregnated her:

Because you know we have got this thing in our culture, when you impregnate somebody's daughter, I mean, it's embarrassing, it's a disgrace to just go away, throw your hands away from this thing, because, I mean, you have to take responsibility of it. So I stuck by that rule, you see.

C feels that he would not have married his girlfriend if he had not impregnated her: "I hoped to forget about her because she was just my school days girlfriend, and when I'm away from school I would start a new life .... with new girlfriends." At the same time he developed respect for her because she went against her mother who "didn't like the idea that she must get married to me". This was extremely courageous, explains C, because of a traditional belief that one should obey your parents, and it added impetus to his decision to marry her.

C describes his marriage as a new "transition" and a "new life". He began to reappraise his own life. He felt now he had to apply "stricter measures" towards his friends and his previous carefree lifestyle, with its emphasis on drinking and going to discos, and become more responsible towards his wife and child:

In other words you have to control, a limit of all you activities now, you can't have them as you used to, before you got married, because I mean really that bond now binds you to

concentrate and focus on your family life, not on the outside life as you used to before.

Another aspect of his life that he had to reappraise was the support he was providing to his parents, especially since his brothers were not assisting his parents. The bond between him and his family of origin "weakened dramatically" as he had to "devote myself to my family and pay less attention to my father's family".

Nevertheless, C continued to feel a personal obligation to help his two younger brothers because they were not able to obtain a matric and were unemployed most of the time. He has continued to help them in various ways such as providing them with clothes, and even bailing them out of jail. C describes it as such: "But the fact that they're my brothers, you see, that brings more weight, to the extent that I feel really I have to do it, you see." He feels that he has to "rescue" his brothers and "bail them out of trouble". This he says, "indirectly affects my personal life because I have to pay attention here and there".

The reduction of financial assistance towards his parents resulted in considerable tension between C's mother and his wife, as they both thought that they were being neglected. C felt "caught between" his mother and his wife. He coped with this difficult period in the marriage by playing "a double standard of satisfying them both".

This frustration, coupled with the frustration of not having his wife with him - she was still living at the hospital residence while completing her nursing course - promoted C to succumb to "silly temptation" and have a brief affair with another woman soon after his marriage, which resulted in the birth of a child.

He describes this as follows:

She (his wife) was still there by the college, that's how this illegitimate child came about, because I wasn't staying with her. She was staying there by the college and I was staying with my mother in the location. I'd say, in fact, it was a silly temptation.

Although he felt "very embarrassed" about this event, he coped better with the birth of this child than the previous one because he felt more prepared:

Through the strength that I had .... from the first experience, I said, 'No, I'm going to stand it,' because that's my child, I'm going to support her. I have to clothe her and I have to feed her.

His wife was deeply hurt when she found out about his affair (which she learnt about from other people) but the conflict subsided when C apologised to his wife, explaining that it "accidentally happened," and after apologising "everything came to normal". C felt that "she understood it, and all the temptations surrounding a man's environmental situation. She felt she can forgive me for that".

After his marriage, C began to experience an increasing sense of urgency to move away from his parents' home and family conflicts. He wanted to find a house for his own family, and "go and stand for myself". He had a feeling that "I won't last here" (at home) because there were many family tensions. However, he felt nervous about leaving home because his mother was reluctant to let him go. She even refused to give him a reference so that he could buy a house:

You know, it took me some time before I could even reach that decision, because I could see it was a giant step. It was going to hurt my mother .... but definitely to take that decision was a must. And I could feel, I felt very uneasy about it, but I mean, circumstances forced me to do this, you see.

He waited for his wife to complete her basic training at the hospital, and then he moved into his first house at the age of 28. His house was in "one of those first areas to be proclaimed habitable by (black) people".

Although his mother was hurt by his move, he experienced a sense of exhilaration, freedom and independence when he moved into his own house. He felt as if he was moving into a new phase of his life:

I don't know how to describe it. It was like entering a new life somewhere, that is to be independent now, control things yourself, not having anything to live against. Just making your own decisions ... to be strong enough to do things your own way, without somebody to tell you that 'look like this, do this like this.' You see it was quite adventurous to me, it was quite adventurous to me.

This move represented an attempt by C to establish a home base and deal with the conflict between his mother and his wife, who were both demanding his support: "But making it a point that now there is nowhere where they can collide. Hence, now I took my wife away to establish herself and left my mother there where she is."

In this way C hoped to "balance" the situation, and deal with the conflict brought about "because both these people are important to me, my mother and (my wife)". He was tired of "play(ing) a double standard of satisfying them both".

At the same time, C found this new experience of establishing his own house and living with his own family difficult because it was so different to his previous lifestyle:

You know to start a family is not a small thing, especially in a new house, because now you have to set the rules, the by-laws of the house and what have you, deciding to be strict or not. But I mean, you must live towards certain standards, according to certain rules of the family, so just a formula like that - it was a bit tough for me because I never had it before.

C's wife had just completed her nursing course but was unemployed. Furthermore, C was still contributing to the support of his parents

(although less than before his marriage) which caused further complications:

You know, I no longer now did those things a hundred percent which I used to do before I was married. You see, if I used to buy, let's say ten rands, now we couldn't do it, so I had to buy five or three rands (groceries for his parents).

Nevertheless, after he had completed furnishing his house, nearly two years later, C experienced a sense of relief, "feeling a break," and he began to relax and "breathe" easier.

About two years after this, C and his wife had another daughter. He felt more prepared to deal with the responsibility of parenthood after this planned pregnancy, than he had with his first child. He describes his relationship with his daughter as "so tight, to the extent that she enjoys more company with me than the mother, so that makes me a bit happier".

C still stays in the same house with his wife and four year old child. His eldest daughter is in the middle of her high school education at a school in the Transkei. At present C experiences a sense of there being "no mass satisfaction" in his life because his wife is expecting a child soon and his difficult financial situation will be aggravated when she takes maternity leave. C and his wife decided to have a third child even though they are experiencing financial difficulties: "We just closed our eyes on the financial side" because they both wanted a boy to add to the family. "I'm happy, I'm happy, in fact , I've been waiting for it." They did not want to have another child before as his wife was busy with certain courses.

A prominent feeling that C has at this stage of his life is disappointment: "Disappointed, quite disappointed, let me tell you straightforward," for not reaching the goal he had set himself in his late teens, and for not being "what I longed to be":

I feel that now (disappointment) especially when I see young guys who are nearer by me agewise, they are lawyers now. Some

of them are doctors. I mean that thing brings back that, gee wizz, if a young boy like this can be this, I'll be far by now if really I fulfilled my expectations.

C feels that he has not realised his dream to become a doctor or engineer and feels that he cannot really change the direction of his life:

If I had that belief or that thinking (to be a doctor or engineer) at that age while I was still at school, as I just mentioned, it was what I was expecting, I wished to be. But now my dream didn't really come true, as I said, and now I'm seated on one thing saying, 'Okay, come what may, I'll accept it as it is,' especially now I'm a family man, I'm no longer a bachelor.

At the same time C still has an "intention to improve my academic level". He says, "it was my aim to further my studies directly or indirectly, but that is highly not possible because I have full time employment and I have to support my family."

Most of C's energy and focus is directed towards his family: "My family is the most important thing." His aim for the future is to upgrade his living standards as his family expands. He wants to buy a bigger house and a new car and, perhaps, most importantly, to save enough money to provide his elder daughter with a tertiary education.

He feels that his mother is now "used to" the fact that he is staying away from her. He still helps them financially (for instance he buys food and coal for his parents). His parents still have an influence over his life. This is evident in the way they advised C to send his daughter to a school in the Transkei. He did not agree with them, but felt he could not "go against their will" (although he now feels pleased about the decision). C describes his parents' influence on his decision as follows:

... to a certain extent ... in percentage wise, about 25 percent, they still have influence on me, because, you see,

even now with my work they can make a decision really. Along the lines if we happen to disagree with my wife, I always go to her and say, 'Look, I've got this problem, like this and this, and is it correct if we do it this way?' So I mean just to hear a third person's voice, you see, and then stick to a firm decision after that. So they are always there as my advisors, but not to say they dictate my life, no.

C does have a vague dream about becoming a "businessman" but feels the responsibility of having a family impinges on this. His motive for his wish to be a businessman is not only financial, but also stems from his desire to be "very independent, not relying on anybody, an employer, just to run my affairs smoothly, progressively".

To help alleviate his financial situation, C hopes to begin a part time course in electronics so that he can do occasional work (and perhaps at a later stage leave his present work and do electronic work full-time). The choice to do this course is also a reflection of the dissatisfaction that C feels at his present place of employment.

He describes his present relationship with his wife as "moderate" with "no hopes of getting to the rocks at the moment". He values her financial support "especially with the bringing up of the two kids". At the same time he feels that his wife has "improved my life tremendously, by courage during the times of frustration and downfall," and that she gives him "boldness and more strength". The main fights that they do have are over financial issues, and C feels that they will never divorce because if they do have a problem they discuss it with his in-laws:

We African people, we believe in this thing, your in-laws have got a part, a role to play in your married life, just like ... if let's say she wants a divorce, she can never divorce me without consulting her parents or mother or whatever. And then if there's any, a big problem ... we sit down and discuss it.

He feels that the family support and involvement is a main factor that distinguishes a Christian marriage from a traditional marriage:

Both families are always there to guide you, and always try to make you reconcile whenever there are times of difficulty, unlike this Christian marriage - they go to the marriage officer ... As long as she's more than 21 years, and you yourself are an adult, go there and sign a document that you are now there getting married. The following week if you feel it does not suit you, you got a right to go.

Another recent development in C's life is that his father moved into his house last year. C told him to come and stay there because he felt that he was old and the children who were still at home were giving him "a lot of trouble". C adds that his father plays "the important role of being the head of the family," and his brothers were "disobeying his rules". C asked him to come and stay at his place so that he "can't see these things".

The fact that he has to support his father and provide for his mother increases his financial instability and is a major factor which keeps him from feeling settled down. This is evident in his response to the researcher's question of whether he feels life is "smooth" at the moment: "Not yet, as I said, because I still have my parents, my mother and my father."

A further factor that is draining his finances is that he will need a "heavy load of money" to get his daughter through university in a few years' time. He feels that when the children were young "the responsibility is not that much," but now he feels that "the greater the demand is," including financial demands and boyfriends. This makes him feel that he is getting older: "Now I see her and I can see she's growing - then that thing crops up in my mind - I'm also getting older."

C also misses his daughter who is at school in the Transkei, saying that her absence "drives me crazy, in fact, you see, it drives me crazy". He has contact with her by telephone and letters and sees her during school holidays. His relationship with his younger daughter is so "tight" which helps him to cope with the absence of his eldest daughter from home.

Looking back at his working life, C feels that it has been marked by frustration and stagnation. He has found it difficult to adjust to different supervisors and he has felt disheartened because he has not received a promotion for the last ten years. C asserts that this is because it has been much more difficult for black people to receive a promotion, and often people who have been at the department for much less time than him are promoted above him. This is "acceptable, but painful".

C's sense of stagnation at work is also reflected in the way in which his supervisors "limit your scope of ability" and "your scope of action". He feels that he cannot realise his potential at work: "That's what I mean, in fact, which brings more frustration than anything: "When a man, he's got initiative and the potential, and when he's not given a chance to prove it."

He has coped with the frustration by learning how to compromise or to "adjust," "exercise tolerance" and "use a lot of tact". He did not even find an outlet in the social relationships at work because "we have got different tastes, you see. The only thing that binds us is the work".

It is not surprising that he now sees work as being there "just to keep myself busy" and as a means to obtain a salary. He often feels that he is employed at the wrong place. He feels this at such times as when he is travelling in the taxi, and listening to the other people talk fondly about their day at work. Incidents like his supervisor recently writing negative comments about him have exacerbated the situation. There has also recently been a "reshuffling" at work which has resulted in C having to do the same work that he was doing soon after joining the organisation.

His dissatisfaction at work affects him both "physically" and "socially;" as it is evident in the affect that it has on his home life:

At home, I mean a family doesn't expect you coming home weary, tired, what have you. They expect, I mean, love, fatherly love, what have you - but only to find that you can't give it to them as they deserve it, because of all these problems.

He feels so drained from work that he has to "force the communication" with his family, "in other words, you pretend".

He currently feels that "there is a certain deterioration in the standard of living" due to limited financial resources, and if it were not for his wife working "my family life would be in tatters".

He is proud that he owns a house: "I started having a house, that is a home for my family, so that I've achieved already," but he would still like to have a car "before I die".

There is still some tension between his wife and his parents, and he would like them to be closer:

They must learn to know that your wife is part and parcel of that family. And your wife must understand that family - I am from there - can't divorce your family. You are from that family, so just to learn to live together.

He still feels responsibility towards his brothers, especially his brother in jail - "it boils back to me".

Looking back at his life, C does not feel that he has changed, but rather that circumstances have changed: "I wouldn't say that I have changed personally, but what I would say is that circumstances have changed. I personally haven't changed, but the circumstances changed from that time compared to now."

He is unable to specify what the specific changes were: "I can't say specifically what it is really. I'm unable to identify it. But I just assume, due to the change in times, circumstances also change. I'll just put it that way."

In response to the researcher's question concerning whether he believes that he is a similar person to what he was in his early adult years, he replied: "I still believe so because what I used to think then - though it didn't materialise - I still think it now. I still have that thing in mind."

"That thing" means his needs "to upgrade myself" by "going back to class" or studying further. He realises, however, that "dream didn't really come true" and now he is "just seated in one thing saying, okay, come what may, I'll accept it as it is".

He perceives himself as getting older, not because of an inner feeling of ageing, but because those around him - and especially his daughter - are maturing. This is evident in his response to the researcher's questions concerning whether he felt that he was getting older:

Not yet as a feeling .... but now relatively speaking, as I've just mentioned about my daughter - I see her and I can see she's growing, then that thing crops up in my mind: I'm also getting older - not necessary that I have that feeling in me.

Lastly, he finds it difficult to describe himself at this point in time. In response to the researcher's question to that effect, he replied: "I'm sorry I'm unable to answer that question," and "I'm unable to describe myself."

### **Analysis of C's Life According to Levinson's Framework**

#### Pre-Adult Years

It is evident that an outstanding feature of C's preadult years is the significant impact of external factors upon his early development. He had to leave his nuclear family during early childhood so that he could go and help maintain his father's kraal. This resulted in him not forming a "close relationship" with his siblings during these years, while friends and extended family played an important role in his life during that time. Poverty and his father's sickness also resulted in him having to discontinue school and go back to his family in Johannesburg. He found this "disturbing" because he felt that he had already established himself in the Transkei. Furthermore, the bursary which his father obtained for him to study further was also a chance factor (he describes it as "fortunate") which helped him to continue with his schooling.

It is apparent from C's words (referring to his parents) that he perceived there to be little control over important events and circumstances during his pre-adult years. He says they "took me over to that side" (Transkei), and "they changed me to this side" (when he came back to Johannesburg). This sense of being at the control of external factors is apparent in other instances during the evolution of C's life structure as shall become clear during this analysis.

Separation from his family also produced in C a feeling of self-reliance ("go it alone"). C experienced a lack of concern and attachment during these years ("I had nothing, nobody, no worry") and a sense of freedom ("breathing air like anything") which came to a sudden end at the beginning of the EAT.

#### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

C did begin work on certain aspects of the tasks of exploration and leaving the pre-adult world as proposed by Levinson (1978), but these tasks were complicated by a number of factors.

This transitional period was marked by a deep crisis, precipitated by his girlfriend's pregnancy. This was a transitional period in the sense that his life structure drastically changed as the freedom of his youth disappeared and the responsibility of fathering a child surfaced. C perceived there to be little control over this "accidental event" (it was "not a planned thing") and this period was predominated by a feeling of helplessness and wanting to flee from the situation. He was far away from his girlfriend and child, still dependant on his parents, and unemployed, which increased his sense of anxiety and restlessness.

The process of transition and leaving the pre-adult world is evident in C's description of this period as a "new stage," a "new transition," and a "turning point;" and him having to leave the friendships and freedom of youth behind him in order to deal with adult responsibilities (fatherhood).

C's attempt at initiating early adulthood, which is a fundamental task of this period, is evident in his description of himself as "ambitious" during this period, his desire to study further and his registration at a university - like the majority of the men in Levinson's (1978) study. However, external circumstances (his girlfriend's pregnancy) resulted in him not being able to live out this desire as he had to find a job in order to support his child. His "self-definition as an adult" (Levinson, 1978, p.75) was characterised by his struggle to integrate the responsibility of being a father, and his attempt to deal with inner conflict stemming from his desire to "run away" from the situation.

External circumstances also played a pivotal role in the initial formation of C's career. He describes the acquisition of his first job as "luck" and "fortune". He took the job more out of financial need than motivation for that specific job. While the job conferred upon C a feeling of prestige, self-worth and independence, which were all important issues for him at this stage of his life, he also felt stifled due to racism and discrimination (stemming, for instance, from the tense relationship between white and black staff and the lack of promotion opportunities because he was black). He coped with this situation by accepting it, or adopting a passive "tolerance" of his situation - a pattern of coping that would be evident throughout the formation of his life structure.

C's first job meant taking on more responsibility through supporting his parents and his brothers financially. Thus, at a time when a man "must remove the family from the centre of his life and begin a process of change that will lead to a new home base for living" (Levinson 1978, p.75), C continued to stay with his parents and they became the people on whom he "concentrated most". C's desire to help his parents arose not only from their poverty, but also from personal and traditional expectations that he should show gratitude to his parents for helping him through school. The importance of these traditional expectations is visible in his "warm and comfortable" feeling about helping his parents.

Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creating a stable life structure)

Internally, C's desire for "stability and order, for roots" (Levinson, 1978, p.79) manifested in an increasing sense of urgency to establish an independent home base, especially after his marriage. This urgency is reflected in the question: "When will the time come when I will have my own place, and just be away from this thing?" coupled with his strong need to "stand for myself".

C's marriage inspired a transition (which he describes as a "new transition" and a "new life"). A guiding force in his decision to marry was the cultural expectation that a man must marry a woman if he impregnates her. He began to reevaluate his relationships with his family of origin and his previous "carefree" life style as he searched for a more stable life structure which revolved around his own family.

The task of creating a stable life structure, however, was inhibited by a number of factors including the frustration he experienced from being separated from his girlfriend and child during most of this period (and even for a time after they married, which partly instigated him to have an affair). Linked to this was the frustration and turmoil that he felt concerning the feelings of responsibility (mainly financial) he experienced towards his family of origin, on the one hand, and his own family on the other. There was also the conflict between his mother and his wife as well as his mother's reluctance to "let him go". C coped with the conflict between his parents and his wife in a passive way by "playing a double standard," and attempting to satisfy them both.

In terms of the task of exploration, which is fundamental to this period, it is important to note the lack of exploration in relation to the formation of C's marriage during this period. C had little time to explore possible marital relationships because he was, to a certain extent, pressurised (due to cultural constraints and his own feelings of responsibility) to marry his girlfriend, who he had unintentionally impregnated, shortly before the EAT. C's extra-marital relationship, soon after marriage can be seen as an attempt to explore other options, but resulted in further financial instability as he had to help to support

the child that resulted from this affair. C's explanation for having an affair (to his wife), again emanated from external circumstances (it "accidentally happened" as a result of "temptations surrounding a man's environmental situation".)

There was also very little exploration in terms of C's occupational development. Upward mobility was extremely limited, and he had to devote considerable energy to adapting to different supervisors and dealing with his white colleagues. The promotion that he did obtain during this period was an automatic promotion which made very little difference to the situation. Exploration is evident in his attempt to be transferred to another section in order to gain more experience, and possibly to study further, but this was denied him. C, again, passively accepted this situation by (according to his perception) adapting to it and not actively exploring other options.

C's acquisition of his own property represents the culmination of this period.

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

The main theme of this period was the conflict arising from C's feeling of "being caught between" his family of origin, and their demand for his attention and support, and his own family. After struggling with a decision for a long time, he took a "giant step" - even though he knew that it would hurt his mother - and moved into his first house. Again, C ascribes the root of important decisions in his life to external factors: "Circumstances forced me to do this" (to move away).

The transitional nature of this period is reflected in his description of it as a "new life". He experienced for the first time a sense of independence and control over his life ("to be independent now, control things yourself .... just making your own decisions"). He also had to decide on "standards" and "certain rules of the family," which he found "tough". Furthermore, the fact that he was still helping to support his parents, and his wife was unemployed, complicated the transition.

C's need for independence, separation, and to move out of the family home, thus represents his attempt to "work on the flaws in the life structure formed during the previous period, and to create the basis for a more satisfactory structure that will be built in the following period" (Levinson, 1978, p.84). In this regard it is interesting to note that the issues C had to consider during this period - that is separation from his family of origin and establishing independence - are issues more integral to previous periods in the evolution of the life structure according to Levinson's framework.

#### Settling Down (SD)

(To establish one's niche in society  
and to work at advancement)

It is clear that C's family life has become the central aspect of his life structure during the SD period - that it is "the most important thing," and that it provides the anchor of the SD period. This is evident in his need to upgrade his living standards for his family and his aim to save enough money for his daughter's tertiary education. His wife has also become a strong and supportive figure in his life, giving him courage to deal with his work stress. The need to "deepen his roots" (Levinson, 1978, p.140) in his family takes precedence over financial concerns, as is reflected in the couple's decision to have a baby even though they lack the finances.

Lack of finances has been an issue throughout the SD period. It causes tension between him and his wife, makes him anxious about the birth of his baby and the financial responsibility of his children's education. His feelings of instability have also increased because his father has moved into his house, and he still helps to support his mother and brothers. Thus, even during the SD period, C has a continuing commitment to his family of origin. (For instance it was his request for his father to come and stay with him).

C has devoted little energy to the task of working at advancement, which is so integral to this period. He has not received a promotion since his only promotion during the EAT, and there seems to be little prospect of promotion as he has received negative feedback from his

supervisor. Furthermore, he is still frustrated with his work and is doing similar work to that which he was doing when he joined the organisation. He feels that his "initiative" is not valued at work, and he is not given a chance to show his "potential". C describes his way of dealing with such discrimination at work as one of acceptance and "tolerance". He perceives himself as being different to his white colleagues: "We have got different tastes ... the only thing that binds us is work." In this context there is little probability that C will experience the BOOM (Becoming One's Own Man) phase which was common to the men in Levinson's study. There is also no indication that he has created a strong enough foundation to climb the "ladder" of success (Levinson, 1978, p.141).

C's SD period is marked by an element of failure. It would seem in response to the question, "Have I succeeded or failed?" (Newton, 1983, p.447) which is integral to this period, C feels that he has failed. He is disappointed with himself for not being able to reach the dreams he set early in adulthood, and for not being able to be "what I longed to be". Moreover, the theme of coping by acceptance is again visible in his words, "Okay, come what may, I'll accept it as it is."

At the same time C has still managed to maintain a vague ambition to become a "businessman" or to study further (electronics) during the SD. He sees a slim chance of realising these goals, due to external circumstances (family obligations and financial constraints). His goals are also linked to material concerns (to have a car and a bigger house).

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### Forming and Living out the Dream

During his EAT, C was only able to form a vague Dream concerning a future occupation. His Dream was put on hold during the EAT due to lack of finances coupled with the unexpected pregnancy of his girlfriend. C was thus not able to live out any form of his Dream.

In the later part of the Novice Phase, his Dream revolved around much more material, practical concerns such as improving his standard of

living and buying a car "before I die". A main element of the later part of the SD period is the disappointment he felt in himself for not being able to live out his Dream. He still maintained traces of a Dream (to go into business and to further his education) but he accepted there was very little chance of living out this Dream due to family and financial obligations.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

C was able to form a mentoring relationship at work with an older white man. This person fulfilled the important characteristics of a mentor as he was somebody who C admired and respected and was therefore able to exercise influence over C's work life and his personal life.

#### Forming an Occupation

C began his first job not because of his desire to work in that field, nor due to guidance from others (he complained that he had not received any vocational guidance at school), but because of chance factors (his uncle told him about the job vacancy), and economic need. C was never able to follow his chosen path to study further.

C's job gave him a sense of prestige (as it was difficult for a black man to obtain a clerical position in those times), and it meant a great deal to him in terms of financial status. However, his job resulted in him having to take more responsibility for his family financially (note that while this was a strain on C, he felt "comfortable" in helping to support his parents).

C experienced difficulties in relation to his career during the Novice Phase. This stemmed from C being a black man in a white culture. Thus C devoted much energy at the beginning of his career, and indeed throughout his occupational development, to adapting to his white colleagues and dealing with discrimination, which he felt prevented him from climbing the job ladder. C's working life has been marked by frustration, stagnation and limited expansion (he has remained in one job over the life span). Furthermore, for C, now in the SD period of his development, there seems to be little chance of drastic change in his

career path, due to family obligations and lack of financial resources, which prevents him (according to his perception) from studying further.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

Levinson (1978, p.107) asserts that if a man marries during the EAT, "courtship and marital choice are likely to be heavily bound up with the tasks of the EAT, and especially with his efforts to separate from his parents". Although C married a little later, during the EAW period, Levinson's assertion is applicable to C because the responsibility of commitment was thrust upon him during the EAT, and he thought of himself as being married.

A central struggle that C had during most of the Novice Phase (and even the SD period) was the struggle which C experienced between the commitment that he felt towards his family of origin and his family of procreation. This struggle revolved around financial support - the need to support his parents and brothers juxtaposed with the need to support his own family and establish a home base.

While C's family of origin would remain important throughout the life span, his own family became an increasing central component of his life structure during early adulthood. His need to expand his family even took precedence over limited financial resources.

On the other hand, his continuing commitment to his family of origin is visible by his recent request for his father to move in with C's family. C's respect for his father is evident in his description of his father as having "the important role of being the head of the family," and his need to protect his father from "trouble" that his brothers might cause.

#### **Synopsis**

There is some evidence that C devoted energy towards the tasks during the different periods (especially in terms of the internal aspects of his life structure). The negotiation of these tasks, however, was complicated by a number of factors stemming, for instance, from C's

perception of external events, his characteristic way of coping with these events, and the role of cultural and traditional factors.

C's perception of external events, as well as his pattern of coping with these events, is of particular relevance to the evolution of his life structure. This includes C's perception of being at the control of external circumstances, coupled with his experience of helplessness. The "disturbing" effect of having to leave school during the pre-adult years (chiefly because of poverty) is evidence of this. Moreover, C did have a desire (like most of the men in Levinson's (1978) study) to initiate early adulthood during the EAT by studying further. However, he perceived external circumstances (his girlfriend's unplanned pregnancy and financial strain) as preventing him from realising this aspiration. He experienced, instead, a profound sense of helplessness. He also comprehended external factors, such as "luck" and "fortune," as the guiding forces in the acquisition of his first job. During the later periods of early adulthood, C did form some general goals (for instance, to further his studies and start his own business), but again he perceived external factors (financial strain and family commitments) as thwarting his efforts.

C even ascribed the reason for having an affair during the EAW to external factors, or to his "environmental situation". Similarly, he describes his motive for the important task of separating from his family to external circumstances: "Circumstances forced me to do this" (i.e. to move away from home). Even his perception of developmental change is linked to external circumstances: "I wouldn't say that I have changed personally, but what I would say is that circumstances have changed."

Negotiation of the fundamental tasks of the EAW was also impeded by external barriers, such as his financial obligation towards his parents and his own family, his separation from his girlfriend and child, and the discrimination and stagnation he experienced in his work environment. Similarly, C perceived lack of finances and lack of opportunity (for a black man to be promoted) as obstacles in the way of realising his goals during the SD period.

He also coped with the discrimination at work by accepting it, or exercising a passive "tolerance" and "tact". In a sense he has negated his needs by learning to "adjust," and accepting his slim chance of promotion. C coped with the conflict between his parents and his family by "playing a double standard" of satisfying them both. His style of acceptance is perhaps best summed up in his words during the SD period: "Okay, come what may, I'll accept it as it is."

Traditional and cultural factors also influenced the evolution of C's life structure. His separation from his nuclear family during his childhood to help his father maintain his kraal, illustrates the importance of traditional life. This move fostered in C a feeling that he would have to "go it alone," and it had a direct impact on his family relationships.

The important task of separating from the family of origin was influenced by C's traditional beliefs. His desire to support them financially was linked to the tradition that he should show his parents gratitude. The tension that this produced between his mother and his wife, as well as his own needs, occupied a central aspect of his life structure. He eventually dealt with this tension by choosing to devote his energy and commitment to his own family, while still maintaining ties with his family of origin.

His family of origin would remain an important aspect of C's life structure throughout his development. This is evident, for instance, in the influence they have on important decisions (such as the decision to send his daughter to schooling the Transkei), and the financial assistance he has given his brothers. His recent decision for his father to stay with him and his family, is also linked to his traditional belief that his father should be respected.

C's marriage was also influenced by the strong traditional pressure that a man should marry a woman if he impregnates her. So strong was this pressure (according to his perception) that he felt that he would not have married her if there was not this expectation. C also points to the important role that his parents-in-law have played in his

marriage, due to a traditional belief, respecting the role of parents-in-law.

Lastly, with regards to the major tasks of the Novice Phase, the following point should be highlighted. C was able to form a vague Dream, but was not able to live it out. His SD period was characterised by disappointment in himself because of this. He was able to form a mentoring relationship at work (with a white person). The formation of his career was characterised by frustration and stagnation, and the task of forming his own family was complicated by the responsibility and commitment he felt towards his family of origin.

**THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF F  
(INFORMANT 2)**

"We Zulus believe in that thing ... a man must prove that (he is) a man ...."

(F, second interview, 2 June 1993)

**Identifying Information**

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-2
AGE	31
MARITAL STATUS	Married
CHILDREN	Three (one illegitimate)
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Father deceased; seven siblings
PLACE OF BIRTH	Johannesburg
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Johannesburg
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Matric
OCCUPATION	Clerical/Administrative (unemployed at present)

**Introduction**

F was located through a colleague of the researcher. He was interviewed twice over a period of four weeks, in the researcher's office. A few appointments had to be made for the second interview because he did not arrive on the scheduled dates. Although an appointment was made for the third interview, F did not arrive. Subsequent attempts to contact him, over the next year, proved futile.

This was surprising because F had given the impression that he was really willing and involved with the interview process. It was also frustrating because the interviews with F had provided such rich and

valuable information concerning, for instance, the impact of the family and traditional beliefs on the evolution of the life structure.

The interviews with F were very exciting and stimulating. He seemed to represent two worlds. On the one hand he appeared very urban and "Westernised" in his appearance and in his general style of interaction. On the other hand, he spoke often and convincingly about his traditional world and beliefs.

### **Biography: The Life of F**

The first milestone that F remembers was when his father left home when F was 11 years old. He did not ask his mother why his father had left and she did not tell him until he insisted in 1986 (when he was 28 years old). It seems that his father left the family because he disagreed with F's mother over the issue of schooling. His father, who was from the rural area of Natal, wanted to take the children back to Natal to be schooled there because he believed "when you rear a boy in Johannesburg you become a 'thug'" and he wanted his sons to be "raised like him", working with livestock.

He says that from this time "life changed", and he describes his childhood and youth as the "hard years". Life, he says, was "a bit rough at that time", adding that "I was not happy then. Like I told you before, I don't want to be 18 - 18 is a bad age".

In order to survive, his mother sold liquor and earned the name of "shebeen queen". He remembers, from this time, fights between "gangsters" over girlfriends and his friends becoming involved in drugs and theft and being killed: "I had a lot of friends at the age of 18 who died at that age - some were robbers, some did rape, they went to prison, to jail, some were stealing cars ..."

He also felt a sense of freedom at this stage; a feeling that "because you are young you feel you can do anything you want". It seems that this feeling was influenced by the fact that his father left him at an early age: "Before, when I was 18, I didn't care about what happened because I know my father left me when I was 11 - at 18 I never think of

even though he was very "involved" with the church before this: "I did everything in the church until I was 16, then after 17, started having girlfriends, didn't have time for that." He spent most of his time "running around with girls, buying drinks with friends, going out", and at the age of 17 (while in standard eight), he contracted a venereal disease.

F found it frustrating staying at home during this period (and indeed until he married) because there was no space (the single room house was shared by his mother, his step father, his brothers and his sisters). There was such a shortage of space in the small house that the children had to wait outside if their mother washed herself. F had to sleep on the floor because there was only one bed, and if he had a bed "the house would become too small". F was working and could afford to buy things, but, he says, "if I wanted to buy something for myself there was no place to keep those things".

F's main complaint at this stage of his life was that, "I didn't have my own privacy". This need was accentuated when he met his girlfriend at the age of 21. He describes this feeling as follows:

I need time to speak, to talk to her. In my house there was no privacy because it's only a one-roomed house and we are four at home. It would be nice talking the whole night (but) sometimes I go to the movies, I have to take her back home. And my friends that time were having their places - they go to the movies and they sleep together - for me it was a problem.

He had to "beg" his friends to use their flat for two hours so he could have sex with her. The pregnancy of his girlfriend resulted in some change in his life and his first commitment to a full-time job: "And when I was 20 or 21 my girlfriend got pregnant, so from 22 then I changed a little bit and by the age of 22, I started working at 22". Before this he had been doing part-time work.

At the age of 22, F was "blessed" with the birth of a baby boy. Less than a year later the couple gave birth to another baby boy. This

desire to have children was a wish and plan that he had from an early age: "From the age of 18 I wanted to be a father at the age of 19 actually, so that I can raise my children while I'm still young - it was my plan". He adds that, "I always dreamed I wanted to have four children, four or five."

The desire to have children followed from his need to discard his "playboy" image that he had at school, find a steady girlfriend and then have children:

I just wished to be a father - actually I like children, so at that time I said, 'now it's time'. In fact, I was having many girlfriends at the age of 17. Even at school I was called the "playboy" but now at 19, I said, 'No, it's time, I must get a steady girlfriend and I want to be a father'. That was my wish.

F's desire to have children was also the result of being told by the doctor when he contracted the recurrent venereal disease at the age of 17 that he might be "barren" by the age of 28. This, he says, "shocked" him and,

I said let me leave these things - let me start a family, maybe at the age of 25 I'll be barren, I won't have any children. So that is why I started having children, and I planned with my girlfriend, we talked about it. I convinced her, and we had children.

He felt "happy, very happy", and said, "Thank God, at least I've got a child ... I'm going to be happy, so it changed my life". His happiness was related to his wish to prove something to his father by having many children: "I wanted to prove myself okay. I can raise my family - I want to be like my father".

His desire to prove himself, and his ambivalence as to whether he wanted to be like his father or not, is also reflected in his following words:

Ja, during that time when I had my two sons ... my African name - I am Bhekuyise, and that means 'take care of your father'. Anything that your father do you have to follow him. So I was proving myself that time. Because my father left me, I said, 'No, I'm having my child, I want to stay with my children, give them that love'. That thing kept me going with my marriage - having the belief I want to raise my children, I don't want to be like my father.

After the birth of his second child, when F was 23 years old, he decided to go, on his step-father's advice, to look for his biological father, so as to get his blessings: "In our customs we believe sometimes (that if you) get a baby boy then you have to see your father". Before this time he had felt bitter towards his father for leaving him. This bitterness is reflected by the fact that he changed his customary name of Bhekuyise to F. He says that the name Bhekuyise was a "curse to me" because his father had left him.

F's awareness of his role as a father at this time also made him more aware of the fact that his father did not bring him up: "I was a father at that time, thinking okay, I'm the father of this kid, so what about me, I want to know my father."

This need to find his father was very different to what he felt during his youth: "At 18 I never thought (about my) father but after that age, after I was 25 I said 'I've got a father'. I even asked my mother what must I do? Where can I find my father? So it changed me a lot".

When he met his father, after not seeing him for about 11 years, he "accepted him as my father" and visited him thereafter, annually. His father explained to F the reason that he left the family when F was still young and F felt "happy, because I've even forgiven my father". His sense of stability after reuniting with his father is reflected in the following words:

It was a happy day (when) I met my father. Then life changed. At home everything for once went well, even my job, I was

doing good at work. And in 1987 I bought a flat, and I'm now staying with my wife.

F felt that life "changed" because he decided to marry. He paid labola for two years, "knowing that it is customary", and then got legally married at the age of 24. He advances a number of reasons for getting married at this stage of his life. He says that he loved his girlfriend and it was his "destination" to marry her. The couple also decided that because they had two children, they should get married. They also found that, "life was a bit difficult" as they were staying apart from each other, with their own families. F also decided to marry for the financial reason of paying less tax once married.

The birth of his second child also fuelled his desire to marry:

Then I was 22 after my girlfriend got a baby. After maybe another 12 months she was pregnant again. So I didn't have a chance. So I changed even more. I said, 'Okay, I'm expecting a second baby'. So then I became a father. I said, 'No, let me pay labola for my girlfriend, let me do that'. That changed my life.

F's marriage had a profound effect on him. He felt a sense of exhilaration and freedom. "Life changed for me when I got married", he says, because "everything was possible for me to do", and "I was capable of doing anything I wanted to do then - having my wife". This was linked to his feeling of being more independent, because most of the time before this he was "still depending on my parents. So it changed after I got married, having a place of my own".

His excitement about moving into his own place soon after marriage is reflected in his following words:

I won't forget that day - it was joy ... (I) even threw a party that night - the first time they gave me the key, I called all my friends and we threw a party. From 1985 I'd been staying with my family and my wife staying on the other side - so it was four years, so I was so happy.

These four years that F lived separately from his wife included the two years after marriage. F had not yet found a place which he could buy, so they continued to stay with their own families, initially after their marriage. This caused considerable tension between the couple: "Separated ... and we were having troubles, fighting sometimes I came late to see her - she ask me where were you yesterday, that sort of thing. All my problems were solved then" (when he bought his flat).

He also felt more of an adult after moving into his own place:

Ja, I wanted to be on my own. I've tried many places. I tried to lodge in a house, to share a house maybe, and then in a backyard, but I was unlucky - I tried for four years until I got a flat. I was not independent. I felt more - I don't know how to put it - because sometimes if I'm with my friend, maybe at a party, maybe it's 12 'o clock, it's late, I have to knock on the door, then my mother would be shouting. And at that time I was working. I had two sons but I was still a child at home. That is why, when I got that place where I'm staying now, I felt happy, life changed because I had privacy and I was now independent.

He could buy things that he wanted to and enjoyed, for the first time, sleeping on a bed. He became more actively involved with his children and enjoyed "watching my children playing - things changed, many things changed - and I was able to raise my children".

Getting married and buying his own property gave F a sense of rootedness. Before he got married, F explains, he felt like a "spent tree", spending money and buying drinks with friends. After getting married he felt he was "now having a responsibility" as he had a flat which he had to furnish.

It was at this time that F registered for a diploma in stock management at a private college. He says that during his high school days he did not perform well academically because he never had time to study and he was "busy with girls", but "when I got married, I decided to do a course and I coped with it".

Not long after getting married, F had an affair which resulted in the birth of a boy. His reason for having an affair is vague: "You know we men, sometimes we want to have, you know, like friends, sometimes want to go out. You don't want to take your wife out, you must have a mistress, that is why."

Soon after they moved in together, F and his wife began to experience much tension, and had many quarrels. These quarrels often resulted in his wife moving out and going to stay with her mother for periods of up to a week. F ascribes the tension in their marriage to the change in his wife's attitude once she found a job: "Before, I was the provider, then she got a job - after that she had a big mouth." They fought mainly over "money mismanagement". He describes his wife as being obstinate at this stage, saying she "refused to do anything I asked - that is why I started having an affair".

His wife discovered that F was having an affair after somebody saw him carrying a child (who was 20 months old). F explained to his wife that he had not told her that he was having an affair because he did not want to hurt her. They still sometimes have fights over the fact that F had an affair, and if the situation becomes too tense, he calls in his uncle to help them sort out their difficulties.

F has terminated the affair and now looks upon it as a "mistake": "No, it's unfair because I've got my wife, she (his girlfriend) must have somebody for herself, but coming to see her it's going to frustrate her." He says, however, that he still feels something for her and he still speaks to her on the phone and sometimes arranges to meet her. He also sees his three year old child from this affair and gives money to the child's mother if he has. She understands that he is unemployed and does not demand much of him.

F worked in the same company for five years (from the age of 23) as an administrative clerk. This company, a major transport company, employed mainly black people. The supervisors and managers, however, were mainly white. He had to deal with a considerable amount of racism during this period. One particular person used to make racialistic jokes which had the following effect on him: "I feel angry, but I know he's

stupid. If you argue with him the people will not even take notice. Sometimes it's okay, sometimes it's bad".

At work there was somebody F respected and who had considerable influence over F. This man, a Mr R, who F describes as a "special person" was a manager at work. He was an Afrikaans person who was the same age as F. F describes Mr R as "my friend at work", adding that "he was a good somebody for me, I always talked things out with him, even my problems".

When F thought he was being underpaid, Mr R looked into it for him and rectified the situation. F says that Mr R "always gave me guidance", such as discouraging him from smoking. F was able to break racial barriers with Mr R: "I didn't look at him like a white man, I take him as a person."

F left his job when he was 28. He asked for a retrenchment because his work was "routine" and he wanted to get a job which held more of a "challenge". Furthermore, his job held little chance for promotion and limited financial benefits.

He also felt that he was being deliberately blocked from promotion. He was efficient at his work and his workshop manager depended on him. He felt that it would, therefore, benefit the company to keep him there. A more junior staff member was promoted to a position above F. This situation was exacerbated by F's perception that white workers with lower qualifications than him were getting higher salaries (even though most of the staff at the company were black).

The transport company that F worked for was also experiencing financial problems, because the public was making use of alternative transport, and it closed down soon after F left. Being unemployed has had a stressful impact on F. It has filled him with a sense of purposelessness and vulnerability and has affected his marital relationship:

To wake up and do nothing the whole day - ay! It's so stressing and maybe the wife's complaining. If you not

working she thinks you roam around in the location, meet some girls ... many problems at home. Ja, if you not working you become tempted because I've got friends - maybe a friend of mine said, 'Okay, let's go and steal a car', you see a lot of temptations when you don't work.

He is preoccupied with the issue of being unemployed: "See if you don't work your mind is working fast, you just think of your business, you don't mind other people's business," and, "I'm fighting unemployment now ... I'm trying a lot of means to overcome that". The "means" that he is "trying", includes occasionally selling shirts and resorting to selling liquor to friends. He feels uncomfortable but compelled to sell liquor: "I don't enjoy it ... circumstances you see, I'm forced to sell liquor" so "I can raise my family". He says: "My house is now a shebeen - it's no longer a home".

Unemployment has increased the fights with his wife over the mismanagement of money and he feels "very bad" that she has to work while he is unemployed. At the same time he feels he receives much support from his wife and mentions twice that he feels that she is "behind" him.

Finding a job is of prime importance in F's life at the moment. "I'm praying everyday to get a job." He is driven by this aim: "That day, if I can get a job - I don't give up hope," and "so I believe that this year I have to get a job, I have an urgent feeling". With money, he says, everything will be "easier", and he'll even be able to open an investment account like he used to have. He adds, "I think all my dreams will come true if I get a job."

The period following his unemployment was a traumatic period for F - he left his job, his father passed away and his son was involved in an accident. In response to the question: "When was your life the most hard, the most difficult?", he replied:

Two years ago ... last year, after I lost my father, like I told you, that was the worst part, I had a lot of frustrations. It was 1991, 1992, my life was too difficult. I even gave up food because everything was happening. I lost

my job, my father passed away, my child was knocked down by cars, things like that.

Although his child was not seriously injured, F felt that something strange was happening in his life during this period and he began to have "bad dreams". He complained to his mother that "something's happening to me - I don't know what's happening". His mother advised him to slaughter a goat but he decided he must first contact his father. It was then that he was told that his father had passed away.

Soon after this, his father's wife organised the slaughtering of a cow so that F could talk to his ancestors and they could "give us luck, guide us and things like that". F also reestablished contact with his sister whom he hadn't seen for over 20 years and his younger brother moved into F's house (F's father had many wives and this son was the child of his other wife). After this, and the slaughtering of the cow, F began to feel "better" about his life:

My father, before he died, he told my mother that I must take my brother and raise him in Johannesburg, take him to school. So that is why something changed - I was feeling better now having my brother this side. And I first met my sister. So things changed, I felt better now, secure of having an elder sister (because) I never saw my sister for 20 years.

Besides acquiring a job, the most important aspect of his life at the moment seems to be his family. He says he is very close to his wife and children and that, "everything I do I do it for my family". His desire at the moment is to be able to "raise my children", let them have a good education (at a "white" school) and move into a "new house" with a "garden and flowers", and buy a car. "That's all I want", he says. The realisation of these desires, he feels, is being prevented by the fact that he is unemployed and, "life now is too expensive". The lack of money is preventing him from having another child. Nonetheless, he has recently discussed with his wife the possibility of having another child. She is reluctant because he has another child with another woman.

His desire to have a big family is influenced by the image he has of his father. He feels that he has to prove himself: "Like my father, we are eight (children) so I wanted to have twelve - more than my father had. Ja, that is my dream". His marriage, and the raising of his children, is so important to him now, he says, because he does not want to be like his father, who left the family when he was a child.

His desire to have two wives at the moment has also been influenced by his image of his father, who had more than one wife. Again, this wish has been obstructed by financial constraints. "I always dream about that, you see, my father had seven wives, and I wanted to have two wives, but now during those years life was a bit easier; but now things changed, but that thing is still in me - if I can have more money." He also has an ambition to start a small business: "Not a very big business, a very small business, a one-man concern."

He feels that if he has money, his life will improve:

It will change, because having money everything is possible, and maybe I'll buy a new lounge suite for a house. I've got many things that I want. I'll have an account at the bank like before I used to have an investment in the bank, maybe I'll start again.

At the same time F does not want to be rich, he just wants to be able to live more comfortably:

That's all I dream about. I don't want to be rich, I just want enough money to afford, that's all. Because being rich I think it's going to cause many problems. See, having a lot of money, you won't sleep at night, you think if I lost a cent there, what must I do.

