

**THE LIFE OF HELEN SUZMAN: A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDY**

by

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**Figure 1. Photograph of Helen Suzman.** From “*Helen Suzman. Fighter for Human Rights,*” Exhibition convened by M. Shain, 21 March 2005, at the South African Jewish Museum, Cape Town, South Africa.

Excerpt from the poem *For Helen Suzman* (Mashile, 2009):

...  
In a country made of blinded mouths  
What does it take to speak  
To speak while others are shouting  
To speak while others are dying  
To speak while others are silenced  
To speak while others are hiding  
To speak while the world listens  
To speak while the future watches  
...

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## DECLARATION

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**STATEMENT BY LANGUAGE EDITOR**

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**Statement by language editor**

I hereby declare that I language edited *The Life of Helen Suzman: A Psychobiographical Study*, authored by Carla Nel. The text was edited for language matters only and not for APA compliance or compliance with any other style. Should there be any enquiries in this regard, I can be contacted at the numbers below.

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Yours faithfully

H.C.Botha

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC	African National Congress
DA	Democratic Alliance
DP	Democratic Party
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
MP	Member of Parliament
NP	National Party
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan-Africanist Congress
PFP	Progressive Federal Party
PP	Progressive Party
SAIRR	South African Institute of Race Relations
UP	United Party

## ABSTRACT

Apart from the current upsurge in interest in psychobiographical research, South African psychologists may be further motivated by the country's recent political history to embark on a study of exceptional lives or significant figures. A renewed focus on anti-apartheid activists could be of great value in the current South African context and the process of constructing a narrative of the nation's troubled past. Helen Suzman (1917-2009) won worldwide recognition for her role as anti-apartheid activist and parliamentary politician. She displayed exceptional resilience under trying and often hostile conditions and became known for her intolerance of injustice and concern for the plight of the disenfranchised.

Helen Suzman's life has not been the subject of any prior psychologically-informed biography. She was selected through purposive sampling as the subject for this psychobiography. The researcher aimed to provide a psychologically driven exploration and description of aspects of her life within its sociohistorical context, through the application of specific psychological approaches to the available biographical data. The two psychological frameworks used in this study were (a) a stage-based dynamic description of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963, 1997), and (b) a model for holistic wellness within positive psychology (Myers, Sweeney & Witmer, 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). The primary aim of this study was therefore to explore and describe Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and her holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. This objective falls within an inductive research approach, and reflects the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study.

Two methodological strategies were used in this study. Firstly, Alexander's model (1988, 1990) was used to organise, extract, prioritise and analyse the data. The indicators of salience helped ensure that all significant pieces of biographical data were carefully considered for analysis. Posing specific questions to the data enabled the researcher to extract units of analysis relevant to the aim of the study. Secondly, the use of conceptual frameworks and matrices enabled the longitudinal exploration, categorisation and description of the stages of psychosocial development and the components of holistic wellness, respectively.

The eugraphic focus of both psychological frameworks enabled the researcher to explore aspects of Helen's life in terms of healthy development and holistic wellness. Findings from this study suggested that Helen Suzman (a) progressed successfully through all

psychosocial stages of development and accrued all ego strengths as proposed by Erikson, and (b) achieved a relatively high degree of wellness in all the dimensions and tasks of the holistic wellness model. Findings from both frameworks, furthermore, highlighted the influence of contextual factors on her psychosocial development and holistic wellness.

This study contributed to the body of knowledge on Helen Suzman and the psychobiographical approach. It, furthermore, provided a unique platform for demonstrating the value and relevance of the theory of psychosocial development and the holistic wellness model when applied to an individual life. Based on the application of these theories, recommendations are made for future psychobiographical research projects.

**Keywords:** Psychobiography, Helen Suzman, psychosocial development, Erik Erikson, holistic wellness, neo-Adlerian, Thomas Sweeney, Melvin Witmer, Jane Myers.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter serves to introduce the reader to the study, firstly, by discussing its primary aim. Thereafter it provides a general orientation to the context of the research by outlining aspects such as the general problem statement, the subject under study, the psychobiographical approach, as well as the theoretical frameworks selected for this study. The researcher's personal passage is also introduced to the reader. In conclusion, the structure of this study is conveyed through the provision of a broad outline of the chapters in which this study is divided.

#### 1.2 Introduction and Research Aim

This study, as an example of the psychobiographical case study design and methodology, entailed the longitudinal study of a single case within a qualitative framework. The researcher aimed to provide a psychologically driven exploration and description of aspects of a single life (i.e., Helen Suzman) within its sociohistorical context through the application of psychological frameworks to biographical data. Two psychological frameworks were used in this study: (a) a stage-based dynamic description of psychosocial development, and (b) a model for holistic wellness situated within the positive psychology framework.

The primary aim of this study was to explore and describe Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and her holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. This objective falls within an inductive research approach, and reflects the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study. The researcher, accordingly, conceptualised the subject's life in terms of specific psychological perspectives by applying two psychological frameworks to the historical and biographical information available on Helen Suzman. The concepts that underlie this endeavour are introduced in the following section.

### **1.3 Context of the Research**

In this section, the general problem statement is followed by a brief introduction to the psychobiographical subject, Helen Suzman. Psychobiography as a research approach is briefly described and an outline is provided of the theoretical frameworks which guided data analysis in this study, namely, the psychosocial development theory (Erikson, 1958/1993, 1963, 1980, 1997) and the holistic wellness model (Myers, Sweeney & Witmer, 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

#### **1.3.1 General Problem Statement**

Historically, the psychobiographical approach has enjoyed only marginal status in academic psychology, as many psychobiographers hailed from other disciplines, such as political science, history and psychiatry (Simonton, 1999). Almost two decades ago, Elms (1994) had issued a call for psychologists to “take hold of psychobiography” (p. 5) in order to ensure a high standard of quality in the application of psychological interpretations to the biographical endeavour. In the light of the upsurge in both national and international interest in psychobiographical research, it is not surprising that various researchers have advocated its value (e.g., Carlson, 1988; Elms, 1994; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; McAdams, 1988, 1994; Runyan, 1984; Schultz, 2001c, 2005a). South African universities have seen significant increases in academically institutionalised psychobiographies over the past few decades as reflected by growing number of psychobiographies completed as part of postgraduate degrees (Fouché, Smit, Watson & Van Niekerk, 2007; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; Perry, 2012; Stroud, 2004).

South African psychologists may be further motivated by the country’s recent history to embark on a study of exceptional lives or significant figures. In post-apartheid South Africa, some psychobiographers have studied aspects of the lives of those who have made significant contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle, for example Stephen Biko (Kotton, 2002), Alan Paton (Greeff, 2010) and Bram Fischer (Swart, 2010). Similarly, the lives of apartheid-era statesmen such as Hendrik Verwoerd (Claasen, 2007) and B.J. Vorster (Vorster, 2003), have also been examined through the psychobiographical lens. A renewed focus on anti-apartheid activists could be of great value in the current South African context and the process of constructing a narrative of the nation’s troubled past.

Therefore, this study was not only intended to make a contribution to the growing field of academic psychobiographical research in South Africa, but to do so by exploring a specific point of time in South African history and illuminating aspects of a life of one of our great human rights activists.

### **1.3.2 The Psychobiographical Research Subject**

South African born Helen Suzman (1917-2009), was a renowned politician and anti-apartheid activist (Leon, 2009; Welsh, 2006). She served a total of 36 years as a Member of Parliament (MP), mostly, as a member of the Progressive Party (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) and won worldwide recognition for her role as an anti-apartheid activist (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Oakland, 2005; Shain, 2006; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Taljaard, 2009). Although she was respected by various members of the anti-apartheid movement, she lost considerable popularity by consistently opposing the armed struggle as well as sanctions and boycotts against South Africa (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007; Kadalie, 2010). After her death in 2009, she was praised for her contribution to the establishment of democracy in South Africa and saluted as a fighter for human rights and civil liberties during her career in Parliament as well as after her retirement in 1989 (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Kadalie, 2010; Rotberg, 2011; Taljaard, 2009). Her life has been described as “worthy of emulation by us all for its sheer tenacity, principle and commitment” (Taljaard, 2009, p. 2). Colleague and friend, Colin Eglin, said the following about her when he recommended her for the Liberal International Prize for Freedom in Copenhagen in 2002:

The curriculum vitae of Helen Suzman is an impressive record of service, achievement and public recognition. Yet, it says nothing of Helen Suzman the person, or Helen Suzman the courageous champion of human rights, nor of Helen Suzman who in the dark days of apartheid did more than any other person to keep liberal values alive in South Africa. Helen Suzman is no political demagogue, no armchair crusader. During her 36 years in parliament she was a “hands-on” politician and tenacious fighter for the causes in which she believed. She had a straightforward political creed: “I hate bullies. I stand for simple justice, equal opportunity and human rights. These are the indispensable elements in a democratic society, and are well worth fighting for.” ...Using parliament as a platform, she demanded the attention of the apartheid rulers; she got the ear of the media; she endured the vilification of the racial bigots; and she earned the respect of the oppressed. (Eglin, 2007, pp. 98-99)

Eglin (2007) highlighted some of Helen Suzman’s characteristics which he noted were not immediately apparent when only considering her career accomplishments. He

implied that Helen possessed qualities such as courage, resilience, tenacity and determination in the face of adversity. This study aimed at uncovering and revealing some aspects of “Helen Suzman the person” (Eglin, 2007, p. 98) by exploring and describing her life through the application of the psychosocial development theory and the holistic wellness model.

### 1.3.3 The Psychobiographical Approach

Psychobiography entails qualitative analyses of single cases through an idiographic and longitudinal approach (Simonton, 1999). Psychobiography can be defined as the determined and explicit use of psychology in the interpretation of a single life, whereby the researcher develops an understanding of the individual life through the application of psychological theory and/or research principles, methods and themes (Kramer, 2002; Schultz, 2001a, 2001c). It, therefore, entails the “systematic use of psychological (especially personality) theory to transform a life into a coherent and illuminating story” (McAdams, 1988, p. 2) through which the researcher aims to make psychological sense of the subject (Schultz, 2001c).

In this study, the life of Helen Suzman is explored through the lenses of two psychological frameworks: a psychosocial development theory and a holistic wellness model. Through the social constructivist and interpretative paradigms central to psychobiography (Van Niekerk, 2007), psychological theory and research is applied to a biographical subject’s life in order to promote the interpretation and understanding of the subject’s life story. Psychobiography may also allow for the further development, refinement and testing of psychological theories (Runyan, 2005). This study not only highlights psychosocial development and holistic wellness in the life of Helen Suzman as aspects which have not been investigated before, but also provides an opportunity to *informally test* aspects and facets of the content of these psychological frameworks. Case study research such as the psychobiographical approach, therefore, allows for both inductive and deductive approaches and its nature can be described as exploratory-descriptive as well as descriptive-dialogic (Edwards, 1998; Yin, 2009) with the former being the primary aim of this study. The descriptive-dialogic approach involves forming a dialogue between the exploratory-descriptive findings on the one hand and the theoretical conceptualisations and propositions on the other (Edwards, 1998; Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004).

This research project can, furthermore, be seen as an attempt to address the concerns raised by Elms (1994). He calls for psychobiography to: (a) move from theoretical

narrowness to a range of theoretical choices, (b) shift from methodological looseness to methodological restraint, (c) place greater emphasis on the development of psychological health instead of limiting itself to the practice of pathography<sup>1</sup>, and (d) move away from explanatory reductionism to the embrace of explanatory complexity (Elms, 1994). This study therefore: (a) purposefully selected two theoretical frameworks, (b) carefully applied methodological guidelines for data selection and analysis, (c) employed a theory and a model which, in combination, had the potential to provide a eugraphic and holistic framework from which to view the individual, and (d) embraced explanatory complexity through the application of both a dynamic developmental theory and a holistic wellness model. Detailed discussions of psychobiography as a research approach and its methodological considerations are presented in later chapters (see section 1.5).

### 1.3.4 Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development

Erikson's work investigated the relationship of the *ego* with the *environment* (Erikson, 1963, 1980) throughout human development, and as such, represented a shift in emphasis for psychoanalysis from the study of the individual's ego to the study of the ego's foundation in society (Erikson, 1963). Erikson's approach demonstrated the interplay between the sociocultural and sociohistorical processes of society and psychological development throughout the entire life cycle (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Freiberg, 1987; Hoare, 2005; Schachter, 2005). Erikson conceptualised the ego as a synthesising power within an individual, one that creates an identity through the process of dealing with personal, societal, historical and familial forces as the individual strives to master the environment (Gross, 1987; Wastell, 1996).

Erikson's framework aimed to explain the emergence of different ego qualities during critical periods of the life cycle (Roazen, 1976; Stevens, 2008). His theory (Erikson, 1958/1993, 1963, 1980, 1997) described psychosocial development across the lifespan as a series of crises caused by opposing psychological forces, unfolding epigenetically in a progression of eight stages (Erikson, 1963, 1997). Every one of these crises denotes a necessary turning point, brought on by the creative tension between the opposing forces during each stage of the life cycle (Gross, 1987; Kroger, 2005). The stages are, therefore, all

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<sup>1</sup> The term pathography refers to the exploration of the subjects' psychological failings, shortcomings, or abnormalities (Elms, 1994); a "psychobiography by diagnosis" (Schultz, 2005a, p. 10) in which the complex whole of the personality is reduced to static diagnostic or psychopathological categories or symptoms.

characterised by (a) the ego's task of integrating certain oppositional forces, and (b) the specific resulting ego strength or quality which is gained should such integration take place successfully (Erikson, 1997). A detailed discussion of this theoretical approach and its application to psychobiographical studies is provided in Chapter 3.

### **1.3.5 The Holistic Wellness Model**

The holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) is a neo-Adlerian conceptualisation of several dimensions of the broad construct of wellness, a concept central to the positive psychology movement (Roscoe, 2009). The uniqueness of this model's approach lies in its application of the concepts of Individual Psychology as a classifying and explanatory theme to the different components of wellness (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). In the holistic wellness model, as initially described by Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992), the five life tasks of neo-Adlerian Individual Psychology was utilised to organise the different components of wellness (Myers, 2009). These life tasks include spirituality, self-regulation, work, friendship and love. All five life tasks interact either for the well-being or to the detriment of the individual (Sweeney, 2009). They also dynamically interact with external forces, including family, community, media, education, religion, business or industry and government. Furthermore, the holistic wellness model also examines how the life tasks and forces are impacted upon by global events and issues, such as war, disease, poverty, pollution, overpopulation, and economic exploitation (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). A detailed discussion of this model and its application to psychobiographical studies is provided in Chapter 4.

In qualitative research, issues around reflexivity and researcher subjectivity warrant attention and researchers have been urged to be aware of, and report, on their own subjectivity (Morrow, 2005). In order to therefore reflect critically on the self as researcher (which is discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7), the researcher's motivations for undertaking this research project are discussed in the following section.