The political context, and the violence has negatively affected his view of the future. He is a member of the ANC and aspires to the Freedom Charter, but feels powerless in the face of all the violence: "So what is happening now, it really affects me - I see people are dying and I'm sitting down doing nothing". He nearly became personally involved in the

violence when he inadvertently passed a "No-Go" area near a hostel and was harassed by the hostel residents. After this incident he says, "I was so scared." He adds that many people in the townships would kill you regardless of the ethnic group you belonged to.

Such incidents, as well as the violence in other townships, and the violence which he sees on television, have put him in touch with his own mortality: "I don't want to die." He says he cannot think more than five years into the future because so many people are dying. "Maybe sometimes you'll get a stray bullet", he adds. He believes that things could change after the election but at the moment, "the future is very doomed for me, for everybody, because we don't know what is going to happen next year".

His anxiety concerning next year has been heightened by the statement of a certain influential "sangoma" (sooth sayer). F says that, "I always believe in him" because he had predicted events such as the 1976 uprising and now he has predicted that an important person shall be killed in 1994.

Looking back on his life, he feels that, as a black man, he has been obstructed from certain opportunities:

Like, you see, now being a black man - if you don't have a profession, it's very hard nowadays. And sometimes if you want to go to this technical college, they ask a lot of money - so I think as a white man everything is easier.

He also feels now that he is leading a "better life" than when he was young, because at that age there were "gangsters" and he had to, for instance, fight over girlfriends.

While F describes himself as being selfish during his youth, he feels that he is now more community oriented. In response to the question: "In what way do you think you have changed the most?", he replied:

That time (in his youth) I was a playboy and I was running around with girls; ... but now there where we staying - it's a flat - and my neighbours if they got a problem, they always come to me, I feel better, I feel I'm a man now - they even choose me to be their representative. Actually, I like to visit my people, do something for the community ... maybe sometimes we have to keep the flat clean, call a meeting.

He says he is "pleased" with his relationship with his mother, and that his step father is a "good man for me". He says his mother used to be an unhappy woman, and used to drink a lot, but since 1977, she became a Christian and stopped drinking. He stays in the same street as his parents and visits them everyday. His son also stays with his mother because, he says, his son prefers to stay in a house so that he can play, and F's mother "pleaded" for him to stay with her as "she was alone, lonely, and she wanted a child". He has regular contact with his son.

His brother also stays with his mother, and helps to support the family through part-time work as a bricklayer. His mother earns a salary as a domestic worker and claims a pension. The brother that stays with F has spent time in and out of jail, but is now working, while his older brother is unemployed. He also helps to support his mother financially if he has money, and his wife helps too.

F's tribal beliefs are still very important to him. He says that in Zulu custom there is a sharp distinction between men and children: "If you are a boy you can't stay with the men, you can stay only with the boys", and, "a man must prove yourself that you are a man while you are staying with older people". He feels he has done this because now he "can stay with men, discuss things with them, that's why it's important to me".

Lastly, F expresses a feeling of being "relieved" during the interview process for "talking about things that you are keeping for yourself". He also says the following about being interviewed by a white person: "I view it in a different way, like I know I am black, you are white. I don't know what happened to my forefathers there, but I believe in myself. If I look at you I look at you as a brother."

## Analysis of F's Life According to Levinson's Framework

### Pre-Adult Years

F's father's separation from F's mother during his pre-adult years is significant for two reasons. Firstly, their reason for separating - she wanted F to continue staying in Johannesburg, while he wanted to take F back to Natal to be "raised like him" in a more traditional way. This illustrates a tension between traditional and Western values. Secondly, this event had a profound impact upon the evolution of F's life structure during adulthood, by influencing major decisions relating to family and children, as shall become evident in this analysis.

### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

F's entrance into this period is marked by unhappiness - which is reflected in his wish not to be 18 again (due to certain "rough" circumstances).

His need to separate from the pre-adult world and establish himself as an adult is apparent in F's desire to discard the "playboy" image that he had during the teen years, find a "steady" girlfriend, and have children. The essence of this process of leaving the pre-adult world is captured in F's words: "Let me leave these things (behind)", and "I said no, it's time, I must get a steady girlfriend, and I want to be a father".

The desire to have children stands out as an integral aspect of F's life structure during this period, and was more central than work (F only held a few temporary jobs during this period). As such, it represented his attempt at initiating early adulthood. This desire to have children was linked to his Dream to raise his children while still young, his need to "prove myself" to his father (which shall be discussed in more detail later), and the fear of not being able to have children because of venereal disease. His wish to have children would remain a prominent

feature of F's life structure up to, and including his current period of development.

F's need to separate from the pre-adult world and establish himself as an adult, is also noticeable in his need (which became more urgent after he met his girlfriend) to have more privacy and his own place. This is summed up in his main complaint during this period: "I didn't have my own privacy", and his frustration with his over-crowded living circumstances.

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creating a stable life structure)

The birth of F's children during this period increased his need for stability, which manifested in his decision to marry. His other reasons for getting married - he was frustrated with living apart from his girlfriend and he thought it would help financially - further illustrate his need for stability.

The birth of his son produced a further change. It instilled in him an urgent need to find his father, which was related to his traditional belief that if one has "a baby boy then you have to see your father". When F became a father, it made him aware of the absence of his own father, which increased his desire to find him. The need to find his father represented an important change in F's life, as he was not concerned about his father during the initial part of the EAT. Finding his father provided the stability which is so important during this period, which is reflected in his words: "Everything for once went well."

While starting his first job gave F a sense of stability, he soon had to cope with the "frustration" of doing the same work everyday and the prospect of not being promoted because he was black. Within this context, F experienced little opportunity for exploration in relation to his work, which is a vital task of this period.

F's sense of stability increased when he married and bought his first flat. This is evident in his description of himself before his marriage at being like a "spent tree" and, after marriage, as "now having

a responsibility". The sense of stability in his marriage, however, was soon disrupted when F had an extra-marital relationship, partly due, he says, to tensions between him and his wife.

F had a strong need for independence during this period which is reflected in his statement: "Ja, I wanted to be on my own"; and, his search for four years for his own property. F's marriage and acquisition of his own property during this period conferred upon him a sense of freedom, independence and status as an adult. Before this, he says he was "depending on my parents" and "I was still a child at home". Now he felt that "I was capable of doing anything as I was now independent".

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

Evidence of some reevaluation, which is typical of this period, is seen in F's feelings concerning his job and his subsequent resignation from his job. He felt bored in his work and wanted more of a "challenge". He continued to be frustrated by discrimination and his perception that he was being impeded from a promotion because he was black. His resignation reflects impulsivity, because he made no alternative plans before resigning.

Being blocked from opportunities because he is black, especially in relation to his career, is a pertinent factor in the evolution of F's life structure. This is reflected in F's perception during the ATT, that his life would have been different and "easier" if he was a white person, as he would have had the money to educate himself in order to enter a profession.

Being unemployed has had a devastating impact upon his ATT. It has filled F with a sense of purposelessness, vulnerability and has affected his marital relationship. His ATT has become overshadowed with his struggle to "raise his family" and find a job. The sense of urgency that is typical of this period is evident in F's urgent need to find work.

The majority of the men in Levinson's (1978) study experienced a crisis during this period. The crisis that F experienced during this period was compounded by the death of his father and an accident

(although not serious) in which his son was knocked down by a car. The way in which he perceived this crisis period, and how he coped with it is integral to an understanding of F's life structure. He believed this crisis to have its roots in external forces. This is especially evident in his complaint after his son was involved in an accident: "Something's happening to me, I don't know what". He coped with it by firstly attempting to contact his father and (after learning that his father had died), slaughtering a cow for his ancestors so that they could "give us luck, guide us". He also felt "better" about his life when his brother moved into his house (his father had requested this from his mother before he died) and he established contact with his sister for the first time in 20 years.

The way that F perceived and dealt with this crisis during the ATT, indicates the importance of traditional customs and family in F's life structure. It also illustrates his external locus of control, inherent in F's perception that the crises could be solved by "luck" and guidance from the ancestors.

This external locus of control is also visible in F's perception that he is the victim of circumstances, which is apparent in the way that he feels he is forced by "circumstances" to sell liquor in order to survive. As in his earlier decision to resign from work, he again does not seem to weigh up the consequences of his actions.

F's own family is the central part of his life structure during the ATT, and his Dream revolves around his family. He feels that external circumstances - lack of money and a job - are preventing him from realising his Dream (which will be elaborated upon in the next section).

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### Forming and Living out the Dream

A number of themes emerge in relation to this important task. F's Dream centered around aspirations relating to his family, especially his desire to have many children and more than two wives (which illustrates the importance of traditional practices on this task). His current Dream

also revolves around his desire to "raise my family". The influence of his father on his Dream is reflected in his desire to prove himself to his father by having a big family. His Dream also contains a material aspect, as is evident in his wish to buy a new house, a new car, and open a bank account.

He comprehends external circumstances, or financial constraints, as obstructing him from realising his Dream, whether this be in relation to raising his family, marrying two wives, or buying a house and a car. His dependance on external factors for the living out of his Dream is reflected in his simple realisation that "everything is possible," and "all my dreams will come true," if he gets a job and money.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

F formed a mentoring relationship during this period with a manager at work. The mentoring relationship is captured in F's description of this manager as a "special person", somebody who "always gives me guidance". F could share his personal problems with him, and he looked upon him for advice.

F's father also had a powerful influence on F's life, even though he was absent for most of the time. This is apparent in the manifestation of F's Dream, as already discussed. Moreover, F's father provided in some ways, a negative mentoring experience, in that F did not want to be like him and neglect his children. He seemed to be strongly motivated to match up to his father, and actually outdo him.

#### Forming an Occupation

Levinson (1978, p.101) points out that the first occupational choice "represent(s) a preliminary definition of interests and values". In the case of F, there is no evidence that his first job fulfilled any of his interests and values. Indeed, most of the time he felt a sense of boredom and stagnation which is reflected in his words: "I'm in the same job for five years, no promotion, no benefits. No, if you move a box, put it there, next day you do it, every day. It was more routine."

Racism and prejudice at work also impinged negatively upon the formation of his career, in a formal and informal manner. Informally, he had to deal with the racialistic attitude and verbalisations of his colleagues. F dealt with this kind of racism (such as being called a "monkey") passively, because he felt "the people will not even notice".

The formal discrimination that F had to confront included being prevented from promotion and receiving a lower salary than his white colleagues who were in a similar position to him.

These factors produced a sense of frustration in F, which influenced his decision to resign from his work during the ATT. F's unemployment since leaving this job has occupied a central aspect of his life structure and has produced in him a sense of purposelessness and vulnerability (which has already been referred to).

F's life structure seems to be held together by his need to find a job, and unemployment can be expected to have a negative impact upon the SD process in the next period.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

Having children seemed to be more important to F than marriage itself, and F planned, and had children even before he married. The desire to find his father after the birth of his son illustrates the significance of F's father in his own life, and the importance of customs in F's life ("In our customs we believe that if you get a baby boy, then you have to see your father").

F's decision to marry was based on a number of considerations including financial reasons, frustrations stemming from staying apart from his girlfriend, and the birth of his second child. He also felt it was his "destination" to marry her.

The meaning that marriage had for F is also important. It conferred upon him a sense of freedom ("everything was possible for me to do"), and independence. He no longer felt like a "spent tree", but felt he was "now having a responsibility".

His marriage was characterised by tension stemming from living separately from his wife, unemployment and financial matters. F's affair was a symptom of the marital tension associated with the role of being a man: "We men, sometimes we want to have ... a mistress."

F's mother and siblings still occupy an important part of his life structure. He lives nearby to his mother and still has much contact with her. The close link between F and his mother is shown by the fact that one of his children is staying with her because she felt lonely and wanted a child for company.

F's responsibility towards his siblings is especially evident in his current relationship with his younger brother, whom he is looking after upon his father's request.

### Synopsis

There is some similarity in the pattern of the evolution of the life structure of F, and the men in Levinson's (1978) study. F did feel a need, during the EAT, to separate from his pre-adult world (and change his "playboy" image, become a father and get his own "privacy"). He also felt an increased need for stability during the EAT, which was shown in his desire to marry, and his feeling concerning the acquisition of his first property. During the ATT, F did engage in some reevaluation and change, especially in relation to his career.

F's development however, must be considered in terms of the impact of family, traditional values and his experience of being a black person, on the important tasks and processes of early adulthood.

The need to form his own family, which would remain central throughout F's adult development, was influenced by his need to prove himself to his father (by becoming a father himself as soon as possible and having more children than his own father). This need was so powerful that it took on qualities of a Dream, or a vision of himself in the adult world. Part of this Dream was F's desire to have two wives like his father, which again highlights the importance of customary beliefs, and the role of F's family on his life structure.

F's relationship with his own father was characterised by tension (that was precipitated by the separation from his father during the pre-adult years), which would permeate his life structure. On the one hand, F seemed to cope with the absence of his father by trying to forget him ("at 18 I never think about my father") and becoming angry towards him (which culminated in him changing his customary name because the name implied respect for his father). On the other hand, F had a consuming need to prove himself to his father. The task of exploration during the EAW revolved around F's need to search for, and find his father. This need was influenced by the meaning F attached to himself being a father, and his traditional belief.

F's desire to prove himself is a central theme during the evolution of his life structure. It is detectable not only in his relationship with his father, but also in his strong customary belief that a Zulu man must prove himself before he can be defined as a man. His definition of adulthood is influenced by this customary belief, and in the very definition of "proving yourself" - of what it means to prove yourself.

Discrimination and economic constraints have also impacted upon F's life structure. He believes that life would have been easier if he was a white person because he would have more money and more opportunities. He experienced this as obstructing opportunities such as studying further, and even his desire to have a larger family. The task of exploration during his development was impeded by the frustration F experienced relating to limited promotion opportunities, and the racism that he experienced at work. The task of advancement during the SD was frustrated by his unemployment.

F experienced a sense of futility in trying to fight the racism at work: "I feel angry but I know he's stupid. If you argue with him the people will not even take notice. Sometimes it's okay, sometimes it's bad".

F's vision of himself in the future, an important aspect of the life structure, has also been influenced by his experience as a black person. More specifically, the sociopolitical context, including the general instability and violence in the land (which he has personally witnessed)

has increased his awareness of his own mortality ("I don't want to die"), and his sense of doom concerning the future. This feeling has been increased by an influential traditional healer's predictions concerning the future, which again illustrates the importance of traditional beliefs in F's life.

Another theme that emerges from the analysis, concerns F's perception relating to the control of external circumstances over his life. This is highlighted by his comprehension of the crises that he experienced during the ATT (after his father passed away and he left his job) as been caused by external circumstances that he could not control. He dealt with this crises, not by introspection or self-evaluation, but by slaughtering a cow, which further illustrates the importance of traditional beliefs on his life structure.

F's experience of being a victim of circumstances is also reflected in his perception that he is forced to sell liquor because he is unemployed, and in his simple belief that "all my dreams will come true" if he gets a job.

F's experience of change during his development, as well as the role of planning, are important themes. F's view of change often refers to external events, as is evident in the change he experienced after his wife became pregnant for the second time: "I said no, let me pay labola for my girlfriend, let me do that. That changed my life". He also felt that his "life changed" after he reestablished contact with his father, because "everything for once went well". He also refers to some internal change during his development. Thus, he experienced a change after his marriage, from feeling like a "spent tree", to "now having a responsibility". Note too, that marriage conferred upon him a sense of identity as an adult. Before marriage he describes himself as a "child at home", while after marriage he felt he was "now independent". F also senses change in terms of becoming less selfish, and becoming more community orientated (which manifested in his appointment as a representative for his flat). This community orientedness is succinctly expressed in his words: "I can't live alone, have to think of others, because we need people to live together. So my wish is that we can live in one harmony."

In terms of planning and goal directedness, F does not report any specific goals in relation to his career (his aim at the moment is to get any job). Planning, however, is present in relation to the task of forming a family. F directly says that his goal was to raise a big family while he was still young ("that was my plan"). This intention manifested in his planned birth of his children, and his plan now to have another child (which takes precedence of over financial constraints). Impulsivity is reflected, for example, in his decision to resign from his job without making alternative plans, and in his choice to sell alcohol without due consideration of the consequences.

Finally, the following can be stated with regard to the major tasks of the Novice Phase. F's Dream centered around his family and had a materialistic component. There is indication that he was able to form a mentoring relationship (with a white person). The formation of his occupation was marked by little exploration and choice, and unemployment has occupied a central aspect of his life structure.

THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF M  
(INFORMANT 3)

"I can set out, put certain goals in life, and reach them ..."  
(M, second interview, 22 October 1993)

Identifying Information

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-3
AGE	31
MARITAL STATUS	Married
CHILDREN	One
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Youngest of four brothers (one passed away)
PLACE OF BIRTH	Lesotho
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Johannesburg
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Completing Masters in Psychology
OCCUPATION	Intern Psychologist

Introduction

M was located through a friend of the researcher. Three interviews were held with him over a period of five weeks. The interviews were conducted at M's office (on his request) at the hospital where he was completing his internship.

M was chosen to be interviewed because he had obtained a considerably high standard of education, and he was still negotiating the ATT period. Interviews with him could thus provide valuable and current information on the earlier periods of adulthood, as well as information concerning the impact of having a high standard of education, on the evolution of the life structure. Furthermore, the researcher was aware

that M had been politically active, and wished to explore the influence of this on his development.

M came across as an intelligent, eloquent and friendly person. His responses demonstrated a high degree of introspection and self-analysis. He was quick to understand the purpose of the interviews, and seemed open and eager to share his life with the researcher.

#### **Biography: The Life of M**

M's primary school education, at a multi-cultural school in Lesotho, had a significant impact upon him because "one had to start learning cultures and norms that were not necessary yours, and you got accepted by some and rejected by others" (he was one of the few blacks at the school). He also experienced tension at home because his siblings teased him for going to a predominantly white school. In such a way, he says, the "normal sibling rivalry was compounded with whatever was happening at school". His way of coping with the conflict and estrangement which he experienced as a member of a minority group in the school, was to become a "bully" and to behave aggressively:

As a youngster, you are kind of put into the position of trying to prove that even if I'm young, I can do everything that you can do. And perhaps one of those (things) is to be able to trash it out, fight it out, and actually show I'm on par.

He did not find his move to a high school in Kenya, and the subsequent adaptation to a different culture and norms difficult. On the contrary, he "breezed through" high school. He describes his father as very "educationally orientated". He says that in his childhood years he perceived his father as a disciplinarian, but then he became a "driving force" in his desire to be educated, because, "I started having the urge to prove that I could live up to his expectations".

M's initial "break away" from his family occurred when he attended university after matriculating. He stayed on the campus even though his parent's house was only two kilometres away, because he felt somewhat

"rebellious". He could "smoke in freedom," come back to his room late, and "do anything". He wanted to establish his role as a man, independent from his family:

Going to campus, independence, being myself, doing whatever I want, when I wanted to do it, as I want to do it. So I actually felt this was the moment I'd been waiting for ... If you want to be independent you should be about 18, go to university. So I took the opportunity and I thought, well, make the best of it, don't go back home for vacations, look for work, hire a place, stay there. Which is exactly what I did, and he (M's father) was not really pleased but I felt that I was now a big man and I could go out there by myself.

At this stage of his life, M did not have a clear focus in terms of his career, but had started to study towards a Bachelor of Science degree, because of the vague notion that he wanted to help people via the medical field. He says that there was very little career guidance at school, and even if there was, he would "dodge" them and not take their advice. His passion and energy were focused more on political pursuits. He describes himself as "very radical" and political at that time, and he rose to the top of a student political body.

As a result of the restlessness that M was experiencing, he accepted a bursary to study in Yugoslavia when he was 22. He felt that he "needed a break" (after a South African Defence Force raid in Lesotho) and wanted to test his political idealism and passion in reality. He chose Yugoslavia because he felt the "Eastern Block was the in thing," and would suit his political orientation:

I was a young man and throughout my years at university I'd been very radical, political, Marxist - in fact Leninist. There's a lot of, let's say political indoctrination, philosophy at university. It was the in-thing those days, and it was reflected in the choice of country you were going to. I mean I was offered to go to Britain, but I didn't take it up. I felt that the Eastern Block was the in-thing.

He describes this as the "most traumatic experience in my life". The violence and prejudice that M witnessed led him to become politically disillusioned:

People there were very radical. They were more racial than my experience of South Africans, and my feelings when I got there was - you know, there's all this idealism behind Marxism and equality, and all that kind of thing, and you go to a country that professes to be Marxist, Leninist, and your first experience is worse than which you left. And you sit back and say 'Why am I here?'

He felt "terribly disappointed", because it was such a "constricted type of existence", and "full of uncertainty". He was often "hassled" or beaten up for nothing. After a while he felt "I've got to fight back," but realised that he should be cautious because he was a foreigner.

While M was in the Eastern Block, he left school and travelled through Europe doing odd jobs. This was a valuable experience, he feels, because he was able to "experience certain things," and "to learn at a very young age" about life. Looking back, he feels that his experience overseas has "given me insight into humanity - that you should learn to expect strange things from the least expected quarters". M's extreme unhappiness in Yugoslavia led him to return to South Africa before he finished his course. He felt disappointed in himself. He says: "I don't take not succeeding very easily and . . . I considered that as a failure." The central feeling at this stage of his life (he was 23 when he returned from Yugoslavia) was of alienation, self-doubt and despair.

He felt more than ever a lack of purpose in his life:

But as I came back home, looking back in retrospect, I must have plunged into a depression, and life was quite rough then. I was not really myself. It was like going out there but not being oneself, not looking forward for anything, just existing basically.

M's perception that his father was against him going to Yugoslavia, and was now probably "gloating himself and saying 'I told you so'" increased his feelings of depression. He felt that he had "betrayed" his father.

He stayed with his parents when he came back from Yugoslavia, feeling "kind of like a baby going to cry - not necessarily to cry, but feeling the need to have people who are supporting, close to you". At the same time he felt that his experience in Yugoslavia had taught him to be independent: "So roughly from then on, I can say, I proved that I could do it. I felt I could also be out there by myself."

M's personal crisis subsided, and his life stabilised when he found his first job at the age of 23. He chose to work at the Ministry of Health as a radiographic assistant because he "had always been inclined towards health professions," and because he "did not know much about anything else". He found the work stimulating, challenging and fulfilling because he was helping others, something which he had "always set out to do".

Although M's chances for promotion were good, he did not seem very ambitious about his future, and did not really have a dream about what he wanted to accomplish. His future seemed "too far to contemplate" and he was content with having a job, even though it was not the most "fantastic job". He says of himself at this stage: "I never actually thought really, 'let me go out there and go for it.' I didn't know what I'd go out for."

It was at about this time that M became involved with an older woman, while his girlfriend was studying towards a Masters degree overseas. In response to the question concerning what made him get involved with this woman, he replied:

Oh, quite simple really. I'd been relatively stable with one girl for a long, long time. I did what most of the guys - two or three of my friends - had been doing, and chance presented itself and I said, 'I'm going to join the guys.' I ended it, it didn't work out. It was hard luck on my part, but I can say

partially it was because she was not there (his girlfriend) and chance presented itself. There had always been pressure from the guys.

He also felt that "inwardly I was trying to get back at her (his girlfriend). Who the hell does she think she is leaving me behind?"

He did not tell his girlfriend about the affair when she returned home, but this relationship did produce tension between him and his mother. She so disapproved of him having this relationship, that she seemed to become physically sick. After he broke off his relationship with the older woman, his mother's health improved.

Mention must be made at this point of M's relationship with his brothers. During his early twenties, M felt a sense of responsibility towards his brothers:

In the past one would be (worried) what if anything happened to my folks. I mean, let's take the worst - there's a car accident and they both die, and such thoughts. It became abundantly clear that they'd be reliant on.

This sense of responsibility was accentuated by the fact that one of his brothers was unemployed and a heavy drinker, and by the passing away (which shall be referred to later) of another brother:

My eldest brother drinks a lot. He was exceptionally bright, but he finds it exceptionally hard to keep a job. In fact, I don't think he's been working for the past three or four years. I don't know how he's living, but he still manages to cope. I kind of felt with that kind of thing, with the other one who ... having passed away, one had to kind of, stand up and be strong, and I could actually take the responsibility of being the young man, of being the responsible (one).

M's sense of responsibility did not involve financial support: "Not that I provided for them in anyway, because my folks were still doing that."

Initial stirrings of a dream to become a psychologist was fostered by a newspaper article advertising an industrial psychologist's post in Johannesburg. He was attracted to the profession because of the high salary that this specific job offered, but after reading extensively in various psychology books, he felt an identification with psychology as he began to understand his "personal dynamics" better.

More specifically, it helped him understand the pain and depression he had experienced on his return from Yugoslavia. This feeling of personal identification with psychology, and the feeling that he could help himself and help others, promoted M's decision to become a psychologist.

Thus, at the age of 27, he resigned from his job and began his undergraduate training to become a psychologist at the University of Bophuthatswana. His mother was not very happy with him studying psychology because she felt it was a "waste of time", as he could have continued with a higher post-graduate degree if he wanted. His father was pleased because he "likes education," and would do his "utmost best to support you through".

Just before this, while he was still working (at the age of 27), M married his first-time love. He had met her while studying at university, and he describes the relationship with her as a "long standing relationship". When he met her "it was some kind of puppy love where one is all engrossed with the other". It was, he says, his "first relationship," although when he was in high school the "in thing was to try and get as many relationships".

M married at this time because "it seemed like the right time" in that he felt a sense of stability as they were both employed and he felt it was time to control his "chaotic nature". This decision, to settle down and marry, was also greatly influenced by the death of his elder brother, prior to this marriage.

His elder brother was about to get married before he died, and M felt that his own marriage could lessen his parents pain. It was, he says, an "identification with my parents in the sense that they had

prepared everything, and things falling apart". His other brother, he says, was "unstable," and although M was the "chaotic" one in the family, he chose to marry. The death of his brother had a traumatic affect on M as, "everybody loved him", and it seemed to have instilled a sense of urgency in him to settle down:

There's a sorrow, a grieving that goes along with it but perhaps a wish to settle down ... perhaps what could of been going through my mind then would be, 'Jesus, one should actually get married, do something with their life'.

He felt that marriage did not "change anything significantly" in terms of his relationship with his wife. They had been living together for a long time, and they continued as if "nothing had happened". He did feel, however, that he had "added responsibility". He describes his feelings as follows:

Kind of proud, kind of happy, kind of scared. Happy because that's what I wanted to do, proud because, well I was married - I'd always wanted to get married. Scared in the sense that I was quite aware of how I'd been in the past, and I was wondering wouldn't I one day get sick and tired of this and want to up and go, and this kind of thing.

After the marriage, he still felt very distraught about his brother's death and he coped with this by "running away from the sorrow at home, wanting to be alone to heal", and embarking on a further period of military training for six months. He describes this as "one of the major crises (in his marriage), being adamant about my decision sometimes. I felt I had to carry it through," even though his wife did not want him to go.

The concomitant strain that his move produced on the new marriage was eased when M began his course at the University of Bophuthatswana. This was a "productive period" in his life because he enjoyed his studies and he was living with his wife - she obtained a post of a lecturer at the university. At about the same time, he resigned from the military because there had been a coup, and he felt he "could not identify" with

the army any more. In this way, he says, he was able to "settle down" better.

He also felt, for the first time, an easing of the responsibility he had felt towards his brothers because "they had completed (their studies) and were working. So actually I felt kind of a load had been taken off me in the sense that, now, I could go out there."

After completing his university studies in Bophuthatswana, he was selected for professional training in psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand (WITS). He accepted this position even though it meant leaving his wife in Mbabatho. The primary reason for this was that he was very motivated to become a psychologist, and he felt that he could receive superior training at WITS University. He is currently completing his degree in clinical psychology and, at the age of 31, feels a sense of having "achieved something". At the same time he feels uncomfortable because he is away from his own family:

My wife is in Mbabatho, I'm here ..... but unlike the previous decision (to study in Bophuthatswana), the decision to come to WITS last year was an unusual one in the sense that we had been living in Mbabatho for about three years then, and when I got accepted here she was quite understanding.

He goes home every weekend or she visits him when she's not working, but he feels a bit "disjointed" and unsettled:

But why I'm not very settled is that my work is here, but my heart is not here. So I'm as settled as one can be given the limitations of the constraints of not being there.

He feels that he is "missing out" on his child's growth and development, and at times he feels "anxious in a way or guilty in a way" because he cannot be there most of the time to offer his support to his wife and daughter.

The birth of his baby last year has resulted in considerable self-questioning: "Will I be able to provide? Will I be a good father?" and,

"How much will my kind of stuff from the past impact on the kid? A certain feeling of insecurity that will I do the right thing or the wrong thing?"

He feels "torn" between the need to be with his family, and the need to study further:

I'd sit and actually say, 'For heavens sake, what am I doing here?' I should be back home. I could get a job and actually function quite well. Then at the same time, I say, 'For heavens sake, I mean dropping half way through would be like a failure.' So I'm actually torn between the two.

M consoles himself by pointing out that his baby was planned:

I knew this, what I was in for, and I came prepared for it. It was a planned baby really. We been over the thing, over and over ... she's (his wife) the one who wanted the child. I said, 'after my internship,' but she said she can't wait any longer, and we compromised.

Studying further also makes him feel more secure about supporting his child in the future: "At the end of the day one weighs out stuff and says, 'Well the kid is about one year, and if I don't continue with my school, I won't be able to provide for the kid as I'd like in the future'."

At the same time, the birth of his baby last year has made M feel fulfilled. It has been a "complete transformation" in that he has had to "really think things out". This has deepened his sense of responsibility and created in him an urgent need for his life to go well:

I'd always thought of myself as a mature, perhaps as a family man to a certain extent, but there'd never really been that need or urge to feel that you need to, you see, feeling responsible for your parents or brothers is a different thing. Now when you have a child, it's kind of, you really have to

sit down and really start thinking things out. Really starting wanting to make sure that things work out.

Whilst his career and his own family are the most important aspects of his life at the moment, his relationship with his parents is also important. His feelings of responsibility towards his parents (who are elderly pensioners) has increased since his brother's untimely death because, "they starting to grow old". At the same time he does not feel "obligated to help" them in any way but feels he should show the "reciprocity for what they did for me".

He says that, "I come from a very close-knit family. They the most important people to me at the moment. In that order: my wife, my child, my parents and brothers." He says that the person who understands him the most is his wife and the "puppy love" they initially felt for each other has been replaced by "understand and respect" and "the joy of trying to make a family work out". He also feels he is "less adamant about pushing things through and (is more) willing to compromise" with his wife. When he feels the urge to do something, he sits down and discusses it first.

His father has been an important "role model" in his life - a "driving and motivating force" in M's desire to be well-educated. M feels thankful that his father valued education and made sure he went to good schools. He has continually striven to live up to his father's expectations of him, and his father continues to have an important influence on him:

As I said, he still continues to be a role model because he actually achieved a lot from very humble beginnings, and he actually did very well for himself. We're kind of spoilt in the way we came from a mid-level, let's say a relatively affluent background which he built up by himself really ... so I still regard him very highly really.

He maintains that even his wish to do a doctorate next year is inspired by his father: "I'm actually doing it for him."

He feels he has always been close to his mother:

I was taken to be Mama's little boy at home. I mean it was apparent I was her little pet at home, mommy's pet, not because I was necessary good, well I really don't know, I've always been very close to her.

M perceives himself as having changed significantly since his earlier campus days. His "radicalism" has to a great extent, disappeared and he is not actively involved in politics. He says he sees himself as "having transcended from a political functionary to more or less a political observer". He still believes in the same political cause, but he now "intellectualise(s) about it". He describes himself now as being "less impulsive," "more moderate" and "less restless". He feels more "in touch" with himself, and has more control of his feelings.

He feels he does not have to prove himself to other people any more, and that he can "exist and differ", and hence doesn't need "to fight" (as he did at school and in Yugoslavia), or let his "boyish impulses override him". He says, "I mean the essence of existence is not necessary being uniform or homogeneous .... and I know I've had to choose unity and respect of other's feelings, which is what primary changed me, and is of late what is of primary importance in my life".

He adds that: "I think I've changed significantly. Life is not me and what I make it out to be, but it is an interaction between me and others, and what basically I can gain out of it."

It is his family and future occupation which have given him this feeling of centredness in his life:

It's having to a certain extent achieved something in life, having something that one could hang on. I mean if things go well, one should be finishing a degree in clinical psychology. And having a family to look after, and having responsibility of a young child, you can't afford to let your boyish impulses override a lot of other considerations that come up with age.

M also describes himself as "cynical," and points out that this has helped him cope with life in South Africa:

I can look through issues. I choose who my friends are, and I choose who I want to relate to. And South Africa being unique in its own way, I don't feel the urge any more to feel that I've got to engage people who I don't feel free that engaging with them would be fruitful. So I like to ignore certain issues and pick up on others.

M describes himself as a "very ambitious person by nature, somebody who won't get satisfied until I got to the top in whatever field I'm involved in". Looking back on his life, M says that he has always had a need to achieve:

In primary (school), on the one hand, I was aggressive, was proving a point. And, if on top of that I could become top of the class, then I'd prove something. So I was out to prove. I carried that kind of mentality throughout high school.

It is now important for him to live up to his own standards and values and not to "beat other people" as he wanted to do when he was younger:

I don't think I've got anything to prove out there. If there's anything to prove it's perhaps to myself and by that what I actually mean is that I can set out, put certain goals in life, and reach them through self-motivation and a certain type of awareness that I am able to achieve those. Go out and do it, not necessary for the next person, but for myself.

He adds that the "internal values, standards that I set myself to what I want to achieve, that I think motivates me now. Unlike in my younger years, where it was achieving more than others in your class".

In psychology, he says, he would like to achieve "as much as my ideals can be able to", because "psychology has become part of my life to almost a total exclusion of other interests".

In retrospect, M says that he has "nothing to regret," and there's nothing he would really like to change. He looks upon the experiences he had - even those that "were not necessary pleasant" - as learning experiences. They have, he says, "moulded me today into what I am".

M has recently completed his internship, and has returned to his wife in Mbabatho until he decides upon his future career path. He has been for a number of interviews, but has not accepted a post because his wife is considering a doctoral degree at a university in Johannesburg, and M does not wish to be separated from her again. He will therefore only accept a future post when his wife makes her decision.

M describes his future options as follows:

I've got several options really. I've got a post that has been offered to me, and I've got an offer at the University of Bophuthatswana where my wife is lecturing at the moment, and I'm actually weighing up the two. I'm very loathe to get myself involved in politics here in South Africa or back home. I think my decision will be based on what seems more stable. Which environment seems more conducive to bringing up my child? What does it offer for my family? So basically what I'm saying is I'm still in a kind of limbo, I haven't decided ... I've asked them to give me time until the end of the year.

#### **Analysis of M's Life According to Levinson's Framework**

##### Pre-Adult Years

Certain patterns of coping with, and relating to, the external world manifested during M's pre-adult years, and would remain significant during the evolution of his adult life structure. This includes M's high need to achieve, and prove himself, coupled with his "aggressive" style of coping with the world.

This is evident in M's description of himself, during his pre-adult years, as somebody who "was proving a point" and wanted to become "top of the class". This "mentality" can also be seen in his political exploration during his early adult years when he went "right up to the top," and in his current need to "achieve ... as much as my ideals can be able to," in the field of psychology.

His relationship with his father played a significant role in his need to achieve during the pre-adult years, and his adult years. In order to please his father, M endeavoured to do well at school. This is also his motivation to do his doctorate: "I'm actually doing it for him."

Another significant pattern that developed during the pre-adult years, concerned the way in which M coped with racism. He did not accept the racism at school, but fought back (note the description of himself as "aggressive" and a "bully" during this period). This energy would follow M during the adult years, and he would never passively accept racism and discrimination. Significantly, though, during the later periods of early adulthood, he perceived there to be considerable change in terms of this personality trait - a point that shall become clearer later in the analysis.

#### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

There is strong evidence that M began work on the tasks of this period. In terms of the internal aspects of the life structure, M did have an intense desire for freedom and independence - to establish his role as an adult, away from his family. This desire manifested in M's rebelliousness, restlessness and political radicalism. Externally, the negotiation of these tasks were evident in M separating from his family to go stay and study at the university (an opportunity made possible by his parent's financial support, and the high value they placed on education). Furthermore, it is reflected in M's perception that he was now a "big man and could go out there by myself".

M spent most of this period at university (like most of the men in Levinson's (1978) study). It is important to note, however, that the central focus of M's life structure during this period was not his education, but political pursuit (he was very involved in Marxist politics, and achieved a high position on a student political body). M's political ambition represented his way of initiating early adulthood. Leaving South Africa to go and study in Yugoslavia represented for M a clean break with the pre-adult world, in that he felt he "kind of left home for good then." This move signified the end of the EAT, and the beginning of the period of EAW.

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creating a stable life structure)

Like the men in Levinson's (1978) study, M channelled most of his energy into the task of exploration during the initial part of this period, while he used the latter part of this period to establish a more stable life structure. The tasks of this period were again coloured by M's political ambitions.

M's restlessness and move to Yugoslavia marked the beginning of the EAW. It represented his attempt at the "exploration of self and world" (Levinson, 1978, p.78) which is fundamental to this period (or in his words, his need to test his political idealism and passion in reality). The need for exploration is also evident in his sojourn through Europe so that he could "learn about life". Self-exploration is further reflected in his soul-searching, which was precipitated by his feelings of self-doubt, despair and depression after returning from Yugoslavia. This is summed up best by his question: "Why am I here?" Note that this despair emanated from M's specific construction of reality after returning from Yugoslavia: "I construed it as a failure."

M's first job represented his initial move towards creating a stable life structure (and indeed he experienced a sense of stability after he started working). Although he chose this job, his commitment to the job was very provisional - as is characteristic of this period according to Levinson (1978) - because he still didn't really know "what I'd go out

for". M did not have a well formulated Dream or mentor at work to guide him during the initial part of this period.

During the later part of this period, however, M began to feel the stirrings of a Dream to study psychology. His change of career at this time, was one of the milestones that marked the entrance into the ATT.

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

The self-reappraisal of the past and the future, which is the basis of this period, is evident in a number of ways in the life of M.

M's brother's death caused M to reevaluate his life and created in him an intense need to control his "chaotic" nature, "settle down" and get married. He made this decision based on his urgent need that "one should actually get married, do something with their life". This sense of urgency is typical of this period, according to Levinson (1978).

Even after his marriage, he felt uneasy (which he ascribes to feelings involving the death of his brother) and a need to be alone (which is visible in him going away - against his wife's will - for further military training).

Further evidence of reevaluation and reappraisal of the structure established during the previous period of development is apparent in M's resignation from work to study psychology. M's career change was related to his desire to understand himself, and the pain of the previous period (that is his depressed state after returning from Yugoslavia).

The central anxiety that M experienced during the ATT (and especially the later part of this period), is the tension between his desire for professional advancement on the one hand, and his commitment to his family on the other hand. He felt "torn between the two". In dialectical terms, he experienced a juxtaposition between his need to be with his family, and his need to achieve. The importance of professional advancement in M's life structure is visible in M's passion towards psychology, and his decision to leave his family for a while to complete his professional studies.

His commitment to his family has increased after the birth of his baby, and produced further dramatic change and self-questioning that is the cornerstone of this period. M describes the impact of the birth of his baby as a "complete transformation". He has an urgent need "to make sure that things work out". It is further exemplified in his questions: "Will I be a good father?" and "How much will my kind of stuff from the past impact on the kid?"

Perhaps the most startling evidence of the processes of transformation and reevaluation that underlie the ATT, is the changes in M's political identity. He perceives himself as having changed radically since his early twenties, becoming less radical, less political, and "having transcended from a political functionary, to more or less a political observer". This political change should be seen in the context of broader personal change, for he perceives himself as having become more in touch and in control of himself, and less impulsive and less restless.

M's sense of having "achieved something" in life, and the feeling of being "satisfied" with his life, are feelings which will facilitate the SD process of the next period. Moreover, his need to achieve, and to get "to the top" (by planning to register for a doctorate) can be seen as laying the groundwork for the BOOM phase of the next period.

Before the SD process can be initiated, however, M has to make an important decision relating to his future employment. In this regard, he perceives there to be "several options" in terms of his future career. He will make this decision based on his need to be close to his family.

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### **Forming and Living out the Dream**

M's ideological and political passion and pursuit embodied qualities of a Dream, or a vision of self-in-adult-world. This Dream had a persuasive influence on his evolving life structure during the initial part of early adulthood, but subsided as his political passion waned.

Besides his political vision, M was not able to formulate a Dream concerning his future during the initial part of the Novice Phase. He describes the future then as "too far to contemplate". Later on, however, his vision of himself as a psychologist became a central aspect of his life structure, and he was able to work steadily towards realising his Dream.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

M was unable to describe any person who fulfilled the functions of a mentor. His relationship with his father, however, fulfilled some aspects of a mentoring relationship. This can be seen in the utmost respect M has had (and continues to have) for his father, the influence that his father has had on his life, and M's description of his father as a role model. It is also evident in the way that M constantly tried to live up to his father's expectations, especially in terms of M's educational and professional advancement.

A possibility of what can be referred to as a "negative mentoring experience" also emerges from an analysis of M's life. This is evident in M's response to a question concerning the presence of mentors in his life: "In the negative sense, yes - my eldest brother." Explaining this further, he added that his eldest brother drank excessively and although he was "exceptionally bright", he could never keep a job. M learnt from this that "one had to stand up and be strong" and "responsible" in relation to his family, and life in general.

#### Forming an Occupation

An important feature of M's occupational and career development, is that he had the support of his parents (they encouraged his educational development, and had financial resources), and he was able to choose his career path.

He chose his first job in the health field because he wanted to help others. Moreover, he chose to study psychology for personal reasons (which have already been discussed). This process of career choice was made possible because M did not have to contend with financial

impediments, such as lack of financial resources (which he ascribed to the fact that he comes from a middle class family).

It is interesting to note the meaning of work and career at different periods in M's life. During the EAT, M only had a vague conception of his future career path, and his political ambitions took precedence over career goals. During the EAW, M's commitment to his career was still provisional and he was just happy that he had a job (even if it was not the most "fantastic job"). During the ATT, however, M's career became the central aspect of his life structure, and conferred upon him a sense of stability and achievement. The need to achieve further in his career is evident in his desire to register for a doctorate next year. The impending decision concerning a future job, is something M will have to confront during the next period.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

M describes his wife, child, parents and brothers as being the "most important to me at the moment, in that order". Some interesting themes concerning these relationships are apparent during the evolution of his life structure.

M perceives his relationship with his wife as having changed during the evolution of his life structure, from a more passionate relationship, in his early twenties, to one that is currently based on mutual respect, understanding and, "the job of perhaps bringing up a child together".

M's parents have also occupied a central role during the evolution of his life structure. This is evident in his father's powerful influence over him. It is reflected in his decision to get married based, in part, on an "identification with my parents" (after his brother, who was about to get married, died). Although he currently feels he is not "obligated to help" his parents, he feels a sense of "reciprocity for what they did for me".

M has felt a sense of responsibility (although not financial), towards his brothers, which was accentuated by the death of one of his

brothers, and the fact that his other brother drank heavily, and found it difficult to hold a job.

The impact of M's marriage, and the birth of his baby during the ATT, should be considered in terms of the tasks and processes of that period. Both these events resulted in much evaluation of self and the past, which is typical of this period.

### Synopsis

The evolution of M's life structure was similar in many ways to that of the men studied by Levinson (1978). Issues of separating from his parents and defining himself as an adult were important to him during the EAT. He did spend much of the EAW exploring certain options, and the ATT was associated with introspection and change.

The evolution of his life structure, however, was influenced by a very important factor - his political ambition and involvement. The task of initiating early adulthood during the EAT was linked to his political aspirations. During the EAW, he further explored his political identity, while he devoted much energy during the ATT to reevaluating this identity.

The evolution of M's life structure is characterised by certain patterns of interacting with the world. This includes M's intense desire to prove himself and achieve (whether this be at school, in his political pursuits, or career), and his sense of control and direction in his life. This internal locus of control is illustrated by his references to his "self-motivation," and his need to "prove ... to myself". It is also visible in such self-descriptions as: "I can look through issues. Choose who my friends are, and I choose who I want to relate to," and "I'd rather distance myself from those things that I don't want to be engaged in". M perceives these characteristics, as well as his "cynical" nature, as helping him to adapt to life in South Africa because he is able to "ignore certain issues and pick up on others".

A few more themes are evident. M perceives both stability and change (in terms of his personality) during his development. He points

out that his need to achieve has been important throughout his life, and has manifested in many ways (at school, in politics and in his professional field). He is also aware of change ("I think I've changed significantly"), as he senses himself to have become less self-involved and less aggressive than he was when he was younger. This is neatly expressed in his words: "Life is not (just) me and what I make it out to be, but is an interaction between me and others." He also sees change in the nature of his marital relationship (from "puppy love" to understanding and respect).

Coupled with M's awareness of change, is his introspection and general awareness of himself as a person. This is evident in his expressive self-descriptions (which include "less impulsive," "introvert," "aggressive," "radical," "less restless," "cynical," and "chaotic"). He also has a strong philosophy, or outlook, upon life, which can be seen in such references as: "I mean the essence of existence is not necessary being uniform or homogeneous."

M has been open to learning from his experiences during his development. This is especially visible in his feeling during the ATT, that although he has had many unpleasant experiences, there is "nothing to regret," as these were "learning" experiences, and have "moulded me today into what I am".

With regard to the major developmental tasks of early adulthood, a number of themes have been identified. M was able to form and live out aspects of his Dream during early adulthood. He did not form a mentor relationship at work, but his father fulfilled certain aspects of a mentoring figure. He was able to form an occupation based on personal choice. His family of origin would remain important throughout his development, but he was able to separate from them and devote his attention towards forming his own family unit, which he now describes as the most paramount aspect of his life structure.

**THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF J  
(INFORMANT 4)**

"I can see a vision of a bright future at the end of the tunnel."

(J, third interview, 14 October 1993)

**Identifying Information**

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-4
AGE	32
MARITAL STATUS	Married
CHILDREN	Two (one illegitimate)
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Mother deceased; eight siblings
PLACE OF BIRTH	Rural area of Hamanskraal
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Johannesburg
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Matric
OCCUPATION	Clerical/Administrative

**Introduction**

J was introduced to the researcher by the researcher's wife, who worked with him. He was chosen to be interviewed because the researcher was aware that J lived most of his life in a rural area, and had come to live and work in an urban area (Johannesburg) in his early twenties. The transition from a rural area to an urban area is typical of many black adults, and the effect of this move on J's life structure would be valuable to the emerging theory.

J was interviewed four times over a period of six weeks. He chose to be interviewed at the researcher's house. A friendly, warm relationship was established quickly with J. He communicated in a lively, genuine, and sometimes emotional manner (becoming tearful at such

instances when he spoke about his mother's death). The impression was of a man who was caught between the contradiction of wanting to pursue his dream and career aspirations, on the one hand, and being caught in a rut on the other. "When is this person going to escape the stagnation he experiences, and realise his career aspirations?" is a question that often came to the researcher's mind.

(Note that in the first section - that is J's biography - there is a sub-section entitled "Follow up Interview". This section includes information based on a follow up interview held with J after he had married. For the sake of clarity, this interview was included separately).

#### **Biography: The Life of J**

The first event that J recalls which had an effect on his life was having to leave home to stay with his grandfather in 1968, when he was six years old. He went to stay at his grandfather because "they wanted someone to look after the sheeps and goats because there was no small boys there". While staying at his grandfather, he started school at the age of eight. This was a difficult time for J. He felt out of place with his grandparents, like a "boarder", and was always conscious of the fact that his grandparents treated him differently to their own children. He felt that he was missing out on the "happiness" at home, and he unsuccessfully begged his parents to take him back home, telling them that "life here is like hell," and threatening to walk back home.

During his adolescence, J began to have a consuming fear that he would not see his sick mother again (she suffered from "fits"). He also felt that there was no need for him at his grandfather's farm because most of the animals had died from disease. His request to go back home, however, was again denied a few times, until he eventually returned home in 1977 (age 15). In the meantime, his worst fear materialised because his mother had passed away just months before he returned home.

J describes his feeling of returning home and finding out that his mother had died, as a "feeling that I will never forget". This feeling is prevalent in J's life at the moment: "Even now if you look at me, my

eyes, you will see that my tears want to come, and when I remember that thing, it's the worst feeling I've ever had in my life." He adds that, "I don't know how to overcome that feeling".

His mother's death, and the fact that he was away from home during his childhood and adolescence has left him feeling that, "I owe something to my mother," because, "I've never done anything for her or never enjoyed her love as my mother". This has resulted in a desire to help his younger sister as far as possible, because she was younger than three years when their mother died and hence, like J, missed out on having a mother.

J found it difficult to adapt when he returned home. During the time that he was staying with his grandparents, he had only seen his family occasionally during school holidays. He felt like a stranger in his own house, "like a lonely person," because his siblings were not "used to" him and he was not "used to" them. He still feels the effect of having been away from his siblings during his younger years, and only seeing his one sister for the first time when she was two years old:

I think it weakened the relationship, that has effected it, I can say, up until now. It still happens to me sometimes, because when I see some of the things goes wrong, especially my side, between me, my brothers and sisters, it still draws me back to the time that I stayed at my grandparents' place for about ten years ... the way of life, the kind of life they were living and the kind of life I was living was different, you see.

J thus "battled to bring that bond together". He also found it difficult to adapt to his new school, and was not able to concentrate on his school work. Life "changed a little bit," however, when J began to realise that perhaps he should begin to communicate more with his brothers and sisters. He began to feel that there must be a purpose in belonging to such a big family, which he realised, was to help and support each other. After explaining this to some of his siblings, he felt more comfortable at home.

J's education was interrupted after standard eight for one year because his parents could not afford the school fees. He then went on to matriculate in 1982, at the age of 20. J did not feel uncomfortable about completing matric at a late age because most of the scholars in his class were actually older than him (he describes one person in his class as having grey hair already). After matriculating, he wanted to study journalism at a university or technikon: "Since when I was 18 the main thing - I've wanted to get a bursary to go to university." He was prevented from doing this due to lack of funds. Indeed, "lack of funds," he says, "has affected my career," throughout life.

J's intense wish to become a journalist had begun in his later school years. It developed through listening to the radio, reading books, and from his "main interest" in writing. When the library at school was destroyed, he began writing dramas for the radio. After his stories were continuously rejected by the radio station, he decided that he should study further, to improve his journalistic and writing skills. J's wish to become a journalist stems from his conviction that writing is "a way of delivering messages", and "a way of sharing ideas with people," especially black people. Moreover, J has always had a desire for "doing something for the people", such as writing a book or article which "can help him (the black person) in life". This desire, he says, increased at age 27, and is particularly strong now.

So keen was his desire to be a journalist, that he wanted to do a teaching degree after school because he had heard that the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC) was employing teachers, and he thought that he would gain good journalistic experience there.

J decided to come to Johannesburg in 1983, at the age of 21 because his friends were either completing their education or working, and he wished to pursue his education. He felt that he was stagnating at home: "I finished my matric in 1982, so I couldn't go any further, so I was lonely at home. I didn't know what else to do." His sister, who had a job as a domestic worker in Johannesburg, had organised a temporary job for him as a gardener with her employer.

J did not find leaving his family traumatic because some of his siblings worked in Johannesburg, and he stayed with his sister. Furthermore, he did not (and still does not) feel that he was separating from his family: "Well I'm still with them. It's only because of employment (that) I have to come here. But every weekend we go home and we see each other." Moving to the city, however, was a great shock for J. There had been no electricity at his home and the lights of the city "looked like heaven" to him. It was also the first time that he saw white people, whom based on descriptions from his friends, he was scared of, and respectful to, at the same time. His fears increased when he was hit for no apparent reason by a young white boy. J felt frustrated and powerless because he could not hit the young boy back and decided that it might be safer for him if he stayed in his room: "I didn't even want to go out again and preferred to stay in the room 'cause maybe if there's many of them they just going to hit me and hurt me."

Soon after arriving in Johannesburg, J enrolled for a commercial course at a private college because it was cheaper than a course in journalism:

To do journalism which I couldn't .... it was expensive .... well, I wouldn't blame my parents because what I've realised - if you are from maybe a poor family and there's nothing which helps you to get education or for them to get money, it's still going to affect your life after that because you didn't get the chance to go to school like nowadays. You had to find employment, and you see how much competition it is.

After completing the course, the person that J was working for on a temporary basis, hired him to work in his company on a full time basis. It was at this time that J moved from staying with his sister to staying with his uncle. J went to stay with his uncle because his uncle wanted to keep him away from "bad influences" in Johannesburg.

After starting his first full time job, he felt quite frustrated because he felt that his employer was treating him unfairly, paid him too little, and did not give him enough "freedom". More importantly, he still had a strong desire to study. He "had no interest so much in working at

the time" but only wished to work for a few years so that he could save money to follow his real dream, which was to study journalism.

He originally worked as an "assistant accountant" and felt pleased that he was "gaining experience" but was suddenly moved to another section of the company to work as an assistant store manager. He soon began to feel bored and frustrated, as if "I'm wasting my brains". Before the year had ended he told his uncle that he wanted to leave his job. Looking back now, he partly blames himself for not leaving his job, but points to two factors that prevented him from leaving: his lack of education and "these pass laws, whereby if you don't work you always scared of the police" and "if you don't work you get arrested . . . . so you had to stick where you were". J points out that jobs were reserved for people who had passes, and he did not have a pass.

This sense of regret for not having left his job soon after joining the company is expressed in the following words:

So, I think if it weren't because of that (pass laws), I could of left this work a year after I joined them, because I couldn't even see a light at the end of the tunnel. So, today I still blame myself for staying too long there, because I could have found something else maybe.

Starting work meant for J that he had to take on the responsibility of helping to support his father financially, as well as his siblings who were still at school. He describes it as an "early parenthood" and says, "with us most of the time when you start working, I'd say you start practicing parenthood". There is no such thing, he continues, as leaving home at 18 or 20. Rather "with the first payment (from work) you start to be a parent already" and it is "with us, usually when you get married (that) you can move out of your home, and build your own home".

J felt nervous about mixing with white people at work and felt that "it was going to take long before I get used to that". In spite of this, he seemed to make friends with white people quite quickly, and felt "so honoured" that his first friend at work was actually a white woman. He describes in detail his first visit to her house which she shared with

her fiance. He felt nervous about meeting him, but soon relaxed as they watched football together. This incident, he says, helped him to feel so much more relaxed with white people.

J did not have anyone at work that he looked up to or admired. He did, however, describe a writer of a book he had read as an influential person, and somebody who has "done a lot to me," and whom he reads if he has a problem.

J is still working at the same company and says that: "I still think that I am wasting my brains" at work. He says that his job does not require any expertise, qualifications or initiative: "Just do what they tell you to do." These factors make the work "so frustrating". J also feels that his employers are taking advantage of people and, more specifically, "there's a lot of racism". The black people at work, he says, "are denied most of the things we should be getting". He cites examples of having to come to work on the weekend (without being paid) or blamed for mistakes which he feels he, and the other black staff, did not make.

J describes the effect of the racism that he has experienced by referring to a song: "I forget the name of the song, but somewhere it says, 'Oh Lord, oh Lord, what's wrong with the colour of my skin?' So that's the kind of feeling that sometimes I get."

Besides the monetary factor and the work load, there is little room for advancement in the company:

I'd say it's a .... most of racialistic things that happens, and more work, no money. And one of the worst things - I've been with the company for so long, where it has become monotonous and boring. You see there's no room for promotion. If you do the same thing for a long time - maybe if you get a better package it can quieten you up .... but if you just get more work, and bad treatment, and you do the same thing every day.

J had a relationship with a woman in 1987 (age 25) for about three years, and had a child from that relationship. He does not have much contact with this woman or her child because her parents do not want him to see the child. He does not help to support the child because he feels that the child's mother wants too much money, and has advised her to take legal action. He says that he always has the feeling that "you got a child somewhere," even though he has very little contact with his child.

J had a relationship with another woman in 1990 which lasted for about two years. J says that they broke up because she did not have the same aspirations as J (especially the desire to study further).

These two relationships, and his present relationship, are the only "serious" relationships J has had with women. He describes his other relationships with women as short term relationships where he was "naughty" and wanted to sleep around.

This changed when J met a woman about 18 months ago, whom he plans to marry. She stays in Hamanskraal (about 100 kilometres from Johannesburg) in a place that J has recently rented.

Marriage is more important to him than his work. Work, he says, is important "for me, just to get my plans going - that's all - not interested at all, only to get what I can accumulate (that is money), to add to what I've got. Just to try and make my plans work, with my major plans being to get married next year".

He feels frustrated at the moment because he only sees his girlfriend on weekends. "Let me put it to you this way," he says, "most of the things we can do together, we can't do it, being separate". He says he will have to continue staying with his uncle after getting married, but is trying to get a job closer to Hamanskraal.

At the age of 27, he developed this desire to marry when he turned 30: "I've got a pressure from myself because I wanted to marry at the age of 30 - that's my whole wish." The reason that he does not marry now, he says, is that he does not have enough money, and he wants to save some money before getting married so that he does not get "stuck" later.

Nevertheless, he feels that this is an appropriate stage of his life to marry and start a family: "I'd say every 'normal man,' I'd call him, at this stage wants to have a family and I'm no exception." At times, he says, he even forgets that they are not married yet, and thinks of this girlfriend as his wife. He says that he is tired of being a single person and has a "burning issue that I have to get a family now". He also expresses the desire to be like his parents and have a "big family".

He says that his relationship towards women has changed since his youth because when he was 18 he would "just like to go out with every other woman I bumped into - I didn't even want to have the right woman, I just wanted to run around". Now, he says, "I just want a determined woman, who wants to share her life with me during happiness and tears, and who needs to challenge this life".

His future wife shares two of his most urgent needs at the moment: to marry and to further his education:

Between marriage and education, you see, this one almost frustrated me .... but it gave me courage with this woman I met because she also has the same aspirations, even if it's not in writing. I mean furthering education and all these things. And she didn't have that background she needed, so we're in the same boat, so we can just put this boat together, just to get moving to the other side.

J feels that with their "common interest," they can "give each other a chance," start a family and begin accumulating funds to study further, even if it means studying through correspondence. Due to this common desire, J believes that he has "bumped into my dream lady". They have currently planned that they are going to study from January. In order to do this they will start putting money aside to buy a small car and then take turns to study. They also want to start saving money for the future education of their planned children. His priority of educating his children stems from his "desire to see if you can do better than your parents did to you".

J refers to the relationship with his girlfriend as "the happiest relation I've ever had, and most of the times, I think she's my ideal woman". He describes his love for her as follows: "I think ... it's a feeling ... I don't think it's mostly in my mind, it's a feeling inside. I don't know how to explain that feeling, but it's a feeling inside."

The only thing that she is lacking in terms of J's conception of an ideal woman that he formed during adolescence, is that she is not "light coloured," and from his youth he wanted to marry a light coloured woman.

The prospect of marriage is "like starting a new life". It makes him feel "like a little bit excited, and sometimes it's a little bit frightening". Marriage, he says, will "help you to look into your life," but it is also a "serious responsibility" because he will have to give up some of the freedom of being single. He will not be able to "go anywhere, like anytime, waste money most of the time," and will have to "control" himself more.

The aspect that is scaring him about marriage is that he thinks he will have to continue to financially support some of his siblings (especially the youngest sister) after getting married. He finds this "a very frightening" prospect. It is so frightening that "at times I have this feeling that I hate to be an adult," because of the "responsibility" of helping to support his siblings. "It's a nightmare, it's a nightmare," he says. Furthermore, J has a feeling that he owes his mother something, and through supporting his youngest sister through school, he feels that he can, "take this feeling away from me".

He is also nervous that he will not be able to support his wife on his limited salary:

And one other thing, I also want to get married - the salary that I earn also frustrates me. If I can't survive on that salary, what if I involve another person to live on that salary with me. So you see this is a frustrating situation for me.

His fear is accentuated by his perception that as a father, he should be "like an umbrella for everyone in the family". He says this is related to a traditional belief: "Especially in the olden days, women were not used to work(ing) after getting married. They used to be like housewives."

It is this financial frustration that permeates his life at the moment. Although he does not blame his parents, he feels that the root of his financial problems is that his parents were "not that well educated and they were underpaid". This affected him in many ways: he had to stay out of school for a year; he had to start working immediately after school and could thus not further his education and become a "professional somebody;" and he still has to help support his siblings. If his parents had money, he would be "living better - not that strenuous one that I am experiencing now".

J does not wish to get rich, but just to be able to "try to manage like any other middle class parent," and have a house and a car and most importantly to be able to afford the education for his children. If he had money, he says, and if he had a good professional education, he would be able to afford these things:

Most of the things I've wished to have I didn't have, like every other guy will have your own car after working for a year for this company, before you get married and all these things. I'd like to have a car, just as a small boy you like to have a bicycle or motorbike, and after that you want to buy yourself a car, then after studying, working. So I'd say one other thing, if I could have had my education and profession at the time I wanted it, I could have been in my own house by now.

J still has a desire to study journalism, but it does not seem as intense as it used to be. He completed a part-time course in journalism at a private college about three years ago (aged 27). He was disappointed in the course because it was "not what I expected," as it was just an introduction to journalism. His disappointment and frustration with not being able to raise the necessary funds for a tertiary course in

journalism has resulted in him putting the wish to be a journalist aside for a while, and focusing more on the prospect of marriage: "I just left it for the moment - my idea now is just to get married," and

.... like now you ask me what is important at this stage between getting married and furthering my education. I battled so many years to accumulate funds to go to school, but I couldn't, so I think getting there it's one of the things I wished. So if you can't do the other one, I'll do the possible one. So even if I don't go to school full time, see, I'll do it part-time when my money is a little more relaxed. It's worth it you see, so marriage is what I can afford now.

J still feels a desire to help other people: "From 27 upwards, you see, because I wanted to do something for the people, not only to myself, just my family." He always asks himself what he can do for the people, and especially the African people. He feels that he can help the people through a "professional field", such as writing or journalism. If people can read his articles and "grab something" which can help them, then, he says, "I'll know that I'm doing something for the people".

J still sees his father regularly and does "a lot of things for him". He describes his father as "unique," like being an "older brother," somebody with whom he can share ideas and problems. He is still very proud of his father, partly because of his father's decision when J was 14 not to remarry: "No, he didn't (remarry) and we're still a family, and we still proud about that decision." J says of his father: "We are there to guide him, and he's there to guide us."

He refers to his father as an "idol", adding, "I've gained a lot of ideas from him which helps me to challenge life, or to meet the challenges of this life". The only way his relationship with his father has changed, he says, is that while his father used to be strict and harsh with them as children, he now treats him like an "adult," a "friend" or a "brother," realising that he can "learn some of the things he doesn't know" from J.

J feels that he wants to be more independent from his uncle with whom he is staying, but cannot afford to rent another place:

Sometimes I feel I should have my own place where I can be with my girlfriend, not to be an everyday part of life of my uncle. I need to be like independent from him, though I only go there at night to sleep. I still, at this time, I don't want that any longer, I just can't afford most of the rents.

There has been a lot of tension between J and his uncle, but "it has changed a lot" since J spoke to him about some of the things that were creating the tension. J says that he wants his uncle to give him advice, and "challenge" him when necessary, but it upsets him when his uncle "treats me like a baby".

He describes his life at the moment as "hard" and full of challenges: "I think that it's a little bit worse than before, or not worse in the sense that I can't cope .... or what can I say .... it's worse about the challenges." Life, he says, would have been easier for him if he was a white person, "because they have all the privileges".

At the same time he feels that "there's no turning back," because turning back will be "sort of killing my future". He is optimistic about his future describing it as a "vision of a bright future at the end of the tunnel". His girlfriend, and the common dreams that they share, makes him optimistic about the future.

One of the things that he wishes to change in his life is that he feels he wastes a lot of time drinking when he could be doing more valuable activities such as writing:

One of the ones which I want to .... I don't know how I can get rid of them. It's like over the weekends, if I'm at home where my parents are, 'cause I've got more friends there, people whom you've grown up together with, so lots of those shebeen goings. I think I waste more time and money where I could be doing something like writing.

He attends a "lekgotla" regularly. This is "a place where men meet together and share ideas". They drink traditional beers at these gatherings, and talk about "different things in life," and "things you are experiencing at the moment". The older men advise the younger men at these meetings because "they have gone through some of the things you are experiencing at the moment". There was one particular person at these gatherings who influenced J and gave him "good advise in life". This person used to be J's English teacher at school. He influenced J's desire to marry by suggesting that J should not be deterred from marriage due to his financial situation, adding that when he himself married all that he could afford was the labola.

#### Follow up Interview

J's desire to marry materialised when he married his girlfriend at the beginning of the year (1994) at the age of 32. He refers to his marriage in terms of a legal marriage, and a traditional marriage. The legal marriage involved the necessary signing of the marriage certificate at the magistrates court. The traditional marriage involved the payment of labola to his wife's parents by J's uncle, at a price that J's father and his wife's parents had decided upon.

The traditional marriage involving the payment of labola was important to J because "like all the nations, everyone wants to keep their tradition alive" and "you have to pay labola and all those things. If you don't pay labola in our tradition, you wouldn't say you married."

Although J had experienced some pressure from his father and his uncle to marry because they thought he was getting old, he reiterated that the marriage is "within my plans," and, "it's the right age to get married".

J felt very excited when he got married, as though he had his manhood conferred upon him:

It was so exciting. It was one of my greatest days 'cause it was one of the greatest things which I ever achieved as a man

in my life. So really today I am a man, I am no longer a, what can I say, a boy, or whatever.

He feels like he is now "heading for responsibility," as his central focus in his life is now his own family. He also describes his wife as being more "settled" since getting married, which is reflected in her preoccupation with family matters (such as furnishing their house). At the same time it is evident that J feels more settled, describing his wife as the "woman who put me down," or "the one who brought me down to earth". He believes that in the years before meeting his wife he was like a "wild man," showing no "respect" for women, and wanting "to get into bed" with any woman who he liked. Now, he says, he does not have that urgent need because his main responsibility is his family. His feeling of responsibility "tells me to go home to see my family".

J and his wife knew that she was pregnant when they got married, but this was not the reason that he married her. Since the birth of J's first child to his previous girlfriend, J has had a fear that the woman whom he marries would not be able to fall pregnant. He impregnated his wife before marriage to disprove this fear.

J has recently had a child, and he describes his feelings as exciting and challenging:

I feel so great. I feel so great and I feel (like) being challenged, so life is challenging me more. Sometimes I ask myself is this the same feeling my father had when he first had the first child.

J believes that the birth of his child has brought him and his wife closer together: "I found the relationship stronger than before." He describes his child as "one of the bones that is there," and "which brought more happiness in the family". He feels sad, however, that he cannot be with his child while she is "growing up". At the moment his wife and child are staying (according to custom) at his wife's parents' place for a few weeks. After this they will return to the house which J is renting in Hamanskraal. His wife's sister also stays there.

J also feels an increasing sense of independence, although he still feels attached to his family of origin, and he still helps his family financially ("cause with us finance has been the biggest problem"). He describes this relationship as follows:

Not very close like it used to be. I can't concentrate on both families like now, equally. So I've got to concentrate on my own family, to see the progress of the family. But with my brothers and sisters, I just want to know how they keeping, and if they got problems which needs our assistance, I discuss it with my wife, then if we can help, we help.

He does not perceive himself as "breaking away" from his family of origin, but wants to "minimise financial support".

Since starting a family, J's anxiety about finances, which he had before the marriage, has increased his desire to find another job:

It's still frustrating me, like sometimes late last year - it was December - when after I paid labola, it struck my mind and I felt, 'Will I ever be able to support my family with this money?' So I felt like looking for another job.

He recently spoke to his bosses about an increase. They said that they would get back to him, which they have not done. However, it is not only the financial insecurity, his low salary and absence of a pension fund, that has resulted in an urgent need for J to find another job, but also the lack of promotion opportunities and good working experience, and the boring nature of the work itself. He sometimes feels that the last ten years at work have been "like ten years down the drain".

He has been for a number of job interviews, and wants to find work in Pretoria if possible, because it is closer to his wife and child:

Like I say, if I can get a job near my home, I wish to stay near my wife, near my family, 'cause like you can't stay the whole day without even thinking about your family, so it doesn't suit me to be this far. Unless they were in

Johannesburg, then I's be staying in the same place. So it doesn't give me any pleasure.

### **Analysis of J's Life According to Levinson's Framework**

#### Pre-Adult years

J's pre-adulthood years were both disjointed and disrupted. His experience of these years was characterised by feelings of loneliness and estrangement. He felt out of place, like a stranger, when he stayed with his grandparents, and he also felt lonely and isolated when he returned home during his adolescence, and had to adjust to a big family and to a new school. He was not able to experience and develop close relationships with his siblings or his parents. This was confounded by the tragic sense of loss that he felt when his mother suddenly died, before he could establish a close relationship with her.

The disruption, estrangement and loss has had a profound effect upon J's life structure. Much of J's adult development has been characterised by a struggle to overcome difficult external circumstances that he experienced during his pre-adult years. This struggle has been characterised, in part, by feelings of helplessness and a fixation on the past. This is especially evident in J's perception that if his parents were more educated and had more money, he would be "living better," and in his frequent references to the role of poverty in blocking him from certain opportunities (such as furthering his education). Feelings of helplessness in relation to J's past, are also captured by J's words, "I don't know how to overcome that feeling" (referring to his feelings concerning his mother's death) and in his perception of often been "drawn back" to the past (and to feelings associated with the separation from his siblings during the pre-adult years).

In dialectical terms, the juxtaposition of these feelings of helplessness in the face of external circumstances, coupled with J's desire to escape the poverty of his pre-adult years, has portrayed much of J's developmental struggle.

Early Adult Transition (EAT)  
(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

J's EAT was delayed in comparison with the men in Levinson's (1978) study, because he matriculated at what can be considered the late age of 20. (He did not consider this age "late," because many students in his matric class were, in fact, older than him).

J's EAT was initiated by a sense of frustration, boredom and stagnation that he felt after completing matric. This feeling, as well as J's Dream to pursue a career in journalism, resulted in J's decision to move to the city. This was thus his initial step towards leaving the pre-adult world, by separating from the family of origin. In terms of the internal aspect of the life structure (or J's perceptions), J did not feel as if he was separating from his family. This is reflected in his words: "Well, I'm still with them (his family). It's only because of employment that I had to come here (to Johannesburg)".

J's EAT must be understood in terms of this transition from the rural area of Hamanskraal (which was populated exclusively by black people) to the urban metropolis of Johannesburg. This transition involved "discontinuity" in Levinson's (1978) terms, because J had to adapt to a new culture and a different way of life. He dealt with this transition (especially the racism he experienced) in a passive way (by withdrawing to his room). Later on, however, he was able to make friends with white people, although he was never able to overcome discrimination in the work place.

The task of separating from the family of origin was never fully completed by J. He had to provide for his father and some of his siblings as soon as he started working. Thus, instead of developing independence from his family, he had to assume, according to his description, the role of "early parenthood". This role was related to the expectation that a man should help to support his family of origin until he gets married, which illustrates the importance of traditional beliefs on this task.

J's Dream - to become a journalist - represented the path he had chosen to initiate early adulthood. This Dream was grounded in his interests and desire to communicate with others, especially other black people. It fuelled his desire to further his education, and he was able to specify an initial route to meet this goal (namely to study a teaching degree so that he could find work at the SABC).

Poverty and family circumstances however forced him to compromise on his Dream. Firstly, he could not afford a course in journalism, so he settled for a basic commercial course instead. Secondly, although the most important component of his life structure at this stage was to study further, economic circumstances forced him to negate his choice, and to start working.

The initial forming of an occupation, in J's instance, was thus marked by feelings of frustration and stagnation. The occupation was not of his choice, and had no relevance to his Dream. Instead of following his Dream, he went to work as a gardener, and soon after this, in a clerical position. Occupational choice was not the result of deliberate career planning, but rather the result of circumstantial factors, or his perception that, "you had to find employment," to get money. He thus experienced himself as having little control over his career path.

J also felt that there was little control and direction over the work that he was doing, as he was moved from one section to another (which increased his frustration). It seems that he experienced himself as being passively trapped by external circumstances (he had to "stick where you were"). Thus he felt scared to leave his job because he was afraid that he would be arrested if he was unemployed (as he had no "pass").

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creation of a stable life structure)

The main internal component of J's life structure during this period continued to be his desire to study further, and pursue his Dream in journalism. His life structure, though, was characterised by frustration and stagnation at work. He continued to work in the same job even though

he was unfulfilled and unhappy. Furthermore, he did not seem to formulate any goals in his work environment, but rather accepted that he would never be promoted. Coping by acceptance stands out as a pattern, or way in which J dealt with the frustration at work. This is especially evident in relation to the discrimination which he experienced. He never challenged the unfairness that he experienced. Instead he coped with it by developing plans to leave his job - plans which he did not act upon during the entire Novice Phase of development.

In terms of his Dream, he did attempt to explore options by completing a basic course in journalism towards the end of this period, but his disappointment with the course increased his sense of stagnation.

The second important component of J's life structure during this period concerns his relationships. Towards the later part of this period, J became "seriously" involved with a woman for the first time, and he developed a desire to marry.

There is little evidence of J being able to create a stable home base and life independent from his family, which is important during this period, according to Levinson (1978). He continued to stay with his uncle, due to lack of financial resources, and maintained a high level of continuity with his own family, through financial support and physically staying at his father's home on weekends. He did, however, feel a need to move away from his uncle's place and establish his own place. Again, J accepted the situation even though he was frustrated, ascribing his reason for continuing to stay with his uncle to external circumstances (lack of finances).

By the end of this period J had not established a stable life structure. Indeed, J's life structure before the ATT is outstanding because of its provisional nature. He felt unhappy at work and wanted to change jobs; he still had no place of his own; and he had not yet married.

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

Two related themes characterise J's life structure during this

period: his intense desire to get married, and his urgent need to find other employment. His marriage at the end of this period shows J's capacity to be flexible and compromise, as he was able to weigh up the options "between getting married and furthering my education," and choose the "possible one" (marriage) while keeping the other alternative on hold (until "my money is a little more relaxed").

J's marriage during this period increased his urgent desire (which is typical of the ATT) to leave his work so that he could earn more money, and be closer to his wife and child. Self-evaluation, which is also typical of the ATT, is apparent in J's active process of evaluation in terms of his work, which brought all his work frustrations and problems to the forefront (including his low salary, the discrimination at work, the routine nature of the work, and his feelings that he had wasted so many years at work).

J's marriage also conferred upon him a sense of "manhood" and independence, and marked a refocus of responsibility from his family of origin to his own family (even though he continued to support his siblings). J was thus still struggling with tasks typical of the earlier periods of the Novice Phase (establishing independence and separating from the family of origin) during the ATT.

It would seem then that J did begin to work on the flaws and limitations of the previous life structure, as is typical of this period (this is evident in his reevaluation and active search for a new job and his urgency to marry). He also began to make new choices in his pursuit of a stable life structure (by his choice to marry and have a child).

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### **Forming and Living out the Dream**

J was able to formulate a Dream during the first period of the Novice Phase. His Dream was well articulated and focused, revolving around two essential aspects of J's life structure - work and education. The Dream was influenced by internal factors such as J's interests, and had an individualistic component (ie. to achieve) and a group component

(to help the black people). J's Dream also had a compensatory quality which is reflected in his desire to escape early impoverishment. It is evident that J could not live out his Dream during early adulthood due to external aspects of the life structure, such as lack of finances and opportunity.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

J did not form any mentor relationships at work. It seems that his perception of his seniors as prejudiced, and the lack of senior black men to act as mentors, would prevent the opportunity for mentoring. Evidence of mentoring relationships however is seen in J's relationship with a person at the "lekgotla" (communal gathering) that J attended. This person, who used to be J's English teacher, is somebody who J respected and somebody who was able to advise and influence J, even in matters such as marriage. J was open to advice from other men at the "lekgotla". The advisory function of the "lekgotla" raises the intriguing possibility of another kind of mentoring experience - group mentoring.

J's father was also an influential person in J's life. He gave J advice and J also worshipped him. At the same time J, was intent on escaping the poverty and lack of education that characterised his father's life.

#### Forming an Occupation

J, essentially, was forced to begin his first job while still a child - working as a herdboys. A striking feature of the formation of J's occupation during the Novice Phase of development is the stagnation, claustrophobia and frustration which he felt in the work environment. Quite clearly, the internal and external aspects of J's life structure, in terms of the formation of an occupation, were "out of sync". His Dream to study further was harshly juxtaposed with the reality of doing work which he had no desire to do. External factors (financial constraints and discrimination) prevented J's occupational goals and desires from being fulfilled. Another striking feature of J's occupational development is that his initial occupation was not the result of choice, or the

result of consciously matching internal desires and needs with the world of work, but rather the result of chance and circumstantial factors.

By the end of the ATT, J had not been able to establish an occupational identity. Work for J seemed to be nothing more than a means to earn money. He still desired to follow his Dream and do something completely different. It would seem that what was preventing J from entering the SD Period, was his unhappiness at work, his low salary and the fact that he was working and living far from his wife and child.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

J's relationship with his girlfriend during the ATT resulted in a shift in his life structure. He no longer had the wild need to have sex with every woman, but wanted to devote his energy to one woman. This woman, whom he married, fulfilled the criteria of a Special Woman, in her very special connection to J's Dream (to study further), and in the way in which her presence could inspire him to pursue his Dream. (Note that J's image of a Special Woman, especially during his youth and early twenties was also in terms of physical characteristics - that he desired a light skinned woman.)

The task of forming a marriage and family, was impeded by external factors, because J was living and working far from his family, and he felt insecure about supporting them. These factors prevented J from feeling settled and would, it seems, be a crucial issue which would have to be negotiated during later periods of development.

A final point concerning this task is the importance of cultural factors, as is evident in the significance J attached to the traditional wedding (through the labola). Even now there is family separation due to the tradition that the wife has to spend time with her family after the birth of their child.

#### **Synopsis**

There were some similarities in the pattern of the evolution of the life structure of J, and those of the men that Levinson (1978) studied,

during early adulthood. J was concerned with the primary tasks of leaving the pre-adult world and initiating early adulthood during the EAT. This was inspired by his feelings of stagnation after completing matric, and his Dream to study further, and is evident in his move away from his rural familial home to the city and his transition, after finding work, to the new role of "early parenthood". J was also concerned with the primary tasks of exploration and creating a stable life structure during the EAW. Thus, J did begin to explore options in terms of his career (he studied a course in journalism) and his relationships (he became seriously involved with women for the first time, and considered the option of marriage). His life structure at the end of the EAW, however, retained a provisional quality as he did not feel he was independent from his family, and he was not committed to his work. He felt a sense of urgency, and some self-reevaluation during the ATT which was typical of the men in Levinson's (1978) study. This was evident in his extreme dissatisfaction at work, and his urgent need to find a new job, and his marriage (which was an attempt to find stability in his life structure because he could not find stability at work) during this period.

The evolution of J's life structure must be considered in terms of the dialectical interaction between J's needs and aspirations, and external economic and sociopolitical factors which stagnated the evolution of his life structure and, in many ways, prevented him from establishing a viable life structure.

Integral to this is J's experience of being powerless, and at the control of external circumstances, especially the poverty which had its roots in his family background. This is evident in J's continual references to the manner in which poverty has blocked him from privileges and opportunities (such as furthering his and his family's education and owning a house and a car). "Lack of funds" prevented him from completely separating from his family of origin (as he helped to support them financially). While J takes some blame for not leaving his job earlier, he points to external circumstances (such as lack of job opportunities and influx control laws) as the reason for not leaving his job. Even at work, J coped with frustration in a passive way, as is evident in his words, "just do what they tell you to do".

Perhaps this external locus of control is best expressed in J's words, "if I could have," as in his following words, "if I could have had my education and profession at the time I wanted it, I could have been in my own house by now". He believes that he would have left his uncle and found his own place if he had more money.

There is evidence of goal directedness and flexibility in the face of adverse circumstances, during the evolution of his life structure. Thus, J was able to choose another study direction during the EAT because he could not afford his preferred direction. Moreover, economic frustration during the ATT initiated the development of another plan - his desire to get married.

A striking theme that emerges during the evolution of J's life structure (and especially the ATT), is his feeling of disappointment, coupled with his perception that he is different to other people. This is visible in J's strong words, "most of the things I've wished to have, I didn't have, like every other guy;" or "like any other middle class parent;" or "normal person;" and his perception that life is not "to what my expectations are". It is also evident in J's overwhelming sense of disappointment and frustration at work.

J's experience of being a black person has increased his sense of being different. He believes that life would have been easier if he was a white person because he says, "they have all the privileges". Racism (especially at work), has accentuated this perception. J has coped with racism and discrimination during the evolution of the life structure by withdrawing from it (or retreating to his room after a racialistic incident during the EAT); by internalising it ("what's wrong with the colour of my skin?"); and by passively accepting it (as has been evident throughout his working career).

Another theme that emerges concerns J's perception of change during his development. He says, "I've changed a lot". J does not refer to any internal or personal change, but rather to change in terms of what he calls his "behaviour". This essentially refers to change he has experienced in terms of his relationships with women (he has become less "wild"), and his family of origin (since marriage his own family has

become more important to him). He also has experienced some change as a result of recent changes in South Africa. This is reflected in his words: "It will effect my life, but positively. I've got so much hope in the changes that are happening now." Some desires which J has had, have remained stable throughout his life, such as the desire to study further: "Since when I was 18 - the main thing - I wanted to get a bursary to study at university."

Cultural factors also played an important part in the evolution of J's life structure. J's definition of himself as an adult (and as a father) was linked with cultural expectations. This can be seen in J's role of "early parenthood" (which was related to the cultural expectation that an unmarried person must help to support younger siblings), and his assertion that in his culture, one only gains independence from the family after getting married. Although the support that J provided to his family was draining ("it's a nightmare"), J accepted it as part of his tradition, saying that, "that's how we were grown up". The tasks of the Novice Phase (in this instance, separating from the family of origin) must be considered within the cultural context.

J's definition of himself as a father was also influenced by cultural expectations. This was reflected in his fear concerning the role of fatherhood because of a traditional expectation that a father should be "like an umbrella for everyone in the family".

J's marriage must also be seen in the cultural context, as reflected in the importance J attached to the traditional wedding. He felt that the marriage would not be recognised as a marriage (by himself and his family) without the labola. Traditional influences were also evident in J's social life, as in the traditional gatherings which he attended.

Lastly, a point must be made concerning the effect of external circumstances on the major tasks of the Novice Phase (especially the formation of the Dream and career). J was able to form a well articulated Dream (to study journalism) but was prevented from realising this Dream during this phase, due, in part, to lack of finances. The formation of his occupation was influenced more by economic and chance factors than choice, and the discrimination that he experienced at work and in society

(for example influx control laws) increased his sense of stagnation. Moreover, the lack of a mentoring experience at work should be understood in terms of the prejudice and discrimination he experienced in the work situation.

**THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF N  
(INFORMANT 5)**

"While there were stumbling blocks before ... I think they (are) now moving away."

(N, first interview, 29 June 1994)

**Identifying Information**

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-5
AGE	40
MARITAL STATUS	Divorced
CHILDREN	Three
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Father deceased; two older sisters
PLACE OF BIRTH	Orlando West
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Mamelodi
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Diploma in Occupational Therapy
OCCUPATION	Senior Occupational Therapist

**Introduction**

N was introduced to the researcher by the researcher's secretary. She was a close friend of the informant. N was chosen to be interviewed as he could add to the understanding of the life structure, being a professional man who had obtained a senior position at his work, unlike the other informants that were interviewed. Thus, a central question here was: What is the nature of the evolution of the life structure of a professional black man, who had obtained some degree of seniority in terms of his career?

N chose to be interviewed in his office, a small prefab office in the hospital grounds. The interviews were sometimes disturbed due to

phone calls or people wanting to see him, and he gave the impression of being in a rush, which resulted in the interviews being terminated prematurely. Three interviews were held with N in the space of about five weeks.

N appeared to be a friendly, but introverted person. Although his responses were interesting and articulate, there was little evidence of introspection and he seemed unable and unwilling to access deeper feelings.

#### **Biography: The Life of N**

N's father passed away when N was still a small boy, and he does not even remember what he looked like. During his childhood years he stayed with his mother and elder sisters, and counts himself fortunate that his uncle was able to assist the family financially. During his adolescent years, N stayed with his grandmother who lived far from his home. He moved there on the request of his uncle because his grandmother was alone, and needed somebody to look after her.

He describes the death of his father and the move to his grandmother as a "learning experience", a "challenge" and a "decision" which he had little control over, and hence had to accept:

It was not my decision that my father should die, it's not my decision that I should go stay with my grandmother. The elder people, my mother, my uncles and whatsoever, they chose me to be the adult. It's not my decision. That's why I say it's like a learning situation, where you find that things are happening not because you want them to happen (but), because of other people's decisions on something else.

He adds that, "I was not looking at it in a negative way. To me it was an experience - an experience, a challenge. And again, learning to live with it." Later in his life, this sense of learning would be expressed in N's desire to impart his experiences, such as losing his father at an early age, to others in order to help them cope.

During his high school years, N's energy was devoted to finding a suitable career: "I wanted to decide on my career, what am I going to be after matric? I think that's the most important thing, that conflict that I had." N developed the desire to study at a university in the field of law. His ambition to study law stemmed from feedback, which he had received from friends, that he was a good speaker and could argue points well.

He felt "discouraged" and did not choose this option because "the opportunities appeared very slim", as there was a quota system in the universities whereby "preference was given to the whites". Furthermore, the prospect of talking Afrikaans in the courts was daunting, because "Afrikaans then was a hated language". He thus felt there was "no hope" for this option.

After matriculating, N was surprised when he applied and was accepted for a law degree at the University of Zululand. He planned to do a B Iuris (BIur) degree and then proceed to an LLB degree. Although he had little financial support, he was determined to complete his degree: "Though I didn't have money, I'd see to it what I was going to do to help myself". He felt "excitement" while at the university at the prospect of his "life style" changing, which was expressed in his question: "What's going to happen?"

Unfortunately, N had to leave his studies at the university after only five days due to the death of his grandmother. He felt very close to his grandmother, and her death had a "profound effect upon him". He felt "shattered" by this "big blow to me psychologically and emotionally". It also caused a "change of plan" because he had to now discontinue his studies as he did not want to be a financial burden to his relatives, who were supporting him financially (their money, he thought, would now be needed for burial expenses). He had to put his desire to study further on hold: "I should not be a burden to them, instead I should help myself, try to help myself, get employed and accumulate something and go back to university."

With this in mind, N began a job as a teacher: "Then after that I don't have money, the person is gone, what else? Let me just go for this

private teaching." He chose teaching because the job was available, and because he wanted to "accumulate some money for me to go to university". N began working as a teacher in a private school in 1976, a politically tense year in South African history. He describes this period as a "rough time". There were problems at the school because many of the older teachers felt that the younger teachers, like N, were influencing the children to protest. N remembers that during the Soweto uprisings in June of that year, the police began looking for him at his house in Soweto during his holiday. He spent much time sleeping at friends, but they eventually found him, and after taking him to the "Blue Hotel" (John Voster Square Police Headquarters) they released him.

During the time that he was teaching, N stayed at a boarding house at the school during the week, and at his late grandmother's house on the weekends. He kept contact with his mother, who had remarried and was staying in the Transkei, through letters and occasional visits.

Teaching required that N adapt to a different situation, a new role: "I won't say I was a different person, I would say I was in a different situation." This new situation required that he abandon the role that he had been accustomed to (as a scholar listening to instructions and dressing in school uniform), and become the "opposite now as a teacher imparting information to students". He had to dress differently and talk differently.

N quit teaching a year later because he wanted to follow his "desire" to study further, and he felt that "I'm still young - learn, go to the university". The political turmoil that he had experienced were also "sticks" which "might have added more fuel to the fire, to my decision, to go on with education".

He wanted to study law at university, but he did not have sufficient funds. He then registered for training as an occupational therapist at Medunsa. This, he says, "was not my choice", but was his only option because the Department of Education and Training was offering a bursary in this field. Occupational therapy was "a new thing to me", and he only started learning what the profession entailed during his practical work much later on in the course.

There was political tension and "upheaval" at the university while N was there, which affected him personally. He was arrested once, and had to appear in an identification parade after a fellow female student's room was burnt down. The woman first pointed at N (who was unaware of what was going on), as the guilty person, and then hysterically said it was not him. N was so "shocked" by the event that he could not concentrate when he returned to class.

He describes himself as one of the best students at the university, achieving above 80 percent in all his subjects. He was one of only a few black occupational therapy students at Medunsa, and he had to deal with much racism and discrimination. He clashed with one of his white lecturers who he describes as having a "boer attitude". She was "bossy" while N was a "very difficult person myself - I had an attitude - if somebody's having an attitude towards me, automatically I'd have a reverse attitude as well". When she attempted to prohibit the black occupational therapy students from the year below N from writing their exams, N defended them. She then attempted to stop N from writing his exams, although "she didn't have any concrete thing". After many arguments, and being labelled a "hardegat (arrogant) kaffer" by her, N did write the exam.

N met his future wife while studying occupational therapy. She was studying radiography. He describes himself at this time as somebody who "could always get a girl," stressing that women were not high on "the lines of priority", and he had many relationships with women. One of the things that attracted him to this woman was the fact that she was also studying: "I wanted somebody who had some education, somebody who could earn a living, better wages and then we'd help each other in building our lives." He also valued the affection they had for each other: "First was the caring that we had for each other and then, of course, that she was also a professional, she qualified and was also a professional."

He married this woman when he was 29 years old. He says he did not experience any pressures to marry at this stage of his life, but that it was a "natural feeling" that "came spontaneous":

I won't say that I planned, it is difficult to say I planned marriage - most of the time planned things fail. It was like that feeling just came on its own. It was sort of a mutual feeling that we could marry, there was no pressure anywhere.

The paying of labola, which was done through his uncle, was important to him.

N did not feel that marriage changed his "inner personality", but his life did change in certain ways: "I think it changed my life 'cause now I want to do those things that I was doing when I was single." He did not have to do the washing or the cooking anymore, he chose new friends, and even the way he interacted with people changed:

And then even the way I presented myself to people. I was no more like that free kind of guy who was anything he wants at any time he wants ... at home to look a little presentable, even talking, selecting friends and things like that.

N felt that there was now "somebody to be responsible for," and that he had to adapt to various "restrictions" such as not going out as much as he did before, and not going out with other women. He seemed to adapt well to these restrictions:

It didn't really affect me in a negative (way) because I was prepared for that. I was looking forward to that - I've got to be home at this time, got to go visit these types of people, and I've got to stop arriving late at night.

After getting married N focused his attention on having children and owning property:

I knew after getting married it was important for me to have a family. I had a wife but then now to follow it - the kids, and then after the kids I had to own a property, have a shelter for my kids, my own shelter, that was important to me.

N's wish to have children materialised within two years of his marriage when the couple had a baby, and soon after that another child.

He had been worried about having children because there was a common belief that many of the women were aborting their children during that period, and often mothers would make their daughters sterile with traditional medicine. He also seemed to doubt his own capacity to have children. The question he asked himself was: "Can I be able to have my own child, do my sperms ... are they okay?"