## **1.4 The Researcher's Personal Passage**

When first exposed to the concept of psychobiographical research, the researcher was immediately drawn to the in-depth and investigative nature of the approach. The opportunity to conduct qualitative research on a single case immediately appealed to the researcher's role

as psychotherapist. Due to her keen interest in the disciplines of history and politics, the psychobiographical approach further complemented the researcher's desire to better understand a historically and politically significant life from a psychological vantage point.

Helen Suzman was chosen as a psychobiographical subject for the following reasons: (a) the significant body of information available on her life, (b) the applicability and relevance of Helen's life regarding the psychological frameworks used in this study, and (c) the value in studying exemplary and exceptional figures. These factors are discussed in greater detail in section 7.3. Furthermore, the researcher had limited prior knowledge of Helen Suzman's life story, knowing only of her career as an MP. This was seen by the researcher as an advantage in reducing the likelihood of researcher bias, which is discussed further in section 6.2.1.

These were not the only reasons for the choice of subject. Simonton (1999) wrote: "Sometimes a researcher's decision to study famous persons reflects mostly an idiosyncratic rather than scientific motivation" (p. 431). The researcher's personal motivation for selecting Helen Suzman as a subject arose from her interest in the political transformation that marked recent South African history and fascination with Helen's role during that period. Furthermore, the researcher was drawn in by the unique nature of Suzman's position within her sociohistorical context (being a Jewish woman in minority opposition politics during apartheid-era South Africa, serving in a Parliament dominated by Calvinist<sup>2</sup> Afrikaner men). Strangways-Booth (1976, p. 14) noted that while she was writing about Helen and the party she represented, she aimed at outlining the qualities which she felt enabled Helen to "maintain her position in the face of such fearful odds: her courage, her persistence, her tireless energy, her uncompromising integrity, but above all her deep-rooted concern for her country's disenfranchised millions...". As the researcher became aware of these qualities from the data on Helen's life, the desire to understand their origins and dynamics became a strong motivating factor for this psychobiographical endeavour. The researcher's reaction to the subject throughout this study is reflected upon in Chapter 11.

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<sup>2</sup> In the South Africa context, Calvinism had been associated with Afrikaner Nationalism and its ideology of racial segregation by conservatives such as Dr Andries Treurnicht. This justification was challenged by anti-apartheid activists such as Dr Beyers Naudé (Vosloo, 2009).

## **1.5 Overview of the Study**

This manuscript, firstly, contains four chapters that comprise the literature review of this study. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive historical overview of the salient sociohistorical events in Helen Suzman's life. In Chapter 3, Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory is presented and discussed. Chapter 4 focuses on the model for holistic wellness. Chapter 5 concludes the literature review by providing an overview of psychobiographical case study research.

Secondly, the methodological aspects of this study are described in two chapters. The preliminary methodological considerations regarding potential problems and issues inherent to psychobiographical research are discussed in Chapter 6. Chapter 7 then presents the reader with a thorough discussion of the psychobiographical research design and methodology as it applied to this study.

Thirdly, the findings and the discussion thereof are presented in Chapters 8, 9 and 10. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the discussion of the findings as they relate to the psychosocial development of Helen Suzman. Following this, the findings and discussion related to the holistic wellness of Suzman are provided in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 consequently integrates the research findings. Chapter 11 concludes the study by discussing the value and limitations of the study, providing recommendations for future research in the field of psychobiography and reflecting on the researcher's personal passage.

## **1.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced the study by briefly describing the research aim and the context within which the research took place. The researcher introduced her personal passage to the reader. In conclusion, a broad outline of this study was given. The following chapter highlights the major sociohistorical events in the life of Helen Suzman.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE LIFE OF HELEN SUZMAN: A CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

#### 2.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter provides a historical overview of the life of Helen Suzman. Her lifespan is presented over a historical period of 91 years, from her birth in 1917 to her death in 2009, with the aim of providing the reader with an overview of her development and the events that may have influenced it. The biographical information on her life is presented in chronological order in this chapter, and is organised into distinct historical periods. The reader will, where needed, be provided with information regarding the sociohistorical context of these periods in order to better understand the subject's environment.

#### 2.2 Historical Periods in the Life of Helen Suzman

Biographical information on the life of Helen Suzman was gathered by means of collecting archival public documentation on or by her, including her memoirs *In No Uncertain Terms* (Suzman, 1993), as well as the works *A Cricket in the Thorn Tree: Helen Suzman and the Progressive Party of South Africa* (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976), *Helen Suzman's Solo Years* (Lewsen, 1991) and the volume *Helen Suzman* in the *They Fought for Freedom* series (Godsell, 2011). In addition, the researcher used newspaper articles and media interviews, the Parliamentary records (*Hansard*), published speeches, exhibition texts, archived material (contained in the collection *The Helen Suzman Papers* housed at Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand), as well as correspondence with one of Helen Suzman's daughters, Dr Frances Jowell, as sources of information. For the purposes of this psychobiography, the life of Helen Suzman is presented over eight historical periods. These periods were identified based on the presence of salient aspects, events and influences of a domestic or global nature. The historical periods and their relevant biographical data are explored in the ensuing eight subsections.

### 2.2.1 Childhood (1917 – 1933)

Nobody in the family ever spoke to me about my mother. I think it was too painful a subject for my father, and my aunt was too reserved to broach it. I first saw a photograph of my mother when I was fifty-five years old. (Suzman, 1993, p. 7)

Helen Gavronsky was born on, as she noted in her memoirs, the day of the Russian Revolution: November 7, 1917, (Suzman, 1993). She was born in Germiston, a mining town southeast of Johannesburg to Samuel Gavronsky, a Jewish Lithuanian immigrant and Frieda Gavronsky (née David), who had immigrated from eastern Europe to South Africa when she was 18 years old (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen was their second child; her sister, Gertrude, was four years old at the time of Helen's birth (Rotberg, 2011; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

About 40 000 Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe had sought a better life in South Africa between 1880 and 1914 (Mendelsohn & Shain, 2008; Pimstone, 2005). Helen's father and his other brothers left their Lithuanian *shtetl*, Klykoliai, "for the usual reasons: to avoid the draft of twenty-five years' service in the Tsar's army, to escape the pogroms<sup>3</sup> and to seek a better life than the one with restricted opportunities which Russia offered to Jews" (Suzman, 1993, p. 6). There were eight Gavronsky brothers, all of whom would eventually leave Russia. Samuel took on the difficult journey by cart and boat to London when he was 16 years old, from there travelling by sea to join his older brother, Oscar, in South Africa (Godsell, 2011). When Samuel arrived in South Africa in 1904, he was poor and had no knowledge of English or Dutch, which were then the main languages spoken by White South Africans (Suzman, 1993). After saving enough money in Cape Town performing menial labour, Samuel left for Johannesburg where Oscar had been waiting for him (Godsell, 2011). They settled down in the Witwatersrand, where many immigrants were working after the discovery of gold there in 1886 (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

The brothers established their own businesses in cattle trading and later as wholesale meat sellers, acquired a soap factory and also invested in property (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976). The Gavronsky brothers married two sisters also from a family of immigrants: Samuel married Frieda, described by the Gavronsky family as "the beautiful, gentle Frieda" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 16) and Oscar married Hansa, who

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<sup>3</sup> Unilateral, nongovernmental forms of violence (Bergman, 2005) against Jewish minorities in the Russian Empire during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

was seen as “the possessor of a temperament as cold as the northern winters” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 16). Samuel and Frieda settled in Germiston outside of Johannesburg after their wedding (Godsell, 2011). Frieda died, at age 28, two weeks after Helen’s birth, likely as a result of ineffective postnatal care and the Spanish influenza (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

After Frieda’s death, Samuel and their two daughters moved in with Oscar and Hansa, who were childless (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Hansa was later described by Helen as an introverted woman who was “probably deeply upset at her childlessness in a household containing other people's children” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). Helen’s sister, Gertrude, later recalled that the moment they took up residence with her aunt Hansa, “...all warmth went out of *her* life” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 16). Helen’s experience, however, might have been different to that of her sister, as “the two-week old Helen brought out Hansa’s repressed maternal instincts. For the next 10 years she lavished all the affection of which she was capable on her younger niece, becoming emotionally involved with her to an almost obsessive degree” (p. 16). In 1921, the entire family moved to Berea, Johannesburg. By then, two teenage children had also joined the household, following the death of another of Hansa's sisters (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Helen, then aged four, became a pupil at the nearby St George’s School (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

Hansa’s emotional involvement with Helen had created the unfortunate situation in which Helen was viewed by her sister and cousins as ‘Auntie’s pet’. As a result, she was always excluded from their “games and secrets” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17) during the afternoons when school was over. Hansa, however, also frequently withdrew from the household and left the young Helen alone, as she would retire each afternoon “with a bandage soaked in vinegar over her forehead to relieve her headaches, apparently brought on by her domestic responsibilities” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). Being left alone in this manner seemed to make little impression on young Helen, whose “burgeoning self-reliance... was also attributable in some part to her father, who adored her” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). Helen later noted in her memoirs: “There was, obviously, an absence of maternal affection. Perhaps that engendered in me the strong spirit of independence which persists to this day” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8).

Helen later remembered another absence during her time in the Berea house: books. She referred to this absence as “my abiding memory from that period of my childhood” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). As soon as she was functionally literate, Helen longed to read, but despite desperately rummaging around in search of reading material, she could only find

newspapers and the *Zionist Record* (Suzman, 1993). Young Helen's curiosity had contributed to the strong bond between her and her father (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976), who adored Helen "not only because she was pretty – she had inherited her mother's face – but because her quick and lively mind matched his own" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). Strangwayes-Booth (1976) described Helen's family unit as "a typically Jewish one" (p. 17) - close-knit, secure, and self-enclosed, scarcely affected by the sociopolitical climate of the times.

In 1927, when Helen was nine years old, however, a major change took place in the Gavronsky family: Samuel remarried (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Hansa resented their departure and, with her peculiar temperament, felt that her child – Helen – was being taken from her (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Samuel's second wife, Debbie, was an English-born divorcée who Helen described as an expansive hostess (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). The marriage brought about social changes for the Gavronsky girls, leading them out of a background Helen later felt their father had outgrown:

...She and Sam lived a full social life. He enjoyed his poker and bridge (three no trumps was his favourite bid, partner notwithstanding). They were a gregarious pair and loved entertaining. Debbie's enthusiasm for beautiful possessions introduced a new dimension into my life. We moved into a sprawling old stone house in the suburb of Parktown, built by the famous English architect Sir Herbert Baker, with a large garden shaded by huge oak trees, and a tennis court. I loved the house, though it was freezing in winter... (Suzman, 1993, p. 8)

Helen would spend the remainder of her childhood in the Parktown house (Suzman, 1993). Her parents' social involvement extended to hosting concerts in aid of charity. Helen received her first mention in the media when a reporter commented on her performance during such a concert, referring to her as a "clever and entertaining young artist" (Jowell, 2007, p. 13). Although growing up in Parktown ensured that Helen and her sister were sheltered from the concept of poverty, the atmosphere at home was often tense, as there was continuing conflict between Gertrude and their stepmother, with Samuel "himself no model of equanimity" (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). When Gertrude turned 18, she married and left home, joining their father's business enterprises (Suzman, 1993).

Helen received most of her schooling at the Parktown Convent, a private Catholic school willing to enrol Jewish children: "Like Jewish immigrants the world over, my father believed that a good education for his children was essential" (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). At the

convent, Helen had, to her great joy, access to a well-stocked library (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Academically, she was viewed by her teachers as a well above average learner, who also excelled at extramural activities such as swimming and diving (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). One of Helen's fellow learners, Sister Maria Bindon, remembered the young Suzman:

...highly attractive, with blue blue eyes and wildly curling hair, she exercised a charismatic effect on all of us. She had an instinctive ability to command respect, not only because she was so good-looking and intelligent but because she had the gift of appearing to be interested in the least of us. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 23)

In her memoirs (Suzman, 1993), Helen reflected on the significant contribution of her school experiences to her later career. She attributed her good memory to the "teaching by rote" (Suzman, 1993, p. 9) method used by the nuns and her determination to the high expectations placed on the pupils by Sister Columba: "We also learned to be bad losers, because unless we won at games, we would be severely chastised by Sister Columba. And that probably was very good training for me in politics" (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). Sister Columba seemed to have been an influential figure in Helen's life. Helen commented later that it was she who had instilled certain values in her, such as being punctual and conscientious: "To this day, when I shirk doing something I know I ought to do, the ghost of Sister Columba, the head nun, whispers in my ear, "do it, child," and I do" (p. 9). Years later, Judge O'Regan said during the 2011 Helen Suzman Memorial Lecture: "I imagine that Sr Columba was perhaps the first and last person that Helen ever obeyed automatically" (O'Regan, 2011, p. 2).

Helen later expressed doubts, however, as to whether the convent, where she moved in exclusively Anglo-Jewish circles (Godsell, 2011), had had any influence regarding her later interests in human rights or race relations (Suzman, 1993). Although they were taught to be well-mannered and polite to everybody, irrespective of race, she had no contact whatsoever with Black people apart from the domestic staff at home and at the convent (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). "There were no Black children at Parktown Convent, and certainly there was no socializing across the color line" (Suzman, 1993, p. 10), Helen later recalled. She wrote (Suzman, 1993, pp. 9-10):

...I had the typical South African upbringing of a White child in the city... (It was only years later that I was struck by the incongruity of the practice of my writing 'specials' night after night authorizing our domestic adult male employee to be away from our house after the 9 p.m. curfew. The permit would read: 'Please pass bearer Jim to town and suburbs to return at 11 p.m.,'

and it would be signed by me – aged twelve!).

### 2.2.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)

“My time at university was carefree and wholly enjoyable” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9).