He was thus very excited by the birth of his children, especially his first child. He felt that he had to become "more responsible" than he was before, because "now there is this kid to look after". Responsibility, according to N, entailed such considerations as taking the child to a doctor if needed, comforting the child and generally looking after the child.

At the age of 31, N bought his first house. After leaving the university, N had stayed on other people's property (even when he was married) in Mamelodi: "Like somebody's having a place, a garage that he is not using, request for a place to use for domiciling and then pay a certain amount."

He was "elated" when he bought his first house and slaughtered a **beast** to show respect for his ancestors: "To say thank you for helping me and protecting me, that I should be able, at long last, to have a house of my own."

N started working at a mental hospital immediately after completing his university studies. This marked a significant change in his life: "When I started working at W, I think that's when everything changed". He was "faced with the actual imbalances and discriminatory limit" of **being** a black person. He was paid less than his white colleagues, had less chance of promotion, and was only allowed to work with black patients. He also found it "hard" because he felt that his ideas concerning changes which he wished to make, were squashed by "rules and regulations", and "we weren't really allowed" to challenge the white staff. Although the situation was "hard" at times, he says he cannot

describe it as "bad", because "I sort of conditionalised myself to the situation".

However, he did entertain the idea of studying medicine because "I had a taste of it in my education", and he thought he would enjoy the work of a doctor. However, limited finances prevented him from following this option.

He also experienced conflict because he felt a sense of responsibility towards the black patients: "I first have to stay with the patients of mine, my colour, money or no money." After deciding that, "my heart was with my patients" and that this was more important than "any other materialistic thing", N chose "acceptance of the situation", and strove to remain optimistic, although it was frustrating: "It was frustrating, but not so much, because I was sort of a tough-minded optimist, and I took it as a challenge, instead of running from the situation."

N spent the first four years at the hospital "getting used to the system", and looking for "loop holes" so that he could "embark on any change" if necessary. Change came in the form of N's successful attempt at integrating the occupational therapy department and making it "one for everybody". He did this (during his early twenties) through skillfully negotiating with his superiors to upgrade the inferior facilities that the black patients had, and then finally integrating them with the white patients. He felt very proud of this achievement: "I was on top of the world, let me say so, I'm still very proud of what I've done, even now."

N felt confident about his role as a worker during this period of his life: "I felt I was doing a good job for them, I felt good. It would take a long time before they could get somebody to replace me."

At the age of 31, N was promoted to second in charge of his section. This was made possible as the hospital had now become racially integrated. He felt that he was ready for this promotion and that it was "long due". His staff however were "negative", and some were "passively sort of aggressive", making it difficult for him to run meetings, and

give instructions. He coped with this situation by accepting and adapting to it: "I sort of conditionalised myself to the situation."

N experienced conflict when he was asked by his superiors to be transferred to another hospital (where he is currently employed). They offered him a promotion to a more senior post, which was, according to N, "like dangling a carrot" in front of him, as the conditions at this particular hospital were known to be poor. He decided to take the post because of the promotion, and because he wanted to help the black patients, and almost all the patients there, were black: "Those are the black people, go and help them, go and do the best that you can for those patients - patients come first".

He found the situation at the new hospital "very difficult", and felt as if he had been "thrown in the lion's den". He felt that people were very negative towards him, that he did not receive any support or recognition from his superiors, and the administrative staff, and that any idea that he thought of "was sort of crushed". The hospital itself was also in turmoil - there were strikes and people were retrenched. The fact that a white colleague, with less experience than N, was promoted before him also resulted in frustration.

N misses the fact that at his previous place of employment "everybody was respecting me", for achievements such as establishing integrated services and starting a sports club. His attempt at starting a sports club at his present place of employment was soon crushed. N feels that this situation "renders me useless", because "I'm a person who likes to see things going, I don't want to be at a very static place, where people are just coming to work, like that. So this situation is not for me."

N sees the "future as black" due to these frustrations, and has been looking for a new job for a few years already. He wants to get a position as a manager as he feels that:

I should be working now on a managerial level, no hands on treatment with the patient, or something like that. I should be working on the planning of the profession or something like

that. I should be in on organisational type of things, no more patient treatment.

He is so eager to find another position, however, that he is prepared to accept a position where he has to work himself up. His main concern is to change his work environment: "Doing the same profession but in a different place, I think I'll actualise my abilities more."

N was married for seven years before he divorced at the age of 36. He feels that his wife was not ready to deal with the responsibility of marriage: "She was not really ready for marriage, and then looking at all the responsibility and all the things that bind one to one's family - I think she was not prepared as yet for that."

N says that although they "were communicating" during their marriage, the fact that his wife worked as a radiographer at a hospital far from home caused much tension in the marriage. She left home early and arrived back late, and in the beginning of their marriage he had to travel to see her because she worked on some weekends. N also complains that, "she didn't have enough time for the kids as she often worked overtime, or came home tired from travelling". He had to, in fact, take "two roles" and act like a mother, "taking the children to school, preparing food for them, and looking after their general needs". He had to curtail his own leisure activities, such as playing soccer, to look after his children.

N tried to find his wife a job in a hospital nearer home. When he did, she refused to take it. N's years of marriage, and subsequent divorce, caused pain which N does not want to remember: "Those are the things I try not to recall - I've taken them out of my mind." He describes his divorce as happening "so unexpectedly". He felt a sense of "shock" when he arrived home one day to find his furniture and curtains had disappeared and his wife had gone. She had also taken the children which made him feel "very, very cross" because the relationship between him and his children was "a very close knit tie", as they spent so much time together.

The divorce had a profound impact upon N: "Ja, it was terrible, it was really terrible 'cause I know my weight changed. I became more leaner. My appetite generally was disturbed. I was not okay - the major issue was, how am I going to make ends meet?"

N now felt that he had to "to start from the beginning", as there was nobody helping him "in paying installments, looking after family, sharing responsibilities". He also missed the "envy" he felt from other people concerning "the way you do things together, the way you prosper". He had to adjust to living alone after the divorce, which he says he managed to do by accepting the situation, and realising that "nothing's going to change".

After divorcing, he tried to contact his ex-wife at work to find out how his children were, but she refused to answer the phone. It has only been since last year that they have been communicating with each other. He says he is now in "good communication" with his ex-wife, and he is allowed to see his children on some weekends and during some holidays.

Although N felt after his divorce that, "I should not hurry myself into another marriage, I should take my own time", he plans to marry again shortly. It is only since a few years ago that "things started to shape up, and my life started to become a lit bit stable".

N had a child with his present girlfriend three years ago. The fact that he had this child while he was married is "not an issue" for him. He feels that it is "in us, you know, the Africans, to have a number of women as the forefathers were allowed to marry any number of women that he felt he could". The fact that he and other African men "are respecting the Western tradition", is the only factor that curtails extra-marital affairs, according to N. The important point in having an affair, such as he had, is that his wife should not find out: "What is important is that we don't expose that information, it's a secret thing - you don't change your programme at home". It seems that this child was planned, and he "looked forward to having a child". This child stays with his girlfriend, and visits with N's mother occasionally.

N feels at this stage of his life that he has "matured", and "learnt quite a lot about life, and in general":

I'm a mature person now, in making decisions. Because you have to have a conflict first and then work it out ... And then once you make a decision, the decision becomes better; it becomes profitable to you. You learn by that. And next time another conflict comes (and), after you see (that) the method you have applied to the old (problem) ... is not profitable, you think about something else (that) you can utilise in getting out of the conflict.

He feels a strong need to share what he has experienced in life with others, that is "to impart that experience to others", including his children and to "anybody else who can appreciate these experiences, somebody who can learn from what I've experienced". He feels he has, and can help people who have experienced similar experiences (such as losing a parental figure). He also says he has "developed a style of imparting information," from his profession, which can help others, "to grow out of that misery".

In retrospect, N feels content with his choice of career, but feels in addition that, "it was not really where my dream was," as he had initially chosen to study law. N feels at this stage of his life that he has to be more realistic and cautious about decisions:

One should be realistic at the moment, at this age. Forty years of age is when one is ... ought to think every step that one takes should be a very positive step. You must not take a step that is going to frustrate you, and should be realistic about your resources. Don't get yourself into a situation where you going to get frustrated, especially financially. You looking at the responsibility again that one is having.

N's plan for the future is to write a book about black people, with specific reference to black people in his profession:

I think at this juncture, nobody has written any books about blacks in the profession. And then I was going to write books so people, other people, people who are coming after us - since South Africa has now changed - that they got to learn more about the black person.

His need to write this book stems from his belief that people do not understand the black culture. This understanding, he says, was even evident in one of his lecturers at university who maintained that black patients preferred white therapists. She did not understand, says N, that there were not enough black therapists.

N's plan has been to write this book in the form of a Masters thesis. He wants to do this because he feels that recognition and educational advancement is as important as enlightening others: "I mean by writing a book, you are going to impart information to the other people. On the other hand, you get recognition by getting a degree in something like that."

He feels he will not realise his aim to start his thesis in the immediate future, because he is too busy at work, and his superiors have recently advised him not to begin the research, a matter that frustrates him. He has "little time for pleasure". He devotes much of his free time to work in the community (for instance, he is the area convener for the local elections in his area).

The current sociopolitical changes in South Africa, including the recent elections, have had a profound effect on N. It is "exciting" he says "to see freedom in our life time". He explains this as follows:

I refer to basically the freedom of the black person in South Africa. We've been oppressed for a long time - our parents, foreparents and that. So I didn't believe it would happen - nobody who was black believed it would happen in his life time.

Oppression in the past has meant for N limited "opportunities" at work and "job insecurity". Many jobs were reserved for whites, so

promotion for black people was very difficult, and "due to oppression, anybody could be just out of a job for no apparent reason. If a white man hates you, you gone". White colleagues, with considerably less work experience, were promoted well before N was.

N also had experienced frustration in the area of housing "... and then housing - if we get housing for instance, we could only build A or B type of house, we couldn't build a house like anybody's having a house". Frustration was also linked to such acts as having to carry a pass: "And then look at the passports we used to carry - you won't go to town without passbooks. Shops - you used to use windows to buy instead of going into the shop."

The recent democratisation of South Africa has meant for N that many of these "stumbling blocks" have been removed. He feels more optimistic and hopeful that, "things are now put into correct perspective. There is a way forward, and I'm very confident I'll climb up, you know, go up vertically". He adds that, "it's going to change our lifestyle. We'll be able to achieve what we want, actualise our potential - our potentialities". More specifically, he feels that "there is more job security", and that "there is hope that I'll be able to climb the (job) ladder, go up" because his experience will now be recognised. N's optimism is linked strongly with factors such as affirmative action: "With affirmative action someone should recognise me somewhere up there."

Even in the context of "oppression", N feels that he has achieved something in terms of living up to his name - "Mkulu" - which means "the great one". This name, which he inherited from his ancestors (his father's father) carries much meaning for him and his family (including the extended family). N explains it like this:

They respect me, I'm a symbol - especially on the paternal side - I'm a symbol of my auntie's father, my father's father and my paternal uncles. I'm a symbol of their fathers.

N feels he has lived up to his name in the following way:

At least I've studied, went up to the university. And then my grandfather went up to his own traditional healing school, and then I think I've achieved something for myself, for the family. We did it for the family.

Looking back on his life, N says that he cannot identify any specific event that has affected him or changed him significantly:

I don't have one particular thing that had an effect on my life. I don't think that there's a particular thing that I would say that this thing had an effect on my life ... caused my life to change, something like that, no, no, no!

He does however repeat that, "these changes that are happening in my life, I didn't take them as negatively, but as an experience". He adds that:

These experiences helped me in the sense that maybe next time, in the future, I will be able to handle this thing better, or prepare my own children about changes that might come into our life. Not because they want (it), but because of that they do happen.

Furthermore, N is unable to identify any good points, or highs, in his life, except the recent transformations in South Africa:

You know, it's just difficult because I'm not a person who really demarcates events or something like that. I take them as part and parcel of the things happening in my life. It's how it is. And I won't recall - say, this particular event was quite exciting - you know really, I won't say that, except as I mentioned before: You know free at last, freedom - that's the wonderful thing.

He also says: "I don't think much about myself ... I was not self-directed. I was directed towards events and people."

## Analysis of N's Life According to Levinson's Framework

### Pre-Adult Years

N's childhood years were disjointed and unstable in the sense that his father died when N was still a child; his family had to be helped financially by his extended family; and he was forced to leave home by his mother and uncle and look after his grandmother during his adolescence. (He thus began a major task of the EAT -leaving the pre-adult world - during the pre-adult years). N's experience (or construction) of these life events is significant. He accepted the situation (the move to his grandmother) because it was beyond his control - "they chose me to be the adult "- and he saw this move as a "learning experience", and a challenge, and something positive: "I was not looking at it in a negative way." He had a positive attitude even when he believed external factors were controlling him. In a similar manner he saw many of the difficult times during adulthood (such as the discrimination at university and at work) as a challenge that he had to overcome. During his adult years, he even perceived the death of his father as a learning experience - something he could impart to others in order to help them. The important point is that these coping patterns (perceiving external events as a positive challenge and learning experience) that manifested during the pre-adult years, would become relevant later on, during the evolution of the adult life structure. Lastly, the lack of financial resources during the pre-adult years would also have a significant impact on his life structure during the adult years, especially during the EAT.

### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood).

The two main tasks of this period, according to Levinson (1978) - leaving the pre-adult world and initiating early adulthood - are evident in a number of ways in the evolution of N's life structure.

Leaving his mother's home during adolescence, and going to look after his grandmother, signified the beginning of the EAT for N because

his role changed from that of being a child to an "adult" who had to look after somebody else (his grandmother). The task of initiating early adulthood, thus began relatively young.

The beginning of the EAT was also marked by N's central question: "What am I going to do with myself after matric?" and, like the men that Levinson (1978) studied, N began to form a Dream during this period, which was based on his desire to study further. The dominant component of N's life structure, during this period, like the men in Levinson's study, was his intense need to find a suitable career, and obtain further training.

It is also important to note that N had a strong feeling that he would have to rely on himself to get through university, as he had limited financial support: "I'd see to it what I was going to do to help myself". This reduced dependency on parental support (which in N's case was influenced by financial reasons), is an important aspect of the EAT according to Levinson (1978). It also illustrates the importance of internal resources (or, N's internal locus of control reflected in his reliance on himself) on the evolution of his life structure.

The tasks of this period were characterised by frustration and stagnation because N knew he would have to contend with external factors (quota system and having to speak Afrikaans in court) to pursue his career choice. Furthermore, although he was accepted at the university, his chance of studying further was initially crushed by the death of his grandmother.

The death of his grandmother represented a turning point in the evolution of N's life structure, and signified a clear break with the pre-adult world: He now had to change his plans and find work, as he did not want to be a financial burden to his family (in a sense then, the responsibilities of early adulthood was thrust upon him). N's perception of this turning point, and his coping strategies, are again significant. He realised he would have to rely on himself ("I should help myself") and make alternative plans (start working) to realise his aim (to go back to university). It is also interesting to note the significance of N's

grandmother in his life structure during this period, as reflected in the impact that her death had upon him during this period.

The work that N started, as a teacher, represented a further step in the transition to adulthood, because he experienced a change in role which he had to adjust to (he also had to deal with political turmoil in the schools at that time which had an effect on his life structure, and influenced his occupational choice). N ascribes change at this time not to himself, but to external circumstances: "I won't say I was a different person, I would say I was in a new situation."

This initial step in the formation of N's career was initiated because of economic necessity, and was not the career he really wanted to follow. Furthermore, while he had to put his Dream to study further on hold, he was able to keep this aim alive during this period and put it into action during the next period.

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creating a stable life structure)

There is persuasive evidence that N did begin work on the major tasks of this period: Exploration and creating a stable life structure. The negotiation of these tasks, however, was often frustrated by external socio-economic factors, especially in relation to the living out of the Dream, and the formation of an occupation.

N did have the need to explore alternatives in terms of his career path. The frustration he felt as a teacher (which was fuelled by the political turmoil in the schools), and his desire to further his education, marked N's entrance into the EAW. The task of exploration, however, was negotiated in the context of limited alternatives - he began studying occupational therapy (even though it "was not my choice"), because he did not have the financial resources to study further, and a bursary was being offered in this field.

The initial formation of N's professional occupation was not based on a desire to enter that occupation, or knowledge of that occupation (indeed N only began to understand what occupational therapy was much

later in the course), but was rather influenced by very practical, financial reasons. N had to compromise on his initial Dream, which was to become a lawyer, and study a course which "was not really where my dream was". This illustrates the importance of a personality characteristic - N's flexibility - in the negotiation of the tasks of this period.

The sociopolitical climate and discrimination also impinged upon the vital tasks of this period, and stagnated, in many ways, the process of establishing a viable life structure. At university, N had to contend with racism and discrimination that affected him on a personal level. Significantly though, N coped with this situation by not passively accepting this discrimination, but actively challenging it (as is evident in the conflict with his lecturer) - a theme that emerges throughout the evolution of his life structure. N had a positive view of himself in terms of his academic abilities, describing himself as one of the best students at the university.

After starting his first job in his profession, N felt "stuck" because of the external aspects of his life structure - the blatant racism and discrimination that he experienced in the hospital setting. He did have a need for exploration which is reflected in the desire he had to create changes within the hospital setting and, when this was "squashed", his desire to explore other career options (such as medicine). This created conflict, but the fact that N chose to cope with the situation by accepting the situation, remaining optimistic and perceiving it as a challenge, indicates the importance of these internal aspects of the life structure in relation to the external aspects. (These patterns of coping were also present earlier on.) Moreover, the importance of helping black people, as is evident in the channelling of his energy to help the black patients in the face of all his other frustrations at the hospital, is an important theme of this period. This need to help the black patients illustrates the positive effect of having an aim or purpose, on the formation of the life structure.

N's need for exploration and change within his work setting was so powerful that he spent about four years settling into the system. He then embarked on a process of change which led to the integration of

black and white services within his profession at the hospital, and conferred upon him a feeling of pride and accomplishment. It represented a significant move towards creating a stable life structure ("It would take a long time before they could get somebody to replace me") which is an integral task of this period of development. N's pride, and positive view of himself, is reflected in his statement: "I was on top of the world ... I'm still very proud of what I've done," and illustrates how N, through the mobilisation of internal resources, managed to cope with external obstacles.

N also explored options in terms of relationships with women, and had many relationships during this period. During the middle of this period he met the woman whom he was to marry. His marriage to her at the end of this period, stems, in part, from N's need to fulfil the task of creating a stable life, or in his terms to "help each other in building our lives".

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

N did experience some changes associated with the ATT. He did begin to work on some flaws, or more particularly "gaps" in his previous life structure, but there is little evidence of self-evaluation and exploration, which characterises this period, according to Levinson (1978).

N's marriage at the age of 29, marks the end of the EAW and the beginning of the ATT. N did not perceive any internal change (or change to his "inner personality") after marriage, but rather change in terms of his lifestyle: "I think it changed my life". N was able to contend with the changes because he was prepared for them, and did not perceive them negatively: "It didn't really affect me in a negative (way) because I was prepared for that."

An external locus of control is prevalent in N's decision to marry. He directly states that he did not plan to marry because "most of the planned things fail," and "it was like that feeling (to marry) just came on its own".

After marriage, N began to feel a sense of urgency which is typical of the ATT. This sense of urgency manifested in N's need to have children and to own property. The desire to have children was accompanied by some self-questioning: "Can I be able to have my own child?" N was excited about the birth of his children, and felt an increased sense of responsibility. He was very pleased with the acquisition of his first property during this period, which he celebrated through a cultural rite (slaughtering a beast).

Another change that N experienced during the ATT was his promotion at the hospital. This promotion was made possible due to changing discriminatory policies at the hospital. N did not really feel excited about this promotion because it was long "overdue", and he experienced much resistance from the white staff. Again he handled the situation through acceptance ("I sort of conditionalised myself to the situation"), while continuing to promote change.

#### Settling Down (SD)

(To establish one's niche in society  
and to work at advancement)

According to Levinson (1978), the family is paramount in providing the security which is integral to the task of establishing one's niche in society during this period. N experienced dramatic change and instability within this area during this period: He had an affair and a child with another woman, divorced his wife and is currently planning to marry again.

It is the divorce from his wife which created the most dramatic change in his life structure during this period. In terms of the internal aspect of the life structure, it is evident that it had a profoundly disturbing psychological effect on him, to the extent that he began to reevaluate his relationship with women and decided to be cautious about marrying in the future. In terms of the external aspects of his life structure, he now had to adapt to the tasks of living alone again.

Again, N contended with this crisis through acceptance or the realisation that, "nothing's going to change," and "start(ing) from the beginning". It took N about two years before he began to feel better, and his life structure began to stabilise. There is some level of stability in N's life (in terms of his family) at the end of the SD period. This is apparent in N's reported feelings of being more settled down, his resumed contact with his ex-wife, and his plans to marry his current girlfriend.

The second task of this period, to work at advancement, was also marked by frustration and instability. This is reflected in the sense of frustration and stagnation that N felt after being transferred to another hospital during this period. The promotion that N obtained after being transferred could have provided the context for the BOOM phase, described by Levinson (1978), which normally occurs towards the end of this period. Instead, N felt frustrated because he felt he was not receiving recognition from the staff, his ideas were not being heard, his promotion was overdue, and the hospital itself was experiencing some political turmoil. While N feels content with his career choice, he also experiences some disappointment realising that his profession "was not really where my dream was". Thus, the alternative, available choice did not bring true fulfillment.

While the process of working at advancement was frustrated in N's working situation, he did still have the internal need for advancement, and the desire to find a culminating event (as most of the men that Levinson (1978) studied did) to mark this period. This is reflected in his wish to write a book (and a thesis) concerning black people in the profession, which stems from his need for recognition and educational advancement (unfortunately even this need was blocked by his superiors). It is also evident in his desire to be promoted to a more senior managerial position (in another job, but in the same profession).

An important factor that imbued the SD period of N's life with significance, concerns the recent sociopolitical changes, including the recent elections. These external aspects of the life structure have had a direct bearing on the internal aspects of N's life structure by instilling in N a feeling of optimism and hope that he will be able to

advance and actualise his potential (due to the recent elections, affirmative action and the general democratisation of South Africa). It has made his "black future" look brighter, and nurtured the needs for "building a better life ... contributing to society and being affirmed by it ..." (Levinson, 1978, p 140) which is so important during this period of development.

In terms of the internal aspects of N's life structure, N feels a general mellowing, a feeling that he has "matured", that he is more "realistic and cautious". These feelings are in direct contrast to his rebellious nature he describes as a young man (which was especially evident at the university) and are feelings which are more congruent with the SD period.

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### **Forming and Living out the Dream**

N did begin forming a Dream during the Novice Phase of development, which revolved around his desire to become a lawyer. This Dream was grounded in the view of himself as an effective speaker. Although N did begin work on the task of living out the Dream, social and economic factors stagnated this process during the EAT (he had to give up the law course due to the death of his grandmother and lack of funds). In this sense, N had to compromise his original Dream.

N's desire to write a book concerning black occupational therapists during the SD period, also has qualities of the Dream in that it "has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality" (Levinson, 1978, p 91). This Dream has been inspired in part by the recent changes in South Africa ("since South Africa has now changed, that they got to learn more about the black person"). This Dream, however, was also impeded by external circumstances (N's superiors discouraged it). It is interesting to note that this Dream was linked to his desire to help other black people, and thus contained an element of generativity.

### Forming Mentor Relationships

A striking feature in the evolution of N's life structure is the absence of mentor relationships: "I didn't really have a mentor, I was just finding my way forward you know." He describes the reason for there not being an influential person in his profession to the fact that he was amongst the first black people to be accepted for occupational therapy, and he thus had nobody to "model" himself upon.

He did, however, take on mentoring qualities himself at his work (before he was transferred to a new hospital) which is visible in the way he describes himself as "a good leader" and "like when they have problems, like that personal problems, they (his subordinates) know that they got an answer from me, they get direction, some guidance from me".

### Forming an Occupation

There are some important trends in N's formation of an occupation which need to be noted. N did make an early occupational choice during the EAT (which was linked to his Dream), but for reasons already pointed out, was not able to follow this occupation. Instead, he began working as a teacher even though this was not his chosen career, and subsequently settled for a career (occupational therapy) which he "chose" for external reasons (availability of a bursary).

The formation of N's occupation is characterised by the many obstacles he had to contend with in order to make his career a viable aspect of his life structure. This includes, as already discussed, racial and discriminatory factors which impeded upon his occupational development. Even in the context of these obstacles, N was able to experience achievement and maintain his need for growth and development (this can be seen in the changes he made, such as integrating his department, and the respect he gained from others, as well as his desire during the SD period to further his studies).

The need to advance his studies in his field, and write a book concerning his occupation, indicates that N has settled more into his profession (but not his current job). This is only after many years of

struggle and conflict with the profession (which was especially evident in the earlier part of the Novice Phase when he considered changing professions). A main factor which has kept him in his profession over the life span has been his desire to help the black patients.

Lastly, the frustration that N currently feels at work is the main factor preventing N from settling down during the SD period.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

Although N had casual relationships with many women before he got married, his relationship with women was not a central aspect of his life structure. N did have a vague conception of a Special Woman, somebody who was educated, who could earn a living, and who could care for him.

N married during the ATT (as did 20 percent of the men in Levinson's study) but he did not feel the "disadvantage of marrying under pressure" as can be typical of men who marry during this period according to Levinson (1978, p 108). The traditional marriage through labola was important for him.

After marriage, N focused his attention, like the men that Levinson (1978) studied, on building a family and home. This was frustrated, however, by external factors (he still did not have a house of his own but lived on somebody's property) and marital strife.

His extra-marital affair is interesting in that N did not feel he was doing something wrong, but rather saw it as something acceptable to men in his culture.

N's divorce and the subsequent personal crisis must be seen in the context of the SD period, and more specifically the disruptive effect it had on the SD process.

#### **Synopsis**

A striking theme in the evolution of N's life structure is the influence of the external aspect of the life structure - family, socio-

economic, sociopolitical circumstances, as well as traditional values.

While his central question during the EAT - What am I going to do with myself? - is an integral question of this period, according to Levinson (and he was able to formulate a Dream as most of the men that he studied had), limited finances, discrimination and problems associated with being a black man in a white context, complicated the process of answering this question (and living out his Dream). Moreover, during the EAW, N did have the desire to explore options (especially in terms of his work) but compromised on his initial aim to study law because he did not have the finances, and chose another career because bursaries were offered in this field. The political strife and discrimination that N felt at university and at work increased his sense of frustration and stagnation during this period.

Even N's promotion during the ATT was negotiated in the context of the resistance and discrimination that he experienced from other white colleagues, and was perceived by N as being long overdue. Furthermore, N's need for advancement during the SD period, was frustrated by impediments in his work setting.

The interplay between personal (internal) and external components are integral to the evolution of N's life structure. A pattern of perceiving external events as a challenge to be overcome is evident throughout his development. This pattern initially manifested in his pre-adult years, as is reflected in his perception of having to leave home as a "challenge" and a "learning experience". Again, during the EAW, when he felt "stuck" in his work because of external circumstances (discrimination at work), he perceived it as a "challenge" which he strove to overcome. Similarly, during the same period, he fought back when he experienced discrimination at university.

N's resilience in the face of adverse circumstances, highlights the power of the internal aspects of the life structure over the external aspects (such as the racial discrimination and inequality that he experienced). An internal locus of control was part of this resilience. This internality is especially reflected in N's awareness that "I'd see

to it what I was going to do to help myself" (when he started university), and "I should help myself" (when his grandmother died).

Flexibility is apparent throughout the evolution of his life structure. For instance during the EAT, he was able to generate another option (working as a teacher) while keeping his Dream alive (to further his studies) because he did not have the resources to study further. Similarly, during the EAW, N was able to compromise on his desire to study law (because no bursary was offered in this field) by studying occupational therapy. His flexibility and willingness to learn from experience, is also reflected in his words: "You learn by that" (referring to mistakes that he has made), and his comprehension of changes during his development as something "I didn't (take) as negatively, but as an experience".

In relation to his perception of change, he is unable to identify any specific event that has changed him. The lack of introspection during the evolution of his life structure is summed up in his words: "I don't think much about myself. I was not self-directed, I was directed towards events and people." Even his marriage during the ATT was accompanied by little change to what he refers to as his "inner personality". His lack of introspection is linked to his acceptance of events during his development. He says: "I'm not a person who really demarcates events ... I take them as part and parcel of the things happening."

The role of planning is another important component of N's life structure. Although he says (referring to his marriage), that he didn't plan during his life because "planned things fail," there is evidence that the evolution of his life structure was guided by a strong sense of purpose and direction. This was evident, for instance, in his plan to become a professional during the former part of early adulthood (and the route he followed to realise this desire), the strong purpose or commitment that he felt towards helping black patients at the hospital, and the desire to write a book that he currently experiences. During this process, he demonstrated a capacity to plan around his alternatives when his original plans failed.

This sense of purpose and direction has been influenced by the sociopolitical context. More specifically, the need for affirmation and his desire to build a better life, which is so integral to the SD period, according to Levinson (1978), has been nurtured by the recent democratisation of South Africa. This is evident in N's experience of exhilaration and freedom, relating to his perception that impediments to his future development have been removed. The effect of this on the task of climbing the career ladder, which Levinson emphasises during the SD period, is neatly expressed in N's awareness that "there is hope that I'll be able to climb the (job) ladder, go up".

The role of culture, traditional values, and the family have also occupied an important role during the evolution of N's life structure. For N, "customs are intermingled with beliefs," and customs and traditions were evident in such milestones as his marriage; buying his first home; and the importance that he attached to his own name, and his family's expectations of his name - Mkulu - the great one.

**THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF D  
(INFORMANT 6)**

"I didn't have the opportunity like white people. When they grow up they did have the opportunities."

(D, second interview, 30 March 1995)

**Identifying Information**

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-6
AGE	41
MARITAL STATUS	Married
CHILDREN	Two children
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Parents deceased; second eldest of two sisters and a brother
PLACE OF BIRTH	Alexandra (Johannesburg)
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Soweto
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Standard seven
OCCUPATION	No formal occupation; works as a general handyman

**Introduction**

D was introduced to the researcher by an acquaintance (he worked for this person). D was chosen to be interviewed because he had a low educational level and the researcher was aware that he had - like many black people during the era of apartheid - worked in a number of temporary jobs. An interesting question would thus be how this has affected his occupational identity, and the evolution of his life structure in general.

D was interviewed three times over a period of seven weeks. He was interviewed in an outside shack at the house of his employee (who was not

there at the time), and at the factory where he worked. The researcher had to stress confidentiality because he knew D's employer.

D seemed to settle in well to the interview process, and would respond quickly to questions and probes. He appeared to the researcher as somebody who had much unutilised potential (reasons for this would become apparent during the interview process). During the interviews the researcher was constantly aware that the hold that D had on his life structure was very tenuous - and seemed to depend very much on the job he had recently obtained. A few months after the interviews, the researcher learnt that D had been hospitalised with a "nervous breakdown".

#### **Biography: The Life of D**

The first significant event that D recalls is having to leave his parents' home in Johannesburg, at the age of ten, to go to Botswana. His parents had decided that he should go to Botswana because they thought "that the education that side is better". He felt "happy" about going to Botswana because his grandmother and sister were living there. He describes his relationship with his grandmother and sister at that time as follows:

The person I can say who was important to me was my grandmother because she was the one who cared a lot about me when I was that side (in Botswana). And my sister also, because she was the one who went with me that side, doing the washing for me, cooking for me. She was like a mother to me.

He also felt close to his uncles and aunts who were staying in Botswana. He used to help his grandmother by doing chores around the house, and assisting with the ploughing of the fields.

D had to discontinue his schooling prior to attending secondary school due to "financial problems". His parents could not afford to pay for his schooling and his travel expenses (the secondary school was some distance from where he stayed). His father was "the only one who was working," and was struggling to support the family.

With this in mind, he began his first job at about the age of 17, as an administrative clerk for a big mining enterprise. He drifted into this job without a clear sense of direction while most of his thoughts were focused on going back to school: "Oh it's feeling all right (to get his first job) but my mind was at school - just accept that job because there was nothing that I was doing," and "the most important thing to me which I can remember was to succeed in life if I can get education". In order to achieve this "my main thing was going back to school".

His conception of success at this age was not only obtaining an education, but also a vague sense of "like having cattle, goats, and having some fields to plough - that was my aim." He also thought about "having some business".

He experienced his job to be demanding at first because he was "fresh from school" and found the administrative duties difficult. He left this job after only four months when his father wrote a letter to him telling him to come back to Johannesburg to continue with his education as he was "still young to work". He did not feel happy about coming back to Johannesburg: "My mind was only there in Botswana, 'cause I had good contact with people on that side. So from this side I was going to start afresh." He was distressed about leaving the life that he had established in Botswana and having to adjust to life in Johannesburg:

The thing that made me not to like Johannesburg (was that), there were too many 'tsotsis', and all those type of things. So I didn't want to associate with such things because I (had) found a new life in Botswana, people were okay.

Looking back now, he feels a deep sense of regret that he had to come back to Johannesburg and was not able to continue with his education in Botswana:

If I should have stayed there, in Botswana, there was going to be a difference ... maybe I should have gone somewhere, attended school, made some means to go back to school because

by coming this side (to Johannesburg) I think I've wasted my time.

He feels that "if maybe I was educated maybe I was going to be something" and:

I've wasted so many years here and I've got friends, some of them who didn't even just guide me (but) told me it's better to get education, rather than drinking and all those things. I wasn't naughty in my life, I was just quiet. But education-wise, that was my main worry. My main worry was to get educated, because some of my friends in Botswana, they're educated ...

The main factor that prevented him from receiving an education, he feels, was that his parents did not have the financial resources: "I think I can say to you first it was caused by my parents telling me that they haven't got money to take me to a secondary school." He says his parents should have "planned for me, when I grow up", by saving money for his education.

After coming to Johannesburg, D did not go back to school (for about a year) until his father obtained a place for him in a school not far from where they lived. He left this school after eight months because he could not understand Afrikaans. He begged his father to allow him to go back to Botswana, so that he could continue with his education there, and because he was "longing for my grandmother and sister":

So I told my parents that I won't carry on because Afrikaans is too difficult for me. So I pleaded with them to take me back to Botswana. They refused (saying), 'if you want to go there, we won't do anything for you, so rather stay here.' So I stayed there in Meadowlands.

D does not know why his parents refused his request to go back to Botswana, and he did not ask them. He coped with the situation in the following way: "I was just quiet, just told myself there's nothing that I can do. I'll listen to them and stay."

After leaving school (for the second time), D felt an increased sense of stagnation and purposelessness: "I was sad just to stay doing nothing, I didn't have any future." He describes his lifestyle during that period as follows: "I was just doing gardening at home, going to training (soccer training). I've got to wake up in the morning, clean the house, do the gardening."

He was unhappy about staying at home, but feels he had no other alternative:

I was not happy to stay at home, but the thing that made me to stay there was oppression, because I didn't have the opportunity like white people. When they grow up they did have the opportunities.

By opportunities he means "job opportunities, education-wise", and the fact that his parents did not have the "means to prepare for us for our future, because they didn't earn so much money to make future for ourselves".

During his twenties (whether he was at school, or working), D felt that he wanted to live on his own, but a "stumbling block" was that he did not earn enough money.

D attempted to further his studies in his mid-twenties at a private college. After only a few months he had to discontinue his studies due to lack of funds: "The only thing for me was the money - I was having money problems."

His father found him a temporary job (at about age 23) packing boxes at the market. His father told him to take this job, because he thought "the better thing is to go and work". Although he found the work "hard" and he didn't enjoy it, he had to "just accept it because my father said go and work because you don't want to attend school".

At this time D had a vague idea that he wanted to work as a clerk but feels that he was prevented from following this option due to a lack

of education: "In my life, I just wanted to be maybe a clerk, but then it was my education - without education I was not going to get a job."

Even though D was working, he did not feel a sense of independence during his early and mid-twenties because he was still staying with his parents, and he had to give his salary to his parents: "I wasn't independent because even when I earn my wages on Friday I wasn't keeping it on me - just giving it to my parents." After he had given his parents all his wages, they would give him a small amount to buy things such as shoes. This made him feel "as if I was still young".

He did not question that he had to help support his parents, but accepted it as part of his tradition:

We were taught, while we were still young that if you grow up, you got to maintain your parents while you not married. And we are used to that until you grow up and get married, then you start looking after your wife and children, but not forgetting also your parents.

He feels that circumstances would have been different if he was a white person:

Yes it's different. First things concerning how you grow up, because your parents - you are lucky because your parents they make your future for you while you still young, like saving money for you. So our parents are not doing that. You start saving money for yourself when you start working, unlike ourselves.

His mind was also still set on education: "It (the job) wasn't so important to me. That's why I said to you, what was important to me was still education." So strong was this desire that he told his father: "I'm not prepared to work, I want to attend school." His father again enrolled him in another school, which he attended for about four months and then stopped due to his difficulty with Afrikaans.

The death of his mother, when D was about 25 years old, had a disturbing effect upon him: "It affected me because my mother was a darling to me. Whatever I need I used to go to her and tell her, and she's also washing for me, doing so many things for me." He says "things started changing in my life when my mother passed away" adding that "my life was the worst. I didn't have any direction in my life".

He started drinking heavily after his mother's death: "I was sad, I was really sad, until I turned to the bottle, thinking that maybe it would take that worry form my heart." His sadness and his need to drink was fueled by the disappointment in himself (which permeated most of his twenties): "Yes I did ask myself: 'What am I doing to myself? Am I living a normal life or what? Am I going to become a hobo or what?' I was asking myself, 'What am I doing to myself if I'm drinking like this?'"

About two years after the death of his mother (when he was about 27) his father advised him to get married because his "life at that time was in hell" and his father thought he should find somebody who could be "close" to him, and so, "I did listen to him". He expands upon his reason for getting married as follows:

It's my father who pushed me. He told me that I have to get married. So he told me that it's high time that I got married. By that time my mother was dead, so I was having a problem with my clothes. Who was going to wash my clothes? So he told me that the only way to do that was to get married.

At the same time, he says, he did feel "comfortable" with marriage at that stage of his life as he had felt a desire to marry ever since his mother's death: "Well, that thing came to me in 1977 after my mother passed away, so I told myself I'd rather get married."

He had met his wife, who stayed in the same street as him, about three years before his marriage. He describes his attraction to her as follows: "All I can say is that she made me happy in life, and there was some good understanding." He says relationships with women had not been an important part of his life, even at that stage. During his early

twenties he was more interested in education than women, and during his mid-twenties he was more interested in football. He had relationships with two women which were terminated because the one woman had a drinking problem, and the other one married somebody else.

He says he did not have an idea or dream concerning a particular kind of woman he wanted to marry: "To tell you the truth I didn't have that idea. I was just wishing maybe I could get somebody." At the same time he wanted this person to be "maybe a beautiful woman, someone who's polite, with good manners - I was just thinking of somebody like that".

After getting married, his wife only stayed with him on weekends, as she was looking after her grandfather (who had a stroke). He accepted this situation because there was nobody else to look after her grandfather: "There was nothing wrong with that, just taking it as it is." He also felt a strong traditional value of "respecting an elder person", and it was his decision that his wife should look after her grandfather.

He already had one child when he married, and another child was born soon after his marriage. He says he was not planning to have children: "I was just thinking of the future, only to be surprised by that she's expecting a baby." He says, "I was happy, I was happy we were having it (the baby)".

His relationship with his father began to change after his mother passed away. He felt disappointed with his father because his father started having relationships with many different women:

I did have a different relationship (with his father and mother). I'm sorry to say but my father started to become a womaniser when my mother passed away, something that I didn't like. He even mentioned this thing of getting married again. So I told him, if he wants to get married - don't get married here, you rather stay there.

His father moved out of their "family home" to go and stay with a woman.

D's friend found him another job when he was 26 years old: "One of my friends said to me "come let's go', there was a job near where he was working." D worked there for about three years, and then left because he was drinking too much: "So I was behind the bottle, the bottle was controlling me too much."

After leaving this job (at age 29) he continued to stay at home, where he descended into an alcoholic oblivion:

After leaving that job I stayed at home from 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, not working, busy drinking - anything that somebody gives me. What I was thinking was only (about drinking) ... even my children, neglecting my children, not even worrying about what was happening at home (or) eating.

The death of D's father when D was 30 years old, did not have the same emotional impact on D as his mother's death had: "Truly speaking it didn't affect me, only my mother affected me." He says that it didn't affect him because he still felt disappointed in his father.

The death of D's father did, however, instill in D a feeling of independence, for the following reason:

It maybe started in 1983 (after the death of his father) because when I was still working doing temporary jobs, I used to give my father and my mother my money. I didn't open the envelope of my salary. Once I earn it from my work then I go straight to him and give it to them. That's why I changed in '83 because I was just opening the money for myself - no fear that my father is going to ask me what have I done with the money.

The home where D is staying belonged to his parents. He describes this home as a "family home", because his sister stays there as well, and other family members use it when required.

Soon after the death of his father, when D was 31, he developed a strong desire to move out of his parents' home: "That (need) started in

1984, that I got to get my own place, until up to now." He adds that, "there wasn't anything that happened in 1984 - I just wanted to move, to get my own home".

A need for independence, however, had gained impetus at around age 28: "That feeling, it came to me in 1980. I start telling myself I'm grown up, I've got to look after myself." In response to the researcher's question: "Was there anything that made you feel like that?", he replied, "It was just a feeling, I had that feeling that I'm grown up now". He also adds that "by that time I was playing football". He says: "Education was totally out now. My only concern now was to have money, lead a better life," or "maybe to own something like a business or a car".

When he was 33 years old, his wife and children left him to stay with her parents due to, he says, his drinking problem. This had a devastating effect on him: "I was blaming myself. I was even praying if God can help me to quit this thing, because there was no future." He pleaded with his wife to come back to him, and even thought of hanging himself.

During his late thirties he continued to drink heavily:

A crisis time for me was in 1992 - drinking heavily because there was nothing that I was thinking - even my future. What I was thinking was I was just only thinking of the bottle, if I can get the bottle, liquor.

He lost a lot of weight during this period, as alcohol became his main focus, and he did not even worry about his children, or his personal appearance. He did manage to obtain some temporary jobs (such as loading bricks at the supermarket).

He began to change, however, towards the end of his thirties, and stopped drinking because,

I told myself I got children. So my children are going to be lost if I keep on drinking like this. So the future of my

children is going to be bleak. Because I grew up with fatherly love and brotherly love, so I've got to do the same thing for them.

This increasing sense of insecurity about his and his children's future, and the fact that he did not have a stable job, was alleviated when he started working in his current job:

Then in 1992 this lady who was working here, at A, came to my rescue and told me that A needs somebody who can come do his gardening. I told her I'll come because it's better than just drinking and not earning anything.

When he stopped drinking and found employment, D felt like "another person" and experienced an increasing sense of direction in his life: "Ever since I stopped drinking, I think I've got some direction. I'm just planning for my future." Looking back at his life, he feels that he changed jobs so many times because he was "too playful" in that he was "not just thinking about the future, just thinking behind, not thinking what's going to happen to me if I just go there and there". He says, "I only realised after a long time that my future is important".

He says he is happy in his current job, and he respects the person he is working for: "I was enjoying every minute when I was here ... 'cause I'm what I am today because of A, because he helped me through what he's given me." He says that A is "somebody who I listen to because I think we've got a good relationship".

He says his relationship with his wife is also "good", and it only "became worse when I was drinking". He is quite content with seeing her only on weekends. He is also adamant that he has never had an affair with another woman: "Maybe you won't believe me, but I'm telling the truth - just the one I married ... because if you get involved with another woman it's not good."

His brother, who was staying with him, has recently gone missing, and D spends much time looking for him in the "suburbs". He says it makes him feel "bad" that his brother is missing.

He is helping to support his sister financially at the moment, but feels that it is "not a problem, just accept it, she's part of me, she's my sister. I've got to help her". He is the sole provider of the household because his wife is not working as she is looking after the children.

D has a strong desire to make sure his children are educated, which is linked to the disappointment he feels about his own life:

My main worry is my children now, just concentrating on them, to get them better educated, 'cause I see that I've wasted my time, opportunities that I didn't use it ... if ever I can push them to be educated, and tell them without education, they nowhere.

D's sense of disappointment in himself, is further reflected in the following: "I mean I don't want them (his children) to be like me ... I mean you see the way I look! I want them to be decent, to get some job, nice job."

The importance of his children, he says, is related to "our tradition" concerning the value of children:

They - my children, I've got to look after them, educate them, buy them clothes, do what they want from me as their father, until they get married. Then they can move maybe to their houses, but they must still remember me. They'll remember me even if they've moved from me. They'll keep on coming to me, give me something to eat.

In order to ensure that his children are educated, he will have to earn more money: "Now what's important for me is to get money and educate my children. That's what's important for me now - if ever I can achieve that."

He also wants to buy his own house:

The future is for my children. I'm just planning for them. If I can open some savings account, also for myself, and my wife also. Maybe I can have my house, my own house. (This) is what I'm eager to get in my life.

He thinks that he will have difficulties in buying a new house:

I'm also trying my hardest - if ever I can get my own house - it's going to be hard for me to get it. Even when the country's being ruled by the black man, there's no difference, it's just the same. I think it's going to take me years to get a house.

D feels he has changed considerably since his younger years, especially in the following way:

I can say I've changed 'cause now I'm working for myself, unlike before when I was still young I've got to go to my father to ask for something ... He can tell me that this week I haven't got money, get it next week. Maybe next week he'll tell me, 'No, I haven't got any money, you've got to work for me until that day'. So I think now cause I'm working for myself, I'm changing in my life.

He says that his relationship with his children has changed over the years, but he is unable to specify in what way: "It (the relationship) has changed, we always happy."

D's wife continues to stay with her grandfather, and he accepts the situation: "Yes I'm happy with that, but it's too strenuous for me because I'm not earning enough, I'm just managing."