Helen finished school at age 16, with a second class matriculation pass. As the first member of her family to go to university (Godsell, 2011), Helen enrolled as a Bachelors of Commerce student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Suzman, 1993). Her choice of a commercial degree course was possibly influenced by her good matric results in book-keeping (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Young Helen’s plan was to study law on a postgraduate level (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen recalled this time at University in her memoirs as follows:

I was a keen participant in innumerable faculty dances, which may have been one of the contributory factors to my failure in the exams at the end of the third year. I also went on two student tours overseas. Each jaunt cost my father only £100, which paid for the round trip between Cape Town and Southampton on Union Castle liners and for accommodations in London, Paris, Zermatt, Rome and Venice – bliss for a young South African who had never before left her native shores. (Suzman, 1993, p. 9)

According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), Helen did quite well during her first year of study, “but subsequently seems to have undergone a form of collapse” (p. 24). Her interest in her subjects waned and Helen spent more time socialising than studying (Godsell, 2011). Helen’s choice of a commercial degree course was brought into question as she did not uphold her good academic performance after her first year (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen later felt her matriculation at age 16 had been to her disadvantage. Firstly, because she thought that a later matriculation would probably have ensured her a first class pass. Secondly, her university career might have taken a different course, and possibly could have led her to the postgraduate law degree she had intended to obtain (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

Helen had wanted to continue her studies overseas and wrote to her father from London at the end of 1935, pleading with him to let her enrol at the London School of Economics (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She later wrote (Suzman, 1993, p. 9): “I longed to remain in London after the second tour and finish my degree there”. Helen returned home to continue with her studies at Wits without much enthusiasm (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

During this year, Helen had met Moses Myer Suzman (Mosie) at a riding school (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Mosie's father, Lewis Suzman, had emigrated to South Africa from Russia in 1889 and became a highly successful tobacco wholesaler (Gibson, 1994; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Lewis and his wife, Rebecca, had eight children, of whom Mosie was the second youngest son. The Suzmans became a well-known and respected Jewish family with accomplishments in various fields such as law, commerce, the arts and academia (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). By the time Helen met the 33-year-old Mosie, he was already "beginning to be singled out as a brilliant specialist physician" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 24).

In her memoirs, Helen recalled her reaction to her father's refusal for her to study overseas. She wrote: "So back I came to Wits, dropped out before I graduated, and got married" (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). Helen would later return to the University to complete her Bachelor of Commerce degree, motivated by both global and personal events (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). These are discussed in the following section.

### **2.2.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)**

"I led the life of a privileged young White South African housewife during that period – the only time I ever reverted to type" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12).

On 12 August 1937, the 19-year-old Helen married 33-year-old Mosie Suzman (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011). After their return from a European honeymoon, they first lived in a large Parktown house with two of Mosie's seven siblings and two of his nephews. Helen reflects on this time in their lives: "Mosie and I had a wonderful time, both being fond of dancing and horse-riding. Once I joked that I had married Mosie because he had a horse I coveted. A surprising number of people took this remark seriously" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). The Suzmans soon moved into a newly built house in Northcliff, a wedding gift from Helen's father (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). For two years, mostly sheltered from the rise of extremist forces in Europe, their life consisted of dinner parties, horse-riding and games of golf and tennis (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

South African Jews had during this time, become aware that many Afrikaner Nationalists were sympathetic to the cause of the Third Reich and that anti-Semitic violence in Europe was being ignored by the Nationalist media (Mendelsohn & Shain, 2008). When

World War II broke out in 1939, Helen was eager to join the war effort (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). However, she had given birth to her first child, Frances, a few weeks after the start of the war and was, therefore, excluded from military service. She recalls approaching her economic history lecturer, Professor Pollak, who was then in charge of the SA Women's Auxiliary Force. "I rushed off to her and said, 'I want to join up.' She asked, 'Haven't you just had a baby?' And I said, 'Yes, I have.' She said, 'Well, go home and look after it.'" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). An enraged but eager Helen then decided to work at the Governor-General's War Fund, where she soon found the clerical work monotonous (Strangwayes-Booth, 1973). She later wrote: "I was most upset about being excluded from war service and decided that if I couldn't get into the army, I was at least going to complete my degree" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). She returned to Wits University in 1941, and completed all her unfinished subjects for her Bachelor of Commerce degree in one year, receiving first class passes in both of her major subjects, economics and economic history (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). One of her professors remarked on an examination paper from November 1941, that she was the best student of the year (Jowell, 2007).

After graduation, she again attempted to join the army. This time, Helen was accepted at the War Supplies Board, where she continued to work as a statistician for the duration of the war (Rotberg, 2011; Suzman, 1993), a job she referred to as "boring but essential" (Suzman, 1993, p. 13). Mosie was also involved in the war effort, as he had joined the South African Medical Corps. When their second child, Patricia, was born on January 1, 1943, he was stationed in Egypt, as second-in-command of the medical section of the 106<sup>th</sup> South African General Hospital at El Qassâsîn (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). The Suzmans were in the company of roughly 10,000 other Jewish South Africans (more than 10% of the entire South African Jewish population) who heeded the call to arms and served in the Union Defence Force and other Allied forces (Mendelsohn & Shain, 2008).

World War II came to an end in 1945, and Mosie returned to private practice<sup>4</sup> (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen had, on her own accord, sold the house in Northcliff whilst Mosie was stationed in Egypt, in what daughter Frances later referred to as a demonstration of her mother's decisive independence (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). Immediately after the war, the Suzmans built a

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<sup>4</sup> He would later become one of South Africa's most renowned diagnosticians, and his eminence in the medical profession would become comparable to Helen's later prominence in politics (Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

house on an agricultural holding north of Johannesburg in order to be closer to the children's schools, the hospitals Mosie practiced at and the neighbourhoods in which their friends lived (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Suzman, 1993). They named the house Blue Haze, inspired by the morning mist in the valley their property overlooked. They would continue to live in Blue Haze for most of their lives, which, by the time of Helen's retirement, had lost its view of the valley and become part of the suburban spread of Johannesburg (Suzman, 1993). After Helen's death, friend and parliamentary colleague, Colin Eglin, highlighted her love of her home and its gardens, recalling how it served as "the focal point of her domestic, social and a large part of her political life" (Eglin, 2010, p. 19).

After the War, Professor Frankel had offered Helen a tutorship position in economic history at the University of the Witwatersrand. Helen recalled walking past him one day when he grabbed her by the arm and said "You'll do!" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 34). She accepted, and was later appointed as lecturer, a position she held until 1952 (Godsell, 2011). Helen later reflected on her experiences in teaching economic history as "enormously useful to me when I became an MP, for they provided a solid background on which to base my speeches, and developed my skills in researching source material" (Suzman, 1993, p. 14).

#### **2.2.4 Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)**

"Helen was aware of racial oppression, but the insulated environment in which she had grown up makes it probable that her awareness was of a sub-conscious nature, now brought to the surface by the rise of Nazism in Germany" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, pp. 32-33).

During the eight years lecturing in economics at the university, Helen gradually became more interested in politics. Although initially interested in international politics, she became increasingly concerned about local political issues, especially relating to South Africa's racially discriminatory laws. During this post-war era, Black students were present on the Wits campus for the first time. The majority of the Wits students were ex-servicemen, and many now became personally conscious of the country's segregation policies and the effect this had on the upward mobility of Black South Africans (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen became one of the first of the university's lecturers to raise these issues during her lectures (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976):

Students who flocked to her lectures because she was young, attractive and had a gift of mimicry and a biting wit which could keep a class roaring with

laughter, soon discovered that underneath these exterior qualities lay a solid core of realistic thinking. Her lectures on the irrationality of South Africa's economic structure and her arguments for social and economic change, so in advance of general White South African thought, soon brought her to the attention of the executive of the South African Institute of Race Relations. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 36)

Helen was subsequently appointed as a member of the Executive Council of the South African Institute of Race Relations<sup>5</sup> (SAIRR). During her work for the Institute, she and one of her university colleagues, Ellison Kahn, was assigned the task of preparing evidence for the Fagan Commission<sup>6</sup> (Suzman, 1993). Helen spent five months conducting thorough research and preparing her evidence for the commission, and was appalled by her discoveries:

For the first time in her life she became fully aware of the real disabilities under which Africans suffered in a determinedly White-dominated society, of their low wages, their lack of mobility and, above all, of the misery and disruption that the migratory system brought to their family life. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 38)

During this era, government policy attempted to restrict African domicile to the reserves, but economic forces motivated Black workers to take up permanent residence in urban areas. By 1946, there were more Africans than Whites in South African towns (Thompson, 2006). Helen submitted her evidence, voiced in uncompromising terms, to the Commission, calling for the migratory labour system to be phased out. She also proposed that wages be increased and negotiating machinery be set up to enable African workers to voice their grievances. She recommended the removal of legislative and customary restrictions on training and education, and urged Government to recognise the permanent presence of Blacks in urban areas (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Although the SAIRR advocated the repeal of the pass laws, this was not recommended by the Fagan Commission, who only concluded that the permanent presence of Blacks in urban areas should be acknowledged and regulated by law. Helen, "profoundly dissatisfied with the Fagan Commission's timorous proposals" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 39), decided to become more politically active. She later recalled how her encounter with the plight of Black South Africans through her work for the SAIRR had influenced this decision:

I learned a great deal from others who had been working in the field for several years. But before and during World War II, I was much more concerned about the defeat of Nazism than about the disabilities of Black

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<sup>5</sup> The South African Institute of Race Relations was founded with the aim of collecting and publishing information pertaining to the effects of racial segregation and discrimination (Thompson, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> A commission appointed to investigate the situation regarding urban Black labour (Barber, 1999).

South Africans. Thus I was a late starter in the field of race relations, but once I got going, I became utterly preoccupied with it. (Suzman, 1993, p. 15)

Helen joined South Africa's ruling party, the United Party (UP), which was then under the leadership of General Smuts. She then, "in a vain attempt to interest the students" (Suzman, 1993, p. 20), formed the Milner Park branch. Helen, always "jumping up and down making suggestions" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 48), now also became known as a speaker at the monthly meetings of the UP Witwatersrand Women's Council, where she was later named honorary Information Officer (Suzman, 1993). The UP's 1948 electoral defeat<sup>7</sup> to the National Party left Helen feeling "as if the world had come to an end" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 45). She later recalled:

On the night of the election I was attending a play in the Great Hall at Wits when the news broke: Smuts had lost his seat. The hall emptied instantly and we streamed downtown to watch the election barometer that had been erected there. It soon became evident that Smut's United Party government was defeated and that the National Party was in. Utter gloom pervaded our group. I thought despairingly, 'We will never get the Nats out.' That prediction held good for more than forty years. (Suzman, 1993, p. 17)

Helen decided that the Milner Park Branch of the UP was a waste of her time, as it had too high a membership turnover due to its large student population (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She "bullied, nagged and cajoled" (Suzman, 1993, p. 47) her friends until they helped her establish the Hyde Park Mixed Branch in Johannesburg North, with Edward Joseph as chairman and herself as secretary. Helen stated that, due to the National Party's opposition to South Africa's involvement in the war and their 'anti-British' support for Germany, "...none could doubt the support for Nazism among Afrikaners throughout that period..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 17). She felt "extremely uneasy at the prospect of such a government taking power" (p. 18). For the first time, Helen considered the possibility of emigration. In her memoirs, she cited their reasons for staying:

(Mosie) was very attached to his family in South Africa and was well established in his profession. I had other reservations about leaving: I enjoyed my job at Wits, and we had two young children who were settled at school. Also, I had excellent domestic help, who attended to all the chores I hated. And I couldn't cook. I envisaged a chaotic household and a starving

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<sup>7</sup> WWII and the political defeat of General Smuts brought about significant changes in the South African political climate (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). The National Party (NP) had first emerged as the official parliamentary opposition during the 1943 elections. The NP had appealed to the racial attitudes and material interests of Afrikaner voters. It criticised the UP government for failing to arrest the influx of Africans to urban areas and attacked the UP's link with Britain and South Africa's subsequent involvement in the two world wars, winning 70 seats compared to the UP's 65 (Thompson, 2006).

family. The natural beauty of the country was another compelling reason for staying in South Africa – its wonderful climate, the opportunities for playing golf and tennis, the magnificent beaches and its incomparable game parks. In short, the sunny comforts of South Africa proved too good to leave. And within a short time after the election, politics had ensnared me; I was firmly committed to remain, despite all my misgivings and some occasional second thoughts over the years. (Suzman, 1993, p. 18)

In the meantime, Helen had become increasingly involved in political activities such as fund-raising, canvassing, and attending the UP meetings and congresses (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She had, however, harboured no intention of becoming a public representative on any level (Suzman, 1993). To her great surprise, she was approached by the chairman of a Houghton Branch during the preparations for the 1953 elections, with the request that she stand for Parliament in Houghton. Thinking of her family responsibilities and how much she enjoyed her work as a lecturer, she immediately declined. Mosie, however, persuaded her: “They’re not crazy. You’re crazy. Of course you should stand for parliament. It’s the natural outcome of the work you’ve been doing all these years” (Suzman, 1993, p. 21). Helen admitted that the reason for her finally agreeing, was that she thought her chances of displacing the current MP were slim. In an interview in 1974, she recalled that she ran for Parliament mostly because her husband thought it was a good idea. The reporter noted: “...she did not expect to win, and – if the low keyed tone of her first campaign literature was any clue – perhaps she didn’t even care” (Rensberger, 1974, p. 1). However, she won the party’s nomination, ran unopposed in the elections and consequently, on March 14, 1953, was named MP for Houghton (Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Her father, who was beaming with pride, joked that now that she has won, she could resign (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), Helen said to her friend Ellen Hellmann after she won the party nomination: “My God. I’ve got a safe seat in my hot little hands and I don’t really want it” (p. 62). She also indicated her doubts to another friend some time later:

I’m not at all sure I’ve done the right thing. Mosie said, ‘Give it a go’, and I did and the darned thing came off! Now I’ve got to do something to justify the confidence people have placed in me: the burning question is, can I? Even if I have the principles and try to uphold them, there is the all-powerful caucus to keep the new girl quiet. Anyway I shall try. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 62)

Far from enthusiastic about going to Parliament, Helen did explore the possibility of handing over her Houghton seat to Albert Robinson, another UP candidate, who was most

likely to obtain her seat in the event of her resignation and whom Helen had considered a more valuable party member than herself. Robinson, however, kindly but adamantly declined her offer and, in July of 1953, Helen went to Cape Town to attend her first session of Parliament, “shaking in my boots” (Suzman, 1993, p. 23). Mosie accompanied her to the official Opening of Parliament. Helen, one of only four female MPs at the time, remembered looking at Mosie who was watching the proceedings from the Wives’ Gallery, and described him as “a lonely little baldhead among all those nodding plumes” (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 69). Mosie’s support would continue throughout Helen’s long career (Suzman, 1993, 2006). Decades later, in a speech at the opening of the exhibition *Helen Suzman: Fighter for Human Rights*, Helen thanked her “late husband Mosie and the girls, who took the brunt of it and without whose support and encouragement I could never have embarked on a political career” (Suzman, 2006, p. 17).

After Mosie’s return to Johannesburg, Helen became increasingly lonely and found herself uprooted and in the midst of a Cape winter (Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976). With very little guidance from the UP’s Chief Whip, Jack Higgerty, Helen and the other new back-benchers, with whom she was “only on nodding terms” (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 70), were unsure of their duties, responsibilities and rights. During the short post-election session of Parliament, Helen and the other newcomers did receive significant support and encouragement from a limited number of the older UP members, such as Harry Oppenheimer and Harry Lawrence (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). However, most of the UP MPs weren’t friendly towards Helen because of her liberal views. She had correctly assumed that the viewpoints of many of her parliamentary colleagues would be in direct conflict with her own, and during her first speeches, was careful to follow official party policy. She even emphasised the UP’s policy of racial interdependence in lieu of total racial assimilation during an appearance at an election meeting (Strangways-Booth, 1976).