With regards to the recent democratisation of South Africa, D believes there have been some changes which have affected him on a personal level:

I can say there are some changes. Now white people are regarding us as human beings, not like before. I don't think

by that time of apartheid, I was going to sit like the way I'm sitting here with you. It was hard to be close to a white man. It was something that we never dreamt of in our life. So now I'm enjoying the freedom of listening.

He feels now that "white people can listen to our grievances".

### **Analysis of D's Life According to Levinson's Framework**

#### Pre-Adult Years

A number of important themes characterise D's pre-adult years. These include his separation from his family of origin during his childhood years (a decision which he did not challenge, but felt "happy" about), and his close relationship with his extended family (especially his grandmother) and his sister. A further theme is the impact of the pre-adult years on the adult life structure. D's current life structure is characterised by a feeling of regret, and a feeling that, "I've wasted my time", because he had to come back to Johannesburg and did not complete his education. He blames his parents for this, because they should "have planned for me when I grow up", by saving money for him. This external locus of control (blaming his parents and financial circumstances) is apparent throughout the evolution of D's adult life structure. In Levinson's (1978) terms lack of financial resources during the pre-adult years meant (for D) that his parents were not able to lay the foundation for living in the adult world.

#### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

There is some evidence that D began work on the major tasks of this period, especially in terms of the internal aspects of his life structure, but the negotiation of these tasks was continuously frustrated (according to D's perception) by external aspects. D uses the word "oppression" to refer to these external aspects, by which he means lack of financial resources, education, job opportunities and other opportunities.

D's entrance into the EAT is marked by him having to start his first job, (and having to return to his family in Johannesburg shortly after that) because of his parents' lack of financial resources. It was premature because D still had a pressing desire to continue with his schooling. D had to leave his previous life structure behind ("I had found a new life in Botswana") and adapt to a new life which he found both difficult and frustrating. D coped with the situation by acceptance. He says he did "just accept that job", although he did not want to work.

A main theme during the EAT (and through most of the Novice Phase) is the juxtaposition between D's intense desire to further his education, and the external circumstances that prevented him from following this option. D's desire to continue with his school education, and his various attempts at going back to school during this period represented his attempt to "make something of his life" (Levinson, 1978, p.79). This attempt was continuously frustrated by external factors, including D's lack of financial resources, as well as his inability to communicate in Afrikaans.

While most of the men in Levinson's (1978) study used this period to initiate the process of separating from the family of origin, D's parents (and especially his father) had a strong influence on the formation of his life structure during this period. D came back to Johannesburg on his father's request and stayed there (even though he wanted to return to Botswana). His passive acceptance of this situation ("I was just quiet, just told myself there's nothing I can do. I'll listen to them and stay") was tied to his traditional belief of respecting one's elders.

D also experienced "oppression" in relation to the task of leaving the pre-adult world by separating from the family of origin. He felt that the lack of finances was a "stumbling block" preventing him from leaving home. It must be noted, however, that in terms of the internal aspects of the life structure, D did have a need to leave home. Again, his perception is that this need was frustrated because he did not have the opportunities that white people had during their development.

It would seem at the end of this period that D did not have a sense of "clearly defined options for adult living" which is so central to this period (Levinson, 1978, p.75). Rather, he felt a sense of stagnation and purposelessness which is expressed in the following words: "I was sad, just to stay (at home) doing nothing - I didn't have any future."

This sense of purposelessness and disappointment permeated most of his adult life structure.

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creating a stable life structure)

While there is some evidence that D used this period to work on these important tasks, they were much less pronounced than the experience of the men in Levinson's (1978) study, and they were negotiated in the context of limited choices and possibilities. Furthermore, D did not seem to have a strong goal or purpose to guide him through this period.

D did have a conception (albeit a vague conception) of the kind of work he wanted (clerical), and he did have a vague Dream (having a farm or a business), but experienced his choices as being limited due to a lack of education ("without education I was not going to get a job"). Both the jobs that he obtained during this period were not his choice (his father found him the first job, and his friend found him the second). He found the work tough and felt unhappy because he still wanted to complete his schooling. Again he coped through passively accepting the situation ("just accept because my father said 'go and work'").

The jobs that D had during this period did not confer upon him a sense of independence or identity as an adult. "I wasn't independent" he says, because he had to give his total earnings to his parents, who would then give him a share. This made him feel "as if I was still young". This illustrates the impact of traditional beliefs (D supporting his family) on D's identity as an adult. This cultural belief was so influential that he did not even question the fact that he had to give his parents his earnings: "We were taught while we were still young, that if you grow up you got to maintain your parents". A related theme

is his perception that circumstances would have been different if he was a white person: "Your parents, they make the future for you while you still young, like saving money."

Within this context, however, D did engage in a limited amount of exploration. He attempted to pursue his goal to continue his schooling, and he enrolled for a course at a private college during this period. Both these attempts were short lived. As far as his attempt at furthering his studies at a private college is concerned, D (again) perceived external circumstances as blocking him: "The only thing for me was the money - I was having money problems".

The death of D's mother during this period further complicated and stagnated the process of exploration and establishing stability, which is fundamental to this period. It initiated a crisis in which he felt as if "I didn't have any direction in my life". It is interesting to note that his subsequent descent into alcoholism after this is accompanied by some introspection ("I did ask myself: 'what am I doing to myself'"), and much disappointment in himself, which permeated most of the Novice Phase of development.

His marriage during this period was fueled by his mother's death and represented an attempt to work at the key task of creating stability in his life. In his words, "life at that time was in hell", and he needed somebody to help him with elementary tasks such as washing his clothes. D was influenced by his father to get married ("It's my father who pushed me") which is an external pressure typical of this period according to Levinson (1978, p.79): "Externally, there are pressures to 'grow up', get married, enter an occupation, define his goals and lead a more organised life".

At the end of this period, however, D was jobless (he left his work because the "bottle was controlling me too much"), and he entered the ATT consumed by his passion to drink, neglecting his children and his future.

#### The Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

While D entered this period with a sense of purposelessness and

despair, he also experienced some changes which are typical of this period. He describes an important change around age 28 where he began to feel more "grown up" and where his priorities changed from pursuing education to earning more money, and leading "a better life". He could not articulate why he felt this change during this period, but related it to an external event: "By that time I was playing football".

D also experienced some fundamental changes after the death of his father during this period. He felt for the first time a sense of independence because he could now keep his earnings for himself: "That's why I changed in '83, I was just opening the money for myself." It also instilled in him a sense of urgency, which is typical of this period, according to Levinson (1978), which manifested in a rather basic need that, "I just wanted to move, to get my own place". D's negotiation of these tasks (separating from his parents and establishing independence) was at a much later period than the men in Levinson's study.

This period ended with a crisis precipitated by his wife leaving him with their children because of his drinking problem. Thus at the end of this period, he did not have the "basis for a more satisfactory structure that will be built in the following period" (Levinson, 1978, p.84). He felt rather a sense of purposelessness "even (in relation to) my future", the depths of which are reflected in his suicide ideation.

#### Settling Down (SD)

(To establish one's niche in society  
and to work at advancement).

During the former part of this period there was little evidence that D managed to "deepen his roots" or "anchor his life" which is typical of this period (Levinson, 1978, p.140). He continued to drink heavily, did not seem to be concerned about his wife and children (who were still staying away from him), and only held temporary jobs. He generally struggled to hold on to his life structure.

Towards the end of this period, however, he began to experience some important changes which partially initiated the SD process. The need to care for "the future of my children", and provide them with "fatherly

love" became paramount to him and he decided to stop drinking. Furthermore, the job that he obtained through a friend of his, had a profound effect on his life structure, and he began to experience (perhaps for the first time during his adult years) a sense of establishing his niche in society (Levinson, 1978). In his words, he began to feel as if he had for the first time "some direction" and "plans" for the future, and he felt as if he was "enjoying every minute of his current job". This was perhaps the first time that D reported having a sense of control and direction over the evolution of his life structure.

Thus, while there is little evidence of "moving onward and upward" which is central to this period (Levinson, 1978, p.140), or evidence of "becoming more senior and expert," which is a component of the BOOM phase (Levinson, 1978, p.148), D's job did provide him with a feeling of stability and direction.

While D's life structure seems to be stabilising, D's SD period is still marked by a sense of disappointment in himself ("I see that I've wasted my time, opportunities that I didn't use"). It is also evident in his exclamation that he does not want his children to live like him or even look like him. He still feels a sense of disappointment that he was not educated, and one of his main aims is to make sure his children are educated. His children are the central focus of his SD period ("my main worry is my children now, just concentrating on them"). He sees them as providing security for his future. He invests for himself through investing in them.

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### Forming and Living out the Dream

D's passion to study further during the initial part of early adulthood had qualities of a Dream, in that it was an "imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality" (Levinson, 1978, p.91). Unfortunately external factors, such as lack of finances (and difficulty with Afrikaans) prevented him from following this option.

Besides D's general desire to educate himself, his vision of himself in the future remained vague (to be a clerk), while certain aspects were tied to his own tradition ("like having cattle, goats, and having some fields to plough - that was my aim").

There is evidence during the SD period that elements of a Dream began to emerge again. This is apparent in his plans for the future, which were materially related (to earn more money and buy a house and a car), and centered around his family, and especially his children (to provide and educate them).

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

D's father had a very powerful influence on D's life (telling him for instance to come back to Johannesburg from Botswana, and advising him to get married). However the respect that D felt for his father dissipated when, soon after his mother's death, his father began seeing other women.

D's current employer fulfills some qualities of a mentor in that he is somebody who D respects and "somebody who I listen to", and who has thus had a lot of influence over him: "I'm what I am today because of A".

#### Forming an Occupation

Levinson (1978, p.101) says that the "transformation of interests into occupation is rarely a simple or direct process". In the case of D, this process was almost completely absent. Moreover, it would be difficult to apply the concept of "career path" or "career development" to D's life. Instead of choosing a career he was pressurised by his father (and more particularly lack of financial resources) to start working although he still wanted to continue his schooling. The work - most of which he found very hard - was in no way linked to any Dream he had.

Most of the jobs that D held were temporary jobs. The meaning and significance of these temporary jobs in D's life structure is very

important. He felt he had so many temporary jobs because he was "too playful", and had no future goals: "I only realised after a long time that my future is important".

Another important theme in the formation of D's occupation, is the reactive manner in which he obtained his jobs. His father, and his friends found jobs for him. One wonders how his life structure would have evolved if his friend had not found the job that he currently holds.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

A few points should be noted with regard to D's negotiation of this important task.

His extended family and his own family occupied a central role during the evolution of his life structure. He describes himself as feeling closer to his grandmother (and sister) during his pre-adult years. His parents (and especially his father) were very influential during most of the Novice Phase of development. This is evident in the important decisions that his father made for him. For example his father was the impetus behind D having to come back to Johannesburg, his first job and his marriage. It is important to note how D passively accepted his father's decisions, even though he did not agree at times (such as when he was denied the opportunity to go back to Botswana).

The centrality of his parents is further evident in D having to give them his job earnings. The impact of this on his life structure is important - it made him feel dependant. D only experienced a sense of independence during his adult years after his father had died, and he could keep his job earnings. The importance of D's family of origin is also evident in the manner in which he unquestionably supports his sister who stays with him in the "family house".

In terms of the formation of D's marriage there are some important points to note as well. Education was more important than relationships for D at the beginning of adulthood. Moreover, relationships never seemed to be a central focus of his life structure. D is adamant that he has never had an extra marital relationship because "it's no good".

D was not able to form a conception of a Special Woman - "to tell you the truth I didn't have that idea" - beyond qualities of being "beautiful", "polite", and having "good manners". He offers a very simple reason for wanting to marry - he needed somebody to wash his clothes.

Furthermore, D can only describe his relationship with his wife in very general terms saying it was "good" but it "became worse when I was drinking". D's relationship with his wife and children was often impoverished and disjointed. He drank so much during most of the Novice Phase that he completely neglected his family. When his wife (and children) left, it precipitated a crisis characterised by much self-blame. Currently he only sees his wife on the weekends. He has accepted this because of a traditional respect for elders (his wife is looking after her grandfather). Traditional beliefs have also influenced D's determination to look after his children so that they can look after him when he is old.

### Synopsis

The underlying processes and tasks during the evolution of D's life structure were much flatter and less pronounced than that described by Levinson (1978), and was complicated by a number of factors. The evolution of his life structure was characterised by the dialectical interplay between his needs (for instance, to pursue his education during the Novice Phase, and to form a stable life structure during the SD period), and external circumstances that impeded his progress. The way in which D perceived and negotiated these external circumstances had a persuasive effect upon the evolution of his life structure.

An external locus of control and a passive acceptance of circumstances is evident throughout the evolution of D's life structure. D perceived external circumstances, including lack of education (and his inability to speak Afrikaans at school), lack of financial resources (and financial support and planning from his parents) as main obstacles in the path of his development. Related to this is D's experience of being a black person, and more specifically his perception that he suffered from

"oppression", because he did not have the "opportunities" while growing up, that white people had.

D's passive pattern of acceptance during the evolution of his life structure is visible in some of his constructs. For instance he says of his first job during the EAT that he did "just accept that job" although he wanted to continue with his education. Similarly, during the EAT he says he did "just accept" his work (even though he found it "hard") because it was his father's wish that he should work. He also says, "I was just quiet, just told myself there's nothing I can do", when his father told him to stay in Johannesburg against his wishes. External locus of control is also evident in his perception of being "pushed" into marriage by his father, and his experience of being "controlled" by the bottle.

Linked to D's passive acceptance, was his lack of any specific goals or direction during the Novice Phase. He says of himself toward the conclusion of the EAT, that he did not have any future, while during the EAW he felt that he did not have any direction. During the ATT he also experienced a sense of purposelessness in relation to his future. He did not seem to formulate goals around his career (and most of the jobs that he held were found for him), or his family (the birth of his children was unplanned and the relationship between him and his children was characterised by neglect during most of the Novice Phase). It was only during the SD period that D began to experience a sense of goal directedness, which seemed to depend very much on the job he acquired during this period. He still, however, felt disappointment in himself, and in his life in general.

The effect of traditional beliefs on the evolution of D's life structure is evident in a number of ways. His respect for his father - which had considerable impact upon his life structure - was tied to a traditional belief of respecting one's elders. The unquestioning financial support which he provided for his parents after starting his first job, was linked to the belief that a child should help support his parents until he marries. This had an effect on the crucial development task of establishing independence during the EAW (which was summed up in his words, "I wasn't independent", because he could not keep his wages

at the end of the month). Furthermore, he experienced his first job as different to how a white person would experience it because, "You start saving money for yourself, when you start working, unlike ourselves".

Traditional beliefs revolving around respect for his elders also influenced his acceptance of his wife staying away from him, with her grandfather. It can also be seen in the unquestioning support he provides his sister, and in his motivation to get a house and education for his children - so that they can look after him when he is elderly.

Another theme that emerges from the analysis concerns D's perception of change during his development, which is most apparent during the ATT. D articulated the change he experienced in a vague and concrete manner (he felt more "grown up"). His feeling of independence is conveyed in the following way: "I can say I've changed 'cause now I'm working for myself, unlike before when I was still young, I've got to go to my father and ask for something." He found it difficult to express a reason for the change. He also experienced positive change as a result of the recent democratisation of South Africa. He thought now that he would be treated as a "human being," and felt easier about communicating with white people.

With regards to the major tasks of the Novice Phase, a number of issues have been identified. D was able to develop a vague Dream and vision of himself in the future, but was unable to live out aspects of this Dream. His Dream (especially during the SD period) was very concrete and materialistic. D did not develop a mentoring relationship through most of his working life, except (to a limited degree) with his current employer. Forming an occupation for D was a passive process, free of a guiding purpose or goal. Lastly, the formation of marriage and family was marked by instability and conflict.

**THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF B  
(INFORMANT 7)**

"If you don't own nothing, you nothing."  
(B, Second Interview, 24 May 1995)

**Identifying Information**

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-7
AGE	41
MARITAL STATUS	Never married
CHILDREN	Two
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Father deceased; eldest of two brothers and a sister
PLACE OF BIRTH	Johannesburg
PLACE OF CURRENT RESIDENCE	Tembisa
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Standard Six
OCCUPATION	Basic manual and technical work (unemployed at present)

**Introduction**

B was introduced to the researcher by the researcher's colleague. Two criteria were important in selecting B to be interviewed. Firstly, he had completed the era of early adulthood without ever being married; secondly, he did not, like most of the previous informants, have much formal education. An understanding of the effect of these two factors on B's development could thus enrich, and broaden the emerging theory of the life structure.

Three interviews were held with B over a period of six weeks. B chose to be interviewed at the researcher's office. After each interview

the researcher drove B to a taxi rank on the way to his home (he had never owned a car and could not drive).

A striking feature of the interviews, was the flat and concrete nature of B's responses, as well as his lack of introspection. Most responses had to be coaxed from B and his repetitive impoverished responses frustrated the researcher. He exuded a sense of desperateness, of a man struggling to hold on to a disintegrating life structure. He seemed depressed and spoke softly, with his blood-shot eyes turned downwards. He answered the questions in a subservient manner and, often referred to the researcher as "sir".

B constantly referred to the fact that he was unemployed, and asked for a job on a number of occasions. Considerable time had to be spent explaining the aims and purpose of the interviews, because B thought that the reason he was being interviewed was to get a job.

B's pathetic situation evoked feelings of pity (and perhaps guilt) in the researcher, which was perhaps eased by giving B some old clothes, some of which he immediately (according to the researcher's colleague) gave to his mother and close family. He also gave his mother the little money that he was paid for each of the interviews.

#### **Biography: The Life of B**

B describes his childhood years as follows: "My life was good for me that time because my father was still alive, I was attending school, and I was very happy about school". Looking back, B relates his childhood years as the most happy in his life "because I did want to further my studies".

He especially remembers playing soccer at school, and the passion to go overseas and play soccer followed him through most of his adult years:

My important thing was the time when I was playing soccer. I was going to go overseas to prove my soccer career there. So my bad luck, I broke my leg. My life fell apart so that

B had to leave school in Standard 6 (when he was an adolescent) after his father died, because his mother did not have money to pay for his education or support the family, and he had to "help my mother" financially. He said that "since then my life changed", and portrays the impact upon him as follows:

Because when I did leave school my heart was sad because I wanted to further my studies, but nothing I can do. I have to leave the school so I can look for a job so I can start my future ... things go bad for me when my father died.

He also adds that "if he didn't die, maybe I'd get a great position because I did want to further my studies".

He had to put aside his youthful ambition, which was to further his education and start working, so he could help "support" his family:

In my youth I did want to go further with my school so I could be somebody, maybe a doctor, a mechanic or whatever, but of course I didn't have the money to further my studies. It was bad for me.

Educational advancement was more important than relationships: "No, relationships was not my important thing. My important thing was to go to school and to go to university". He also that says he "didn't have time for girlfriends" then, as "I was busy studying" (at school). He did, however, meet the girl with whom he was to have two children. He describes the meeting with his girlfriend (with whom he still has a relationship) as follows:

I met her in Tembisa. I was working that time. I was staying in the same section. I found her when she was going to the shop, asked her to take her outside one of these days, said she'll see me next time. Next time I met her it was nice for me, so we stayed together ... have first born.

He describes the kind of woman he wanted to marry as follows: "In my life I did want to marry an educated woman, so when we old we can help

each other and we can be a big, happy family". He also adds that, "I did want one whose got respect for me so I can tell her everything she can understand." He says he "loves" his girlfriend because she has no parents:

Her mother fell ill and suddenly died. Her father got a car accident. At work he collided with another truck, his car turned away, he died. Now I'm taking like an orphan - that's why I love her with all my heart.

When B met his girlfriend, he was working as a greaser at a big transport company where his father had worked before he died. He did not enjoy the work and still wanted to go back to school: "I didn't want to work that time, I wanted to go back to school, but there was nothing I can do. I have to work so I can help my family."

He experienced a lot of discrimination during his first job, mostly in the form of verbal abuse. He dealt with this in the following way: "That time I didn't know what can I do; because I want to work I did listen to him when he tell me everything he want me to do, but in my heart I didn't feel too good."

He left this job after two years (at the age of 18) because "they (the municipality) moved us to Tembisa". Although this was a forced removal he felt "glad" because the house in Tembisa was bigger than the previous house. He was upset about leaving Alexandra because "I did grow up in Alex, I did like the place". He also says he left his job because of conflict between him and another colleague: "(I) did get some misunderstanding with some colleague. We used to fight, that man didn't like me. Sometimes he want to kick me around."

During his twenties he held four different jobs. Most of the jobs were manual jobs such as a grinder and a greaser, as well as a packer and storeman. The longest he held a job was for about three years, and the reasons for leaving the jobs included being underpaid, and conflict with his seniors (due, for instance, to arriving at work late after the weekends).

During this time he felt that "the most important thing was to work and have a good house so I can support my family". Work meant the following for him: "I was happy because I can get money to support my family". He also says that during his twenties he had three main concerns: "The important thing was soccer and to own a house, and to further my studies - the only three things that were important to me".

While he was working he helped to support his mother financially. He says he was "happy" with this because "in our culture, if you not married, (and) you still staying with girlfriend, you can't give her my money. The money, you must give your mother".

B's relationship with his girlfriend - even at this time - was characterised by tension:

Sometimes we fight about maybe she come too late home, maybe she visit uncle or aunt, didn't tell me. I ask, 'Why didn't you tell me you going?' Maybe I didn't see her for three days - so we used to fight.

He describes himself as having the following dream in his thirties:

I was dreaming about to make my life, to own something. Sometimes you dream about owning a car; sometimes living in your house - in a big house, staying with your wife and children. That time I did dream about getting married and getting my own house.

He also says, "I did want to make a lot of things, so I can own my factory, but things did not go good for me". Things did not go well for B because he was arrested (at age 32) for alleged car theft, and sent to jail for four years. He was arrested while he was working at a big company as a storeman. He describes himself as very happy before his arrest: "I was happy; (in) my job I was happy".

Shortly before being jailed, B had his first child (when he was about 31) and his second after coming out of jail. He says it was "hard luck" when his girlfriend fell pregnant, and describes the birth of both

his children as a "mistake". At this time of his life, he says, he was not thinking about having children, but was "thinking about to get married when I got old enough".

Although both these children were not planned and a "mistake", he felt "happy", because "in our culture, if you over age 35 (and) you don't have a child, you're not a man". He also felt an increasing need to marry: "I was very happy that time, to show I'm a man. So I should get married, stay with my wife." Although he wanted to marry and support his family, he felt that he was prevented from doing this because "things went bad for money my side".

B's need to move away from home increased after the birth of his children: "When we got the children we have to move out". He also had a need to move out of home during this period because, "I didn't like to share same room with my younger brother". He only moved out, however, at a later stage for reasons that shall become apparent.

B spent four years in jail for a crime he says he did not commit (he was "framed" by a friend). In jail he was preoccupied with revenge but, "bad luck, when I came out, he was dead. They shot him in the location".

He describes his reaction to prison life as follows:

The thing that was bad for me in jail was when the time some inmates were fighting. At that time my heart was not happy. I didn't want to live a life like that, 'cause sometimes if you sleep, somebody come with a knife, hit you and stab you with a spoon. That time it was too bad.

He says that the following two things were important to him while in prison: "I was happy because I had a child - that thing was important to me - and I was happy playing soccer". He felt unhappy that he was not able to see his child while in prison: "I feel bad, I didn't have time to see (my child), because in prison they didn't want children".

The fact that his girlfriend continued to visit him in jail increased his desire to marry her: "That time I did see (she) come and

see me, she still love me. So I did change my mind, I did want to marry her".

When he came out of prison his main aim was to get a job and perhaps get married: "When I was in jail, sir, I did like when I come out I must get some job so I can start my life again. We can get married, or find some house. But then things didn't go good for me".

B describes this period as difficult because he could not find a job at first. The fact that the unions were becoming powerful increased this difficulty: "When I came from jail, that time in the factories they started the Unions - from there I tried to look for a job, but nothing ...". B continued to stay with his mother after coming out of jail, and managed to find a job about a year after his release. He found this job in the following way: "I did make an appointment and I brought some forms. They told me that they'd call me again. They did call me and that time I got a job".

He had no specific idea of what occupation he wanted to follow at that time: "I did want to do any job I can do". He was "glad" when he found the job (which was working as a grinder) and he was "enjoying the work he did".

While he was working he shared his small salary with his mother and his girlfriend. The financial support towards his mother is related to his following belief: "Because now I'm not married I must give my mother some money, so she can put it (away) for me , so when I want to marry she can give (it) to me, and I can start to marry". He did not question the support for his mother and felt "happy" about it.

He describes his relationship with his "boss" at work as "good, because he was from America, not South Africa". He says that his boss didn't "shout to me, just talk to me nicely". He was pleased when his boss let him start work later when he could not get to work on time because of the taxi queues.

In retrospect, he also says that while he was working he did want to get to a higher position, like a manager or supervisor. His need to

be "somebody higher" is reflected in the following: "I did feel I did want to be a man so I can be somebody, maybe somebody higher, to own something. In our culture, if you don't own anything, you're not a man".

Another aim that he held when working in this job was to "get my own house, so I can stay with my family." During this period, he did manage to rent his own place with his girlfriend. B (then in his mid-thirties) felt ambivalent about leaving home. He wanted more space and privacy but was hesitant about leaving his mother:

When I started to move (out of) home my heart was sad because we too many and the house is too small. I didn't want to leave but I can't share a room with my younger brothers. That is why I did go and hire some house somewhere.

He also says that, "I did want to stay with my mother so I can support her, because I havn't got a father". His mother was upset that B was moving away but B explained to her that "you see, the house is too small, when we make some outside room, I'll come back".

B had to leave his job in Edenvale (in his late thirties) because "bad luck my boss moved away". He describes his reaction as follows: "I was very upset. It was very bad, I was upset because I'm somebody who likes to work". He says that after this things "went bad" and his life "fell apart".

Losing the job disrupted the lifestyle he was beginning to establish: "My life that time was better. I didn't know my boss was going to move. I was going to put money in a bank, when I can get enough money, to buy my own house". He adds that "that time I was working I was happier, since I lost the job there was nothing I can do". Soon after leaving his job he had to return to his mother's home, even though he did not want to: "I didn't want to go back home, 'cause I lost my job. You know when you don't work you don't get the money to pay something, like that (rent), so I have to go back home".

Back at home, however, B felt pleased that he was staying with his mother: "I was happy, sir, because I did want to stay near my mother

cause she's old now, doesn't work any more, getting pension money." He also felt that, "I don't want to stay with my family my whole life .... I want to move away". Again he advances the following reason for this: "Where I'm staying the house is too small. So I want to start a new life. I want to move away from home, to get my own house so I can support my children and my wife."

His ambition to get his own home has taken on a dream-like quality: "Everyday when I sleep I'm dreaming of staying at my home, living with my wife and my children, have some car." He adds that he wants to now "live like other people".

He feels it would have been easier for him to move away and establish himself if he was a white person: "Maybe I'd be working, getting some good salaries. Maybe I could have been happier now, being away from my family, staying with my own family."

His urgency to move out of his house is related to a traditional belief concerning his role as the eldest brother in the family: "So with our culture the smallest one is the owner of the house. By us, the big one must move away from there, they must leave the small one in the house."

According to this traditional belief, he feels he (as the eldest brother) should be supporting his family. However, his brother and married sister (who has moved out of the family home) help to support the family.

He feels a sense of shame about this:

... because they at home, my mother is a pensioner and the one who is working is the younger brother and my other brother, who is after me, is not working. We looking for the younger brother to support us .. too bad for me, I should have supported him; now he's supporting me.

His brother's planned marriage has accentuated the situation because, "he's going to bring another family in the house. So the house

is too small". B wants to move out of home so that, "I can give the small boy - my younger brother - a chance so he can start his own life again". Again, this is related to a traditional belief: "In our culture ... if you go and get married (then) you started your life now. You must start to support your wife and the children. You going to start giving them (family of origin) less."

To help his family financially, B has a vague idea of starting a small business: "I did want to get some money to buy some soft goods so I can sell some soft goods - things like coats, socks, jerseys and lumber. So I can get some money so I can help my family."

A further problem is that he is unable to support his children through school: "'Cause even now the children want to go to school - I havn't got the money to take them to school". He feels "very bad" that his children are staying away from him and that he only sees them on weekends. He feels he "can't ask my small brother to take the children to school because he's supporting at home". He also says: "I don't want to rely on my family to support my children. I must support my children like my father used to support me".

He adds the following:

(I feel) very bad sir, cause there's nothing I can do because I havn't got money to support them. Sometimes at home there's a lot of complaints - 'You make child around here, but (you) don't work,' and then I don't know how I'm going to support them. I always tell my mother, 'sometimes God is there, maybe I can get some job and support my children.'

While he is waiting for another job opportunity, B passes most of his day the following way:

I'm going to the factory to look some jobs. When I didn't get I come back. During the day I look around to see if our garden is clean or dirty; so I start to clean our yard till the day's gone.

He says he is not happy with his life at the moment because he's not working: "What can you do in your life without work?" He feels he will have a "better life" if he gets a job, and wishes that "one day I can go to the private school, like maybe there I'm going for welding or plumbing or whatever the job I can get".

Since leaving his job, B has worked at a couple of temporary jobs, which he describes as "very bad" because "you working nicely, then the following day they tell you the job is over, you must come and try again".

His guiding purpose has been to find work: "I just want to work". In response to the question: "Is there anything you think you're good at?" B replied, "No, I'm thinking about a job and to get married only. Only the things that I'm thinking about at the moment". He also says, "I want a job so I can get a house, so I can move away, stay with my girlfriend". At the same time he says, "I'll never forget my mother".

The importance of his mother in his life at the moment is reflected in his response to the researcher's question: "Who is the most important person in your life at the moment?" He replied, "my mother".

He also describes his uncle as an influential person currently in his life: "Always telling me I'm big enough now, must go look for a job, getting old now. Marry, so you can be a man just like other people." He adds that his uncle is "just grumbling when he see me, say 'you are old enough, try to be a man and make your own life so that we can see you're a man' ". He also portrays his aunt as an important person because "she shows me the way" through the "advice" and directions she gives him.

Although B is not married he feels that the right age for a man to marry is in his mid-thirties:

In our culture when a man is about 35 years, he must start his own life, he must get his own house and move away from his family to make sure that now you're a man. You must get your own things.

He says that he is "always thinking about marriage," and "now I'm old enough, so I want to get married". It is the lack of finances, he says, which is preventing him from getting married at the moment (he cannot afford labola). He says that, "I havn't got the money to marry her because I'm no longer working".

He experiences some family and cultural pressure to get married, and feels a sense of "shame" that he is not married:

Yes, they (his family) want me to get married because my younger brother's going to get married. And then it's a shame - because I'm the eldest one and I'm not married. If my younger brother gets married, in our culture they think it's no good. In our culture the first one must get married (first).

His girlfriend is currently staying at her sister's place because her sister is working and she is looking after her children. She visits B on weekends and sometimes during the week.

There is a lot of tension between the couple, which often revolves around the fact that he is not working and cannot support the children. He says the relationship is "not so good" as "she want me to work so I can come and support the children, so we can get our own house, so we can live together". He says she often shouts at him, saying, "you give me two children, now you don't want to work, my children havn't got food". He adds that, "so that's when my life started to go bad".

While he still feels that "I love her, sir, it's a long time, I've lived with her since 1973", he says he has "two girlfriends" at the moment. He describes the other one as "my secret one", and his "private one", somebody for his "spare time". He has not told his long-standing girlfriend, or his mother, about her: "I make sure that they mustn't see her because my mother likes to shout."

He met her last year, and says that the "one I love is the one I got children with. The other one, sir, just messing around (with)". His desire to make his long-standing girlfriend jealous, however, also

motivated him to find another woman: "I did want to make her jealous, so she can stop shouting at me. That's why I did get another girlfriend - I did want to make her jealous."

Although he is "feeling bad" about having two girlfriends, he says that "in our culture there's some who are married who get two or three wives". He also says that although he thinks she does not have another boyfriend, if she did, "I can kill myself".

In the last interview with B, he says that he had a fight with his second girlfriend and he has now ended this relationship. He describes this as follows:

I fight with the other one. I'm finished with her, because she did want me to leave my wife and go and stay with her. I did tell her no, I can't be like that because I got children with this one - that's why I can't stay with her.

B still feels ambivalent towards his girlfriend, which is reflected in his statement, "Maybe I should have left her a long time ago". He says he should have left before they had children, but felt he could not leave her because of a cultural pressure to stay with the woman you had children with.

The only way that B perceives himself to have changed since he was younger is that "there's a difference, cause now I'm getting old now". He says that, "that time I was a young boy, now I'm old ... doesn't work, haven't got own place, too bad". He adds that, "I've changed because I'm not working, can't be happy when you not working". If he compares himself now to when he was at school, he says he has changed because "that time I was at school".

B says he is different to other people: "Yes, I'm different because if you don't work ... somebody's working and they got a car or a house, but I didn't have a house or car". He adds that, "I did feel bad because I did want to be like other people - other ones they owning some shops. If you don't own nothing, you nothing".

B does not feel the elections and democratisation of South Africa has changed his life much:

When I see now things are still the same, they didn't change you see. We got still a lot of fighting when we were voting for Mr Mandela. We think things will be good - living some good lives, owning some house, they going to give us many things, but now there is still lot of violence.

Looking back on his life, he says that he felt the effect of apartheid and discrimination, especially in the work place. He says that the foreman at work used to treat the black people badly - making them carry heavy loads, working outside during winter and verbally abusing them.

He experiences much pain at the moment which he alleviates by drinking, "because when you drink, you become happy, you forget about the past." He drinks to forget about the time in jail:

When I went to jail, when I'm drinking I don't remember. It did hurt my heart. Every time when I'm drinking it did make me to forget where I came from. I don't want to remember about things when I was in jail.

He also drinks to forget about "the life I'm living at the moment. You see when you don't work things are no good for you". Lastly, he feels that life will be "different if I can get some work".

#### **Analysis of B's Life According to Levinson's Framework**

##### Pre-Adult Years

Looking back on his life, B describes his pre-adult years as the most happy in his life because he was at school and he wanted to study further. His childhood years were interrupted, however, as he had to leave school at a young age and put his aspiration (to acquire a good education) on indefinite hold. He was unable to build a solid foundation for the development of a future viable life structure. An experience of

unfulfilled aspirations and helplessness in the face of lack of opportunity and resources would permeate B's adult life structure, as shall become evident in this analysis.

Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

The tasks of this period - which was initiated by the death of B's father - are characterised by B's experience of impotence, in the face of circumstances. This is apparent in his words, "there was nothing I can do", as he had to leave school after his father died although he wanted to continue with his education. A feeling of unfulfilled aspirations permeates B's current life structure, for instance, in his belief that if his father did not die he would have been able to pursue his education and achieve a "great position".

Although B began to form a Dream during this period, like most of the men in Levinson's (1978) study, the Dream was very vague. He also experienced a sense of not being able to live out his Dream due to circumstances (and more specifically poverty). This is apparent in his words: "But of course I didn't have the money to further my studies (and become a doctor or mechanic). It was bad for me". He had to abandon his Dream and go and work, and again he experienced a sense of powerlessness. This is evident in his words that, "there was nothing I can do. I have to work so I can help my family".

Even at work, B coped with discrimination and verbal abuse in a passive way. For instance, he listened to and accepted the verbal abuse which upset him. He also passively accepted the forced relocation of his family to another area even though he felt "sad" about leaving the township where he grew up.

B's need for education during this period was a more important part of his life structure than the need for a steady relationship. B, however, did meet his first girlfriend during this period and initiated a relationship which would be characterised by tension.

In terms of the task of separating from the family of origin - which is fundamental to this period - it is apparent that B continued to stay with his family and continued to help support his mother financially. Traditional expectations influenced this task, as indicated by B's acceptance of and willingness to look after his mother, because it was expected of him in his culture. There is also an indication that B used these traditional beliefs as a convenient justification for avoiding adult responsibilities.

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creating a stable life structure)

This period is outstanding because of its flat nature. B was not - even after repeated questioning - able to relate any influential events (besides having a few jobs), experiences or feelings that characterised this period. The manifestation of the tasks of this period are also very vague. There was little indication that B was able to experience a sense of exploration during this period. This is especially visible in relation to the jobs he held during this period. These jobs were not based on personal choice (most of them were found by friends of his), and work was not associated with a process of discovery but rather meant for him an opportunity to obtain "money to support my family". His jobs were thus found in a reactive rather than a proactive manner.

Psychologically, in terms of the internal aspects of the life structure, B did have a general and limited need for exploration - or desire to search for other options. This is apparent in his continuing wish to pursue his education and in an aspect of his Dream - to play soccer overseas. B perceived external circumstances as obstacles preventing him from realising these options. He could not continue with his education because he had no money, and he could not continue with soccer because of "bad luck" - he broke his leg. The influence of bad luck and other external circumstances, is an integral theme in the evolution of B's life structure, and clearly demonstrates an external locus of control.

B's need for stability and "roots" (Levinson, 1978, p.80) during this period is apparent in his feeling that, "the most important thing

(for me) was to work and have a good house, so I can support my family". He perceived external circumstances (and especially lack of money) as preventing him from realising those aspirations.

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

Levinson (1978, p.85) remarks that "all men make some changes during this period". In this regard, it is important to note that the little change that B experienced was not the result of much introspection or self-evaluation, but rather the result of a significant external event that occurred during this period - namely, the birth of B's son. Again B refers to this significant event as "bad luck" because the birth of his child was unexpected and unplanned.

While the birth of his son was unplanned, he felt fulfilled because it conferred upon him a sense of manhood and identity as an adult. This sense of manhood was directly related to a traditional belief, which is clearly illustrated in B's following words: "I was very happy because I'm thinking now I'm a man ... In our culture if you over age 35 (and) you don't have a child, you're not a man."

The birth of B's child also instilled in B a sense of urgency which is characteristic of this period. This manifested in his increasing need to move out of home, get married and support his own family. This task was again influenced by a traditional belief that a man should establish his own home base after having children.

Unfortunately for B, none of these wishes materialised due, in part, to the impact of another unfortunate external event (his arrest and imprisonment). In this regard it is important to note his subjective construction of these events. Again there is evidence that he chooses to blame external events because it allows him to abdicate responsibility.

Settling Down (SD)

(To establish one's niche in society  
and to work at advancement)

There is some evidence that B had a need - albeit a very vague and undefined one - to deepen his roots and to work at advancement. However, there was little outward manifestation of these tasks, and his life structure during most of this period was characterised by fragmentation and instability.

B did express a desire during this period "to make my life, to be a man, to be ... somebody higher". He also had a need to root himself in his family and a need to have his own family home (and to own something, like a car). These needs even had qualities of a Dream: "I was dreaming about to make my life."

His life structure, however, was characterised by instability and disruption, the cause of which he frequently ascribes to external circumstances, and which he felt powerless to overcome. This is captured at the beginning of this period in his description that, "things did not go good for me", after being "framed" and jailed. It is also evident in his reference to "bad luck" after he lost his job, and his perception that "my life fell apart". Powerlessness is reflected in his words, "since I lost the job there was nothing I can do". Unhappiness and a feeling of being different from other people characterise B's current life structure.

There is no evidence that B has been able to "enhance his life more firmly in family, occupation and community" which is paramount during this period (Levinson, 1978, p.140). He feels "very bad" that his children are staying away from him and he is unable to support them through school. Again he feels impotent in relation to this: "There's nothing I can do, because I don't have the money to support them." His relationship with his girlfriend is also unstable, and he feels he would have left her before if there was not a traditional taboo against a man leaving a woman who he had impregnated.

In terms of advancement at work, B had a vague ambition to advance himself and become a manager (or own a factory), but there was no concrete work on the task of advancement during this period. B remained in the same manual position in his job during this period, and although he enjoyed the work, the job seemed to mean nothing more to him than being a job: "I did want to do any job."

Traditional beliefs and expectations had an influential role during this period, and even influenced his definition of himself as an adult. B felt less of an adult because he did not own anything: "In our culture, if you don't own anything, you're not a man". Cultural pressure relating to being an adult is also evident in his perception that, "in our culture when a man is about 35 years, he must start his own life ... and move away from his family"; and in his pressure to marry, "to show I'm a man". Traditional expectations concerning his role as the eldest son increased his sense of shame about not being married, but did not seem to encourage any internal motivation to act on his desire to marry.

#### **Major Tasks at the Novice Phase**

##### Forming and Living out the Dream

It should be evident from the preceding analysis that B was able to form a very vague Dream, but he was not able to live out his Dream. His vague Dream was linked to his desire to "be somebody, maybe a doctor, a mechanic or whatever". He felt that circumstances (his father's death and poverty) prevented him from realising his ambitions.

Another component of his Dream was his ambition to go overseas and become an international soccer player. Again he felt he was prevented by circumstances and "bad luck" from accomplishing this.

His Dream also included materialistic elements, which stemmed from his poverty and lack of resources. He says: "I was dreaming about to make my life, to own something" - such as a car and his house (where he could stay with his own family). Instead of realising his Dream, B currently feels a sense of purposelessness and a feeling of being

different to other people, because he does not own anything or have what he wanted.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

B was not able to identify an individual in the work setting who fulfilled some functions of a mentor. In his personal life his aunt and uncle did fulfil some mentoring functions, as he valued the advice and guidance they gave him.

#### Forming an Occupation

A striking theme during early adulthood is contained in the meaning that work had for A. There is little evidence that B was able to establish what Levinson (1978, p.104) refers to as a "differentiated occupational identity". Work for B, predominantly meant obtaining a job ("any job") so as to get money to support himself and his family. His jobs were not chosen on the basis of introspection or conscious matching of self with the world of work. Nor was there any evidence of any sound goals or sense of direction in relation to his work.

Instead, the jobs were acquired in an unintentional, reactive fashion, by other people and by chance. The simple and concrete process of finding a job is reflected in B's following words: "I did make an appointment and I brought some forms. They told me that they'd call me again. They did call me, and that time I got a job."

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

A number of issues emerge in relation to this task. B's own family, and especially his mother, remained important to him throughout the evolution of his life structure (during the SD he describes his mother as the most important person in his life). He was thus never able to complete the task of separating from his family of origin.

Furthermore, this task was influenced considerably by traditional beliefs as it most evident in the "shame" B feels about not being married. Note also, that B did not feel a sense of shame about having

two girlfriends because of his belief that it was culturally appropriate for a man to have more than two wives. He did, however, perceive it to be inappropriate for a woman to do the same.

Lastly, B's relationship with his girlfriend was characterised by tension and a lack of intimacy.

### Synopsis

Although there is some evidence that B began work on the tasks and processes characteristic of the periods of early adulthood, the evolution of B's life structure seems to be much flatter than that described by Levinson (1978). B did begin forming a Dream during the EAT, but the Dream was very vague and undefined. The exploration during the EAW, was also very limited and general, while there is no evidence that he experienced a BOOM phase during the SD period.

There is also not much evidence that B engaged in much introspection or self-analysis that is required of a transitional period according to Levinson (1978). For instance, the formation of his occupation was not characterised by a matching of personal attributes and the nature of the work, but was governed by the need to find any work. There also seemed to be little introspection during the ATT.

A number of other major trends and themes characterise the evolution of B's life structure. Perhaps most outstanding is B's pattern of helplessness and passivity in the face of external circumstances. This is evident, for instance, in B's feeling of impotence after having to leave school during the EAT; in the passive manner in which he coped with discrimination at work; and in his feelings of helplessness after losing his job during the SD period.

Linked to this is B's external locus of control. This manifests in B's frequent references to the effect of "bad luck" in his life course (for instance when he broke his leg, when he was arrested, and when his wife fell pregnant); and in his experience of not being able to live out his Dream or realise his aspirations because of external circumstances (and especially poverty). Perhaps B's connection to life can be summed

up by the following statement: If I had (money, a job, education, was white, or had not broken my legs) then I would be happy.

Another theme that characterises the evolution of B's life structure, concerns the impact of traditional beliefs, and linked to this, the role of the family of origin, on important processes and tasks. This is most apparent in the dialectical struggle B experienced around the task of separating from his family of origin. B felt caught between the need to move away from his mother (and his younger brother) and his need to support his mother. The need to support his mother was clearly related to the traditional belief that he, being the eldest brother and unmarried, should support his mother. B experienced much "shame" about not being married and not being able to fulfil his role as the eldest son. Moreover, at the end of the SD period, B had still not completed the task of separating from his family of origin, in terms of the internal aspects (he describes his mother as the most important person in his life), and external aspects (he still stays with her) of his life structure. There is also evidence that he used these traditional beliefs as a "cop out" from adult responsibility.

These traditional beliefs are also apparent in other instances or milestones during the evolution of B's life structure. This is evident, for instance, in B's experience of being more of "a man" after the birth of his son and his belief that it was appropriate for him, as a man, to have two girlfriends. It is also visible in B's experience of being less of a man because he did not own anything.

A further theme that emerges, especially during the SD period, is B's experience of being different to other people. This was linked to his experience of being a black person and not being able to own anything, like a car or a house.

With regard to B's perception of change during the evolution of his life structure, it is evident that he perceives developmental change in a simple and concrete manner. This is succinctly summed up in his impression that he feels a difference because, "I'm getting old now". Change is also related to external factors as seen in his understanding that he has changed because he used to be at school and now he's not

working. He also feels that there has been little sociopolitical change as a result of the recent democratisation of South Africa ("things are still the same").

A final point concerning the nature of the major tasks of the Novice Phase, was that B was never able to live out his Dream during early adulthood. He did not form a relationship with a mentor. The formation of his occupation was marked by lack of goals and exploration, and the task of forming a marriage was marked by instability and a lack of intimacy.

**THE EARLY ADULT LIFE STRUCTURE OF P  
(INFORMANT 8)**

"I've done it, I've made it happen ..."  
(P, first interview, 6 July 1995)

**Identifying Information**

INFORMANT NUMBER	I-8
AGE	38
MARITAL STATUS	Married
CHILDREN	Two
FAMILY OF ORIGIN	Mother deceased; one of seven siblings
PLACE OF BIRTH	Rural area near Pietersburg
CURRENT RESIDENCE	Johannesburg
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	Masters of Business Administration (MBA)
OCCUPATION	Senior Business Manager

**Introduction**

P was introduced to the researcher by a mutual friend. He was chosen to be interviewed because he held a senior position at work (more senior than any other of the informants). It would be interesting to identify what influence personal qualities, and perhaps external factors, had on his success, and to explore the interaction between these personal qualities and external circumstances.

P was interviewed twice in his office. He communicated in a very confident, direct fashion, and responded quickly and intelligently to the researcher's questions. He gave the impression of someone who is in control of his life and knows what he wants and who he is. The

interviewer was excited, and at times bewildered, by the amount of information that emerged during the interviews.

A further factor that had an impact on the researcher was the many photographs of his family in his office, which gave the impression of someone who really valued his family.

#### **Biography: The Life of P**

Looking back on his life, P says that the "first thing" worth mentioning is that he grew up in a rural area. There were eight children in his family, and his mother was a teacher, while his father was a school principle.

P's father was wealthy: "I mean my father had everything. He had everything. At one stage he could buy anything for cash". His wealthy background had an important impact on his life because it "opened opportunities for us". He adds that his father was "also very clear in what he wanted his children to be". He didn't want his eight children to become teachers, like him and his wife, "but he was clear that the only thing I can give my children is education, and he was not negotiable on that one".

Much of his family's wealth derived from a "family business". His father owned two tractors, and P remembers fondly how he - as a child - would help in the business by working in the fields, and delivering goods . This provided the foundation for an interest in business which P would pursue in his adult years. Referring to the family business P says that, "we built something very, very great, and also very prosperous", because the family was "committed".

P says that one of the things "I still feel proud of" is that he and his mother started, and ran, a successful business together when P was just 16 years old. He feels proud because they had to overcome many "apartheid issues", or obstacles, to make this business work. P remembers in detail, discriminatory and racialistic incidents and attitudes during his pre-adult years - such as having to call the grocery store owner "baas" (boss) before getting service, and being denied (or

charged extra) for certain goods needed in the business, because he was black.

He says that "looking back as a black person we have achieved a lot. We survived the era of apartheid," and:

Let me just tell you, when I look back in life I look back with pride, because I say to myself, I have come so far with this background, with all these problems, and I still managed to make it. That gives me pride inside, that I've managed to achieve even with all these obstacles. It was very difficult.

P feels he has managed to come "so far" because of not only his family background, but also his own initiative: "So if I reflect back on my life I must say that what I've done and I've achieved, is not only what my father, or my parents did for me. I was involved, and I've done it, I've made it happen."

After matriculating P enrolled for a degree in accountancy at the university. He describes his career path which led up to his decision to study accountancy as follows:

Through the years as I grew, these plans have been changing; because I remember the first time I went to high school, I thought the best thing I ever wanted to be was to be a doctor. But by the time I finished high school, I realised that no, medicine is not my line. I don't like to see sick people. I just didn't like the idea. Then I was very business oriented because I'm from a business family. So I felt I had to do something about business, to learn more and more about business. Hence I did a B.Comm and accounting straight after school. Although I didn't like accounting much, I liked the business economics part, the marketing side of business. But when I did accounting eventually - even though I didn't like it that much - I wanted to become an accountant.

P chose accounting because he thought it was "challenging", because "I wanted to explore it first" and because he thought it was a good

"starting point" for him to "branch off" into marketing at a later stage. He thought that accountancy would provide him with the financial background needed for marketing, and make him a "very good business person".

Being a "business person" was something that P dreamt a lot about at university:

The dreams I had when I was at 'varsity was working in a big cooperate, in a big company, maybe holding a very senior position. That's what I dreamed, earning lots of money. But you know, having not worked before, your dreams are sometimes not realistic. But my dreams were always around, working in a big corporate, or alternatively what I thought was maybe running my own business. These were two things which I had in mind. But if you have never worked before, you don't know what it's like. What I felt was maybe it's better to start working, gain the experience, and if the opportunities are there, then you can have your own business.

While at university, P continued to stay with his parents, and continued to assist with the family business. He also met the girl who he was later to marry. She was doing a similar degree, and they would often meet in his room to study together.

He says that his "needs", in terms of relationships, changed when he went to university: "As you grow up your needs change, because you become mature, and learn quiet a lot of things". His needs (in a relationship) when he was younger, revolved around "relationships, companionships", "somebody you could laugh with, you could share a lot of things with". He describes his relationships then as more casual and relaxed, where the "responsibility is to take her out for a hamburger". At university he began looking for somebody to "build a family with". He was only to marry a few years later, however, after coming to Johannesburg and starting his first job.

After completing his degree, P wanted to come to Johannesburg to find work, but - due to influx control - could not obtain a job. Under

influx control regulations companies had to follow a procedure, which involved contacting the local chief to approve the granting of a work permit to the prospective employee. The permit had to be renewed annually by the company. Most companies were not prepared to follow that procedure, "even though we had the qualities and the potential".

Eventually a well established company did follow this procedure and accepted P, for which he still feels grateful. Thus P left his rural background and came to the urban metropolis of Johannesburg (in his mid twenties).

He describes this move as a "cultural shock", saying that it was "difficult for me to adjust" because Soweto was one of the "roughest" locations, and he felt very insecure. He also found it difficult to adjust to his living circumstances. His aunt, where he stayed, had a typically small house, and he had to sleep on the carpet (whereas at home he had his own room).

Coming to Johannesburg was the first time that he left his own family. He felt a need for independence at this time, but this process was complicated by his father's unwillingness to let him go. He explains this need, and his father's feelings as follows:

That was important to me, to adventure into life, to know what life is like, not to be dependent on my father. But I didn't state it. You know traditionally, when you grow up as a black person, you must be able to look after your parents. I wanted to come here to be able to adventure into life, and be successful, and be able to show them that 'there, look what you've done for me, now I can support you'. That is what I've done. I mean my father is very much proud of me for what I've achieved. And that is what I wanted to achieve. I didn't want to be dependent. Although my father still wanted us to be close to him, to help him run the business, we said 'No. This business helped us to get us where we are today, but now we must go on our own, and start doing something for ourselves, to support you.'

Even though he was reluctant to let him go, his father wanted his children to have the "experience of life here", but stressed that "he never wanted to loose the link and family ties". P did not feel fully independent in Johannesburg because his parents were still very central to him. He was "missing" them very much, and would return home every month, which gave him the feeling that "I never left them" (he would only feel fully independent after his marriage). After some time his father was "happy and comfortable" with his son being away from home.

Soon after arriving in Johannesburg, P began working in this international "top company". Working at this company was for P a "last resort," because his background was accounting and he wanted to pursue this option. After this company offered him a job, and realising that it would be difficult to get another offer, he thought, "Why not? I'll accept it". He began to enjoy his job however, although he knew he would soon have to "follow another route" to get what he really wanted.

He was happy at this company, because it "gave me exposure into the world of business". He liked the many "career paths" in the company, as well as the management style. He adds that, "when you get into the company, in the first place, you know where you are; you know where you going to, and you know the options". There was also equal opportunity programmes which focused on the development of black employees, and "there wasn't this issue of 'meneer' (sir) or 'baas' (boss)".

He also felt that his position that he attained at work was a "big achievement," that he had "made it". He received a good salary, and was able to select a company car, which was for him "a symbol of achievement". He says that, "you were looked upon as those people who achieved, and it gave me a sense of achievement".

P says he did not have "any specific person I aspired to while working, as well as outside of work". He did have people that he "admired", such as a leading black bank director and a well known black business man, both of whom "have done very well". He felt that he did not need somebody to aspire to, because he relied on himself: "I must say that there were very few people who inspired me. What I think helped

me is the drive within myself as to what it is I want". He always thought, while working there, that "I'm getting there!".

Even in this context, however, he began to get "worried" about "cul de sacs for blacks". They could not obtain certain positions. Furthermore they started off in lower positions, and moved up the hierarchy slower than white people.

The feeling of stagnation, and not being able to move into a top managerial position was a fundamental driving force behind P's decision to leave this company later on. For the time being, however, he was content in his career, and his attention focused on the issue of marriage. After completing her first degree P's wife went overseas to continue with her studies. Soon after returning the couple married (P was 27 years old).

P's "ambitions" of the type of woman he wished to marry, and his decision to marry his girlfriend is reflected in his following words:

Well I think in life (like) most people - maybe today things are changing - I had ambitions to have a family, and the only way to have a family is to get married. I had a girlfriend, I'd been with her for a couple of years, and then when the time came (when) we felt it was necessary to start a family, we decided to marry.

He also wanted a woman who could "challenge" him (especially in family related issues) and could pitch the communication at his level. She should be "equal", not just somebody who would agree with him the whole time. She should also be able to "contribute positively" to the support of the family, and understand him and "contribute to whatever you do". Furthermore, he wanted somebody who was "independent", and "not only just a lover", somebody who could support him in meeting the "other needs that will start coming out", when building a family - such as the needs for a house, a car, and a good education for the children. His decision to marry his girlfriend was based on these "ambitions".

Soon after marriage P experienced a "big, big change which I never anticipated". He says, "I changed immediately". A central question which brought about this change was the following: "Do you have to be close to your wife or family?".

He felt that "the day I got married, that's when I felt gradually I'm going to be losing ties", because "I could see that there was even friction that I'm leaning towards my family". He saw this friction as "teething problems" which he was able to deal with.

He further says about the weakening of the bond with his family of origin after his marriage, that, "we've had it but it disappears with time, especially once you get married". Before he married he would return home regularly for funerals, and other occasions. Now, when he returns home (which is much less often) he also has to visit his wife's family.

He says that "traditionally there's nothing wrong" with only moving away from your parents' home after marriage. In his culture, it is expected that a person moves out of home only after marriage, and if he was single he would probably still be at home. In Johannesburg, however, he says it is "totally different", because people move out of home at a young age, even if they are single. He says that the Group Areas Act, and a lack of housing and financial resources often made it difficult for the young adult to leave home.

P concentrated all his attention on his wife, and building a family:

I had to be close to her. I hadn't seen her for ages, and all of a sudden I felt I'm building a family. It was something new. I just told myself, 'once she comes back (from overseas), and she's here, I'm going to stop everything. I'm going to be close to her because I think that's the best way. And I'm not going to let anyone come between us'.

To his friends it was a "drastic change", and they could not understand why he would not go out with them, or why he was not "available". He lost friends because "I couldn't see them as we used

to". It was also very difficult for his family (parents and brother) because they were "very close" and "now all of a sudden I'm been stolen away from them, taken away from them". His parents found it particularly difficult because they wanted the family, and especially the brothers and sisters to continue being very close. But, P "could see that does not work. The person you got to be close to is your wife; and that created a lot of friction".

This situation was confounded by P's religious conversion at the time of his marriage. He chose to join his wife's church after she had come back from overseas a "changed person", as the result of joining a certain religious denomination while there. He had never heard of this denomination before, but joined it to express his union with his wife:

In a relationship you tend to compromise. And I tend to believe men compromise more than women. The first thing, my life changed. I had to go to this church which I didn't know about before, and the second thing I realised that once you're in a marriage you are one; you can't be two.

This was a difficult decision because "in our tradition a man should not be told by a woman what to do. The woman must come to my church, not me to her church. So it was even worse from my family, and my friends". It seemed to him as if they were asking the question, "Now what has this woman done to you?"

So intense was P's religious beliefs, that he felt he had to "restructure my life in line with the beliefs of the church, in everything that I do", and he had to take a "totally different route - everything changed". He cannot say what affected him most, his religious change, or his marriage (because the both occurred at the same time), but acknowledges that "both of them played a big role". Both of them produced in him an immediate sense of responsibility as he distanced himself from the way he "used to live", and centred his life around his family.

Looking back on his marital life, P says that "there has never been any crises, like she'd leave me, or I'd leave her". He also says that

while they have had arguments, they have never "for a single day fought".

Their marriage is free of conflict, he says, because of this common religious belief, and the guidance and direction they receive from the Lord. He says that, "we have indoctrinated ourselves that there is somebody high above us, and we should humble ourselves and let Him take charge of the situation of our family".

Within a year after marriage, the couple planned for, and had their first child, while their second child was born about four years later. He experienced further change after the birth of his baby, and his sense of responsibility and commitment towards his family increased. He says the birth of his child "changes your life altogether". He adds that "every stage in one's marriage comes with changes. You can never just refuse to change". He felt there were now different needs, and he had to learn to "accommodate the child because everything changes now". This meant getting used to his wife's divided attention, learning how to "start scheduling your time according to the new arrival", and coping with and "planning" for things such as nappies, and waking up late at night.

Being a father was "adventurous for me", he says, because it was a "new experience", and "I (had) to make the best of it". He also felt that "it's interesting that your child can bring you (the couple) closer together". The birth of his second child represented "another change", because "now they're two people who you have to divide, or schedule your life according to". He was especially concerned with making sure that his first born did not feel "left out".

Having children increased P's sense of independence from his family of origin. He says that his parents "understand, because we married, we got kids. I mean this is my home, not that one. My kids know this. Although they know their grandparents well, it's not possible to 'play' it the way we used to when we were single."

After working for some time P decided to do a diploma in marketing management, as he felt he was "lacking a bit of marketing" and he wanted to "compliment the accounting". With this course, as well as other

courses that he did at his company, he "felt now I'm more confident" and "I could face challenges in the business world".

After completing this diploma, P began to develop a desire to leave the company which he was working at. He describes this as follows: "Then I realised I had to move now. I've been doing what I've been doing for quite a long time. It's time now that I have to move into something I've been cherishing - into management."

This need intensified when P was in his early thirties, as he realised that, "I need to change in the future, I don't think this is what I'm going to do". He thought that he had the qualities of a good manager, and felt that other people thought so as well.

He also felt stifled in the sense that he perceived there to be little opportunity, as a black person, to reach high levels in his company. After weighing up alternatives P decided to enrol for a Masters in Business Administration (MBA), at age 33:

Now how do I get out of it ... then I have to do MBA, so I can look for opportunities. That's exactly what I did. And I always had in my mind an idea of what I need to do, where I want to go. So when these questions came to my mind, I said 'Okay, how do I get out of this situation?' That's exactly what I did.

P enrolled for this diploma because he thought it would serve his goal of reaching a higher management position, and because, "I wanted to have a clear picture as to what business is like, to have a better insight into business".

After completing his MBA, P began to "look for opportunities within the company first, then you make your move - that's what I did". He confronted one of the directors with the following words:

I said to him 'listen I've been doing what I've been doing now for ten years. It's been a wonderful experience for me. I loved the job, but I think I don't want to do this any more.'

I need to move forward because I've got aims in life. I've got certain things I need to do, and I'm very clear what I want to achieve'.

The director then offered to put P on a mentorship program in the company. When P asked him if it would guarantee him a management position, and he replied that it could not, P said, "I don't want it". The director then offered P "good opportunities, and chances of getting out of that current job, and getting into management". P thus decided to stay at the company, with the provision that he would leave if he received a better job offer, "because I had a clear picture of what I wanted, and where I wanted to go".

P was offered a position (in his mid thirties) at another big company, where he is currently employed. Even though his manager offered him a management position so that he would not leave, and although he would receive a lower salary at his new job, he chose to make a career change. He made this change because he thought there was a "bigger future" for him at the new company. He realised that he would not be able to attain a very senior position (at his previous company) because the company was still "male white chauvinists in middle and top management". He says that, "I could see I couldn't get where I wanted to because I've got high ambitions. I need to get somewhere".

P works as a senior manager in his present company, and experiences a sense of satisfaction with what he has achieved at work, and in life in general:

Yes, I'm quite happy with my achievements. I think I've done what I thought I could, to some extent. They're achievements in terms of not only material things, but also career and in terms of family development, where I'm quite happy.

He is aware, at work, of living in "two worlds" - the "business world and our traditional cultural life", or his home life. He says that qualities which are found in traditional life, such as respect for others, and the taboo on "challenging elderly folks", are often out of place in the predominantly white business world. He adds that he has

managed to adapt very well to the business world, while still keeping his traditions. He enjoys referring to his colleagues and superiors by their first names, but will still address an elderly black person in a customary respectful fashion.

He describes his family as the most important part of his life at this moment: "My family comes first. Everything comes last - even my job doesn't come first. My family is very important. I can tell you, I don't think I'd be where I am without my wife. And she comes first, and then my kids."

Religion is still a very integral aspect of his family life. Religion, for his family, does not just mean going to church, but means "believing in what we're doing". So powerful is his belief in God that he says, "all my achievements are because of God's messages". The church has had a "major influence" on his life, and he feels that if it were not for his religious beliefs, "I don't think I'll be in this position ... because I would have been a totally different person".

P says that the fact that his parents were financially secure, also helped him to be successful, because "they managed to put us through education which opened opportunities for us". That is why, he says, almost all his siblings have graduated, and "that we should be somewhere today".

The death of P's mother last year has increased his sense of gratefulness:

My mother passed away last year. She has done so much for us. I mean, we cried, but when we look back we are all grateful. We went to school - she has done so much for us. She left a very good foundation for us. We are proud of her.

However, P makes it clear that his success has not just been the result of his parents, and his background:

But you can't push people to do what they should do, they must have a drive in themselves. They must have a vision. They

must be enthusiastic about what they want to do, and they must know what they want, and they must know how to get there. Even if they can give you anything - if you not zealous to get anywhere, you'll never get anywhere.

He adds that "life is for people to believe in themselves". He relates this to himself in the following way:

When I worked at \_\_\_ for quite a number of years, I was told, 'P, you this kind of person,' and I did not agree to that. I know who I am, and I know what I can do, what I can achieve, and that is the bottom line. You believe in yourself, you carry yourself much better, that is the difference ... I'm a confident person, I know what I can do, I know what I can achieve. I don't need somebody to tell me 'no, you can't do this,' because I know what action I can do, and I have the drive.

He also feels that he has been successful because he has planned his career:

I planned my career very well, and I told myself that this is what I want to do in life, how do I go about getting there. I must go to school, I must do this course, and after that, this course. I'm going to make moves to get where I want to get to, and that's exactly what I did.

Looking back on his life, P feels he has changed in fundamental ways:

The changes come in stages. If I look back at high school or whatever ... the main thing here is maturity. And as you grow, you learn a lot of things, and you come across so many things, and your views, and your values - your value system changes with time. It's like culture, it's not static, it changes with time. There's a lot of things that influence you as a human being.

P says that the dream he began forming while at high school - to run his own business - has not changed much: "The dream hasn't changed. Even today I'm asking myself many questions - when am I starting my own business?" The only difference now is that "I have to weigh the benefits of both". This means he has to weigh the security and benefits of his current position, with the challenge of starting a new business. He is even considering becoming a "silent partner" in a business with his friends.

P has the following ambition for the future:

To put it straight to you, I see myself as one of the directors of any company within five years, or seven years, in the near future, or something equivalent to that, like say maybe a general manager, or maybe outside director of a company. That's my ambition; I'm looking forward to that, and I think I have to work very hard towards that.

#### **Analysis of P's Life According to Levinson's Framework**

##### Pre-Adult Years

The relative affluence, stability and family cohesion that P experienced during his pre-adult years would remain significant throughout the evolution of his life structure. The manner in which P (and his family) coped with apartheid during these years (by rising above it, and affirming themselves) would constitute a pattern of coping, which P retained during his adult years.

##### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

(Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood)

A striking feature of this period is that P was able to initiate early adulthood with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Like the men that Levinson (1978) studied, he was able to form a Dream, that would guide him through early adulthood.

This purpose and direction is reflected in his career plan, which was in turn linked to his Dream - to enter the business world. More specifically, he chose his first degree because it would lay the foundation (it was a good "starting point") to later enter (or "branch off") into his desired profession (a "business person").

The process of exploration which is integral to this period according to Levinson (1978) is clearly reflected in the reasons P advances for choosing his particular career path. He thought it was "challenging" and says, "I wanted to explore it first".

An interesting quality of this period was that P was already able to perceive change in terms of his plans: "Through the years as I grew, these plans have been changing." More specifically, he says that the plans he had during his pre-adult years - to be a doctor - changed during the EAT to more business oriented goals.

He also experienced change in terms of his relationship needs: "As you grow up your needs change." His decision to find a woman who would satisfy his need to marry and raise a family, represented a decisive step in the process of leaving the pre-adult world. However, P only felt he was truly separating from his family of origin after his marriage (during the ATT).

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

(Exploration and creation of a stable life structure)

During this period, according to Levinson (1978, p.79) "the young man has a sense of adventure and wonder, a wish to seek out and discover all the treasures of the new world he is entering". This sense is reflected in P's need "to adventure into life, to know what life is like, not to be dependent on my father". This need manifested in P leaving his family, leaving his rural background, and starting his first job (after completing his degree). Some important themes emerge, in regard to these events.

This includes the importance of traditional belief in P's life, and the tension between his needs and the needs of his family. Thus, P's

strong need to venture into life and be independent, was juxtaposed with the traditional expectation that he should be able to look after his parents. The tension between his needs and his family's needs, is further reflected in his father's reluctance to let him leave the family (and the "family business") to come to Johannesburg. P coped with this tension in a direct, self affirming manner, which is reflected in his words: "... we said, 'No. This business helped us to get us where we are today, but now we must go on our own, and start doing something for ourselves to support you'".

While P's need for independence and exploration took precedence over family and traditional pressures, his desire to prove to his parents that he could support them would remain prominent during this period. Furthermore, although he had physically left his family, he did not feel he had truly separated from them - "I never left them" - as he missed them, and would visit them regularly.

An important theme during this period is P's sense of purpose and goal directness, and his ability to generate options. This is especially evident in relation to the formation of his career. P had a clear and specific goal after completing his degree - to pursue a career where he could test out his career choice (accounting). He also kept his options open by realising that he would have to later "follow another route", because this was not his ideal option. Then, to further himself in his career (and especially in the area of marketing which he thought he was lacking in) he completed a diploma, and participated in other training courses run by the company.

P was able to overcome obstacles in the way of his own development. For instance, when he experienced stagnation (or a "cul de sac") because of limited opportunities for black people to be promoted to senior management positions, he began planning for a career change - the manifestation of which would become more evident in the next period.

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

The change, reappraisal and reevaluation, which is typical of this period, is clearly evident in the two most important aspects of P's life

structure - his family, and his career.

P's decision to marry during this period, and the birth of the couple's child, produced a fundamental change which is reflected in P's words: "I changed immediately" and "every stage in one's marriage comes with changes". This change manifested in P disengaging from his family of origin, as well as his friends, while the central aspect of his life structure became his own family. The extent of change produced by P's religious conversion soon after marriage is reflected in his words, "I had to restructure my life," and his feeling that he had to "take a totally different route", as he began to ascribe more to religious beliefs and principles. P was able to describe major changes as a result of this transformation (such as disengaging himself from his friends, and his previous lifestyle) as well as smaller changes (such as not receiving traffic fines, as he did before).

Just as P had experienced some conflict about leaving his family during the EAW, so he experienced similar friction during the ATT. This is evident in a central question P asked after his marriage, "Do you have to be closer to your wife or family?", and the jealousy P experienced from his family of origin when he did devote his attention to his own family. In this regard, P again coped with this tension by choosing his needs (to be closer to his wife, and later his children) above his family of origin's needs.

A related important theme that emerges, is the impact of traditional values on important processes during this period. This is most apparent in P's feelings that "traditionally there is nothing wrong" with separating from the family of origin only after getting married (as he felt he did). Traditional values also increased family tensions when P adopted his wife's faith, consequently rejecting a traditional belief that "a man should not be told by a woman what to do".

P also engaged in a process of reevaluation in terms of his career during this period. Indeed the process of "work(ing) on the flaws in the life structure formed during the previous period" (Levinson, 1978, p.84) is most apparent in relation to his career. P realised that, "I need to change in the future, I don't think this is what I want to do". His

need to acquire a more senior management position laid the basis for his decision to study further, and his eventual career change during the next period.

Settling Down (SD)

(To establish one's niche in society  
and to work at advancement)

P was able to negotiate the tasks of this period so successfully, because he was able to define a "personal enterprise - a direction in which to strive" (Herbert, 1989, p.61), and because he was able to generate options.

P's sense of direction is reflected in his words: "And I always had in my mind an idea of what I need to do, where I want to go," and, "I've got certain things I need to do, and I'm very clear what I want to achieve". When he perceived there to be little chance of becoming a senior manager in his company, because of restricted promotional opportunities for black people, he generated an alternative - equip himself with an advanced degree to increase his chances, and then reassess his possibilities.

So powerful was P's need to work at advancement during this period, or to move "onward and upward" (Levinson, 1978, p.140), that he then chose to move to another company - even though the salary was lower - because of his perception that there were greater opportunities to attain a more senior position.

It is evident that P was - at the culmination of the SD period - able to experience the feeling of having made it, which is integral to the BOOM phase of this period. He states this simply, by saying he is "happy with my achievement" (in terms of his career, and his family) and "I think I've done what I thought I could". He has specific future ambitions (to become a director of a company) and he is prepared to work hard to reach this goal.

It is important to understand P's insight into the reasons for his success. This includes the "foundation" that the family provided -

through their wealth and encouragement; his feeling of pride for having overcome obstacles, and "apartheid issues"; his religious beliefs, and religious way of life; his belief in himself ("I've made it happen"); "confidence" and "drive"; his ability to plan ahead ("I knew where I was going to"); and the closeness of his own family (wife and children).

It is the closeness of his own family that has provided P with the "roots" and stability during this period (Levinson, 1978, p.140). This is visible in his description of his family as the most important aspect of his life - even more important than his need to achieve at work. His marital relationship is characterised by stability and cohesion (P says they never have any major conflicts).

### **Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### Forming and Living out the Dream

A striking aspect of the evolution of P's life structure is that he was able to form a Dream which guided him through early adulthood, and he was able to live out important aspects of his Dream. His Dream revolved around an image of himself in the business world, and had a very ambitious quality - to eventually occupy a "very senior position".

Towards the end of early adulthood, P was able to experience a sense of satisfaction that he had been able to live out his Dream. At the same time he developed new aspirations and goals to guide him in the future.

P's Dream retained a sense of continuity throughout the evolution of his life structure. At the culmination of the SD period, an aspect of P's Dream - to have his own business - which he formed during the early years of adulthood, was still the same. In P's words, "The dream hasn't changed."

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

Although there were certain people who P respected and admired (these were all black men who had been successful in the business arena), P was unable to identify a single figure who had a significant impact

upon his life, or who "I aspired to". He felt he did not need a mentor because he relied on himself, and his own drive to achieve in life.

### Forming an Occupation

Some important themes stand out in relation to the formation of P's occupation.

The formation of P's career seems to be characterised by the interaction of two important factors - opportunities emanating from the external environment, and personality characteristic intrinsic to P. P had the opportunity to follow his career path (and study at university), because his family was financially secure (something for which he feels very grateful). He believed that he was fortunate to get his first job because of difficulties faced by black people entering a career. The job itself offered - in P's own words - different "options" and "career paths", and it focused on the development of black people. Even later on in his career P was able to change jobs when he was offered another position.

Even in this context there were certain obstacles in the way of P's progress. The important point however, is that when P perceived there to be an obstacle (such as limited opportunity for black people to reach top management positions), he was able to generate alternatives (and, in this instance, register for an MBA to increase his prospects).

It is personal qualities such as his ability to generate alternatives and plan his career path, as well as his belief in himself, sense of direction and purpose - all of which have been adequately highlighted in the preceding part of this analysis - which have guided him in his career development.

With these opportunities, and these personal qualities, it is not surprising that P has felt a sense of achievement in terms of his career development. This sense of achievement is illustrated by P's feeling that, "Yes, we've made it", during his first job, and the sense of satisfaction he feels in his current job, for having achieved many of his career goals.

Another important theme that emerges in the formation of P's occupation, is the perception of living in "two worlds" - the business world, and the traditional world - and his awareness that the traditional world does not fit into the business world. P was (and is) able to cope with this dilemma by adapting himself to the values of the business world: "We are used to it, we have to adapt to it, because if we don't we won't survive - people will run over your head".

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

A number of important themes emerge in relation to this important task. Forming a family was extremely important to P. P's image of a Special Woman was well formulated, specific and directly linked to his desire to start a family. The central motivator behind P's decision to marry was to start a family. The central role of the family in his life structure is further evident in the way he restructured his life, and focused all his attention on his wife (and later children) after marriage, and his description of his family as the most important aspect of his life during the SD period.

A further theme (which has already been discussed) is the tension P experienced between his family of origin and his own family.

Lastly, a striking theme is the stability that P experienced in his family. He describes his marriage as been almost completely conflict free, one which is based on common religious beliefs and ways of living.

#### **Synopsis**

The evolution of the life structure of P was similar to that described by Levinson (1978). He used the early periods of adulthood to "explore" options, "adventure" into life and establish a stable life structure (which revolved around his career and family). During the ATT he engaged in important self reevaluation and reappraisal of his previous life structure, which led to significant change. Furthermore, his SD period was characterised by a sense of achievement and stability.

Some important themes are evident during the evolution of P's life structure. Perhaps foremost is P's sense of direction, purpose and flexibility during his development. He was able to set specific goals and work towards achieving these goals (such as his aim to be a "business person"). He demonstrated a high internal locus of control throughout his development, which is aptly summed up in his words: "What I think helped me is the drive within myself as to what it is I want."

He was also able to overcome discrimination and obstacles in the external environment in an active and self-affirming manner. This is particularly visible in his feeling of pride at having "managed to achieve even with all these obstacles" (such as the discrimination which he experienced when he and his mother established a business during his pre-adult years). This active pattern of coping with discrimination can also be seen in his work environment, where he was able to plan alternatives and affirm himself when he experienced obstacles in the way of his promotion.

The influence of traditional beliefs on the evolution of P's life structure is also a pertinent issue. Traditional beliefs influenced the important task of separating from the family of origin, and forming a marriage. P felt that separating from his family of origin only after he married, was culturally appropriate. P's marriage represented a crisis in terms of his traditional beliefs (and his relationship with his family). He chose to ally himself with his wife and her church, in the face of traditional taboo of a woman telling a man what to do.

In this regard, it is important to note that P chose his own needs above traditional pressures. This pattern of transcending traditional beliefs and being able to compromise, was also demonstrated by the manner in which P was able to adjust to the world of business (which he describes as very different to his traditional world), while maintaining his own traditional beliefs.

Another important theme which is evident during the SD period is P's perception of change during the evolution of his life structure. In this regard he notes that the changes in his life have come in "stages". He experienced change in terms of his career plans (for instance he says

that his plans during the EAT to be a doctor changed to more business oriented goals), and in terms of his relationship needs (from wanting companionship to wanting a family). The changes have been a result of "influences" and "learning things" throughout his development. He has experienced change in terms of the internal aspects of his life structure (that is, his "values" and "views").

With regard to the major developmental tasks during the Novice Phase, the following can be noted. P was able to form a focused and definite Dream, and was able to live out this Dream. Although he did not seem to form mentor relationships, there were people who were influential in his life (who were all black). The formation of his career was characterised by goal directedness, flexibility and conscious matching of himself with the world of work. Lastly, the formation of his marriage and family was marked by stability and cohesion, and his own family occupied perhaps the most central aspect of his life structure.

## COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS

### Introduction

In the previous eight chapters, the central themes concerning the evolving life structures of the men were highlighted and explored. In accordance with the grounded theory approach and the framework proposed for analysis (Herbert, 1989) in chapter 6, this involved three stages: A chronicle of marker events, a narrative summary, and a developmental summary. The fourth stage of this process - which is the purpose of the present chapter - entails a collective analysis, in which the informants protocols are compared with each other, in order to note differences and similarities in their evolving life structures. Chapter 16 will then address the final stage of the analysis which is the comparative analysis, or the comparison of the present research finding with other studies and theories in the field.

As in previous research of the life structure (for example Adams, 1983; Herbert, 1989) the protocols of the men will be compared in terms of the tasks and processes of the different periods of the evolving life structure, and then the major tasks of the Novice Phase. The chapter will conclude with a synopsis or integration of some major themes that have emerged from the analysis of the different periods.

### The Evolving Life Structure

#### Pre-Adult Years

I-3 and I-8 stand out as the two informants who had the most **stable pre-adult years**. The stability and love which they experienced, coupled with the financial security, provided the basis for the attainment of a viable adult life structure. Both informants (although I-8 more than I-3) refer to the gratitude they feel towards their parents for providing them with this base. They also acknowledge their appreciation towards

their parents for encouraging them and motivating them, and for placing such a high premium on education.

A pattern that emerges during the pre-adult years concerns I-3 and I-8 as well as I-5's similar way of coping with the external world. Both I-3 and I-8 were able to deal with obstacles to their development (in the form of prejudice and discrimination) in an active, self-affirming manner. I-3 was able to overcome the racism at school by standing up for himself and not accepting it. I-8 was able to overcome discrimination by affirming himself, something which he still feels proud about. Both of them also had a high need to achieve. I-3 had a drive to get to the top at school, and in whatever he did. I-8 was also driven from an early age by a desire to achieve in the business world. These patterns of interacting with the external world remain pertinent throughout the evolution of their adult life structure, as shall become apparent.

Similarly, I-5 was also able to overcome obstacles during his pre-adult years in his unique way. Although he experienced hardships (such as poverty, his father's death and subsequent separation from his nuclear family) which he believed he could not control, he was able to maintain a positive attitude. This is reflected in his perception of these external obstacles as a "challenge," and a "learning experience." This manner of perceiving and coping with external events would (like I-3 and I-8) permeate his adult years.

The pre-adult years of the other informants were more complex. Most were separated from their family of origin during childhood. Three of the informants experienced separation from their nuclear families due to traditional reasons that stemmed from the families' (and especially their fathers') desire for them to help with the maintenance of the family "kraal", or rural home (I-1; I-2; I-4). (The importance of this is reflected in I-2's perception that his father left his mother because she would not allow I-2 to be brought up in this traditional way.) I-5 was also separated from his family so that he could help care for his grandmother, while I-6 was separated from his family due to educational concerns.

This separation often disrupted relationships within the nuclear family, and resulted in extended family members occupying an influential

role. This disruption affected the adult life structure. I-1 felt that he was prevented from forming close relationships with his siblings due to separation, while his extended family became important. I-2 would devote considerable energy during his adult years into dealing with his father's separation from the family during the pre-adult years. Similarly I-4, as an adult, would often be "drawn back" to the unhappiness and alienation he experienced after being separated from his family during childhood. The extremely close relationship that I-5 formed with his grandmother during his pre-adult years (after being separated from his own family) is reflected in the devastating impact of her death on his adult life structure. The importance of I-7's extended family during his adult years manifested in his desire to stay with them, and not return to his parent's home in Johannesburg.

Another form of disruption that these informants experienced during the pre-adult years was the **disruption to their education**. Four of the informants (I-1; I-4; I-6; I-7) had to leave school, due to external circumstances (poverty). This had a major impact on the men's development. While the pursuit of education remained central to their evolving life structure during the adult years, they felt frustrated by external barriers (financial constraints) which had its roots in the pre-adult years and which prevented them from realising their aspirations. This is dramatically captured by I-4's perception that he would be "living better" and more educated if it were not for his parent's poverty and lack of education. I-6's life structure is also characterised by a feeling of regret, expressed succinctly in his words, "I've wasted my time," because he was removed from school prematurely. I-7's aspirations to study further were also disrupted by him having to leave school to help to support his family (after his father's death), something which he too regrets. I-1 found his removal from school (due to his father's illness and poverty), "disturbing," and he had to put his educational goals on indefinite hold after his girlfriend's pregnancy during his pre-adult years.

Thus, much of these informants' adult development has been characterised by a **struggle to overcome adverse external circumstances** that they experienced during their pre-adult years. This struggle has

been characterised by feelings of passivity, helplessness and fixation on the past, which shall become evident in this analysis.

#### Early Adult Transition (EAT)

Leaving the pre-adult world and  
initiating early adulthood

According to Levinson (1978), the young adult has to terminate the adolescent life structure and disengage from the pre-adult world (both physically and emotionally). He also has to initiate early adulthood by taking an initial step into the adult world, explore possibilities, and test his preliminary choices for adult living.

Most of the men began this period with a Dream and aspirations (which is the integral internal component of the task of initiating early adulthood), which they soon perceived to be frustrated by external circumstances. I-1's "ambitious" plans to register at university was halted by the crisis caused by the unexpected pregnancy of his girlfriend. I-4's passion to pursue his Dream to become a journalist was put on indefinite hold because of financial circumstances. I-5's desire to study law was also put on hold due to lack of finances after his grandmother's death. I-6 eloquently refers to the external obstacles (such as lack of financial resources as well as opportunity) that prevented him from following his pressing desire to further his education as "oppression". I-7 also perceived the fact that he had to start working after the death of his father as the obstacle in the path of his desire to continue with his education, and make something of his life.

The EAT began suddenly and was initiated by financial constraints for these men. They had little opportunity to explore options and begin setting specific goals, which is vital to this period. In this context, the men's aspirations (which revolved mainly around educational aspirations) was unsynchronised with the reality of their lives (having to begin work). Feelings of frustration and stagnation were often the result.

These feelings were accentuated by another external obstacle, the **prejudice and discrimination** that they experienced, especially in the work environment (for example, I-1; I-2; I-4; I-7). Discrimination stagnated the men's development through restricting their chances of promotion, and creating a context that was generally not conducive to the realisation of their aspirations.

The impact of these external obstacles (including discrimination and economic hardship) on the men during this period, and the manner in which they **coped** with these obstacles, is a fundamental concern in the evolution of their life structures. Most of these men experienced a sense of **impotence and helplessness** in the face of these obstacles, and coped through **acceptance and withdrawal**. For instance, I-1's EAT was characterised by a feeling of helplessness (after his girlfriend's pregnancy). He felt trapped in a "tight corner," and wanted to "run away" from the situation. He coped with discrimination at work by accepting that there was a slim chance of being promoted, and exercising "tolerance". I-2's feelings of impotence is reflected in his passive reaction to racism because he thought that expressing his humiliation would not help. I-4 coped with the racism that he experienced after coming to Johannesburg (such as when he was punched by a white youth) by becoming fearful and withdrawing into his room. He also experienced a sense of impotence and stagnation in the face of external circumstances (such as discrimination at work, and influx control laws). I-6's passive way of coping with external circumstances (in this case his father's reluctance to let him return to Botswana) is reflected in his words: "I was just quiet, just told myself there's nothing I can do. I'll listen to them and stay." Lastly, I-7's sense of lack of power (in the face of poverty) is expressed concisely in his words: "There was nothing I can do. I have to work so I can help my family." He also coped with abuse at work by passively accepting it and doing "everything he want me to do, but in my heart I didn't feel too good".

I-3, I-5 and I-8 coped with external barriers in a more **active self-affirming manner**, the extent of which would become more apparent during the next period.

The task of **separating from the family of origin**, which is a major component of leaving the pre-adult world, proved to be complex for most of the men, and was influenced by **traditional beliefs**. I-1's parents (and his brothers) became the people he "concentrated most" on after starting his first job. He felt "warm and comfortable" about helping them financially because it stemmed from his traditional belief that he should show his parents gratitude and support them (at least until he married). Similarly, I-4 refers to his role after starting his first job as "early parenthood" because he had to help support his father and some of his siblings financially. Although he found this difficult with his limited resources he accepted it as part of his tradition as a black person. I-6 also felt "as if I was still young" after starting his first job because he had to give all his earnings to his parents, but accepted it. I-7 felt "happy" about staying with his mother through most of his early adulthood (and even at the termination of early adulthood) because he felt it was expected of him in his culture (as an unmarried person). He also did not question the financial support he provided for his mother and his girlfriend, because of a traditional belief that he should support his mother before he married. The role of traditional beliefs on this task is also reflected in I-8's perception that the appropriate time for a man to leave home and become independent is after marriage (when he in fact did feel a true sense of separation from his family of origin). Similarly, I-2 experienced a sense of independence and separation from his mother only after his marriage. Before this he felt as if he was "still just a child at home".

The reluctance of some of the informant's parents to let them go also impeded the negotiation of this task. I-1's mother's reluctance to part with her son (even after his marriage), and her need for his financial support caused considerable tension (for I-1 and between I-1's mother and his wife). Similarly I-8 experienced tension around his parents' difficulty in letting him go (when he came to Johannesburg and when he married). I-6's father prevented his son from following his desire to go back to Botswana and pursue the life he had established there, and I-7's mother was reluctant to let him move out of home. Even I-3 says his father was "not really pleased" when he moved to the residence at university.

Out of all the informants, I-3, I-8, and to a lesser extent, I-5, were able to negotiate the task of developing independence and autonomy, and separating from the family of origin most effectively. In this way their evolving life structures during this period were most similar to Levinson's (1978) men. Both I-3 and I-8 were able to explore their options at university. I-3 directly articulates his experience of being more independent during this period and his feeling of having "left home for good then". I-8 began to aspire towards marriage and starting his own family, while striving to meet specific academic and career goals he had set himself. I-5 also began this period by exploring options at university and in the field of teaching (after he was forced to leave university because of economic constraints). He experienced himself during this period as being more of an "adult".

#### Entering the Adult World (EAW)

##### Exploration and creating a stable structure

Levinson (1978) says that the character of this period lies in the co-existence of these two tasks. On the one hand the young man has to explore and expand his horizons, while delaying definite commitments until his options are clearer. On the other hand he has to create an adult life structure, that has roots, stability and continuity.

There is convincing evidence that the men did have a need for exploration and stability, but the negotiation of the tasks of this period were again frustrated by external circumstances.

I-8, I-3 and I-5 emerge as the informants who were able to negotiate these tasks most successfully (in that order). I-8's strong need for exploration is reflected in his words: "That was important to me, to adventure into life, to know what life is like." Externally these tasks manifested in I-8 leaving his family and launching himself on a successful career path. I-3's need for exploration revolved around his desire to test his political idealism and passion, and his need to "learn about life" (which manifested in his sojourn through Yugoslavia and Europe). In such a way I-3's personal identity was interwoven with his political identity. He also explored options in terms of his career, and

was able to make a commitment to a career path (psychology) at the end of this period.

I-5 also had a strong need for exploration during this period, especially in terms of his career path. His attempts at exploring options and creating stability, however, were frustrated by external factors (for instance, he began studying occupational therapy even though "it was not my choice" because this was the only field where he could obtain a bursary). However, despite obstacles (such as blatant discrimination and prejudice in the work place), I-5 had (like I-3 and I-8), at the end of this period, established a relative degree of stability which is expressed well in his feeling that: "It would take a long time before they could get somebody to replace me." His marriage during this period also stemmed from his need for stability, or to "help each other in building our lives".

The above three informants were able to negotiate the tasks of this period relatively successfully for a number of interrelated reasons. They demonstrated (to varying degrees) self-directedness, goal directedness, optimism, motivation to achieve, flexibility, and a **pattern of overcoming obstacles** (such as discrimination) in an active, self-affirming manner.

Perhaps this is most dramatically evident in the case of I-5. His **flexibility** was demonstrated during this period by his capacity to compromise on his Dream (to become a lawyer), because of financial constraints, and choose another direction. There is ample evidence, during this period, that he overcame racism and discrimination at university and at work by fighting back and affirming himself. He perceived the frustration and discrimination that he experienced at work as a "learning experience" and a "challenge" which he had to overcome. The fact that he did overcome many of these obstacles is illustrated by his effort and success, for instance, at integrating black and white services at the hospital during this period.

I-8 continued to be driven during this period by a strong sense of purpose and goal directedness (in relation to his career and marriage) and he also demonstrated flexibility in generating options. For

instance, when he perceived there to be a "cul-de-sac" because of limited opportunities for black people to be promoted to senior management positions (which was his aim), he began actively planning for a career change.

Like I-8 and I-5, I-3 was guided by ambitions and aspirations during this period, especially in the political arena (where he rose to the top of a student political body). Through his political ambitions, I-3 could affirm himself as a black person.

While the other informants engaged in some exploration during this period their exploration was flatter and less defined than the previous informants, and generally revolved around their continuing need to further their education. Out of these informants, I-4 was the only one who would (to a minimal degree) work towards a goal (of becoming a journalist) by registering for a course (but he was even disappointed by this). The other informants (especially I-1; I-6; I-7) also continued to struggle with the frustration and disappointment of not being able to realise their general goal to further their education.

The men's relationships also proved to be integral to the tasks of this period. Three of the men's marriages during this period (I-1; I-2; I-6) reflected, in part, their need for stability. This is evident in I-1's strong need to "stand for myself" after his marriage, and his urgency to establish his own home base. The birth of I-2's second child energised his need for stability, which culminated in his decision to marry. I-6's marriage partly reflected his need for stability after his mother's death. I-4 had his first "serious" relationship during this period and he began to develop a desire to marry. I-7 (although unmarried) also had a desire to have a good home to support his family.

There is convincing evidence again that these informants perceived themselves to be controlled by external circumstances, and that they coped in a passive manner. Thus I-1 felt that he had little choice in his decision to marry (because of a traditional expectation that a man should marry the woman whom he impregnated). He coped with conflict between his parents and his wife in a passive way by "playing a double standard" and attempting to satisfy them both. He also passively

accepted the lack of exploration at work (such as being denied a transfer) by adapting to it and not actively exploring other options. I-2's decision to marry during this period was also guided by external factors (he was frustrated with living apart from his girlfriend, and he thought it would help financially). He also experienced "frustration" after starting his first job during this period because of discrimination, and felt impotent in relation to discrimination and prejudice.