Helen settled in the Clifton Hotel and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July, wrote home to Mosie, stating how rewarding she found the ocean view to be. She described how she enjoyed a quiet drink in the late afternoon, watching the sea at sunset whenever she had time to do so. Absorbed by the growing discord in the UP, Helen started to affiliate with like-minded MPs. She wrote:

I wanted to put your mind at rest about my apparent unhappiness. I have settled down now and feel that I am really fulfilling a very necessary function in the caucus – things are very tricky at the moment and I find that someone has to help organize opposition to the section that appears bent on ‘negotiations’ at the time when the UP was really coming out well on the

constitutional crisis, the idiots!! ...I am thoroughly unpopular... but I couldn't care less because I know I am on solid ground and that there is a very good element in the caucus that thinks the way I do. (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 70)

Helen also gave Mosie an indication of her busy new schedule in the letter, stating that she now had very little time to herself. She elaborated on her new commitments:

I have been put on the Select Committee to study the Women's Disabilities Bill for opening my big mouth... the Public Accounts Committee three mornings a week, caucus on another, Management (i.e. who will speak on what each day) every day at 12 and Party group meetings (Native Affairs, Labour and Commerce) on other mornings. Have to be in the House all afternoon (new girl must sit and learn) and from next week we have Night Sittings three times per week. So not much time to answer mail, prepare speeches, study Bills, let alone get into mischief. (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 71)

Helen, initially, shared an office with two other women, Bertha Solomon, a champion of women's rights, and Sannie van Niekerk, a confirmed right-winger. The two women disliked each other, and because their close proximity constantly generated tension, Helen often acted as peacemaker (Strangways-Booth, 1976). Helen's relationship with Bertha oscillated between being treated as her protégée, to being renounced by her, depending on if Helen had been 'difficult' in caucus. Owing to their ideological differences, Helen had a "distinctly cool" relationship with Sannie (Suzman, 1993, p. 28). A few years later, she and Sannie (whom she by then would refer to as "the old dragon") had a heated row over the introduction of the 1957 State-Aided Institutions Bill which would allow authorities to limit admissions for different racial groups to different times or days. Helen later recalled:

During our argument, Sannie drew herself up to her full height, which wasn't very high, and she flung out her bosom, which was very large, and said, 'Well, I don't know about Mrs. Suzman, but when I go to a museum, I don't like it if some strange Black man rubs himself up against me.' I asked quietly, 'Don't you mind if some strange White man rubs himself up against you?' There was a lot of laughter, and Sannie didn't talk to me for the rest of that session. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 39-40)

Helen gave her maiden speech in Parliament on the subject of gender discrimination, as she spoke on the 1953 Matrimonial Affairs Bill, which was aimed at alleviating the position of women married in community of property. Although Helen did participate in many debates regarding women's rights, she would not make gender discrimination a major priority during her career (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She reflected on this later in her

memoirs:

My overriding concern as a South African was with race discrimination. Nevertheless, because I was a woman engaged in what was pre-eminently a male occupation in chauvinistic South Africa, inevitably there were two questions I was often asked: How did you manage to combine motherhood and your political career? Was being a woman a disadvantage in Parliament? (Suzman, 1993, p. 25)

In response to the first question, Helen wrote in her memoirs that she "...did not have the feelings of guilt that I am told often plague working mothers" (Suzman, 1993, p.26), despite her initial reluctance to run for Parliament because of her children, who were then 10 and 13 years of age. Helen, who had placed her home in the care of 'Haakie', her Dutch housekeeper, would annually spend almost six months in Cape Town (Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen acknowledged the support she received from her stepmother: "The concern of my late stepmother Debbie, about the wellbeing of my young daughters was a source of great reassurance to me..." (Suzman, 2006, p. 17). Debbie and Helen's father were "fiercely affectionate" towards the grandchildren, and there was a sense of family closeness (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). Helen recalled how she had, especially during the early years in Parliament, dealt with being so far away from home:

I tried to fly home at least every second weekend to be with the family and to deal with whatever domestic crises may have cropped up. The girls flatly refused to go to boarding school, and as I had adequate domestic staff to look after the household, it somehow worked. Mosie was a resident doctor, so to speak, and my father and stepmother were attentive and loving grandparents. The children were fully occupied with school, sport and their friends. (Suzman, 1993, p. 26)

She addressed the second question, whether she experienced being a woman in Parliament as a disadvantage, as follows:

Not at all. I concentrated on making well-prepared and factually accurate speeches, and gradually won the respect of the House, albeit on occasion with unsolicited effects. Once, after a speech on economics, I was accosted by an MP who had said to me in the lobby, 'Helen, you've got a man's brain!' His was not a brain I admired. (Suzman, 1993, p. 27)

During the next few years as a member of the UP, Helen had to endure escalating intra-party conflict, mostly over the UP's stance regarding the proposal of racist laws by the ruling party. Strangways-Booth (1976) reflected on this era in the UP's history, commenting that three clearly discernable groups emerged within the Party: a conservative

wing, a moderate group backed by English-speaking financiers and industrialists such as Harry Oppenheimer, and a small but vocal liberal wing made up of mostly new backbenchers: “Each group was battling to influence Strauss, who by now had shown himself to be more of an ineffectual chairman than a party leader” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 73). Helen, Jan Steytler, John Cope, Ray Swart, Zach de Beer and Colin Eglin all belonged to this liberal wing and shared the same philosophy and ideals (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993), but Helen preferred to refer to them as the “progressive group” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). The Afrikaans press attacked them for trying to promote “leftist”<sup>8</sup> views. Helen recalls that there was a “constant battle within the United Party caucus. We wanted to oppose every law which was racially discriminatory, but were told that while the United Party’s policy was economic integration, it supported political and social segregation” (Suzman, 1993, p. 35). Although there were instances where the United Party had opposed discriminatory Bills, such as the Bantu Education Act<sup>9</sup>, intra-party conflict occurred frequently. Helen was at the centre of the conflict when the majority of the UP supported the Separate Amenities Bill<sup>10</sup> and she refused to vote in its favour, walking out of the House (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She referred to this as her “first act of defiance” (Suzman, 1993, p. 38).

I was summoned by the Chief Whip, the same Master Higgerty, who told me that I would be putting my political career on the line if I continued to defy caucus decisions. In somewhat unladylike language I told him what he could do with my political career, for nothing in the world would make me vote for a bill of that kind. (Suzman, 1993, p. 38)

Helen had decided, in the interest of accountability, to deliver a Report Back speech at the end of every Parliamentary session to her Houghton constituents, in addition to the monthly newsletters she sent to constituency branch committee members (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). In her first Report Back, she described her experiences of the nature of her work as an MP. Strangwayes-Booth (1976) reports Helen saying to her constituents: “I was surprised at the completely absorbing nature of the work. There is also a tendency which I am determined to guard against – of becoming cloistered in the atmosphere of the House, of forgetting the outside world” (p. 80). Mosie continued to attend all of Helen’s annual Report Back meetings (Suzman, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> In South Africa the term was used unrelated to economic policy, but to denote those against racial discrimination (Suzman, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> The Bantu Education Act (1953) gave central government control over African education (Thompson, 2006). Verwoerd defended the act by stating it prohibits Black children from receiving the type of education which will develop in them unrealistic expectations about their future (Barber, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> The Separate Amenities Act (1953) divided the use of public facilities such as recreational areas and means of transport (Barber, 1999).

During her first few years as a backbencher, Helen only occasionally had the opportunity to address the House, but saw herself as “very conscientious, very interested, watching and listening and learning all the time” (Suzman, 1993, p. 24). She found a role model in Margaret Ballinger, one of the two Liberal Party MPs and an elected Native Representative. Helen later described her as follows:

She was a brilliant woman who made just the kind of speeches I felt ought to be made in Parliament. She too had been a lecturer in history at the University of Witwatersrand. But she was not a friendly person, rather self-centred and cold to all except admired and admiring friends. She gave little praise to the liberal wing of the United Party, which I felt she should have encouraged, because we shared her philosophy; in fact, she rarely gave us any credit for anything. She was an excellent MP, of that there was no question. She was a role model for me. Every speech she made was first-class – crisp, well prepared, full of relevant facts. (Suzman, 1993, p. 28)

The “great constitutional crisis of the 1950’s” (Suzman, 1993, p. 31), namely the proposed removing of the Coloured<sup>11</sup> people from the Common Voters’ Roll in the Cape Province, served as a catalyst for the UP’s internal crisis (Suzman, 1993, p. 33). Although the UP reiterated its pre-election stance and subsequently rejected the principle of the Bill, a small group of UP MPs argued that the Coloured vote was unimportant to the UP and that a compromise agreement was needed for the sake of national unity (Strangways-Booth, 1976). Following a heated row, three of the conservative MPs were expelled from the caucus, and another two resigned to join them. Their departure delighted the liberal wing (Strangways-Booth, 1976). The dissidents, however, maintained their status as MPs despite calls from the UP for their resignations. Helen referred to one of these men, Arthur Barlow, in her memoirs as a “thoroughly objectionable man... an evil old liar” (Suzman, 1993, p. 33). He frequently aimed anti-Semitic sideswipes at her after his expulsion, such as “It’s the lady from Lithuania again,” (p. 35) whenever she interjected his speech. She later wrote:

Thereafter he always erased these words from the Hansard (i.e., parliamentary) records which MPs may see and correct for grammatical errors or repetition, before publication. They may not, however, make any material alterations. I observed this stratagem of Barlow’s a few times, then accosted him in the lobby and informed him that if he continued in that fashion, I would see that the press highlighted his comment, which would offend his Jewish constituents, and I would also report him to the Speaker for altering the Hansard record. He never did so again. I got back at this nasty old man when he made a speech complaining about the high murder rate in his constituency. I spoke immediately after him and told the House that if he dared put his head into his constituency, the murder rate would go up by one,

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<sup>11</sup> A South African term for people of mixed race.

a remark received with hearty ‘hear, hears’ from many members. (Suzman, 1993, p. 34)

By the end of the 1953 session, the liberal wing was confident that Strauss would reimburse their support through the voter roll crisis by transforming the UP’s political philosophy (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). The liberals were also adamant to never again allow conservative deserters to retain their seats as MPs, and, therefore, included a pledge on all the Transvaal candidate nomination forms, stipulating that, should the candidate cease to be a member of the UP, he or she will resign their seat as MP. However, as described by Strangwayes-Booth (1976): “Flushed with their victory, they had no idea how ironically this pledge was to rebound on them later” (p. 80).

Helen returned for her second session of Parliament in 1954, during the last months of Malan’s reign as Prime Minister, whom she described as “a dour old dominee (clergyman) who commanded more respect than affection within his own party. He was not the sort of man on whom one could lavish affection” (Suzman, 1993, p. 29). She later recalled how she had been “comparing Malan to Humpty-Dumpty, whom in fact he physically resembled, as I listened to him...” (Suzman, 1993, p. 29). During the 1954 sitting, Verwoerd, then the Minister of Native Affairs, proposed new apartheid bills including the Natives Resettlement Bill<sup>12</sup>, based on his familiar *swart gevaar*<sup>13</sup> defence. Helen pointed out the injustice and suffering to which Africans will be subjected as a result of these measures. This triggered another wave of verbal assaults from more conservative MPs, with Arthur Barlow referring to her as the ‘Salvation Army lassie’ and Frank Waring accusing her of merely salving her liberal conscience with her impassioned speeches. He went on to blame the UP for falling into the hands of young people with peculiar liberal ideas (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). However, Helen had

...firmly fixed her deep concern with justice in the minds of the members opposite and she had learnt to shrug off the anti-Semitic *sotto voce* wisecracks which emanated from the ‘kitchen’ of the House (the area of the cross-benches acoustically and visually ‘dead’ to the Speaker)... She was also learning that riposte and mimicry were far more effective weapons than the furious outbursts of temper which had marked her early political career. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 88)

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<sup>12</sup> The Natives Resettlement Act (No 19 of 1954) gave the government powers to forcibly remove Africans to separate townships (Christopher, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> “Black threat” - a term used to refer to the perceived security threat posed by the majority Black South Africans to the Apartheid government.

Helen had argued that economic integration between Black and White had to be established and that political apartheid cannot be supported and, therefore, political integration would need to follow. To Helen's delight, Strauss seemed to support these ideals, seemingly, laying the foundations for an alternative to apartheid (Strangways-Booth, 1976). Strauss's apparent belief in economic integration was welcomed by the liberals within the party. Helen displayed a sanguine attitude towards the future in her 1954 Report Back speech, stating that the UP had responsibly fulfilled its role as the official opposition during the session and that it had stood firm on principle. Strangways-Booth (1976) reflects on this positive attitude as a possible "...triumph of hope over experience. The United Party at its National Congress in Bloemfontein in November was due to 'unveil' its new Native Policy. Something more positive than past attitudes, Helen believed, was bound to manifest itself" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 90). Helen's hopes were crushed at the National Congress, when Strauss, whom Helen later pointed out to be "the type of political leader who chose to placate his enemies at the expense of his friends..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 39), proposed in his opening address a measure of "differentiation, separation and even considered discrimination" as a more realistic and enlightened approach (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 91).

There was continued conflict and argument within the UP caucus. The new backbenchers were most unhappy about Strauss's failure to clarify the UP's stance regarding the restoration of the Coloured people to the Common Voter's Roll (Suzman, 1993). Helen and other liberal party members had threatened Strauss with their resignations if the UP did not fulfil its previous pledge to the Coloured people. Strauss interpreted their stance as a revolt against his leadership and responded with "bland indifference and a flat refusal to discuss the matter" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, pp. 99-100). A party split was, however,

...narrowly averted by the intervention of the two Harrys, Oppenheimer and Lawrence, who persuaded us that we must remain as a pressure group within the United Party to advance liberal values. But one of the party's most brilliant debaters, a senior MP, Dr. Bernard Friedman, resigned from Parliament in 1955 on the issue, fought a by-election and lost his seat. (Suzman, 1993, p. 39)

Helen felt uneasy at her decision not to resign (Suzman, 1993). After learning of her decision, the Houghton Divisional Committee, who had prepared to resign alongside Helen, sent her an urgent telegram demanding an explanation. She immediately went to Johannesburg to address the angry and resentful members, employing Oppenheimer's argument in an attempt to preserve their support. The committee passed a vote of confidence

in her, but Helen continued to engage in distressed reflection. In a letter to Joyce Harris, she wrote:

I have just gone through the worst week of my life... I know too that whatever decision I may have taken would have led to regrets and questions and ruminations. It would have been far easier, however, to have gone out in a blaze of glory – the climate of disapproval for the UP could not have been better for such a gesture. But there were other considerations. My original decision to enter politics had one main objective, to bolster up the sagging remains of the major Opposition Party. It is still my task to try and do that. But there was also the consideration due to my friends, such as ‘Sakkies’ Fourie and Jan Steytler, who are far more important to the political future of SA than I in my favourable ‘liberal’ seat. Moreover, unlike Barn, I was not convinced that this is a sell-out. That there are people in the Party who don’t give a tuppenny damn about our pledges to the Coloureds or any other pledges, I am quite aware. But these were not the people who persuaded us not to smash the party – indeed they would have been happy to have seen us go. We were persuaded by people like Harry Oppenheimer, Gray Hughes and others whom I respect and who also are very concerned about the non-European problem... (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, pp. 102-103)

Helen risked popularity within the UP to salve her conscience by refusing to speak in support of the UP candidate against Friedman, Louis Steenkamp, in the by-election (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Instead, she joined Hansi Pollak and Ellen Hellmann on a three-week tour to the Central African Federation and the Belgian Congo. Although Helen returned with erroneously hopeful beliefs about the political future of the Congo and Rhodesia, she came back “...more determined than ever to press for liberal reform within the United Party” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 104).