Similarly, I-4 continued to be unhappy and unfulfilled in his work, but never challenged the unfairness he experienced. He formed a general ambition to leave but never acted upon this because of external circumstances (influx control laws). He also ascribes his inability to leave his nuclear home (even though he was often frustrated with staying there) to external reasons (lack of finances).

I-6's perception of being at the control of external circumstances is reflected in a number of ways. He passively accepted his father's decision that he should continue working even though he wanted to study further: "(I) just accept because my father said 'go and work'..." Even his limited attempt at exploration in his career was frustrated by external circumstances: "The only thing for me was the money. I was having money problems." Lastly, while his marriage during this period was inspired by his need for stability (after the trauma of his mother's death), he also perceived much external pressure ("It's my father who pushed me").

I-7 also perceived lack of finances as preventing his exploration, whether this be in relation to studying further, or moving into a home with his girlfriend and children. Even his vague Dream to be an international soccer star was squashed, according to his perception, by external circumstances (he broke his leg). His emphasis on "bad luck" is prominent throughout his development.

#### Age Thirty Transition (ATT)

According to Levinson (1978), the main task of this period is to work on the flaws of the previously established life structure. This

involves reappraisal of the past and a consideration of the future, which raises questions such as: What have I achieved with my life? What can I change? What new directions should I choose? This introspection and questioning is typically accompanied by an increased sense of urgency to reach personal goals.

Most of the **change and restructuring** that the men experienced during this period revolved around marriage and parenthood, the family of origin and work.

The men's **marriages** during this period (I-3; I-4; I-5; I-8) either reflected an attempt to restructure their lives, or the marriage itself resulted in restructuring. This is captured in I-8's need to "restructure" his life and "take a totally different route" after his marriage, and I-3's decision to marry after the death of his brother, in order to "settle" down and control his "chaotic" nature. Restructuring is evident in I-8's "religious transformation" and identification with his wife, and in I-3's "complete transformation" after the birth of his baby. His personal change was linked to changes in his political identity. That is I-3, during his ATT, perceived himself as being less radical and less political while becoming more in touch with himself and being less impulsive.

While both I-3 and I-8 could identify **personal or inner change**, I-5 perceived there to be little change to his "inner personality" during this period, but his marriage did change his "life course". Like I-3 and I-8, I-5's marriage during this period marked a redirection of responsibility from his family of origin to his own family.

I-3 and I-8 also experienced change in terms of the task of **forming an occupation**. I-3 resigned from his job and left his family for a while so that he could follow his choice of profession in psychology. I-8's need for professional advancement fostered in him a desire to study further and plan a career change, which would be realised in the next period. This career change stemmed from self reevaluation which is typical of the ATT. He realised that he would not be able to achieve his aspirations to reach a senior position in his job, so he planned (restructured) his career path.

Restructuring is also reflected in I-4's realisation that he might not realise his career goals, so he should devote more energy to realise his alternative goal to get married. His marriage during this period, however, increased his frustrations at work and disappointment in himself. He felt as if the last ten years had "gone down the drain," which increased his urgent need to find another job. Similarly I-2's frustration and stagnation at work was partially responsible for his decision to resign from work. I-5 experienced similar frustrations to I-2 and I-4 in the work setting (even his promotion during this period was characterised by frustration because it was "overdue" and there was resistance from some of the white staff). However, he continued to cope by striving for change in the work setting.

The restructuring that I-1, I-6 and I-7 experienced during this period was in relation to the **family of origin**. After struggling with a decision, I-1 took a "giant step" and moved into his own place, and for perhaps the first time began to experience a sense of independence. Restructuring is visible in his description of this as a "new life". I-6 also experienced a sense of independence during this period, which was precipitated by his father's death, and the fact that the money he earned would now be his own. A sense of urgency manifested in his pressing desire to "get my own place". Similarly, the birth of I-7's child during this period fostered in him an urgent need to move out of home, get married and support his own family.

**External barriers** (mainly economic) continued to influence the negotiation of tasks during this period. For instance, the financial support that I-1 continued to provide his family of origin, and the fact that his wife was unemployed, complicated the process of separating from his family of origin by moving into his own place. Similarly, I-7's increasing need to establish his own home base during this period was frustrated by lack of financial resources (and his imprisonment). I-2's ATT was overshadowed by his unemployment and economic hardship, accompanied by his urgency to find employment so that he could support his family. I-4 chose marriage above his aspirations to study further during this period, because he could not afford to study further. His marriage was also overshadowed by financial insecurity, as he struggled to help his parents and brothers financially. Both I-4 and I-5 continued

to experience barriers to their development at work, stemming from discrimination.

In contrast to the above informants, I-3 and I-8 did not experience economic barriers during this period. I-3 was able to realise his aspirations to study further and I-8 was able to plan, and later implement, a career change.

#### Settling Down (SD)

To establish one's niche in society  
and to work at advancement

According to Levinson (1978), the first task requires the person to anchor himself, deepen his roots, and build an ordered stable life. The second task requires the person to work at "making it," to affirm himself, and to be affirmed by society. The prime focus of the first task is the family, while the occupation is the main force behind the second task. The second task is of primary importance during the Becoming One's Own Man (or BOOM phase) towards the latter part of this period (Levinson, 1978).

This section will focus on the five informants who had reached the SD period (I-1; I-5; I-6; I-7; I-8). Similar themes that emerged from the other informants will also be considered in this section, even though they were still negotiating the ATT (I-2; I-3; I-4).

Out of the five informants, I-8 was the only one who was able to successfully negotiate the tasks of this period. He was able to work at the task of **advancement**, by planning and making a career change during this period, and acquiring a more senior management position. He was the only informant who experienced a BOOM phase during this period which is clear in his feelings of satisfaction with his achievements (with family and work) which is integral to this phase. Furthermore, his family provided him with the "roots" and stability which is essential to the negotiation of the task of **establishing a niche in society** during this period. I-3 also experienced a sense of achievement during the ATT, reflected in his feeling of having "achieved something" and being

"satisfied" with his life. He also had the ambition and drive to "get to the top" which is fundamental to the BOOM phase.

The other informants (I-1; I-5; I-6; I-7) demonstrated a need to establish their niche in society, and to work at advancement, but they saw external factors as preventing them from establishing a viable life structure. Instead of experiencing a BOOM phase, they experienced feelings of frustration, disappointment and regret. I-5's need for advancement was perhaps the most well formulated out of these informants. He had a need to advance to a senior management position in his career, and a need for professional advancement (reflected in his wish to write a thesis). Again he felt he was being blocked by external circumstances, including lack of recognition and discrimination, and being deliberately blocked by his seniors. In contrast, I-7's need for advancement is the most vague and unconnected to reality (consisting of his general need to get "any job" and his vague ambition to be a manager). He, too, perceived external circumstances (poverty and unemployment) as blocking him. Similarly, I-1 continued to experience frustration and stagnation at work because of limited promotion opportunities, and because his "potential" was not recognised by his seniors. Even his ambition to become a "businessman" (or further his studies) was frustrated by financial constraints. His feeling of impotence is reflected in his words: "Okay, come what may, I'll accept it as it is." I-6's SD period has been characterised by a continuous struggle against personal problems, such as alcoholism and poverty. Although he feels (towards the end of the SD period) a sense of stability and direction for the first time (after obtaining a job) there is little evidence of a need for advancement in the job (and little possibility). Like I-7 he is just happy that he has a job.

Feelings of frustration, disappointment and regret are reflected in I-1's experience of being "disappointed" for not being able to be "what I longed to be". Similarly, I-5 (who had reached a relatively senior position) felt that his profession "was not really where my dream was". I-6 expresses his disappointment with the words: "I see that I've wasted my time," and in his poignant exclamation that he doesn't want his children to ever look like him, or to live like him. I-7's fragmented life structure is reflected in his need to drink to forget "the life I'm

living at the moment," and in his simple (but profound) statement, "If you don't own nothing, you nothing".

I-2 and I-4 also experienced regret and stagnation during the ATT. I-4 felt as if he had wasted so much time in his career, as if his life "had gone down the drain." His disappointment in himself is reflected in his words: "I still blame myself for staying too long there" (at work). I-2's sense of disappointment in himself is related to his unemployment and not being able to support his family.

The informants' families emerge as a powerful force behind the first task - to establish one's niche in society - but again some of them experienced frustrations with this task because of financial constraints.

Like I-8, I-1 describes his family as "the most important thing," and much of his energy has been channelled into upgrading his living standards and educating his children. His need to have another child even outweighs the financial constraints and concomitant anxieties he feels in relation to supporting his family. I-7 feels a sense of impotence as he wants to be with his children (who stay with his girlfriend) but feels "there's nothing I can do because I don't have the money to support them". Similarly, I-6's children have become the central aspect of his life structure during the SD period, but his wish to provide for them is frustrated by his need to "earn more money". The centrality of I-2's family (during the ATT) is reflected in his words, "everything I do, I do it for my family". Like I-1 he plans to have other children even though he feels financial circumstances are blocking him.

### **The Major Tasks of the Novice Phase**

#### Forming and Living out the Dream

In terms of this task the informants represent a continuum of three groups: Those who were able to form definite and specific Dreams, and were able to live out their Dreams (I-3; I-8); those who were able to form relatively focused Dreams, but who experienced problems in living

out the Dream (I-1; I-2; I-4; I-5); and those who could only form very vague Dreams (I-6; I-7).

The first group (I-3; I-8) were the most successful in being able to form and live out their Dream. I-8 experienced a feeling of satisfaction during the SD period for having been able to live out his Dream (to reach a senior position in the business world). Similarly, I-3 was satisfied with the progress towards realising his Dream, which revolved around his vision of himself as a psychologist.

The middle group represents those informants who could form relatively vague Dreams but who experienced problems in living out their Dreams (I-1; I-2; I-4; I-5). These informants perceived external circumstances, especially lack of money and poverty, as preventing them from realising their aspirations and ambitions. For instance, I-5 perceived lack of funds (due to the death of his grandmother) as preventing him from pursuing his Dream to become a lawyer; I-2 perceived lack of money (as a result of unemployment) as preventing him from realising his aim to buy a new house for his family; and, I-1 perceived family and financial problems as impeding his aspiration to go into business and further his education.

I-6 and I-7 represent the other end of the continuum because their Dreams were very vague and they were both unable to live out any aspects of their Dream. The vagueness of I-7's Dream is reflected in his words "(I wanted) to be something, maybe a doctor, a mechanic or whatever" and in his desire to be an international soccer star. I-6's Dream was also general, and centred around his desire to further his education (with no specific mention of a specific direction). Like the previous group, both informants perceived poverty, and other external circumstances (such as I-6's difficulty with Afrikaans, and I-7 breaking his leg) as obstacles preventing them from realising their ambitions.

The content of the informants' Dreams is also important. Their Dreams revolved around specific, well formulated career aspirations (I-3; I-8). A desire for education, as well as a more materialistic component were also prominent aspects of the Dreams of the men. Both I-4 and I-5 were guided by a strong vision to study further. Both I-1 and I-2 had

a wish to improve their standard of living, and buy a house and car, as did I-6 and I-7. The importance of the family and the need to secure their children's future was also a prominent feature of the men's aspirations. The Dream was sometimes linked to traditional factors, as in I-2's Dream to have many wives and a large family (like his father), and I-6's Dream to own a lot of cattle.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

The majority of the men were unable to form mentoring relationships in the work environment. The perception of three of the informants (I-1; I-2; I-6) of their superiors at work did contain certain elements of a mentoring experience in that they respected and looked upon them for advice and guidance. In all these instances the mentors were white men (only I-8 was able to report black role models that he aspired to). Perhaps the reason for lack of mentoring relationships in the work environment can be ascribed, as I-5 affirms, to the lack of black managers and seniors to "model" on, or, as I-4 says, to the discrimination and prejudice in the work place.

While there were very few mentor relationships in the comprehensive sense of the word, the men's fathers (and sometimes other family members) did fulfil some important mentoring functions. For instance, both I-3 and I-8's fathers played an important role in encouraging and motivating them to improve their education, and both informants were driven by a need to live up to their father's expectations. Mentoring qualities are also evident in I-4's description of his father as an idol, and in the valuable advice (according to I-4) that he provided. I-4's uncle was influential in his life, while I-7's aunt and uncle fulfilled a mentoring function in that he would often approach them for advice concerning important decisions.

The possibility of a group mentoring experience is also raised by the advice and guidance that I-4 received from the elders in the traditional group to which he belonged.

Forming an Occupation

The negotiation of this task, for most of the men, was thwarted by external factors, especially discrimination, lack of opportunity and limited financial resources.

I-3 and I-8 (and I-5 to a lesser extent) emerge as the informants who were able to negotiate this task the most successfully. Certain similarities are conspicuous in relation to this task. Both of them experienced strong **encouragement and support** from their parents (both motivational and financial) in the pursuit of their careers. I-3 ascribes much of his career success to the fact that he comes from a supportive middle class family, while I-8 refers often to the gratefulness he feels for his parents having provided for his education. Their fathers were particularly inspirational in the pursuit of their career goals.

Both I-3 and I-8 experienced a sense of **personal choice and opportunity** in relation to their careers. I-3's pursuit of psychology was based on his need to understand himself and others, while I-8's career path was based on his view of himself in the business field. I-3 and especially I-8 were driven by a sense of **purpose and commitment** to their careers, and were able to define specific goals. This is reflected in I-3's passion to progress in his field and study towards a doctorate, and in I-8's continuous striving to reach the top in his career.

Both men were also motivated by a **strong belief in themselves**, in pursuit of their career goals. This is particularly evident with I-8, who ascribes much of his success in his career to his confidence, belief in himself, and his perception that he always knew what he wanted to achieve.

I-5 negotiated this task less smoothly than the previous two informants, but considerably more successfully than the other informants. I-5 was able to formulate some specific career goals (to study law at university, and later to write a thesis), and did experience a moderate sense of career satisfaction during the SD period. Unlike the previous two informants, however, I-5 had to compromise on his original career

choice (to study law) because of lack of finances. Thus his commitment to an academic and professional path (occupational therapy) was based not on personal choice, but on the availability of a bursary. Indeed, he only began to understand the nature of his profession towards the end of his university degree.

The rest of the informants struggled in varying degrees with this task (I-1; I-2; I-4; I-6; I-7). Their first jobs were not chosen on the basis of introspection or a conscious matching of self with the world of work (like I-3 and I-8). Rather their initial commitment to work was necessitated by financial demands, and was often **unsynchronised with their aspirations**. I-7 elucidates this point well when he refers to his need to get "any job". Both he, and I-6 perceived external circumstances (mainly their poverty) as forcing them to find work. They felt a sense of stagnation and frustration because they still wanted to pursue their education. I-4 was able to form clearer career goals (to study journalism) than the other informants from this group, but his aspirations were harshly juxtaposed with the reality of doing work which he felt he was forced to do due to financial necessity. I-1 also began his first job not because of a desire to work in that field, but because of economic need stemming from his girlfriend's pregnancy.

Their first (and subsequent) jobs were often found in a **reactive, passive** way. This is especially apparent with I-6. Most of the jobs he held were found by his father and friends (including the job that he now has, and which holds his life structure together). Similarly, I-7's and I-2's fathers found them their first jobs, while I-1's uncle found him his first job. I-1 describes finding his first job "by luck".

After the initial entrance into their careers, the men continued to experience **frustration, stagnation and despondency** as they confronted obstacles in the external environment such as prejudice, discrimination and lack of opportunity which further limited their career development. Most of these men dealt with their frustrations in a **passive** way. I-1 attempted to adapt to discrimination at work by using "tact", and accepting that there would be little chance for promotion as a black person. I-2 also accepted racism at work because he felt "the people will not even notice" if he complains, and finally resigned because of

the stagnation and frustration that he felt. I-4 experienced a sense of stagnation because of limited chances of promotion as a black person, and blatant discrimination, but did little to change his position.

The passive way of dealing with external obstacles is directly contrasted by the active pattern of coping, visible in the formation of the careers of I-3, I-5 and I-8. I-5 coped with discrimination in the work place by fighting back (and initiating such changes, for instance, as the integration of the department). He also aligned himself intensely with the black patients. Within this context he was able to experience achievement and maintain his need for growth and development. I-8 was also convincingly able to overcome the discrimination that he experienced, and was able to carve out a viable career path for himself.

A further theme that emerges relating to the formation of the men's occupation concerns the issue of **unemployment**. Three of the informants were unemployed for a relatively long period of time (I-2; I-6; I-7). They all experienced a profound sense of **purposelessness**, which they expressed in different ways. I-2's sense of purposelessness is expressed in his words "to wake up, and do nothing the whole day, it's so stressing". I-7 drinks to forget about "the life I'm living at the moment", as an unemployed person. I-6 says he has - since finding a job after being unemployed - for the first time experienced "direction" in his life.

Having to be supported by family members, due to unemployment, has also resulted in feelings of **insecurity** and **shame**, which is aptly expressed by I-7: "Too bad for me, I should have supported him (his youngest brother), now he's supporting me." I-2 also feels uncomfortable about not being the "provider," and this, he says, is the main cause of tension between him and his wife. Similarly, I-7 says the arguments between him and his wife revolve around his inability to support his children (and her). I-7 also says: "I don't want to rely on my family to support my children. I must support my children like my father used to support me."

While unemployed, the need to find a job has become the most central aspect of their life structure. I-2 says, "I'm praying every day to get

a job" and I-7 asks, "What can you do in your life without work?"

### Forming a Marriage and Family

A number of themes emerge in relation to this task.

Firstly, the **forming of a marriage and family** was perhaps the most central aspect of most of the informants' life structures. Both I-3 and I-8 describe their wives, children, parents and brothers as being the "most important to me at the moment, in that order" (I-3). I-1 also describes his family as the "most important" part of his life, which is demonstrated by his plan to have another child in the face of financial strain. I-2's aspirations to have many children is a passion that has driven him, and acquired qualities of a Dream. The importance of marriage for I-4 is reflected in his decision to focus his energy on his marriage when he became aware that he might not realise his career ambitions. The feeling of "shame" that I-7 experienced about not being married is also an indication of the importance of marriage in the lives of the men.

Many of the informants, however, experienced **external circumstances** (and especially financial constraints) as thwarting the negotiation of this task. I-4 was frustrated by, and scared of the prospect of having to support a family with his limited resources. He was also frustrated by living and working separately from his wife and child. Similarly, I-2 perceived financial strain stemming from unemployment (as well as having to stay separately from his wife after the marriage because of financial considerations) as the main cause of strain in relation to this task. I-1 also feels increasingly anxious about the prospect of caring for his children, because of his financial position. Even I-7 attributed the main reason for not marrying to lack of finances (even when he was employed).

The role of **traditional values** and expectations, as well as the **family of origin**, also emerge as key themes in the understanding of this task. The task of **separating from the family of origin**, and committing to the new family, sometimes caused tension and conflict. I-1 struggled for some time with the need to support his parents and brothers,

juxtaposed with the need to support his own family and establish a home base. His mother's reluctance to let him go complicated this issue.

I-8's need to devote himself to his wife after marriage was also hindered by his parents' reluctance to let him go, and his family's resentment towards him for identifying with his wife's religion. Furthermore, I-4 felt a continuing commitment - although less than before his marriage - to his family of origin after marriage, and perceived the prospect of supporting both families (even his brothers) as a "nightmare". I-3 also felt a continuing sense of responsibility to his parents after his marriage, as did I-8. The centrality of the family of origin is also reflected in I-3's decision to marry, which was based, in part, on feelings concerning his brother's death, and the need to fill a space in his parents' lives. In a similar way, I-6's decision to marry was influenced by his mother's death, and pressure from his father.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of the influence of the family of origin on the important task of forming a marriage and family is from I-7, who never married. I-7 continues to stay with his mother, and still (at the end of the era of early adulthood) describes her as the most important person in his life. This is directly linked to his traditional belief that a son should support his parents until he gets married.

A key component of forming a marriage is the image of a Special Woman. Descriptions of a **Special Woman** ranged from the articulate and specific (I-4; I-8) to the more general and concrete (I-6; I-7), and centred around family and educational concerns. Both I-4 and I-8 formed an image of a Special Woman which was linked to their aspirations (i.e. I-8's aspiration to form a family, and I-4's intense desire to study further). I-6 on the other end of the continuum, was not at first able to identify any characteristics of a Special Woman, but then referred to general descriptions such as "beautiful" and "good manners". I-1 also could not identify any specific characteristics of a Special Woman, but mentions that he wanted a woman from a "good background". I-5 had a vague image of a Special Woman - somebody who was educated, could earn a living and who could care for him. I-2 and I-3 (in a similar but more general way than I-8) both referred to somebody who could help bring up the family, in their images of a Special Woman.

The men's **decisions to marry** must be seen in the context of the tasks of the different periods. Five of the men married during the EAW, while three married during the ATT. I-1 felt pressurised to marry his girlfriend because he had impregnated her and he felt bound by a traditional belief that a man should marry a woman if he impregnates her. His marriage during the EAW curtailed the task of **exploration**. Similarly, I-2 married his girlfriend because she was pregnant with their second child. His frustrations over living apart from his girlfriend, and the need for economic security guided his decision to marry during the EAW and represented his need for **stability and independence**.

I-3's need to marry was based on **self reevaluation** and a feeling of urgency which is typical of the ATT. He felt a need to control his chaotic nature and **settle down**. I-4's decision to marry also stemmed from reevaluation. He realised that he might not fulfil his goal (to study further) and hence channelled his energy passionately into getting married. A need for **stability**, is also reflected in I-5's need to "help each other in building our own lives". I-6's marriage during the EAW also represented his need to create stability. He puts this in concrete terms saying he needed somebody to do his washing, adding that his life was "in hell".

Marriage, and the birth of children produced a profound change in some of the men, and was associated with **independence, responsibility and commitment** to a new family and way of life. I-1 describes his marriage as a new transition, as he disengaged from his previous "carefree" life, and struggled to integrate the responsibility of being a father. Similarly, I-3 refers to the birth of his baby as a complete transformation, which resulted in an urgent need for things to go well, and produced some insecurity (reflected in his question, "Will I be a good father?") and, "How much will my kind of stuff from the past impact upon the kid?"

I-2's feeling of responsibility after the birth of his children (and his marriage) is evident in his reference to disengaging from his previous carefree lifestyle. For the first time he felt he was not "still depending" on his parents. I-4's marriage and birth of his child conferred upon him a sense of "manhood", independence and increased

responsibility. The issue of "manhood" and proving oneself is also noticeable in I-5's need to prove he could have a child (stemming from his insecurity about his fertility), and in I-2's words: "I wanted to prove myself - okay I can raise my family. I want to be like my father."

The quality of the men's relationships and the degree of intimacy varied. I-3, I-8, and to a lesser extent I-4, established close marital relationships. All these informants described changes in their relationships with women, from relationships initially based on "puppy love" and companionship, to marital relationships based on mutual respect and commitment to shared goals, revolving essentially around the family and education. I-5's marriage was also initially based on these common purposes, but he experienced problems in his marriage which resulted in his divorce.

The other informants experienced conflict and frustration in their marital relationships, and did not articulate deeper feelings of intimacy concerning their relationships. I-1 described his marital relationship in general terms, saying it was "moderate," while I-7 says he cared for his "wife" because she was an "orphan". Both of them felt that they would not have married them if they had not impregnated them. These informants also reported a high level of conflict in their relationships, especially I-2, I-6 and I-7.

Five of the men had extra-marital relationships. The reason for these relationships were often ascribed to chance factors, and the traditional role of the man. I-1 describes the reason for his affair as a "silly temptation" as a result of living separately from his wife, and the "temptations surrounding a man's environmental situation". I-3 also says he had an affair because "chance presented himself", and because of "pressure from the guys". I-5 felt his affair was condoned by culture, and was related to the tradition that a man could have more than one wife. The important thing, he says, is that the wife should not find out. I-7 also says in relation to his relationship with two girlfriends: "In our culture there's some who are married who get two or three wives." I-2 adds, "we men, sometimes we want to have ... a mistress".

### Synopsis of Major Themes

The purpose of this synopsis is to extract the central themes which have emerged from the foregoing analysis of the different periods of early adulthood. These themes are the impact of traditional and cultural beliefs, socio-economic constraints, and prejudice and discrimination on the evolution of the life structure; and the role of coping strategies across the life span, as well as the role of introspection, planning and goal directedness.

#### The Impact of Traditional and Cultural Beliefs on the Evolution of the Life Structure

The preceding analysis has highlighted the influence of traditional beliefs on the crucial development task of leaving the pre-adult world and separating from the family of origin. Traditional beliefs also had an impact on other milestones including marriage, parenthood, and on the men's relationships with their fathers.

Some instances which illustrate the impact of traditional beliefs on the **men's relationships with their fathers**, include I-1's respect for his father, and his request for his father to come and stay with him, which was related to his traditional view of his father as head of the house. Similarly, I-6's respect for his father was linked to his traditional belief of respect for elders. Moreover, he did not feel uncomfortable with his wife staying with her grandfather because of his respect for him as an elderly man.

Similarly, the impact of traditional beliefs on I-2's life structure is especially noticeable in his desire to prove himself to his father, to have a large family and more than one wife. The process of exploration during the EAW was influenced by I-2's need to find his father, which was in turn based on a traditional belief that if one has "a baby boy, then you have to see your father".

Traditional beliefs also had an impact on the task of forming a family. For example, I-1's marriage during the EAT was influenced by family pressure and the traditional belief that a man should marry a

woman whom he had impregnated. The pressure that I-4 experienced related to his traditional expectation that he should be "like an umbrella for everyone in the family". I-7 experienced pressure because he, as the eldest son, was not yet married.

Furthermore, traditional beliefs influenced the informants' perceptions of "manhood", and hence their adult identity, which is an integral aspect of the life structure. For instance, I-7 felt a pressure to marry "to show I'm a man". He also felt that his manhood and adult identity was threatened because he did not own anything: "In our culture, if you don't own anything, you're not a man." Unlike I-7, some of the other informants (I-2; I-4; I-5) experienced a sense of achievement and affirmation as adults, stemming from their traditional perceptions of "manhood". I-2's identity as an adult was related to his need to prove that he was a "man" according to Zulu culture - something which he felt he had done. I-4 describes his marriage as conferring upon him a sense of being a "man" according to traditional beliefs. I-5's identity was related to his perception of himself as a "symbol" of his grandfather. His traditional name, which denoted greatness and achievement, meant that he should achieve in life like his grandfather did. This he felt he had done by studying at university.

Another theme that emerges is the perception of the white world as being different from the black world. For instance, I-1's sense of being different from his white colleagues is expressed in his words: "We have got different tasks ... the only thing that binds us is the work." I-8 captures the essence of this difference in his perception of being caught in "two worlds" - the traditional world and the business world, and in his awareness that the traditional world does not fit into the business world. He felt comfortable in both worlds. I-5's desire to write a book about black people in his profession stemmed from a need for the white person to better understand the black experience.

#### The Impact of Socio-Economic Constraints on the Evolution of the Life Structure

This emerges as a significant theme during the pre-adult years and the periods of early adulthood. The analysis has demonstrated the

importance of the pre-adult years as a base for the attainment of a viable adult life structure. A **stable socio-economic foundation** emerges as particularly important in this regard. The two informants who were able to form the most satisfactory adult life structures (I-3; I-8) refer to their secure socio-economic (and family) background. A common theme amongst the other informants is a feeling of **regret and disappointment** for not being able to realise their adult aspirations due to socio-economic constraints which had its roots in the pre-adult years.

While the majority of the men entered early adulthood with a Dream, economic constraints prevented them from **living out their Dream** during this era (for example I-1; I-4; I-5; I-6; I-7). The task of **forming an occupation**, which was often linked to the men's Dreams, was also frustrated by economic constraints. These men had to put their aspirations on hold in order to start working, while lack of finances prevented many of them from pursuing academic ambitions. In this context these men entered the era of adulthood with a sense of frustration and stagnation.

The tasks of **exploration and creating a stable life structure** during the EAW was also frustrated by economic limitations. The majority of the men did have a need to explore options - especially in terms of following career and educational goals - but were prevented from this by lack of economic resources. Limited opportunities and options impeded the lack of exploration for the men.

Economic factors continued to influence the men's development during the ATT, particularly in terms of the **restructuring process** which is integral to this period (especially for I-1; I-2; I-4; I-7). Similarly, financial constraints frustrated the tasks of the SD period. The **frustration and disappointment** that arose from being thwarted from realising goals and aspirations due to lack of finances, came to the fore during this period.

A trend that emerges is the **experience of being different** as a black person due to limited opportunities as a result of economic constraints. For example, I-7's experience of being different ("Yes, I'm different") stemmed from his perception that he, as a black person, did not own

anything "like other people". Similarly, I-7 viewed himself as being different because he did not have the "opportunities" that white people have. I-2 concurs with this and says, "I think as a white man everything is easier". I-4's sense of difference is reflected in his perception that he would have achieved in life if he had "privileges" that white people have.

The Impact of Prejudice and Discrimination  
on the Evolution of the Life Structure

Prejudice and discrimination had an impact on the men's lives throughout the evolution of their life structures, especially on the task of forming an occupation (I-1; I-2; I-4; I-7). Discrimination restricted development and work promotion, and inhibited the realisation of the men's Dreams and aspirations. The men experienced formal discrimination which interfered with the process of forming an occupation and establishing a viable life structure. For instance, the task of exploring career options for I-8 was restricted because of the quota system. I-2's career options were frustrated by the lower salary (compared with his white colleagues) that he received. Influx control laws prevented I-4 from leaving his job.

The men also experienced informal racism and discrimination. For instance, I-4 had to cope with a racialistic event during the EAT, which had a devastating impact upon him; I-7 had to endure tough working conditions because he was black, and I-2 had to cope with racialistic exchanges at work.

The removal of discriminating barriers had a positive impact on the men's development. I-1 was able to separate from his family of origin by moving into his own house because these houses had just been made available for black people. Similarly, the recent democratisation of South Africa has had a direct impact on the task of working at advancement for I-5. It has fostered in him a feeling that he will, for the first time, be able to advance up the career ladder and actualise his potential.

The way in which the men coped with racism and discrimination, as well as economic barriers, during the evolution of the life structure emerges as a central theme. Two ways of coping can be identified, one characterised by passivity and helplessness and the other characterised by strength and affirmation.

### Coping Strategies

#### Passivity and Impotence

Many of the men coped with racism and discrimination in a passive way. Such passive ways of coping manifested in: **Acceptance**, as in I-1's acceptance of their being a slim chance of promotion ("It's acceptable, but painful"); **impotence** as in I-2's realisation that challenging a racialistic work colleague would not help; **withdrawal**, as in I-4's retreat to his room after a racialistic incident; and **subservience**, as in I-7 doing everything that he was told by a racialistic colleague even though he was upset (and in I-7's continuous reference to the interviewer as "boss").

#### Strength and Affirmation

A more active way of coping with discrimination was also evident (I-3; I-5; I-8). I-5 took a stand against discrimination, and **affirmed himself as a black person** (whether this be in his political activity during the 1976 uprisings; his challenging a racialistic lecturer at university; or his striving to unite the segregated wards). His affirmation as a black person was also reflected in his commitment to the black patients, and his desire to publish a book to foster advancement in the black culture. I-3's active and affirmative way of coping with discrimination manifested in his aggressive attitude during his pre-adult years. Moreover, his personal identity during early adulthood was closely tied with his political identity.

I-8 takes great pride for having actively overcome discrimination during his childhood years and in his working life. Even at present, he is able to overcome the differences that he experiences between the white

and black world in the working environment. A strong belief in himself as a black person has guided him throughout his life.

Introspection and the Perception of Change  
Across the Life Span

Some of the men's perceptions of change was related to external circumstances and their behaviour, and not to inner change. I-1 states this clearly when he says, "I wouldn't say that I have change personally, but what I would say is that circumstances have changed". Lack of introspection is reflected in his words: "I'm unable to describe myself." He also says that he is a similar person to what he was in his earlier adult years. I-5 also did not perceive change to what he refers to as his "inner personality". This could be (like I-1) related to his lack of introspection: "I don't think much about myself." When he refers to change it is in relation to external circumstances: "I won't say I was a different person, I would say I was in a different situation."

I-4 comprehended himself to have changed significantly since his younger years, but points out that this change has not been personal change, but change in his "behaviour" (he has become less "wild"). I-6 did perceive some change (I can say I've changed") but found it difficult to articulate the nature of change. He related this change to circumstances. For example, he felt that he had changed after his father's death because he could now keep the money that he had earned. I-7 also found it difficult to identify any change, and again he relates change to circumstances, as in his perception that he has changed since early adulthood because he does not have a job as he used to.

The little inner change that I-6 and I-7 experienced, was related in a very simple and concrete way, as can be seen in I-7's perception that he had changed because he now felt more "grown up," and in I-7's perception that "that time I was a young boy, now I'm old". I-2 was able to identify some inner change, for instance, in becoming less selfish and more community orientated as an adult. I-3 was in touch with much more intense changes inside himself, which is reflected in his self-description (for example, "less radical" and "less impulsive"). He also comprehended stability in certain traits across the life span such as his

desire to achieve. Similarly, I-8 was able to identify dramatic inner change, as well as changes in his career plans and family aspirations. He articulated this change in terms of "stages".

#### Planning and Goal Directedness Across the Life Span

I-8 and I-3 emerge as the two informants who demonstrated the highest degree of **planning and goal directedness** across the life span. I-8 attributes much of his success in his life to what he refers to as his "ambitions" and "vision" around forming a family and career development. His statement that "I planned my career very well" was visible in the specific goals that he set himself, and his achievement of these goals. I-3 was also guided by a strong sense of purpose, especially in his political pursuit and in his professional development. He was able to work towards specific goals which he set himself (such as his ambition to become a psychologist).

Goal directedness was also present to varying degrees in the lives of the other men, but these goals were not as well formulated as the previous two informants' were, and the realisation of these goals was often **frustrated by external circumstances**. For instance, I-4 was able to set relatively specific goals around his aim to become a journalist, but his development was characterised by a dynamic struggle between his need to achieve in his career, and external constraints (such as lack of economic resources and influx control laws) which he saw as preventing him from realising his goals. Similarly, I-1 describes himself as a person who was "aiming high" and "ambitious" during his late teens and was able to set general goals because of circumstances. Towards the end of early adulthood, he was able to keep his ambition (to start a business) alive, but realised that there was a slim chance of achieving his goals.

Goal establishment in the lives of I-6 and I-7 were the least well formulated and most general. I-6's goals included obtaining an education and "having some business". He points out that the reason he held so many temporary jobs during early adulthood was that he did not consider the future or plan ahead. His descent into alcoholism was accompanied by an extreme sense of purposelessness and absence of direction. I-7's

goals were vague and unconnected to reality, including his desire to become a mechanic or an engineer. In the face of unemployment and restricted opportunities, his ambitions were reduced to the general drive to procure a job.

In the context of these external constraints, some of the informants demonstrated **flexibility** and the ability to make use of other opportunities. I-5 bluntly states: "I won't say that I planned . . . . most of the time planned things fail." He did however show flexibility in seizing opportunities to develop himself, such as his decision to start teaching when he left university and in his decision to study occupational therapy when a bursary was offered in this field. I-4 demonstrated a similar kind of flexibility in goal setting by choosing another goal (marriage) when he saw his career aims as being unattainable. I-2 was able to devote considerable energy towards family goals and aspirations even when he was unemployed.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The final stage of the analysis is called the comparative analysis. Like the framework suggested by Herbert (1989), this will involve an examination of similarities and differences between the result of the present study and those of Levinson's (1978), with the aim of determining the applicability of Levinson's model to the experience of the black men in the present study. This comparative analysis, however, will provide a more in depth theoretical examination than Herbert (1989) did by including the developmental research and theory, that has already been reviewed, into the analysis. In order to remain "true" to Levinson's findings, direct quotations from his study will be frequently referred to.

This chapter will proceed in the following manner. It will begin with a comparison of the findings from Levinson's (1978) study with the present study. Reference will also be made to other stage theories of development, and to the principles underlying stage theory in general. The applicability of Levinsonian research conducted with black adults and other cultures will also be examined.

This will be followed by an attempt to integrate the findings from the present study into a general theoretical model or framework. This framework will be guided by applicable theories that have already been discussed, including the life events framework (Hultsch & Plemons, 1979), the dialectical approach (Riegel, 1978) and the role strain perspective of black adult development (Bowman, 1989). The practical application of the model to the lives of the men in the present research will then be demonstrated. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical, structural and professional implications of this study.

## Comparison of Research Findings

### The Evolving Life Structure

The internal aspects of the men's life structures, their desires, needs and aspirations, were similar in many ways to the men in Levinson's (1978) study. They did form Dreams during the former part of early adulthood; they did have a need for autonomy and independence; and they did want to explore options and establish stability in their lives. Moreover, the developmental tasks that they negotiated included those described by Havinghurst (1972) such as the selection of a mate; coping with marriage; rearing children; and starting an occupation. It also included some specific developmental tasks relating to the transition to adulthood, such as the establishment of identity and the development of psychological and economic independence, as described by other researchers in the field (Bockneck, 1980; Gerdes, 1988; Levine, 1989).

The realisation of these aspirations, however, as well as the negotiation of the developmental tasks was much more complex and difficult for the black men in the present study than for the men in Levinson's (1978) study. These needs and aspirations were frustrated by what Herbert (1989, p.164) refers to as "societal forces" and "destructive forces", which hindered and stagnated their attempts at achieving a viable life structure. The impact of these forces, including racism, discrimination and socio-economic constraints, on the lives of the black men, has been clearly demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Levinson (1978) does make various references to the influence of these external barriers on the evolving life structure, as in this reference to the EAW: "A man's difficulties during this period are often accentuated by specific aspects of his situation - economic recession, discrimination, the rivalries of a highly competitive world" (p.82). He also says that, "A man may be pushed ... by various external constraints, such as lack of money or opportunity" (p.83) to follow a direction that is different from his Dream. Moreover, he refers directly to problems faced by black people in their pursuit of a viable life structure: "The struggle to remain true to his dream is never easy for a black man in

this society" as he "draws upon himself with increasing intensity all the destructive forces of individual and institutional racism" (p.89).

Levinson's (1978) theory, however, does not explore the impact and effect of these external barriers on psychosocial development in any depth. Herbert (1989, p.164), commenting on Levinson's study, expresses this well: "White men portrayed in earlier studies did not have to contend with the receiving side of these destructive forces." Levinson's (1978) theory is thus restricted when applied to the lives of the men in the present study because it does not address the barriers and difficulties that they faced in the pursuit of a viable life structure, whether it be barriers stemming from discrimination, or economic hardships.

This is convincingly illustrated during the transition to adulthood. Most of the men in Levinson's study (62 percent) established social and geographical distance from their parents during the EAT, without major conflicts and 70 percent of the men completed college (post matric) education during this period. While almost all of the black men in the present study were driven by a need to study further during this period they were frustrated by a lack of financial resources. The need to provide financial assistance to their parents (and sometimes siblings) also frustrated the process of separating from the family of origin, for some of the men. The task of initiating early adulthood was thus impeded by economic constraints. Those informants who had the resources (I-3, I-8) were able to negotiate the tasks of this period (and later periods) more smoothly and hence their developmental paths more closely resembled that of the men in Levinson's (1978) study. That is, they were able to form and live out their Dream, they were able to successfully explore options in terms of their careers, and they were able to experience the sense of achievement and advancement required of the latter part of early adulthood.

Against this background, some of Levinson's propositions, which are applicable to white middle class American men, seem incongruous when applied to the lives of the majority of the men in the present study. For instance, Levinson (1978, p.79) says of the task of exploration that "the external world provides multiple possibilities and invites the young

man to try different choices before making firm commitments". He talks of the SD phase as a time when the adult fulfills his Dream and "become(s) the hero in the scenario of early adulthood" (p.140).

The majority of the men in the present study did not perceive the external world as "inviting" them to choose from different possibilities. Nor did these men experience themselves as "heroes" during the SD period. Instead this period was often marked by disappointment, regret and frustration, as they struggled with social forces and societal barriers.

The Levinsonian research relating to black adult development (Gooden, 1980, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989) has more clearly demonstrated the profound effect of these social forces, societal restrictions and racial identity on the formation of a viable life structure, and is more applicable to the finding from the present study than Levinson's (1978) framework.

The Levinsonian studies of black development, and the present study, concur that the impact of these external barriers was especially evident during the transition to adulthood, when the majority of the men had to relinquish their aspirations to study further and begin working, because of economic constraints. In terms of Marcia's (1989; 1992) scheme, their identity status was one of "identity foreclosure", as they had to make a commitment without exploring options, or in the absence of a psychosocial moratorium (Keniston, 1977). This finding is congruent with the finding by Spencer and Markstrom-Adams (1990) that many young people from minority groups are caught in "identity foreclosure".

The way in which the men coped with the barriers is also a significant issue. The present study found, like the research conducted with black American adults (Bowman, 1989; Downing, 1989) that coping strategies are an integral aspect of black psychosocial development. Both Herbert (1989) and Ruffin (1989) refer to the centrality of coping styles and strategies to the evolving life structures of the black men that they interviewed. Although Herbert (1989, p.162) did not, perhaps, explore these strategies sufficiently, he does differentiate between "reactive" and "proactive" coping strategies amongst the men whom he interviewed. Similarly, the previous chapter has highlighted how some

of the men adopted a passive and submissive way of coping with external obstacles, while others adopted a more active, self-affirming stance.

Ruffin (1989) takes a slightly different view of coping styles. She identified different ways in which the adults whom she interviewed coped with or integrated their identity as a black people. For some of the women she interviewed, their identity as a black person was a central aspect of their life structures. For others, their identity as a black person occupied a background role. Similarly, some of the men in the present study affirmed their black identity and challenged obstacles emanating from the sociopolitical context, while others adopted a more submissive attitude to these barriers. The role of traditional beliefs featured in the majority of the men's lives and was a manner in which they could affirm their black identity. However, traditional beliefs also hampered development in many ways, especially in terms of separating from the family of origin.

A theme that emerged in the present study, but which was not emphasised by the Levinsonian studies of black adult development, concerns the **role and impact of these traditional and cultural values and expectations** on the evolving life structure. The collective analysis has highlighted the impact of traditional beliefs on important tasks and milestones across the life span. The Levinsonian research conducted with other cultures is relevant in this regard. For instance, the finding by Hogan and York (1989) that different cultures have different expectations concerning the appropriateness of age-linked behaviours, is congruent with the findings from the present research. Most of the men in the present study had a different expectation (to the men in Levinson's study) concerning the appropriate age to leave home. They felt that the appropriate age to separate from the family of origin was after marriage. This perception was similar in the case of I-8, who was well educated and of a high socio-economic status, and - on the other side of the spectrum - I-7, who was poor, unemployed, and uneducated. Moreover, these perceptions were influenced by powerful traditional beliefs.

Lim's (1986) and Wolfe et al.'s (1990) findings concerning the lack of introspection in some cultural groups, also gained some support in the

present study. Many of the men did not speak of change in terms of inner change, but related it to external factors.

The findings concerning the impact of the external barriers on the men's development, as well as the influence of traditional and cultural beliefs, has important implications for developmental views such as Havinghurst's (1973) and Erikson's (1968; 1982). Oerter's (1988) expansion of Havinghurst's (1973) concept of **developmental tasks** to include the cultural and traditional influence on the meaning and negotiation of developmental tasks, is pertinent in this regard. For instance, the task of separating from the family of origin, which is a crucial task of early adult development according to Havinghurst (1973) and others (Bockneck, 1980; Levine, 1989), cannot be understood without due consideration to the influence of economic, family and traditional factors, as has already been demonstrated.

Moreover, the tasks that the men negotiated were broader than those described by Havinghurst (1973) and included being able to **balance** or **compromise** their needs and aspirations with traditional beliefs, as well as financial constraints, and being able to deal with racism and discrimination. This is congruent with Bowman's (1989) assertion that a critical developmental task for many black adults is to overcome external barriers in their attempt at achieving a viable life structure. It also indicates, as Sugarman (1986) has stressed, that the **historical context** is integral to an understanding of developmental tasks, because the barriers that the men confronted across their life span was directly linked to circumstances emanating from the epoch of apartheid.

This study has also indicated that Erikson's (1982) model of psychosocial development should be expanded to include the impact of traditional beliefs, in order to be more relevant to the South African context. This was especially reflected in relation to the meaning and manifestation of **generativity** in the men's lives. Generativity often manifested in relation to caring for parents and elders, and the value placed upon looking after and bringing up children. This caring stemmed from traditional beliefs concerning loyalty to parents, respect for elders, and the traditional expectation that children would reciprocate

the care and support that they received from their parents once they were adults.

Generativity also manifested in the desire to help other black people, whether this be I-4's ambition to publish a newspaper that black people could identify with; I-5's desire to treat the black patients at the hospital and write a book to make people more aware of the needs of black people; or I-2's desire to help the black community in any way he could. Perhaps this indicates a relationship between "ubuntu" or this communalistic world view (Bulhan, 1990) or "collective consciousness" (Kotze, 1993) demonstrated by these examples, and generativity.

The important point is that developmental tasks and processes, as outlined by these theorists, should be expanded to more thoroughly address the black experience. A related issue that needs to be addressed, is the assumption that adults will negotiate the tasks and processes in all areas of their lives, including family and work, more or less concurrently. The men's lives in the present research were often characterised by **disparity** and **unsynchronicity** between family and work roles. Some of the men perceived there to be little chance of development in their careers, while they strove to develop themselves in the family context (for example, I-1; I-2; I-4). This was effectively shown in the case of I-4, who negated his career aspirations during the ATT because of limited financial resources, and concentrated on marriage and family commitments.

Hughes and Graham (1990) and Hughes et al. (1986) criticism of Levinson's theory is relevant here. Their **role approach** to adult development proposes that the negotiation of developmental tasks in the work and family roles need not occur concurrently as Levinson maintains. An adult, rather, can be at different phases of development in each role - as was illustrated by the findings of the present study.