Malan announced his retirement in October of 1954, and was succeeded as Prime Minister by J.G. Strijdom, whom Helen described as a “grim, forbidding man” (Suzman, 1993, p. 30). In 1955, the ‘Lion of the North’<sup>14</sup> “...cynically decided to pack the Senate with National Party nominees” (Strangwayes- Booth, 1976, p. 98) and to this aim, introduced the Senate Bill. Helen was concerned that South Africa was entering a position similar to that of Germany in the 1930s. She voiced her fear in this regard: “the destruction of our old Senate is of course not analogous to the burning down of the Reichstag, but it is certainly going to be packed to suffocation with Nationalist candidates...” (p. 98). Helen referred to the UP’s attempts to stop the Senate Bill in her 1956 Report Back to her Houghton constituents: “We are doing our best...to have the Senate Act declared invalid and despatch all those superfluous gentlemen back to the remote corners they came from” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976. p. 110).

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<sup>14</sup> Strijdom, the National Party’s Transvaal leader, was often referred to in this manner.

Helen remained unhappy in the UP and harboured doubts about whether she should stand again in the 1958 elections (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Although she was unopposed at the election, the UP continued to lose more seats. Helen felt that the liberal wing was blamed for this and that hostility against their group was “now reaching its peak” (Suzman, 1993, p. 40). In addition to defending themselves against renewed criticism from the more conservative party members, the liberal wing faced a new challenge in the form of a new national leader, Sir de Villiers Graaff. Helen had defiantly refused to rise when Graaff entered caucus meetings, an act for which she was reprimanded by the Chief Whip. Commenting on the extent to which the Central Executive displayed confidence in the new UP leader, Helen was reported to have scribbled on her Congress agenda: “He should have made us kneel down” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 123). Under Graaff’s leadership, the clash between the conservatives and the progressives was to, eventually, result in a party split (Eglin, 2007). Helen later reflected on her impressions of Graaff:

He proved a grave disappointment to us liberals. In no time at all, he had thrown in his lot with the conservative majority in caucus, and was expressing views which we felt were totally inappropriate to the requirements of the times. Now we had to combat this new and popular leader. (Suzman, 1993, p. 40)

In September of 1958, South Africa also had a new Prime Minister: Verwoerd. Under both Strijdom and Malan, the implementation of apartheid amounted to simple racial segregation through their policy of White *baasskap*<sup>15</sup> (Leach, 1986). Helen now feared that South Africa had, with Verwoerd’s election and the increased NP representation, “embarked on a course of extremism with a fanatic at the helm” (Suzman, 1993, p. 42). Verwoerd had been the editor of the *Die Transvaler*, a nationalist newspaper which supported Nazi Germany during WWII and continued to promote Afrikaner nationalism (Leach, 1986). Looking back at his election to the position of Prime Minister, Helen remarked that, considering the nature of the National Party, the “...man who is the most *kragdadig*<sup>16</sup> will win every time” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 129). She was, however, somewhat relieved that he had defeated the two other NP contenders, namely T.E. Donges and C.R. Swart:

Personally I would rather have Verwoerd, who admittedly is mad, but at least genuinely believes in his madness... And I would rather have Verwoerd because it is hard enough as it is to keep English-speaking people politically conscious, and with Donges as Prime Minister, they would have lulled themselves into a complete coma. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 130)

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<sup>15</sup> domination

<sup>16</sup> forceful

Helen later reflected on her experience of the man often referred to as the architect of apartheid. In her memoirs, she wrote:

I have to admit Verwoerd was the only man who has ever scared me stiff, and I suspect he had much the same effect on his own caucus and on the United Party... Here was a man who could stand up in Parliament and talk for more than two hours without a note, building up an argument so convincingly that one sat there nodding one's head like a zombie, until one realized that his entire argument was built on a false premise. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 65-66)

During the various debates of the 1959 session, Helen received an increasing number of negative remarks from Nationalist MPs in response to her speeches. In an "anecdote calculated to infuriate the Nationalist soul..." (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 141), Helen remarked how, during her time as a lecturer, the best essay she had ever read about the poor White problem was written by Eduardo Mondlane, an African student (Suzman, 1993). She stressed the importance of young White South Africans meeting their nonWhite peers on an academic level, and for them to realise that there were Black South Africans who were their intellectual superiors (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). In response, she was called a friend of the Soviet Union and a mouthpiece of the Black Sash<sup>17</sup>. One NP MP continued launching insults at Helen, commenting on her "tje-tje voice", whilst another echoed that they didn't want to hear her "screeching Jewish voice" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 144). According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), Helen "drew the most concentrated fire from the Government benches" (p. 143) not only for reasons such as her gender and cultural background, but "more probably because they recognized that she had made a decision to take an uncompromising stand against apartheid, unlike the majority of the United Party's members who, whatever their private views, were publicly still toeing the party line" (p. 143).

During the 1959 session, the UP unanimously opposed the passing of two contentious bills, namely the Extension of University Education Bill<sup>18</sup> and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Bill<sup>19</sup>. Verwoerd had proposed the concept of Bantustans<sup>20</sup>, aimed at furthering

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<sup>17</sup> A civil rights organization, founded to fight against the passage of the Separate Representation of Voters Bill, which was passed in 1956. The group's name was derived from the Black ribbons worn by its members (mostly white women at that stage), which symbolised what they regarded as the death of the constitution (Leach, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> The Extension of University Education Act (No 45 of 1959) made provision for the establishment of separate tertiary institutions along racial and ethnic lines (Christopher, 2001).

<sup>19</sup> The Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 made provision for the self-governance of eight different ethnic groups in preparation for full denationalization (De Waal, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Homelands, which represented the different ethnic tribes, proposed to eventually become the home for all the Blacks in South Africa (Leach, 1986).

what Helen referred to as his “mad dream of Grand Apartheid” (Suzman, 1993, p. 88), by withdrawing South African citizenship from Blacks ethnically connected to the homelands, thus ensuring a White majority in South Africa. During the long hours of the debate about this bill, the UP’s “display of solidarity did nothing to combat the inherent deep disagreement on many basic principles, including the differing reasons for opposing the bill” (Suzman, 1993, p. 44).

Helen, with the support of the other progressives, demanded that the UP should, in the interest of a multiracial community, advocate for the retention of the Natives’ Representatives as well as the extension of the Black franchise. At the final caucus meeting, Graaff reiterated the UP’s position of “White leadership with justice in an integrated society” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 139). The progressive group found this to be “depressingly indecisive and insufficiently committed” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 139). Colin Eglin remembered this period in his memoirs as follows: “Divisions deepened and tempers were frayed. In this tense atmosphere, caucus adjourned for the parliamentary recess, and the party started preparing for the national congress...” (Eglin, 2007, p. 67).

### **2.2.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 - 1962)**

“Graaff made no effort to dissuade me from leaving the party, though he tried hard with some of the other dissidents. He considered me a troublemaker, which I was...” (Suzman, 1993, p. 47).

Prior to the Bloemfontein congress, Helen emphasised to her Divisional Committee that any further departure from party principle during the Congress could result in her resignation from the UP (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Meanwhile, the conservatives within the UP appeared to have formulated a strategy for ousting the liberal wing. Their plan became public knowledge when it was picked up by the *Eastern Province Herald*. In an article published on 31 July 1959, Douglas Mitchell was named as the head of the anti-progressive movement (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). On 11 August, 1959, the Congress opened in Bloemfontein, and was attended by 800 party delegates (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, Suzman, 1993). On the first day, the contributions by progressive members were met by taunts and insults, which became increasingly offensive as the day progressed. Graaff seemed unable, or unwilling, to maintain order, and the debate degenerated into chaos (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Mitchell put his proposition forward that no further land should

be handed over to Blacks, arguing that the Native Reserves would eventually obtain independence and cease to be part of South Africa. The liberal group disagreed, proposing that the party should honour the grant of land that had been made under Smuts's leadership (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Late Wednesday night, the exhausted delegates adjourned and many of the progressives separately decided to resign if Mitchell's resolutions were passed (Eglin, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen's only reason for staying on for the next day's session was "...because she felt she had an obligation to her constituents to endure what seemed bound to be another prolonged experience of jibes and abuse from the rampant conservatives" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 153).

The majority of the following day was spent on routine work, until Mitchell read out to the assembly his proposed resolution regarding the allocation of more land under the Bantustan policy. Graaff opened the debate on this issue, stating that while he rejected the proposal, he will not regard it as a vote of no confidence in his leadership should it be passed (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The progressives questioned the morality of the proposition, but the motion was carried by an overwhelming majority when it was put to the vote. Almost without exception, the progressive members of the UP were faced with deciding their next step. Steytler had issued an invitation to meet that evening in the Maitland Hotel. Eglin and De Beer, who opted to cancel their flights and spend the night in Bloemfontein in order to discuss their strategy, informed other progressives about the meeting (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen, who had stormed out of the congress a few minutes before the rest of the party members, was unaware of these arrangements. She recalled the events that followed:

When the congress ended, I went to my car with Kathleen Mitchell...my great chum in politics... 'Well, Katie,' I said 'this is it. I'm going home and I'm resigning. I'm not staying in a party with this disgusting attitude, with this totally expedient attitude to Blacks.' 'I'm with you,' she replied... As we were about to drive off, I noticed in the rearview mirror that three of my colleagues and close friends, Zach de Beer, Colin Eglin and Ray Swart, were in earnest conversation on the steps of the City Hall. 'Hang on a minute,' I said to Katie. 'Something's happening.' We jumped out of the car and joined them. 'Come on chaps, what's going on?' I asked. One of them replied, 'We're going to resign from the United Party.' 'Oh, great,' I said, 'that's fine. We can all do it together.' (Suzman, 1993, p. 46)

Ten of the progressives met in Steytler's room in the Maitland Hotel that evening. Unanimous in their decision to leave the UP, the group debated their next move (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). After some impassioned argument, they agreed to draft a

statement of intent, which they planned to hand over to Graaff (Eglin, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen, whose mood was one of “depression and disillusionment” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 158), was one of the first to sign the letter. Eglin (2007) recalled that, because Helen was anxious to leave for Johannesburg, she signed at the bottom of the blank page on which they were to write their statement. News of the UP split soon spread through the country. During the drive back to Johannesburg, Helen repeatedly exclaimed to her companions, “Now I’ve done it! Now I’ve done it!” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 159).

Upon her return, Helen called a meeting of the Houghton committee in order to explain the reasons for her actions. After she conveyed what she believed to be a fundamental moral principle and tabled her reasons for opposing Mitchell’s resolution, 38 out of the 40 committee members drafted their resignations in solidarity. Convinced of her division’s support, Helen flew to Cape Town for a meeting with Graaff. However, she did not expect much, as she was aware of Graaff’s dislike for her (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 161): “Of all the dissident members, Helen headed the list of those whom the leader secretly hoped would leave the Party”.

Another important decision needed to be taken: whether or not the group should resign their parliamentary seats. The four Transvaal MPs, including Helen, had signed the 1953 pledges, and as a result Helen and John Cope felt strongly that they should resign and fight by-elections. During a meeting at Blue Haze on 23 August, the majority however voted against this proposal, to Helen’s distress. However, she acknowledged that they did in fact need time, until the elections scheduled for 1963, to draft their policy and develop the structures necessary for success in the elections (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She was aware that, should the group have voted in favour of resignation, only herself and Cope had any chance to retain their seats “because of the more liberal attitude in our two ‘silk stocking districts’” (Suzman, 1993, p. 48). Helen later recalled the outrage they had to endure from the remaining UP MPs:

With Steytler as our leader, we twelve Progressive Party MPs took our seats at the far end of the opposition ranks in Parliament, amid screams of rage from United Party MPs who kept shouting at us to resign and fight for our seats under our own banner. We ignored them, because to us the basic issue of unequivocal opposition to apartheid was more important than the fact that we had been elected as United Party representatives. We felt we had been sent to Parliament to fight the racist policy of the National Party, and that the United Party wasn’t doing the job properly. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 49-50)

The Progressive Party adopted a policy of opposition to race discrimination, declaring their belief that all South Africans should be provided with the opportunity to contribute to the country. Steytler emphasized this in his opening address at the Party's first Congress in November 1959, stating that they "...want to face the future not with fear, but with confidence that we can live together in harmony in a multi-racial country" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 171). The members of the Progressive Party seized every opportunity to gather support, addressing numerous house and public meetings. Helen, still adamant about the value of involving the country's youth in the political debate, dedicated a great deal of her attention to addressing students at universities (Suzman, 1993). She recalled the mood and events at one such a meeting at the University of the Witwatersrand where she addressed a lecture hall packed with interested students, a few of whom were Black:

At question time one of them asked, 'What would Mrs. Suzman say if I asked her if I could marry her daughter?' My younger daughter, Patty, then a medical student, was in the audience and she said loudly, 'Why don't you ask me – I *am* her daughter?' Much laughter and an end to that old South African bogey. (Suzman, 1993, p. 48)

The year 1960 would prove to be a watershed year for South Africa, as it would face events such as the Sharpeville massacre, the Langa protest march, the attempted assassination of the Prime Minister, as well as a referendum on the transformation of the Union of South Africa into a Republic (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). Helen had missed the opening of Parliament and the first six weeks of the 1960 session due to infectious hepatitis. She had therefore also missed the historic "Winds of Change" speech by the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan. She later recalled:

I was packing for Cape Town and kept falling into my suitcase. Patty, who was with me said, 'Ma, whatever is the matter with you?' I said, 'I feel as if I'm dying,' and she replied, 'You look as if you're dying – go to bed.' 'I can't – I have to catch a plane tomorrow.' Said the aspirant doctor, 'You won't be going anywhere tomorrow.' She was right. (Suzman, 1993, p. 49)

During this time, the African National Congress (ANC) reviewed its commitment to non-violent and passive resistance (Thompson, 2006). On the 21<sup>st</sup> of March, 1960, under the leadership of the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), thousands of Africans had assembled at police stations, including the Sharpeville<sup>21</sup> police station. During the course of the protest, police at Sharpeville opened fire, killing 67 people and wounding 186 - most of the injured had been shot in the back. The weeks that followed involved mounting disturbances, and a

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<sup>21</sup> A township near Johannesburg

state of emergency was called (Suzman, 1993; Thompson, 2006). On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, a 30 000 strong crowd of Africans marched in orderly procession from Langa<sup>22</sup> to a police station near Parliament in Cape Town. Helen watched from her parliamentary office:

I well remember looking out of the below-ground-level window of my small office and seeing the trembling booted feet of a soldier, part of the military detail sent to guard Parliament. The remarkable thing about that march was that it took place in total silence and was absolutely orderly. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 50-51)

Helen was intensely upset by the events that unfolded when the large procession reached their target. The leader of the march, Philip Kgosana, a young university student, was promised an interview with the Minister of Justice if he could persuade the crowd to return home. He addressed the crowd, and they agreed. However, when Kgosana reported for his meeting with the Minister, he was arrested in what Helen called “a deplorable act of treachery” (Suzman, 1993, p. 51).

The outlawing of the ANC and PAC on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1960, and the subsequent mobilisation of the army reserves, resulted in the swift arrest of 98 Whites, 90 Indians, 36 coloureds and 11 279 Africans (Thompson, 2006). This brought about the first of many of Helen’s investigations of prison conditions, during which she met with political detainees in person (Pimstone, 2005). Helen was adamant to collect firsthand information so that she could report her findings to Parliament. Despite the strict media censorship enforced by the emergency regulations during that era, newspapers retained the right to print all reports delivered in Parliament. Helen, therefore, knew that the press would be able to publish her findings (Suzman, 1993). She later recalled her first prison visit:

I readily accepted the offer made by Erasmus, Minister of Justice, that any MP who wanted to visit the detainees in jail could do so. I flew to Johannesburg, collected my friend Kathleen Mitchell and we drove to Pretoria to see the detainees at the Central Prison. I said to her, ‘Katie, if I don’t come out within an hour, start screaming.’ I’ve never forgotten that first entry into a jail. There’s that awful clang as the iron door closes behind you, and you’re left in this gray, walled corridor with its cement floor, with only a series of barred doors ahead of you. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 52-53)

The day after the banning of the ANC and the PAC, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April, David Pratt attempted to assassinate Verwoerd, by shooting him at point blank range in the face during an Agricultural Show in Johannesburg (Suzman, 1993). Verwoerd recovered quickly and soon returned to work on his campaign to obtain South Africa’s independence from Britain

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<sup>22</sup> A township near Cape Town

(Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). Verwoerd appeared in Bloemfontein at the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Union on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May. Helen remarked that she felt him to be completely convinced that “divine guidance was with him, a sentiment not shared by the dove which he tossed into the air crying, ‘There goes the symbol of South Africa’s peace and prosperity.’ The astute bird dropped like a stone” (Suzman, 1993, p. 68). Less than two months after the shooting, Verwoerd was back in Parliament. Helen recalled:

(Verwoerd) proceeded to give one of his customary lengthy speeches, minus notes. A friend who was sitting in the visitor’s gallery during this tour de force said to me afterwards, ‘Good God, didn’t that bullet do anything to Verwoerd?’ ‘Sure,’ I replied. ‘It cleared his sinuses.’ (Suzman, 1993, p. 68)

Verwoerd was victorious in the October 1960 referendum, albeit with a narrow 74 580 votes. South Africa was declared a republic and in March of 1961, he also announced that South Africa would withdraw from the Commonwealth due to the attacks on South African policy (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007; Leach, 1986). Locally, tension was also building. During the month of December, 1961, Umkhonto weSizwe<sup>23</sup> (MK), the military wing of the ANC, detonated the first of their homemade bombs, which heralded the start of a two year long sabotage campaign (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007).

Despite the conflict and tension, Helen felt that the 1960 and 1961 sessions were truly rewarding for the Progressive MPs, who were by then known as the Progs. Even though they had been demoted to basement offices beneath the Senate block, “the bonhomie and team spirit more than compensated for the physical discomfort” (Suzman, 1993, p.50). Helen described this time as both the happiest of her parliamentary career, as well as the “tensest and most bitter” (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 189). Helen’s happiness seemed to be due to the fact that she and the other Progs had similar ideas and therefore, intraparty conflict was no longer a constant feature (Strangways-Booth, 1976). However, the future of the Progs in Parliament soon came under threat: they did not have “the benefit of the expected period of grace to build up support for the Progressive Party before the next general election” (Suzman, 1993, p. 50), which was initially due in 1963. It was to be held two years ahead of schedule, a decision precipitated by the 1960 referendum and the traumatic Sharpeville incident, various protests and police raids (Suzman, 1993).

Following the grim events of the time, Helen and her fellow Progs were convinced of the legitimacy of their decision to break away from the UP, and any moral reservations they

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<sup>23</sup> Meaning “Spear of the Nation”

may have harboured about the retention of their parliamentary seats, were dispelled (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen later recalled:

During that tragic period we Progs were able to show our worth as a true opposition. We opposed the declaration of the state of emergency, which gave the Minister of Justice extensive powers to detain people without trial; and we opposed the banning of the ANC and of the PAC. We worked well together as a dedicated group. There was never any difference of opinion in our caucus as to how we should handle these issues. (Suzman, 1993, p. 52)

Houghton voters seemed to be in agreement, and Helen's election campaign was a success. However, the early election was disastrous for most of the Progressive MPs, with Helen being the only sitting MP to retain a seat (Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She ascribed her victory in Houghton to the support she received from the *Rand Daily Mail* and the "superior organizational skill" (Suzman, 1993, p. 58) of Max Borkum, her campaign manager (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). On election night, Helen went to Ellen Hellmann's house after hearing of her Houghton victory to wait for the rest of the election results, her mood both elated and miserable:

Helen broke down and wept into the glass of whisky she was holding. 'I was the only one who really wanted to get out,' she recalled later. 'Politics made me sick. I saw no hope for the future but thought I might as well go down with flags flying. And now – one tiny little flag fluttered on by some 500 votes – and it was *me!*' (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 198)

Suzman recalled the conversation that took place between her and her daughter, Frances, who had interrupted her studies in London to assist in Helen's election campaign: "(she) turned to me and said in a despairing voice, 'Ma, what are you going to do?'" "I don't know," was my quavering reply" (Suzman, 1993, p. 60). It was the start of Helen's long and often lonely journey as her party's only representative in Parliament (Shain, 2006; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

### **2.2.6 The Solo Years (1962 - 1974)**

Those turbulent years were very lonely. I did not once have a meal in the member's private dining room, where meals tended to become informal caucus meeting ... Unless I was entertaining guests in the public dining room, I had a sandwich in my office. I especially missed the camaraderie of drinking with my chums in the members' pub after the House adjourned, and all those lively postmortems on the day's events with fellow Progs. (Suzman, 1993, p. 112)

Helen returned to Parliament as the sole Progressive MP in 1962 (Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976, p. 199), it would later be evident that these solo years “...brought to full maturity her latent powers”. Years after her death, former Constitutional Court judge, Kate O’Regan, reflected on Helen’s skill as a parliamentarian during the first Helen Suzman Memorial Lecture (O’Regan, 2011, p. 3):

The seriousness of purpose that underlay Helen’s approach to her work as a parliamentarian was exemplary. It recognised that the work of governance and politics is a serious business which needs to be undertaken with vigour, dedication and integrity. Helen was not a practitioner of what might be called the broad brush approach to factual or policy questions. Instead, she recognised that good governance requires a mastery of detail as well as attention to principle. Accordingly, she took seriously the work of gathering and synthesising information and considering arguments from a range of angles, before taking a view on any problem. It is this serious-minded and painstaking approach to the exercise of public power, despite all the challenges she faced, especially as a lone member of the Progressive Party in Parliament for thirteen years, from 1961 to 1974 during the darkest days of apartheid, that I would particularly like to memorialise today...

Helen later reflected that during the 13 years alone in Parliament, the “conscientious ethic fostered by Sister Columba and the stamina inherited from Sam Gavronsky stood me in good stead” (Suzman, 1993, p. 112). The years to come were difficult for Helen, and she later described each session alone as a “...long dark tunnel through which somehow she had to make her way” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 199). She now felt a “heavy responsibility” (Suzman, 1993, p. 113) of representing all the Progressive Party supporters throughout the country. She was aware of her duty to reflect her party’s view on all the important pieces of proposed legislation “and on all the abrogations of the rule of law” (p. 113). Furthermore, as she had no Whip to inform her on the day’s agenda or changes thereto, she could seldom leave the debating chamber. She also had nobody present “to take points of order on my behalf when unparliamentary remarks or interjections were hurled at me – some anti-Semitic, some sexist, others just plain hostile” (p. 113). In this regard, she wrote in her memoirs: “I especially missed Harry Lawrence at those times. He would have helped me cope, for example, with one Nat MP who sat close by hissing ‘neo-Communist, sickly humanist’ every time I spoke in the House” (Suzman, 1993, pp. 113-114). Years later, Eglin remembered one of Helen’s strategies for coping on her own (Eglin, 2007, p. 48):

In the early ’60s when there were 11 Progressive Party MPs, Helen, when she saw or heard something in Parliament she found to be amusing or ridiculous, made a note of it and passed the note around for the benefit of the other

members of the caucus. I asked her whether, during the years when she was on her own, she was frustrated at not being able to write these caucus notes. ‘Oh,’ said Helen, ‘I still wrote the notes. But instead of passing them around, I put them in my handbag for later on.’

The first of the solo sessions lasted little over 100 days, during which Helen made 66 speeches, moved over 25 amendments and posed 137 questions (Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976). She remarked to anybody who commented on her astonishing productivity and stamina that her daughters had held the belief that she possesses the constitution of a Basuto pony (Strangways-Booth, 1976). In a letter to Frances in June of 1962, Helen described the mental and physical demands of the first solo session:

Have had a perfectly fiendish week in Parliament... I thought I’d pass out at the end of the second day, as I couldn’t even leave the House for one second and we were sitting mornings too. My old bladder must have suffered irreparable damage. A Nat gent said to me in the lobby, ‘God, Helen, we can think of ten Progs we would rather have here instead of you – why did they pick on you?’ To which I replied: ‘For that very reason.’ Looking back over the past five months, I really don’t know how I have kept up this cracking pace... (Suzman, 1993, p. 90)

Although Helen was the only Prog MP, she was not entirely alone in the execution of her duties. As South African MPs did not receive an adequate allowance to appoint a team of researchers and speech writers, Helen prepared for her first post-election session with only one secretary and one researcher at her disposal (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She described her secretary, Barbara Mouat, as calm and efficient, adding that she “looked after me like a mother hen” (Suzman, 1993, p. 113). Her researcher, Jacqueline Beck, a political analyst and researcher who possessed “fine, attuned political judgement” (Eglin, 2007, p. 98), would over the following years be valuable in helping Helen analyse proposed legislation. She was particularly skilled at obtaining relevant information from the press for Helen to use in her questions and speeches (Suzman, 1993). Over the 13 years alone in Parliament, Helen spent hours dictating speeches to Barbara “not only for the debating chamber, but also for the scores of meetings I addressed outside Parliament – protest meetings, university meetings, party public meetings. During election years all these demands intensified to a horrific degree” (Suzman, 1993, p. 118). She also had to meet with numerous visitors to South Africa whose presence was necessary for the fight against apartheid: “I was also on the itinerary of every visiting fireman, journalist or overseas politician... at times I felt like a surrogate Kruger Game Park...” (Suzman, 1993, p. 118).

Progressive Party members who lived in Cape Town had also offered to form an

unofficial caucus, and to meet with Helen over weekends to provide her with support by examining and discussing policy and proposed legislature (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). However, the weekly meetings soon dwindled and eventually ceased, as it was difficult to find meeting times suitable for everybody (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen did, however, have the opportunity to consult with some of them on specific subjects (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She also recalled in her memoirs how she would “send bills flying around the country to experts whom I knew shared my political views” (Suzman, 1993, p. 112), in order to elicit advice and collect arguments for parliamentary debates: “Sometimes their replies came back in time; sometimes they came back after the bills had already passed through Parliament. Sometimes they didn’t come back at all” (p. 133). Eglin reflected on how their political relationship and personal friendship developed during this time: “I combined the roles of consultant, advisor, friend-in-need, and broad shoulder-to-lean-upon when Helen felt she needed my opinion, advice or assistance. Of course, she could have managed quite well on her own” (Eglin, 2007, p. 98).

In February of 1962, Helen introduced the first of a series of motions aimed at revising apartheid legislation, namely the Immorality Act Amendment Bill. With it she attempted to stop the “misery and degradation” which had been caused by the act which prohibited sexual relationships across racial lines (Lewsen, 1991, p. 19). Through this motion, Helen revealed her disapproval of the dogma underlying the Immorality Act, and disregarded “the strong prejudices of many otherwise quite liberal voters” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 205). However, Helen soon reached the conclusion that Government had no intention of abandoning the development of apartheid legislation.

The first of a series of “vicious laws designed to undermine civil rights and to intensify discrimination against Blacks” (Suzman, 1993, p. 88), namely the General Laws Amendment Bill<sup>24</sup>, was introduced by the ruling party, and became popularly known as the Sabotage Act. Helen referred to it as the Intimidation Bill, stating that “the idea is to frighten the life out of anybody who disagrees with the Government...” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 206). She later reminded her Houghton constituents that “the same wide powers were taken in Hitler’s Germany” (Lewsen, 1991, pp. 13-14). Helen was acutely aware of the UP’s hesitation to oppose the act, stating that while she sat in Parliament during the debate, she was “...watching a shiver run along the ranks of the United Party, looking for a spine to run

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<sup>24</sup> The General Law Amendment Act (No 76 of 1962) gave increased powers to the State President to declare organisations unlawful, impose further restrictions in banning orders and imprison persons without due process (Van den Berghe, 1965; Walker, 1991)

up” (Suzman, 1993, p. 89).