The **timing** of the developmental tasks was also different to that of the men in Levinson's study. Most of the men began the process of separating from the family of origin and establishing independence at a later stage than the men in Levinson's study. I-4 only perceived himself as being more independent from his family after his marriage during the

ATT, while I-7, who had not yet married towards the end of early adulthood, still did not view himself as independent.

One of the major, and most contentious finding by Levinson (1978), was the **age specificity** of developmental tasks. While certain developmental tasks were pertinent to different periods, the evolving life structure of the men in the present study was characterised by a constant struggle in which tasks and issues would reemerge, and were never quite settled. For example, the task of exploration was often frustrated by external circumstances, and would reemerge during the different periods. This would be more in line with Hudson's (1991) cyclical reconceptualisation of Levinson's model which portrays development as a continuous process that moves from stable periods to unstable periods with a continuous flow and repetition of similar themes, issues and tasks.

More similarities between Levinson's (1978) study, other research in the field, and the present study, can be highlighted by examining the major tasks of early adulthood as postulated by Levinson (1978). This is the subject of the next section.

### Major Tasks of the Novice Phase

#### Forming and Living out the Dream

Levinson (1978, p.97) says of the Dream that "it has the quality of a vision, an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality". Most of the men in Levinson's study were able to articulate well defined Dreams which guided them through early adulthood. The men in the present research were also able to form Dreams and visions of themselves in the future - which ranged from the vague, to the more articulate - but the majority experienced difficulty in living out their Dreams.

The men in Levinson's (1978) study were able to live out their Dreams partly because they had the opportunities and the resources. The biologists he interviewed had the financial resources and opportunity to pursue their childhood ambitions and interests in the scientific field

at university. The executives could also advance into more senior management positions because "the company stimulated their hopes about further promotion" (Levinson, 1978, p.96).

In contrast, the majority of the men in the present study did not have the financial resources to follow their occupational Dreams, and they were hindered by discrimination and other barriers, from pursuing their hopes and aspirations. The two men who did have the resources and opportunities (I-3 and I-8) were able to form and live out their Dreams in a similar way to the majority of the men in Levinson's study.

While most of the men in Levinson's study were able to realise their Dreams, Levinson (1978) does refer to the fact that external constraints, including lack of money and opportunity, may drive the young adult in a direction that is different to his Dream. The small group of workers that he interviewed often experienced problems in living out their Dreams, because of these external barriers. In this regard, these workers, most resembled the men in the present study, and his reference to them is worth quoting in full: "Still others ... begin the EAT with fantasies about exciting kinds of work and accomplishment, but the incipient Dream cannot be articulated or explored. It is gradually covered over by the more immediate problems of survival" (Levinson, 1978, p.97). These problems of survival manifested in many of the men in the present study having to leave school, discard their aspirations to study further, and concentrate on supporting themselves and their families.

The finding that the men in the present study experienced problems in living out their Dreams, is similar to the conclusions from the Levinsonian studies of black adult development (Gooden, 1980, 1989; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989). For example, Ruffin (1989) found that for some of the black professional adults who she interviewed, their Dream formation was influenced more by economic and racial factors than individual factors. Gooden (1989) also found that the men whom he interviewed had to give up their occupational Dreams because of lack of funds, general financial difficulties and barriers, and lack of opportunity.

Herbert (1989) also found that the Dreams of many of his men were vague, and often revolved around material gains and the need to take care of one's family. This theme is evident in the present study. While some of the men had clear and definite Dreams (I-3 and I-8), others had Dreams which revolved around family and material aspirations, such as buying a car and owning a house (for instance I-1; I-2; I-6; I-7).

The problems that many of the men in the present study had in living out their Dreams has important implications. Gooden (1989) points out that the inability to sustain Dreams means that the young adult is deprived of the opportunity to explore and test out various aspects of self in reality. The process that is thus necessary for the exploration of career and general aspirations is often absent, and can have a negative impact on the adult's development. On the positive side, many of the men in the present study were able to remain optimistic and maintain positive "possible selves" (Cross & Markus, 1991) or visions of themselves in the future.

#### Forming Mentor Relationships

The finding by Levinson (1978) that most of his men were able to form relationships with a mentor who was usually an older, more senior and experienced person in the work environment, is in direct contrast to the lack of mentoring relationships among the men in the present research. This lack of mentoring relationships among the men in the present research, however, is a finding consistent with other Levinsonian research relating to black adult development (Herbert, 1989) as well as Levinsonian research with other cultures (Lim, 1986; Ross, 1984).

Herbert (1989) advances a number of reasons for the absence of mentoring relationships among his sample of black adults, which seem appropriate to the lives of the men in the present research. This includes the lack of black mentors in the work environment, which is particularly pertinent to the men in the present study who had very few black role models in senior positions to aspire to. Weight is added to this reason by the finding that the two men who did develop some form of a mentoring relationship in the work environment (I-1; I-6) both did with white mentors.

While very few mentoring experiences were identified in the work environment, the men's fathers and other family members, such as uncles, often provided aspects of a mentoring relationship. This is consistent with the Levinsonian studies of other cultures by Chavez (1986) and Ross (1984). It is thus important to take into account the presence of "family mentoring" (Ross, 1984) in the mentoring experience of the black men in the present study.

### Forming an Occupation

Levinson (1978) describes the formation of an occupation as a complex social-psychological process that extends over the era of early adulthood, and often beyond. Although the process of forming an occupation was not a simple process for many of Levinson's men, the majority were able to form viable career paths based on their interests and aspirations.

In contrast, it has been convincingly shown that the negotiation of this task, for the majority of the informants, was characterised by frustration and stagnation. The majority of the men were not able to build a viable and satisfying career identity. This is a very significant finding because the development of a work identity is central to adult development (Colarusso, 1992; Evans & Poole, 1991; Stevens-Long & Commons, 1992).

A closer examination of Levinson's (1978) conceptualisation of the task of forming an occupation highlights the differences between the men in his study and the men in the present study in relation to this pivotal task of early adulthood.

According to Levinson (1978), an initial occupational choice is made during the EAT or EAW periods. This involves the young man being able to "sort out his multiple interests, to discover what occupations, if any, might serve as a vehicle for living out his interests, and to commit himself to a particular line of work" (Levinson, 1978, p.101). Many of the men in Levinson's study considered two or more occupational directions at this time. Only two of the men in the present study (I-3 and I-8) were able to decide on and implement an initial occupational

choice in this fashion. In contrast, the initial forming of an occupation for the rest of the men in the present research was governed not by a process of "living out" interests in the world of work, but rather by the reality of having to work to support one's self and one's family. For these men, the main meaning attached to work was the monetary gain, a finding echoed by Van der Walt's (1994) study of South African youth. The men in the present study had little time and opportunity for the exploration and the preparation for occupational choice - which is a vital task of the transition to adulthood (Bockneck, 1980; Gerdes et al., 1988; Levine, 1989). Significantly, though, these men did demonstrate a need to explore options, and a need to study further, although their interests and occupational aspirations remained uncrystallised in the absence of opportunities for exploration.

After an initial choice is made, Levinson (1978, p.104) says that, a man should develop a more "differentiated occupational identity" and establish himself within the occupational world. During this process, the adult might stick to one career path or test several options before committing to one. This is similar to Vaillant's (1977) and Vaillant and Vaillant's (1990) description of "career consolidation" or the process of strengthening a career path. While three of the men (I-3, I-8, and to a lesser extent, I-5), managed to build a differentiated occupational identity, and work towards career consolidation, the rest struggled with this process. Again, external barriers, including discrimination, lack of education and economic resources, impeded the process of exploration and achievement of a differentiated occupational identity.

Issues of advancement and becoming more senior and expert in one's chosen field are integral to the later stages of occupational formation according to Levinson (1978). Levinson acknowledges that "external circumstances" (p.145) can restrict and damage the person's occupational development during this stage. By external circumstances, however, he does not mean discrimination and economic circumstances that many of the men in the present study had to confront, but rather organisational politics and pressures.

The implications of the above is that the stage models of career development (Greenhaus, 1988; Okun, 1984; Super, 1984), which are similar

to Levinson's conceptualisation, are limited in the South African context because they do not emphasise the impact of external barriers on career development. They also do not contemplate the role of traditional beliefs and pressures on career development.

These career development theories do not consider the important role of **circumscription** and **compromise** (Gottfredson, 1981) which were observed in the career development of the men in the present study. Circumscription manifested in the form of the specific constraining environmental variables that the men experienced, including financial constraints, racism and discrimination in the work place and a general lack of opportunities. Compromise was especially evident in the way the men had to relinquish their occupational Dreams because of economic considerations, and the need to support their families.

In terms of Vondracek et al's (1986) "goodness-of-fit" model, the men's career development was characterised by a lack of match between their needs and these contextual factors. The process of matching interests, needs and goals with the world of work, which is the foundation of **career choice** according to Holland (1985, 1987) and Ginzberg (1984), was thus much more complex for the men in the present research. Moreover, **career maturity** (Super, 1990) which is needed for the successful negotiation of career choices, was strongly influenced by contextual factors, as Phillips and Blustein (1994) and Fouad and Arbona (1994) have maintained. For instance, the process of exploring options, which is an integral aspect of career maturity (Phillips & Blustein, 1994), was limited by lack of education, lack of finances, restrictions on job mobility and upward mobility, stemming from discrimination and apartheid-related laws. This is supported by other South African studies, which have demonstrated the detrimental effect of societal barriers and restrictions on the career maturity of black youths (Hickson & White, 1989; Nel & Mkhabela, 1987) and career development in general (Charoux, 1980; 1985; Lear, 1988).

A finding from the present study - which is not addressed by stage theories of career development - concerns **coping strategies** employed to deal with these external barriers. Research concerning the manner in which adults cope with career transitions and changes is relevant

(Kanchier & Unruh, 1988; Morgan et al., 1988; Strümpfer, 1993; Thomas et al., 1982). The majority of the men experienced the sense of powerlessness associated with Strümpfer's (1993) "depressive" style, and Thomas's (1982) definition of the "miserables". A minority of the men coped in a more positive, self-affirming manner which is characteristic of Strümpfer's "constructive" style, and Kanchier and Unruh's (1988) definition of the "changers".

A final point concerning career development relates to the issue of **unemployment**, which impacted on the lives of some of the men. Like the findings by Hall and Mabitsela (1994) and Möller (1992), the present study found that unemployment often resulted in feelings of shame, powerlessness and inferiority, and had a negative impact on the task of marriage and starting a family.

#### Forming a Marriage and Family

This task, and especially the process and meaning of love and intimacy in the lives of the men, proved difficult to explore in the present study. Flat, and what seemed to be socially acceptable responses, were often provided, which is consistent with the finding by Viljoen (1984) and Van der Vliet (1982). More information would thus be needed before comprehensive and valid comparisons between the present study and other research concerning this task can be made. Some themes for comparison, however, do emerge.

Like the men in Levinson's (1978) study, the task of forming a marriage and family was paramount in the lives of the men, and was influenced by the tasks of the different periods. Three themes emerge which distinguishes the manifestation of this task from the lives of the men in the present study and the men in Levinson's study. This includes the impact of traditional customs, beliefs and expectations; the negative impact of external circumstances; and the influence of the family of origin on this task.

This means that concepts such as the "fatherhood click" (Daniels & Weingarten, 1988), or the men's unique understanding of fatherhood, must be considered in terms of these traditional beliefs as well as the impact

of external circumstances such as economic constraints. The same applies to the meaning of marriage in the lives of the men. Both marriage and parenthood were often associated with "manhood" and virility, stemming from traditional beliefs. This is similar to the finding by Herbert (1989) that marriage amongst the black men in his study was often associated with assuming the duties, responsibilities and status of manhood. The family of origin also seemed to be more influential on the process of forming a marriage, than it did for the men in Levinson's study. This manifested, for instance, in the tension that the men often experienced between their loyalty towards their parents and their own families.

Another theme that emerged concerns the struggle that many of the men experienced in establishing intimacy in their relationships, which was reflected in the presence of extra-marital relationships, and marital conflict and tension. This is similar to the findings by Herbert (1989) and Gooden (1989) in their studies of the life structure of black men. Like the study by Gooden, the present study found that conflict often revolved around financial matters stemming from poverty and unemployment.

Problems involving intimacy have serious developmental implications, as intimacy is a fundamental concern during early adulthood according to Erikson (1982), and the capacity for intimacy during early adulthood is a critical indicator of adaptive development during middle adulthood (Valliant, 1977; Vaillant & Vaillant, 1990).

#### **Theoretical Application of Research Findings**

The previous section has demonstrated that the stage perspective of adult development described by Levinson (1978) is limited when applied to the lives of the black men. Stage theory does not adequately address the dynamic and interactive struggle that characterised the men's attempts to achieve a viable life structure. This points to the need for a contextualised theory of black adult development in the South African context, which takes into account the interactive and dialectical process of adult development.

This section will propose a model of psychosocial development, based on the findings, which does take this into account. First, the application of dialectical theory (Riegel, 1975; 1978) to the lives of the men will be discussed, because it provides the foundation for this model. The model will then be presented. The model is essentially an integration and adaptation of the life events framework (Fig. 3.1) and the role strain perspective of adult development (Fig. 2.2), which has already been discussed, to the lives of the men in the present research. It will be shown how the specific features of the life events framework and role strain perspective can be combined and made more relevant to the findings from the present study.

These specific features are the nature of life events themselves; the role of mediating factors and role strain; the importance of coping strategies; and the impact of the stage and sociohistorical context on development. After the model has been discussed, an example of the practical application of the model to the lives of the men will be presented.

### Towards a Model of Black Psychosocial Development

#### The Dialectical Basis of the Model of Black Psychosocial Development

The dialectical theory proposed by Riegel (1975, 1978) provides a foundation for an understanding of black psychosocial development in the South African context. In Riegel's terms, the men's development was characterised by a dynamic interactive struggle between the individual-psychological dimension, and the cultural-sociological and outer-physical dimensions. Some of the characteristics of each dimension, which emerged from the study, can be depicted as illustrated in Table 16.1. (on page 403).

The dynamic interaction between these dimensions, described in Table 16.1., was captured in a number of ways in the present study.

Firstly, at the root of this conflict was the struggle between the individual needs of the men and limited resources (especially economic), and opportunities. The centrality of this dialectical struggle

throughout the evolution of the men's life structure has been convincingly demonstrated. In dialectical terms, the men's development was often characterised by asynchrony, resulting from a dimension - such as their need to develop themselves - being "off time" or "out of sync" with another dimension - such as the reality of having to work (Perun & Bielby, 1980; Riegel, 1975, 1978).

**Table 16.1.** The characteristics of the dimensions proposed by Riegel (1975), adapted to the present study.

INDIVIDUAL- PSYCHOLOGICAL	CULTURAL- SOCIOLOGICAL	OUTER- PHYSICAL
Need for independence, exploration, advancement, stability, and other issues associated with identity formation.	Social, cultural and traditional expectations, beliefs and pressures. Discrimination and lack of opportunities available in the environment.	Economic conditions. Political circumstances. General depressed quality of life associated with urban living.

Prejudice and discrimination was a second aspect of the outer dimension with which the men struggled. Relevant here is Lerner et al.'s (1993) and Lerner and Kauffman (1985) assumption from dialectical theory, that human development depends very much upon social policies and social institutions which are conducive to change. Like other dialectical research in the South African context (Dawes & Donald, 1994; Freeman, 1993; Kivnick, 1988), the present study demonstrated how the men were continuously frustrated by racism and discrimination (especially in the work context) which continuously impeded the process of forming a viable life structure.

Another two areas that were often characterised by a dialectical struggle was in the relationship between the men and their families, and, linked to this, the relationship between the men's aspirations and traditional values and beliefs. Most pertinent in this regard is the struggle that many of the men experienced between their need to establish independence and focus their attention on their families of procreation, and the pressure - borne out of traditional expectations and economic circumstances - to continue supporting their families of origin.

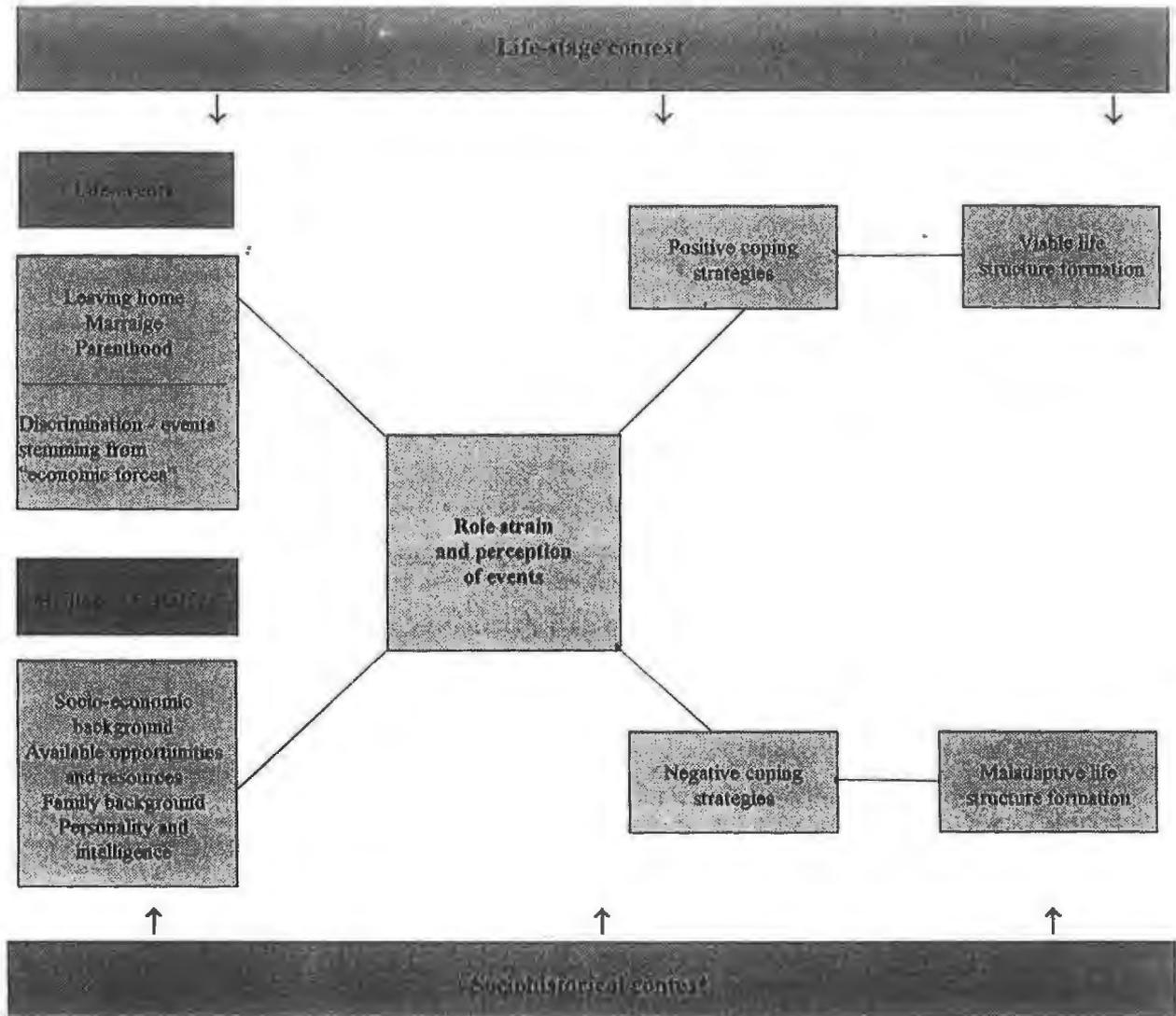
In terms of dialectical theory, each of these dimensions was found to be constantly interacting with each other. For example, the need for advancement, which is an aspect of the individual-psychological dimension, was considerably influenced by lack of opportunities and general economic conditions, which are aspects of the cultural-sociological and outer-physical dimensions.

The emphasis on the dialectical nature of development does not mean that contributions from stage theories such as Levinson's (1978) should be ignored. Kimmel (1990) makes a valid point by asserting that stage theories can supplement dialectical theory by highlighting the processes underlying specific developmental stages. It should be apparent from Table 16.1 that the aspects of the individual-psychological dimension revolve around the processes and tasks described by Levinson (1978), and which were relevant to the lives of the men.

#### An Integration of the Life Events Framework & Role Strain Perspective

While the dialectical view addresses the dynamic, interactive nature of the development of the men, it does not deal with the issue of how the men perceived and coped with external forces, or the role of mediating variables in this process. The life events framework (Fig. 3.1) - does, to an extent, address these issues, especially the role of mediating factors. However, the life events framework needs to be expanded in order to be more relevant to the lives of the men in the present study. Special emphasis needs to be given to the specific nature of the life events that the men confronted, their perception of these events, and their characteristic ways of coping with these events. This can be facilitated by integrating the life events framework (Fig. 3.1) with the

role strain view of black adult development (Fig. 2.2). The new and expanded framework can be represented as follows in Figure 16.1. (on page 405).



**Figure 16.1.** An integrative model of black psychosocial development

Let us now look at the features of this model in more detail.

**Life events.** The foundation of this model is the life events that the men had to negotiate. These events included typical events

associated with adult development, such as leaving home, marriage and parenthood, as well as events similar to those described by researchers in the South African context. A frequently cited event was resistance to black advancement and the experience of being victimised in the work place (Bluen & Barling, 1987). Events stemming from economic "forces" (Kamfer, 1986), such as having to leave school due to lack of financial resources, and being unemployed, were also frequently reported by the men. In Brown and Harris' (1989) conceptualisation, these events would be referred to as "disruptive" and "irregular" events, and included sociopolitical upheaval such as the "1976 uprising". Attention must also be given to "off-time" or unexpected events (Neugarten, 1980) which the men experienced, such as having to leave school suddenly because of financial constraints. These events often had a devastating impact on the men's adult development because they were unable to prepare themselves through "anticipatory socialisation" (Brim & Ryff, 1980). It often resulted in sudden changes in their developmental trajectories (Mumford & Owens, 1984; Mumford et al., 1987).

The nature and impact of life events, especially those stemming from sociopolitical and economic forces in the environment, must be taken into account in the life events framework in the South African context.

Mediating variables. The role of mediating variables, which the life events framework refers to, proved to be pivotal to the evolving life structures of the men. I-3 and I-8 are the two informants who were able to build the most satisfying and viable life structures. Both refer to the secure socio-economic backgrounds, and available opportunities (such as being able to study a career of their choice) as reasons for this. Negotiation of the life events, such as leaving home, starting a family and studying further was much more difficult for those men who lacked these resources. Dowd's (1990) proposition that development depends very much upon the availability of resources and opportunity is thus very applicable to the lives of the men in the present study.

Personality and intelligence are other mediating variables. There are tentative indications from the present study that those men who were more open to experience, and open to learning, and who were more intelligent and flexible, were able to respond more constructively to

life changes and life events (I-3, I-5 and I-8). This provides some support for the finding that "openness to experience" is associated with positive change (Costa & McCrae, 1980; McCrae & Costa, 1990), as is flexibility (Whitbourne, 1986) and intelligence (Goldberg, 1994). Conversely, it provides support for the finding that adults who are more rigid are not able to respond flexibly to life events (Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990).

Role strain. The role strain perspective (Bowman, 1989) provides us with valuable insight into the lives of the men in the present research. Role strain refers not only to the objective barriers or events that black men confront in their attempts to achieve viable life roles, but also their perception of these events and the manner in which they cope with these events. Maladaptive or adaptive coping strategies will be determined by the manner in which the role difficulties or life events are perceived, interpreted and evaluated (Bowman, 1989), and the way in which they are **construed**, according to the constructivist approach (Berzonsky, 1992; Viney, 1992).

Bowman (1989) refers to three critical features of role strain processes across the adult life cycle which are relevant to the men in the present study. These are the "salient goals", "pressing barriers", and "critical conflicts" in the lives of the black men. A salient goal that many of the men had at the beginning of adulthood was to further themselves academically and professionally, and to begin living out their Dream. Pressing barriers that they confronted included lack of financial support, and racism and discrimination. Unemployment was also a pressing barrier that emerged in the study. The critical conflict that they experienced during early adulthood is similar to what Bowman (1989, p.127) describes as "job search discouragement vs. occupational attainment". Discrimination, apartheid, influx control laws, and limited opportunities for black people in South Africa accentuated their job search discouragement.

Another role strain that the men experienced was in relation to the family role. Events such as leaving home and starting a family were again negotiated in the context of pressing barriers stemming from economic forces. A critical conflict that many of the men experienced

in relation to leaving home also included conflict stemming from traditional beliefs revolving around the expectation and need to support one's parents.

A critical element of the role strain that the men experienced is the coping strategies they employed to deal with the pressing barriers and critical conflicts.

Coping strategies. The importance of coping strategies in the lives of the men has already been discussed. Some of the men coped with the barriers and life events that they experienced in a positive, adaptive way, while others coped in a passive, maladaptive fashion. The issue of locus of control (Charoux, 1985; Riordan, 1981; Theron, 1994) which is an important aspect of the life events framework because it highlights how the person perceives and copes with life events, is relevant in this regard.

The issue of locus of control and direction in the lives of the men can be represented on a continuum ranging from those men whose evolving life structures were characterised by control and direction (I-3, I-8, and to a lesser extent, I-5), and those men whose life structures were characterised by the experience of being at the control of external events (especially I-6 and I-7). In Shanan's (1991) terms, the former group of men, who were more in control of their functioning, can be described as "active copers." The latter group, who gave in to external pressures, can be described as "passive copers".

The feeling of helplessness that characterised the lives of many of the men from the latter group, supports Magwaza and Bhana's (1991) finding that the locus of control in black South Africans is linked to helplessness and powerlessness. The highest external locus of control was evident in those men who lacked resources and opportunities to develop themselves, while the highest internal locus of control was evident in those men who had the resources and opportunities. Rodin et al.'s (1990) and Syme's (1993) argument is relevant here. They point out that socio-economic status affects control and direction across the life span because the lower the socio-economic status of people, the less

control they have over the "conditions" or "events" in their lives, and hence their own development.

Life-stage and sociohistorical context. The last two aspects of the life events framework concerns the influential role of the life-stage context and the sociohistorical context on development. Stage models such as Levinson's (1978) add depth to the life events framework because it highlights some of the tasks and processes that the men experienced. The life-stage context refers to these tasks and processes. More attention also needs to be given to the impact of the sociohistorical and cultural setting on the negotiation of life events in the South African context, as shall be illustrated in the following practical application.

#### Practical Application

The practical application of the preceding theoretical framework to the lives of the men can be illustrated by comparing two informants whose evolving life structures were remarkably different, I-7 and I-8. A specific period in their lives will be highlighted - the transition to adulthood - to illustrate the relevance of this new theoretical model to their lives.

I-7's transition to adulthood was marked by important events including having to leave school due to economic circumstances resulting from his father's death, and beginning his first job. This event was "off-time" (Neugarten, 1980) and resulted in a change to his development trajectories (Mumford et al., 1987) because he could not continue on his chosen path - to complete his school education and study further. In contrast, I-8 experienced much more "positive" life events during this transition. He left school with a good education and began pursuing his occupational Dream at university.

**Mediating factors** influenced the negotiation of these events for both men. I-8 had the resources, including a stable background and parents who encouraged his education, as well as financial security, to realise his aspiration to study further. Without these resources - especially the financial resources - I-7 was frustrated from realising his aspirations.

As a result of this, I-7 experienced more role strain than I-8 (Bowman, 1989). His "salient goal" was to complete his education, and then, rather vaguely, to become a doctor or mechanic. The "pressing barrier" that he experienced included economic constraints and discrimination in the work place. The resulting "critical conflict" stemmed from these barriers to his educational aspirations. In the absence of economic barriers, I-8 was able to realise his "salient goals" during this period.

The perceptions and coping strategies that characterised the negotiation of these events were also different. I-8 had a high internal locus of control. He relied on himself, was proud of having overcome apartheid-linked obstacles during his pre-adult years, and was able to set specific career goals. In contrast, I-7 experienced himself as being at the control of external circumstances, expressed in his words, "there was nothing I can do".

Coupled with positive mediating factors, proactive coping strategies, and the presence of few barriers and concomitant role strain, I-8 was able to negotiate the life events during the transition to adulthood in a positive way. Without these resources and in the absence of positive coping strategies, I-7 was not as successful in dealing with the role strain. In terms of the theoretical model, I-8 was able to achieve an **adaptive outcome**, or the development of a viable life structure, while I-7's outcome was **maladaptive**, and he was not able to achieve a viable life structure.

An understanding of their **life stage contexts** and their **sociohistorical and cultural contexts**, provides a background for an understanding of their lives, and the significance of life events. Both men were concerned with typical issues of this period of their lives, including establishing themselves in the adult world and working towards their educational aspirations, although these processes were less pronounced in I-7's case.

In terms of the sociohistorical context, both men were negotiating this period during the apartheid era, when discrimination, lack of opportunities, inferior educational systems, influx control laws, and

general segregation were a part of the black experience. The influence of the cultural and traditional context on the men's lives was also important. I-7's need to support his mother during this period was guided by a traditional belief that he did not challenge. The impact of traditional beliefs would become more evident for I-8 towards the end of this period, in the conflict that he experienced pertaining to the important event of separating from his family of origin.

### Conclusions and Implications

Levinson (1978, p.336) concludes his study with a number of implications for "fostering" adult development. Similarly, the results of the present study have important implications on a theoretical level, a structural or societal level, and on the professional practice of psychology. This section will highlight some of these implications.

These implications must be considered in the context of current sociopolitical changes, culminating in the recent democratisation of South Africa. With these changes has come a gradual easing of many of the barriers that the black men in the present study experienced, and which often had a devastating impact upon the attainment of a viable life structure. However, these barriers have been far from removed. Poverty, lack of opportunities and unemployment continue to be a prominent feature of life for many black adults. Moreover, the young black adult still has to struggle with the imbalances from the past, which - as this study has illustrated - continues to undermine their current psychosocial development.

Levinson (1978, p.337) makes an important point when he says that, "if we are to support adult development on a wider scale, we will have to modify the social institutions that shape our lives". In South Africa, this means we have to continue to address these past imbalances by ensuring that **structural and institutional barriers** to personal development are removed. Such institutional constraints include low educational levels, the stereotype and prejudices held by management, and the attitude of white employees, stemming from the legacy of apartheid (Watts, 1980). These imbalances can be addressed, for example, through affirmative action programmes where the aim is on the removal of all

possible obstacles to socio-economic advancement, and the improvement of the personal, social and material resources of disadvantaged communities (Schlemmer, 1991).

For instance, a specific way that these imbalances can be addressed relates to the provision of bursaries and study assistance for disadvantaged young adults. This study has demonstrated how aspirations to study further and follow one's Dream during the transition to adulthood can be crushed by a lack of economic resources. The provision of financial assistance at this crucial time can have a significant impact on adult development by facilitating the process of living out the Dream.

Eastmond (1991) points out that a fundamental implication of cross-cultural research into adult development is the need to integrate these views into **educational practice**. Similarly, the findings from the present study points to the necessity to introduce theory and models of psychosocial development, and career development, which are more appropriate to the South African context.

Stage models of development, such as Levinson's (1978), which have a white, middle-class, American bias are useful in explaining some of the processes and issues that black adults experience, but these models need to be contextualised to take into account the specific developmental issues and concerns of black adults. In their analysis of psychology in a future South Africa, Rock and Hamber (1994) confirm this point by pointing out that developmental theory in South Africa has ignored the impact of apartheid issues. This has resulted in a "false consciousness" in the field, and the adoption of an elitist attitude in the profession.

More emphasis needs to be given to the impact of external circumstances, including socio-economic constraints, racism and prejudice in theoretical perspectives of black adult development. The impact of cultural and traditional beliefs, as well as the influential role of the family of origin, also needs to be emphasised. The crucial task of separating from the family of origin and establishing independence was shown to be influenced by all these factors.

The dialectical conceptualisation of adult development as well as the life events framework would seem to be especially relevant to our understanding of black adult development, and need to be emphasised in psychology training programmes. The role strain perspective of black adult development also offers a particularly viable framework for understanding black adult development. This chapter has provided an integration of these models into a framework that is more applicable to the South African context. It is hoped that such a framework can guide developmental theory in psychology training programmes.

There is also a great need in South Africa to develop a model of career development and career counselling which is more appropriate to the South African setting. The findings of this study provide some guidelines in this direction.

The findings support Naicker (1994) and Stead and Watson's (1994) contention that we can no longer rely on Western models of career development and counselling, which emphasise the individual, and ignore the impact of structural factors on career development. More attention needs to be given to the impact of cultural, educational, economic and sociopolitical forces on career development, as well as the influence of limited opportunities and other external barriers.

The emphasis should thus be on the dialectical, interactive nature of career development, or more specifically, the struggle between the inner psychological aspects and the outer external aspects of the life structure that characterise the career development process. Career development models such as the developmental-contextual perspective of career development (Vondracek et al., 1986) which emphasises the dynamic relationship between the individual and the external context, would seem to be particularly salient in the South African context.

However, career development theories and the career counselling process itself needs to place more emphasis on the issue of coping strategies. A crucial issue that emerged from the present study is the "pattern" or characteristic manner in which black adults coped with external barriers and constraints during their career development, whether these be lack of finances, limited employment opportunities, lack

of opportunities for promotion, racism and discrimination, as well as unemployment. Career development can be fostered in the counselling relationship by the encouragement and facilitation of positive coping strategies characterised by affirmation, goal directedness, flexibility, and the ability to overcome obstacles, and the development of internal locus of control - all of which were found to be crucial to viable career development. In terms of Tiedeman and Miller-Tiedeman's (1984) model of career development, career development can be fostered by helping the person to become aware of, and act on, their "personal reality" - or personal career goals and aspirations - through the mobilisation of the positive coping strategies that have been identified in this study.

It would seem from the results of the study that black adults are confronted with a career developmental task which can be referred to as **balancing**. Entrance into the first job demanded the young adult to balance his need to pursue educational and career aspirations with external demands, including the necessity to work due to financial constraints, and the need to support the family of origin. How the young adult copes with this task, is of crucial concern. Career readiness and maturity can be facilitated by mobilising those coping strategies which are needed for the task of balancing.

Special attention also needs to be given to the task of **forming a Dream** in relation to career development. The findings from the present study illustrate that the men's Dreams revolved around occupational aspirations. However, the majority of the men could not live out these aspirations. Career counselling intervention needs to focus on helping the young adult to develop an occupational Dream which is based on a realistic matching between the self and available work opportunities. The young adult should be assisted to explore options, to keep the Dream "alive" and be flexible when certain aspirations cannot immediately be realised. The lack of information concerning different career paths, and the presence of often unrealistic career choices in the lives of the men, indicates a need for the provision of career information.

Another task that needs further attention in the career developmental process is helping the young adult form and improve the quality of **mentoring relationships** in the work environment. A striking

finding of the present study was the lack of mentoring relationships in the work environment, and the almost complete absence of black mentors. Mentoring becomes especially important in the current context where organisational barriers have been lifted, opportunities have been "opened-up," but where support and guidance are often lacking.

The coping strategies that characterised the lives of the men in the present research often had their foundation in the childhood and adolescent years. This implies that career development strategies should begin during the early formative years. These strategies should be **preventative**, by helping in the prevention of negative coping strategies. An understanding of what Jepsen (1994) refers to as **career patterns** could facilitate this process. Jepsen asserts that the career counselling process can be enriched by understanding past patterns, themes and trends in order to predict future career development. These themes and patterns constitute the coping strategies which featured so prominently in the lives of the men in the present study. By understanding the development of these patterns we can help to change maladaptive patterns.

The method of **biographical interviewing** (Levinson, 1978), with its purpose of understanding life structure development, can help in this regard. Biographical interviewing was shown to be an effective instrument for exploring themes, recurring issues, processes and trends in the person's development.

The above points also apply to general or **personal counselling** and theory, because the personal and career development of the men in the present study were so intertwined. The impact of external circumstances, the importance of coping strategies, the formation of the Dream, and the significance of the early years, all have relevance for personal counselling. In personal counselling as in career counselling, it would be important to facilitate optimum life structure development via the development of positive coping strategies.

Other factors that emerge from this study which could influence career counselling and personal counselling, include the men's **perception of change** and the role of **introspection**. For instance, the finding that many of the men's perception of change was characterised by a lack of

introspection and was related to external circumstances, could have implications for counselling and therapeutic interventions.

The themes that emerged from the present study concerning the **pre-adult years** and the task of **forming a marriage and family** can also enrich personal counselling and family and marital interventions. For instance, many of the men were separated from their families during the childhood years, which often had a traumatic impact on their adult life structures. Adult development can be fostered in the family situation by addressing these issues. We should be aware in our professional interventions of issues such as the centrality of the family of origin and the family of procurement in the lives of the men, as well as the tension that the men experienced with regard to both these loyalties. We should be aware of the meaning of marriage and parenthood in the lives of the men, and the personal change involved in both these transitions. The meaning of marriage in relation to the specific developmental tasks of the different periods can also enrich our understanding of personal and marital processes.

**Traditional beliefs and expectations** were shown to influence the task of forming a marriage and family, and must also be considered in professional interventions. For example, it would be important in family therapy to understand the influential role of the father in the family, as well as traditional expectations concerning the task of separating from the family of origin. Knowledge concerning problems and barriers around **establishing intimacy** - which many of the men experienced - the presence (and often acceptance) of extra-marital relationships, as well as the men's images of the **Special Woman**, can also guide marital interventions.

In conclusion, it should be stated that while the implications based on the findings of the present research can enrich our interventions, "various options need to be explored so that without glorifying traditional culture, and without becoming part to emphasising differences, interventions cohere with the world-view of clients" (Rock & Hamber, 1994, p.15).

## CONCLUSION

This study will conclude with a critical evaluation of the study in terms of the aims and motivations that were put forward in the introductory chapter. Special attention will be given to the adequacy of the research method used in this study. Following this, some recommendations for future research will be advanced.

### Critical Evaluation of the Study

The guiding purpose of the present study was to provide a groundwork for the understanding of the psychosocial development of black South Africans and of urban black men in particular. This study has worked well towards that aim by providing rich and comprehensive information on important aspects and processes concerning psychosocial development in the South African context. Results were compared to international research and models of adult development, and a theoretical framework for understanding black psychosocial development was advanced.

This study has thus responded well to the call for more relevant psychological understanding in South Africa (Berger & Lazarus, 1987; Dawes, 1986; Freeman, 1991; Rock & Hamber, 1994). It has uncovered the importance of understanding the impact of contextual factors - including traditional beliefs, the role of the family, and socio-economic factors - on black adult development. It has provided "new knowledge" (Herbert, 1989, p.xv) concerning the "world view" (Freeman, 1991) of black South Africans, and has shown how this new knowledge can enrich the curricula of psychology training programmes, and guide counselling and therapeutic practice.

This study has achieved the guiding purpose and motivations of the present study because it has addressed the specific research questions that were raised. These questions, which were based on the questions raised by other researchers of the life structure (Herbert, 1989; Ross, 1984), include the following:

- **What is the nature and character of the men's life structure over time?**

This study has provided valuable information concerning the nature and character of the men's evolving life structure. It has highlighted the importance of understanding the dialectical nature of development, the role of life events, and the nature of role strain across the life span of black South African adults. It has alerted us to the issues and processes which are pertinent to the evolving life structure of black South Africans, including the impact of external barriers on psychosocial development and the importance of coping strategies across the life span - factors which were not addressed in depth in Levinson's (1978) study.

- **What are the main developmental tasks that the men have to negotiate?**

Much information was obtained concerning the nature and manifestation of the major developmental tasks in the lives of the men. The tasks of forming a family and forming an occupation emerged as integral aspect of the men's evolving life structures. Moreover, the impact of external circumstances and external barriers on the developmental tasks, for instance, the impact of economic constraints on living out the Dream, and the impact of traditional values on separating from the family of origin, was explored in depth.

Two new and related developmental tasks emerged from the study. The first concerns the task of coping with external barriers, including racism and discrimination. The second concerns the ability to compromise and balance one's needs and aspirations with external constraints.

- **How does the experience of being black in South Africa, and the influence of the sociocultural and political context in general, impact on the evolving life structure?**

The study provided substantial answers to these questions. Indeed the impact of external circumstances and barriers emanating from the sociopolitical and economic contexts, as well as the role of traditional beliefs and expectations, emerged as major themes. The task of

separating from the family of origin and establishing independence - which is a critical task of early adulthood (Levinson, 1978) - was shown to be closely bound with traditional beliefs and economic constraints. The impact of lack of opportunity, racism and discrimination - which were closely related to the black experience in South Africa - were also explored in depth. Themes of frustration and stagnation, as well as affirmation and strength emerged.

- How does the evolution of the life structure of the black men compare to Levinson's (1978) conceptualisation of adult development, as well as other research and views in the field?

The comparative analysis, which was the crucial final step of data analysis, persuasively illustrated the similarities and differences between the findings from the present study, Levinson's (1978) study, and other studies in the field. It showed that the evolving life structure of black South Africans was more similar to the Levinsonian studies of black adult development (Gooden, 1980; Herbert, 1989; Ruffin, 1989) than Levinson's (1978) model. Some common themes relating to other cross cultural studies were also identified (Hogan & York, 1989; Lim, 1986).

This study must also be evaluated in terms of the positive contribution it can make to the professional practice of psychology in South Africa. The previous chapter has highlighted how the findings from this study can enrich our theoretical models of psychosocial development and career development, and guide career counselling and personal counselling and therapy.

These findings were generated through the qualitative method used in the present study. The next section will evaluate the method in more detail.

#### **Evaluation of the Research Method**

The qualitative method used in the present research proved to be a valuable method for exploring psychosocial development. Through psychobiographical interviewing, and the grounded theory method of data analysis, rich and in depth descriptions and themes relating to

psychosocial development, were generated. It is doubtful whether structured interviews, survey research, or psychometric instruments could have provided such rich data.

The conditions for reliability and validity were established and maintained throughout the research process. "Transparency" (Sykes, 1991) and "descriptive adequacy" (Ashworth, 1987) were ensured by basing all argumentation or findings on the informants' own words, and by keeping to the framework proposed for analysis, including the narrative and interpretive summaries, and the collective and comparative analysis (Herbert, 1989). Through the process of coding, the main aim of the study - which was to lay the basis for a theory of the evolving life structure of urban black males - was achieved.

The valuable information concerning themes, experiences and processes in personal development and career development that the biographical method was able to access, indicates that this method could have great utility in personal and career counselling in South Africa.

Some shortcomings and limitations relating to the research methodology became apparent during this process. Perhaps most striking was the time-consuming nature of the research process. Just as Radebe (1993) noted in her phenomenological study of the midlife transition, the method of in depth interviewing and the concomitant analysis of themes in the protocols that emerge is expensive in terms of time and energy, and can be cumbersome. The reliance on a small sample means that generalising the result to the larger population should be done with care, and individual differences must not be overlooked.

Language barriers also sometimes emerged as a problem. Some of the informants, who struggled with communicating in english, did not seem to access deeper feelings, or disclose much about themselves. It is not clear whether this was due to problems with communicating in english, or an intrinsic characteristic of the person. Language problems were partially addressed by striving for flexibility, and communicating in a style and manner that was congruent with the interviewee.

It can also be argued that the information that emerged could be limited because it involved a white researcher with "Western spectacles" (Bodibe, 1987), exploring the lives of black adults. On the other hand, it is this relationship which provided this study with vitality and energy. From the dialectic between the researcher and the informants, a co-creation of experience emerged, reflected in the researcher's narrative or story of the informant's narrative or story. This interface between white and black "stories" and experiences is of crucial concern in South Africa at present.

### **Implications for Future Research**

A number of areas for future research emerged from the study.

Reasons have already been advanced for the inclusion of only men in the present study, but there is a pressing need for an exploration of the evolving life structure of black women. Interesting issues that could be addressed, include the differences between the life structures of black men and women; their perception and experience of oppression; the influence of traditional beliefs and expectations on their evolving life structures; particular issues and challenges that they might confront in terms of the tasks of forming a career and a family; and the presence of mentors and a Special Man in their lives.

There is also a need to explore the psychosocial development of rural adults, and to compare those findings with the conclusions of the present study. The impact of traditional and cultural beliefs on the evolving life structures of black rural adults would be of particular interest.

It would be interesting to explore the life structure formation of adults from other religious and cultural groups, that make up the South African population.

The impact of the recent democratisation of South Africa on the life structure of the black adults emerged as a theme from this study, and deserves to be explored in more depth. The impact on white adults also warrants attention.

It would also be interesting for a black researcher to conduct a similar study to the present one, in the same language as the informants, and then to compare the similarities and differences.

Specific aspects of Levinson's (1978) theory can be isolated and explored in more depth, including issues relating to career development and the formation of love, marriage and family. The issue of love and intimacy proved the most difficult to explore in this study, and demands further attention. Although the present study provided some valuable insight into career development in the South African context, more work should be done on developing a more appropriate model of career development and career counselling.

Future research can also explore the issue of coping strategies, which occupied a central role in the life structure of the men in the present study. The identification of other coping strategies, as well as the way in which these strategies can be enhanced, are pertinent issues.

Lastly, an area that would benefit from more research would be the applicability of narrative methods in general, and the biographical approach (Levinson, 1978) in particular, to other areas of research, and the practice of career counselling and personal counselling in South Africa.

### **Summary**

The present study has provided valuable and relevant information concerning black psychosocial development in South Africa. It has effectively addressed issues and themes concerning the nature and character of the men's evolving life structures, the particular developmental tasks that they have to confront, and the experience of being black in the South African context. It has also highlighted similarities and differences between Levinson's (1978) conceptualisation of adult development and the present study. This study has achieved its objectives through the qualitative method that was used. Although this approach was time consuming, it proved to be a powerful method for exploring the life structures of black men.

Some important areas for future research emerged from this study, including a need for research involving women, other cultural groups and rural adults, and the need to explore coping strategies across the life span in more depth.

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