The 1962 session had come to a close and in August, Helen again delivered a Report Back speech to her Houghton constituents. This was her tenth Report Back meeting, and it followed the first full session of the first Republican Parliament of South Africa. She remarked that the occasion was furthermore significant for her as she, for the first time, had not only represented her Houghton voters, but also all of the Progressive Party supporters, as well as the Black South Africans who have been denied a voice in Parliament (Lewsen, 1991). Over the next 13 years, Helen began to see herself as the “honorary ombudsman for all those people who have no vote and no Members of Parliament” (Shain, 2008). Helen had little time at home before the next Parliamentary session, as she soon departed for the United States of America on a Foreign Leadership grant, where she spent two months studying the country’s racial problems and federal system (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

During her years alone in Parliament, Helen had evoked strong opposition in the House, which would continue throughout her long career. Once P. W. Botha, before he became State President, said: “the Honourable Member for Houghton must stop chattering. There is nothing that works on my nerves more than a woman who continually interrupts me. She is like water dripping on a tin roof” (Godsell, 2011, p. 20). Another sexist insult from another MP, was the threat: “If you were my wife I would give you a good hiding” (Godsell, 2011, p. 20). In a later interview, she stated that she wasn’t particularly bothered by it, adding that: “I am provocative, and I admit this. It isn’t as if I’m only on the receiving end, a poor, frail little creature. I can be thoroughly nasty when I get going, and I don’t pull my punches” (Rensberger, 1974, p. 2). During a Report Back speech, she commented:

...After 11 years in Parliament one becomes hardened to this sort of sophistry. I pay as little attention to it as I do to anti-Semitic remarks from a few Nat bird-brains on back benches, or to Mr Greyling’s rumbles of neo-communist and sickly humanist, or to Mr Blaar Coetzee’s strident cry of ‘liar’. They are all in the same category – attempting to substitute argument by abuse... (Lewsen, 1991, p. 49)

Apart from the insults and name-calling she endured during Parliamentary sessions, she also received criticism and personal attacks outside of Parliament (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). In her memoirs, Helen described the abusive, threatening and anti-Semitic letters she received during her time in Parliament. One example is the threatening telegrams which came from a former Nazi supporter, Robey Leibbrandt, simply stating that “Mordecai, alias Karl Marx, the father of modern Communism, was a Jew” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 207), and later another which read “Hope your attitude on

Minister Vorster's anti-Communist bill is warning to all goyim" (Suzman, 1993, p. 93). The UP requested an investigation into the matter, but Vorster refused, stating that the telegram 'quite correctly' attacked Karl Marx but not the Jews (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). In a June letter, Helen told Frances about a similar incident:

My anonymous admirer, 'Yok,' is apparently now beside himself with fury at all the publicity I have been getting and literally bombards me with his charming postcards addressed to 'Der Yiddishe Know-All from Houghton.' They arrive like homing pigeons and advise me to go stick my long Jewish nose into the Knesset and leave nice Christian parliaments to nice Christian gentlemen. Ah well, as long as it stays at postcards, I don't mind. (Suzman, 1993, p. 90)

Helen received similar letters from Marie van Zyl, president of the right-wing women's organization, the Kappie Kommando<sup>25</sup>. In addition, there were threatening telephone calls. "My method of dealing with these late-night callers was simple: I blew a loud blast down the phone with the shrill whistle I kept handy... I seldom heard the same voice again" (Suzman, 1993, p. 116). Despite the abusive phone calls, Helen had never delisted her home number (Browde, 2009). This was possibly as a result of her desire to remain accessible to those in need of her assistance (Goldstein, 2009; Rotberg, 2011). Rabbi Goldstein later reported:

Her family tells me that people phoned her house at all hours of the day and night looking for help. She made herself accessible. Her phone number was listed and it was part of her personal mission to help as many people as possible in the most practical way. (Goldstein, 2009, p. 11)

Her friends had become concerned about Helen's safety. One of them told a reporter that he had confronted Helen and asked her if she had thought about letter bombs, to which she replied "Of course I have, I'm no fool." When asked what she was going to do to protect herself, her response was simple: "Nothing" (Rensberger, 1974, p.2). Helen had once received a suspicious looking envelope addressed to "Helen Suzman, Friend of the Blacks in South Africa", with the return address only marked as "From Friends in Amsterdam" (Suzman, 1993, p. 116). Her husband cautioned her not to open it and advised her to contact his lawyer brother, Arthur. He in turn advised her to approach the Jewish Board of Deputies, who informed her that they had received a letter bomb from Amsterdam a few weeks prior. She then contacted the Commanding Officer at the police headquarters. Helen later described the events that took place:

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<sup>25</sup> Named after the deep-rimmed bonnet popularly worn during the Great Trek of the 1830s (Suzman, 1993).

About half an hour later the doorbell rang and there stood an enormous policeman with a shoe box in his hand... I put the letter in and he clapped the lid shut as if he had caught a mouse. Off he went. I heard nothing... for the next three days, and then, overcome by curiosity, I phoned the Commanding Officer again... ‘Ja, it looked very suspicious, Mrs. Suzman,’ he said. We sent it to the CSIR [Council for Scientific and Industrial Research] in Pretoria; they have a special detecting device. It was not a letter bomb.’ ‘Then what was in it, Colonel?’ ‘Pornographic literature,’ he said. ‘Oh, well, send it back.’ ‘Not for the eyes of a lady,’ he replied disapprovingly. Well, the following week exactly the same sort of envelope arrived and I wondered whether the first might have been a decoy. Should I go through the whole ridiculous procedure again? Or should I just take a chance? I took a chance. I ripped it open and there indeed was more pornographic literature, quite interesting stuff and very unusual. The pages had been cut from glossy magazines in Holland and the photographs depicted very lurid scenes of Black men and White women having sex. And across the top was written, ‘This is what you want for South Africa, you bitch.’ (Suzman, 1993, p. 117)

For Helen, the 1963 session was exceptionally stressful (Suzman, 1993). Vorster introduced the second reading of his third General Laws Amendment Bill on 24 April. The UP, which had opposed the first 1961 and 1962 Bills, now supported the proposed legislation. During the debate, Helen stated in no uncertain terms that she felt that two of the clauses were completely overriding the rule of law. Furthermore, she strongly opposed the notion that civil liberties should be sacrificed to uphold apartheid policy, warning that the measure may increase racial tension and enable extremist African leaders to obtain more recruits for their cause (Lewsen, 1991). Colin Eglin remembered that it was during this time that Helen “...displayed remarkable courage, skill and commitment to principle in opposing the slide towards authoritarianism” (Eglin, 2007, p. 102). Helen’s voice was the lone “no” during voting on the Bill, and she moved for a physical division in the House:

As procedure laid down, the bells of Parliament rang for three minutes, members streamed in and they took their seats. The doors were locked. The Speaker stood up and said, ‘The question before the House is...,’ and he put the question, and ordered those in favour to take their seats on his right; those against, on his left. So there was I, sitting alone in a sea of empty green benches, while the whole of the Official Opposition crossed the floor and packed themselves in among the Nationalist MPs. It was a dramatic sight. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 92-93)

The humiliation caused to the UP MPs of having to physically cross the floor led them to negotiate a change in voting procedure, which now required the support of four members in order to call for such a visible division. Thus, for her remaining years as the lone Prog, Helen’s name was often only recorded as the sole objector and the members of the

official opposition party could remain seated whenever they supported apartheid bills (Suzman, 1993). Helen later commented that: “If I ever felt sick at heart it was on the day I witnessed the tragic capitulation of the Official Opposition the day they supported the second reading of that monstrous Bill” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 214).

The *Natal Witness* published an article on 30 May 1963 in which its parliamentary correspondent argued that the Government have been implementing a “Break Suzman” campaign. The article cited various outbursts and remarks during which the National Party MPs accused Helen of stirring up racial tension and being a political enemy of South Africa. The reporter commented that Helen “...appeared to thrive on these remarks and came back time and again with her attacks on Bantu policy. She certainly appeared in no way to be losing her spirit” (Suzman, 1993, p. 94). Helen did not experience all of her colleagues as hostile towards her, however. Towards the end of her solo years, it was reported that “...although the moguls in the ruling Nationalist Party dislike what she is saying, they respect her. What is more, they like her. Perhaps they also fear her” (McNicoll, 1973, p. 4). Helen recalled in her memoirs:

A number seemed to regard me with amazed fascination. Most of them had large, docile wives brought up in Calvinist fashion to be respectful to their parents and to their husbands. Here was this small, cheeky female with a sharp tongue which she used without regard to rank or gender. Some were shocked, but a few were amused and one or two actually liked me. (Suzman, 1993, p. 114)

During the 1964 session, Helen moved a motion for the repeal of all the existing enactments under which detention without trial was made possible. She maintained that civil liberties need to be restored to South Africans, and argued that the powers of detention granted to ministers were being misused (Suzman, 1993). “Arbitrary powers,” she said, “which are not subject to public scrutiny in the courts of law have an ugly habit of getting out of hand, of being used more and more recklessly to control any opponents of the ruling power” (Suzman, 1993, p. 95). Not a single other MP voted for her motion, or even debated the matter. However, her performance during the session had earned her praise, even from members of the nationalist press. *Die Burger’s* parliamentary correspondent had written about how Helen’s reputation and industriousness were generating respect from her enemies, but added that it remained unlikely that she would retain her Houghton seat (Suzman, 1993). Nationalist MP, L.J.C. Bootha, stated that she reminded him of a cricket in a thorn tree: “In her fight for the Bantu, the honourable member also sings the same tune year after year. One must admire her for the fight she is putting up” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 218). Helen

received a more sincere compliment for her role as human rights campaigner in a letter of appreciation from Albert Luthuli<sup>26</sup> (Kadalie, 2010; Rotberg, 2011; Suzman, 1993), which she quoted in her memoirs as follows:

I take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation and admiration for your heroic and lone stand against a most reactionary Parliament... I most heartily congratulate you for your untiring efforts in a situation that would frustrate and benumb many... For ever remember, you are bright Star in dark Chamber, where lights of liberty of what is left, are going out one by one... Not only ourselves – your contemporaries – but also posterity, will hold you in high esteem. (Suzman, 1993, p. 93)

Helen had, from the mid-1960s, sought permission to visit political prisoners in Pretoria Central every year. Her aim with the visits was two-fold: “...to make the authorities aware that someone was keeping a watchful eye on the prisons, and for the prisoners to know that somebody from outside was interested in their welfare” (Suzman, 1993, p. 135). Her frequent visits to political prisoners would later earn her the title “Our Lady of the Prisoners” by Breyten Breytenbach<sup>27</sup> (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007; Pimstone, 2005), who wrote that over the years prison wardens became anxious about Helen’s “sharp eyes and her sharp tongue” (Godsell, 2011, p. 31) and as a result, prison conditions improved dramatically with her visits (Pimstone, 2005). A former Robben Island prisoner, and an accomplished poet, Modise Phekonyane, later recalled in an interview:

...When she came, they made us clean the yard thoroughly, to present the picture of a clean place. They wouldn’t want us to go to work. People like her would be told, oh, we are merely keeping them constructively busy. They pushed a whole lot of us beyond a fence into the soccer and rugby fields, and locked the gates. And we could only see her walk past. And it was a criminal offence, to shout and speak to her. So I and other young men, we decided, to hell, and we were running along the fence, ‘Mrs Suzman, Mrs Suzman!’. And I remember how she tried to look and wave, and how the security forces shielded her away. But her presence meant wonders. The government wanted us to be forgotten. ...Oh, my God, somebody knows about us. Somebody takes notice. So my life means something after all. And that is how profoundly it affected me. I saw her on two occasions, but it meant that much. (Taljaard, 2007a, p. 59-60)

Through her regular visits, Helen became friends with Bram Fischer, who had been a leading member of the Communist Party and headed the legal defence team during the

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<sup>26</sup> Luthuli, Nobel laureate, was appointed leader of the ANC in 1952 (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007).

<sup>27</sup> South African poet and political prisoner detained in Pollsmoor. Suzman never visited Breytenbach, stating that she did not want to deprive him of family visits (Suzman, 1993).

Rivonia trial<sup>28</sup>, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for violating the Suppression of Communism Act and conspiring to commit sabotage. She remembered their encounters (Suzman, 1993, p. 140):

I visited Bram regularly. It was hard to reconcile this small, mild man with anything violent or with his fervent belief in communism. He always assembled a concise list of grievances to hand me. I remember being very touched when I arrived one day and he presented me with a bunch of flowers he had grown in the prison yard...

Her prison visits had also lead to interactions of a less positive nature. Vorster was still Minister of Justice and Police prior to becoming Prime Minister, and had criticised Helen sharply on several occasions. Helen recalled in her memoirs that:

Vorster once paid me the ‘compliment’ of saying I was worth ten United Party MPs (I thought this an understatement). He also told me that I allowed myself ‘to be used too much,’ implying that I was one of Lenin’s ‘useful idiots.’ And he had a point. I certainly was used by people who had political views and aims very different from my own, ranging from those who supported the banned Communist Party to extreme Black nationalists. But, as I told him, as long as he locked people up without trial, I had no option (Suzman, 1993, p. 73).

In her personal life, Helen suffered a significant loss. Her father had a fatal heart attack in 1965, at the age of 80 (Suzman, 1993). Helen remembered her father as a “most litigious man”, who even when victory seemed unlikely, would instruct his lawyers to “sue the bastards!” (Suzman, 1993, p. 11). As a result, Helen and her sister Gertrude, as executors of his estate, promptly settled several lawsuits out of court after his death. She commented that his most endearing characteristic was probably his love of animals:

He used to set off for work each morning, sitting on the front seat of the car next to his Black driver, and on the backseat were his two dogs, who spent the day with him at his office. When he returned home, he lavished affection on his cats. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 11 – 12)

Reflecting on his passing, Helen commented later that she had inherited three things from Sam Gavronsky: “his stamina, his love of animals and his enjoyment of a scotch and soda in the evening - that is, apart from the generous bequests in his will” (Suzman, 1993, p.12). Helen later noted in her speech at the opening of an exhibition in her honour (Suzman, 2006, pp. 20 – 21):

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<sup>28</sup> The trial in which Nelson Mandela and seven others were accused of sabotage and sentenced to life imprisonment (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007).

All this work needed not courage, as some people think, but stamina. And this I inherited from my father... He was a tough, hardworking immigrant from Lithuania who came to this country at the turn of the last century. He certainly did not share my political views, but he never ever tried to dissuade me from continuing in politics. He once visited Jules Browde on a legal matter, and when Jules asked him, ‘Mr Gavronsky, how’s Helen?’ he replied, ‘Helen? She’s *gans meshugga!*’

Helen recalled that she had, “in moments of despair” (Suzman, 1993, p. 11), asked her father why he had not chosen America when he left Lithuania. She remembered that he would firmly proclaim South Africa to be “the best country in the world” (p. 11). He had, despite his intense patriotic feeling, regarded all South African politicians with disdain, although he never tried to dissuade her from her political activities, and had even encouraged her to stand for re-election in 1958. She recalled how he had once attended, on Debbie’s insistence, one of her public meetings. A resolution to work for the end of racial discrimination was put to the vote and received his apparent support. “...Old Sam Gavronsky said that was only because he was too tired to lift his arm to vote against it!” (Suzman, 1993, p. 11). She later admitted that she had often wondered if he voted for the Progressive Party, “or simply spoiled his ballots” (p. 11). Helen and her father had had many arguments about politics, but she remarked that, because he possessed a wonderful sense of humour, the battle was won if she could make him laugh. Helen and her father’s differing views on political issues had even once played out on a more public platform:

On one occasion, when I was overseas, I received a letter from a friend in South Africa informing me there had been an article in the local press saying that ‘Mrs. Suzman’s father had given £500 to Dr Verwoerd’s ... Scholarship Fund.’ On my return, I was met at the airport by Debbie. ‘Where’s the old boy?’ I asked grimly. ‘Too scared to come,’ she replied. When I saw him at home I congratulated him on his generosity to my archenemy, the Prime Minister, and suggested he write out a check for the same amount for the Progressive Party... Meek as a lamb, he complied. My stepmother said later, ‘You were very hard on him. He did it only because he thought it would protect you.’ Since he did not support Verwoerd’s Nationalist government, that may well have been the case. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 10-11)

Helen later, reflecting on the origin of her liberal values regarding race relations, explored whether her father had had an influence on her thinking on the matter. She had never considered her father to have had liberal opinions, and felt that he became uneasy whenever she voiced hers (Forde, 2009b; Suzman, 1993). She described Samuel as a self-made man, and as having a contemptuous attitude to anyone who did not succeed, irrespective of race:

He had worked very hard, and made his way around the world, and he couldn't understand why other people couldn't do the same. To his mind, they had to be lazy or stupid. I tried... to point out that the Blacks in South Africa were subjected to many of the restrictions which he, as a Jew, had suffered in Russia, such as restrictions on mobility and other discriminatory laws. But this argument didn't impress him. He could never really understand why I bothered about the condition of Blacks in South Africa. (Suzman, 1993, p. 10)

Soon after her father's passing, Verwoerd called the 1966 general election six months earlier than anticipated. Strangwayes-Booth (1976) argued that this occurred in order for the NP to take full advantage of an economic boom and the emotional climate following the eruption of a political crisis in the neighbouring country, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Helen's campaign, in which a victory had seemed uncertain, was salvaged by what some called a "personality cult" in Houghton, through which support was centred on her, rather than the Progressive Party. The NP and UP would later use this in their propaganda, claiming that without Helen and her popularity, the PP would collapse. Even though their claim was "a distortion of the truth, it must nevertheless be seen as having a basis of fact" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 226). Helen's campaign also received support from Harry Oppenheimer as well as both the English-speaking press (Pimstone, 2005) and Black newspapers, who echoed the sentiment published by *The Post*:

It is not our job to tell the Whites whom to vote for. We make an exception in the case of Helen Suzman. Surely White South Africa, entrenched in its strength, can afford this one solitary voice... Do a positive act for South Africa by returning this doughty fighter, this most respected opponent of the Government. The good wishes of millions of our people are with you, Helen... (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 225)

Helen also received an unexpected supportive message from a familiar voice from her childhood years (Suzman, 1993, p. 9):

One day in 1966, more than thirty years after I had left school, I received a phone call. A soft Irish voice said, 'May I speak to Helen, please?' I replied, 'Hello, Sister Columba,' and she exclaimed, 'Lord love us, child – you recognised my voice!' She told me all the nuns were praying for me since the next election was about to take place.

Helen retained her seat. Black newspapers published congratulatory articles, claiming that Africans rejoiced at the news of her victory. A township paper called her electoral success a "glorious exception" to the majority rule of the National Party, while another

quoted an Orlando<sup>29</sup> resident as saying that it was a “tangible demonstration that there were Whites willing to live normally and decently in accordance with known standards of civilization and Christianity” (Suzman, 1993, p. 96). Helen, however, felt that her victory was again tainted, as she was “...more than a little bitter at the thought of another five years alone...” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 226). Helen also rejected and detested the public’s perception of her as the *de facto* leader of the PP. After 1966’s crushing defeat, however, Steytler had found it increasingly more difficult to lead the struggling Party from his farm near Queenstown, and although she did not hold any leadership position in the Party, Helen came to exemplify the Progressive Party in the public’s view (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

Helen found the post-election session to be exceptionally demanding, and in October wrote home about the “hellish” week she had had in Parliament, describing the exhausting pace at which she had to prepare speeches and become involved in debates (Suzman, 1993). Helen was now a front-bencher for the first time, and had to cope with the intimidating growth in number of National Party MPs:

After the 1966 election, the Nats held two thirds of the seats in Parliament. They occupied the entire government side of the House of Assembly, more than two rows of benches on the Opposition side and all the crossbenches. This meant that I was not only faced with Nats and but had them behind me as well. I found it distinctly unnerving to turn around and find several sets of beady eyes fixed on me with unremitting hostility, not to mention all the uncomplimentary interjections I could overhear when I was making a speech. (Suzman, 1993, p. 63)

The short post-election session would be Verwoerd’s last. He was fatally attacked in Parliament on September 6, 1966, when the House assembled to discuss the Prime Minister’s portfolio. He was assassinated by a parliamentary messenger, Dimitrio Tsafendas, while Helen was sitting at her front bench reading a letter. After she became aware of what had transpired, she soon became the target for a verbal attack from the then Minister of Defence, P.W. Botha (Forde, 2009b; Suzman, 1993). She recounts the details of her experience in her memoirs:

I wondered whether one of the members of the United Party had gone crazy, leapt across the floor and punched Verwoerd on the nose. I then heard another strangled cry, and as a group opened out I saw somebody being dragged along the aisle of the House by a few MPs. It was the man who had attacked the Prime Minister, not an MP, but a parliamentary messenger. Before my astonished eyes he was dumped opposite my desk, while members pulled at his clothes and pummelled him. After another scuffle, he was

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<sup>29</sup> A township in Soweto, Johannesburg

dragged out and presumably handed over to the police in the lobby of Parliament. While I was watching all this with utter amazement, down the aisle of the House from the direction of the Prime Minister's desk dashed the Minister of Defense, P.W. Botha, arms flailing and eyes bulging. He stopped opposite of me, shook his finger at me and yelled in Afrikaans, 'It's you who did this. It's all you liberals. You incite people. Now we will get you. We will get the lot of you.' And he blundered out of the House. (Suzman, 1993, p. 69)

Helen recalled being enraged by "Botha's accusation and the threat implicit in what he had said" (Suzman, 1993, p. 69), and reported the incident to the Speaker. The following morning they met in the Speaker's chambers. Helen recalled the ensuing interaction (which resulted in her never again greeting Botha or speaking to the future Prime Minister on a personal basis<sup>30</sup>):

Botha glared at me and growled, 'In terms of the rules of the House, I apologise.' I lost my temper on hearing what I regarded as the most ungracious apology imaginable. I turned to the Speaker and asked, 'Do you expect me to accept an apology like that?'... I turned to Botha. 'How dare you talk to me the way you did?' 'What did you expect?' he replied. 'There was my leader dying at my feet.' 'I'll tell you what I expect,' I said. 'I expect you to control yourself. You're the man behind the guns in South Africa. You're the Minister of Defense. It would be a sad day for all of us if you can't control yourself'. (Suzman, 1993, p. 70)

Verwoerd was succeeded by B.J. Vorster, who was Helen's "chief parliamentary antagonist" from 1963 to 1972, first as the Minister of Justice and then as Prime Minister (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 209). When comparing him to his predecessor, Suzman stated that Vorster "was a different cup of tea altogether – pragmatic, down to earth and with no pretensions to divine missions" (Suzman, 1993, p. 72). However, she had later found him to be even less sensitive to the infringements of human rights caused by apartheid policy than Verwoerd:

During the no confidence debate in 1971 I quoted his comment to the London *Daily Telegraph* correspondent that he was 'not aware that there were any annoying elements in apartheid.' I suggested several examples of 'annoying elements' he might experience were he not a White South African: such as having his wife endorsed out of the urban area if he were a Black man, or suffering arrest under the pass laws; or being Group Area'd out of his home or business if he were a Colored or Indian; not to mention the impossibility of finding a golf course where he would be allowed to play his favourite game.

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<sup>30</sup> After not talking to Botha for 22 years, Helen accompanied Colin Eglin to Botha's offices on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1988, to add their arguments to the national and international pressure not to sign the execution orders for six MK members. The Sharpeville Six, as they were known, received a last-minute stay of execution and later their reprieve from the death sentence (Eglin, 2007).

His second comment to the same journalist – that it must be ‘just as annoying for a White man when he could not go into a Black or Colored restaurant as it is for a Black or Colored person not to be allowed into a restaurant serving Whites’ – was one of the silliest remarks I had ever heard him make. I later suggested that he should go into the townships heavily disguised as a human being to experience at first hand what it was like to be a Black South African. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 77-78)

Helen described the next four years in Parliament as a “sheer slog” and “frantic scramble” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 229) to keep up with her task of delivering speeches on all the different votes. In addition, Helen also prepared a private member’s motion for each session on issues ranging from migratory labour to the abolition of the death penalty. Vorster’s focus on security legislation intensified and each session new laws were passed that were aimed at “...imposing yet another restraint on what little remained of the individual liberty of those actively opposed to the Government” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 230).

Helen had heard many rumours about the harsh treatment prisoners were receiving at the Robben Island prison and, in 1967, she asked for permission to visit them (Projansky, 2009b; Suzman, 1993). This is where Helen had her first meeting with Nelson Mandela, an occasion she vividly remembered when writing her memoirs:

Mandela is very tall, has a good posture and speaks excellent English. He also has an unmistakable air of authority. He stuck his hand through the bars and said, ‘How do you do, Mrs. Suzman. I’m very pleased to meet you.’ ‘How do you do, Mr. Mandela,’ I said. ‘How are you and how are things here?’ ‘They are very bad indeed,’ he said. ‘I’m very glad you have come to see us.’ Although the Commanding Officer of the prison was standing next to me, Mandela spoke quite frankly. He made no bones about his complaints. (Suzman, 1993, p. 150)

One of Mandela’s complaints related to a prison warder, a self-professed Nazi who had a swastika tattooed on the back of his hand and who Mandela described to her as “a very tough man indeed” (Suzman, 1993, p. 150). Helen then complained to the Minister of Justice, Piet Pelser, threatening to take the matter to Parliament where it will come under the attention of international media. Pelser had promised to have the warder removed if she gave him some time to do so, and a few days later Helen received a phone call from Mandela’s lawyer who said, “Mandela has asked me to phone you to say thank you. The man has gone.” (Suzman, 1993, p.151). Despite annual applications to visit Mandela and the other Robben Island prisoners, seven years were to pass before Helen would again receive permission to do so (Suzman, 1993).

During Helen's 1968 Report Back speech in Houghton, she described the session as one of the busiest she has ever experienced. She also admitted to being "fairly provocative" when attacking the Deputy Minister, Blaar Coetzee, stating that he makes a "very satisfactory substitute target" to Vorster (Lewsen, 1991, p. 105). Helen did, however, during an April sitting have the opportunity to target Vorster himself, following what she termed the Prime Minister's war with the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS). She criticised him for exaggerating the figures of NUSAS officials found guilty of sabotage or undermining lawful authority and for attempting to prohibit students from engaging in political affairs. She specifically referred to how the Prime Minister had told members of the international press that "it is not his custom to make war on children", adding that, "...all I can say is that he seems to spend a great deal of his time in doing just that" (Lewsen, 1991, p. 107). She proceeded to offer him some advice:

I want to tell the honourable the Prime Minister that it is time he did a little travelling. He should broaden his mind. It is time he left the shores of South Africa and exposed himself to the outside world. To the best of my knowledge he has only left South Africa on one occasion... the trip he made to South America... I suggest that the honourable the Prime Minister travels to America, to England and to Europe, and perhaps he would be doing a bit of double duty. He will expose his mind to the broadening influences of travel, and he will see that students in every country of the world take an active part in politics. (Lewsen, 1991, p. 108)

During the 1969 session, Helen selected the topic of abolition of the death penalty for her Private Member's motion. She argued that the controversial matter should be debated due to the high execution rate (119 hangings in 1968 alone), the growing list of capital offenses, as well as the drop in reprieves. She also stated that the death sentence had already been abolished in many countries and American states (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Her motion, again, received no support from any of the other MPs. Instead, Helen and the Progressive Party were identified with the promotion of violence (Suzman, 1993). In retaliation, Helen had one of many of what she termed "sharp exchanges" with Vorster:

I was glad to have the opportunity to tell Vorster face to face during the 1969 session that I had seen the survey in the *Sunday Times* which said that over 70 percent of the White population thought he was doing a good job, and only .3 percent thought he was no good. I said I wanted to stand up and be counted among the .3 percent... (Suzman, 1993, p. 77)

During the 1970 election campaign, Helen's majority in Houghton increased from 711 to 2049, and her victory was once again welcomed by many outside of the Houghton

constituency (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Dr Nkomo, then the president of the SAIRR, commented that “the silent majority danced in the streets of the townships” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 236). However, the PP failed in defeating the UP in the other 18 contested constituencies:

Yet again, at the end of an election day, the member for Houghton wept – this time when she heard that Colin Eglin had come within 231 votes of victory in Sea Point. As her supporters, with their unfailing, almost desperate optimism sang ‘We shall overcome’, she could only cry out, in total despair, ‘Here I go, for another five years, with that bloody mob.’ (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 236)

In December of 1970, Steytler announced his retirement from the position of party leader. According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), there was speculation as to whether Helen would stand for nomination for his position, “...which she brought to an end by making it quite clear that she had more than enough work in the Assembly without the daily problems of party administration” (pp. 237-238). Colin Eglin was unanimously elected as Progressive Party leader in February 1971. Strangwayes-Booth (1976, pp. 239-240) wrote:

Helen was content with Eglin’s election to the leadership. She thought him both able and sincere and believed that if anyone could lift the Party out of its current doldrums he was the man to do it. Unlike Steytler, far away on his Queenstown farm, and resentful of his anomalous role as leader without a parliamentary seat while Helen took the limelight, Eglin found no difficulty in working closely with his party’s solitary MP. Living in Cape Town, he was available at all times for consultation during sessions, and indeed, from now on Helen made a point of asking for his advice and opinion on controversial legislation. They did not always agree. (‘Helen and I’, he admitted in 1973, ‘can get bloody aggressive towards each other.’) The occasions for aggression were usually those when the leader’s tendency towards pragmatism and practical politicking clashed with Helen’s increasingly uncompromising stand on current matters of principle.

One such an occasion was Helen’s stance on the proposed Drug Abuse Act in 1971. She argued that not distinguishing between marijuana and other drugs of abuse when sentencing is concerned would result in sending thousands of Black people to prison for what she considered to be a cultural habit (Suzman, 1993). This placed Helen in disagreement with her new leader and much of the party rank-and-file. However, she stood firm, stating that although she was against drug abuse, she would oppose any law which allowed people to be locked up without trial. In Parliament, she was accused of promoting a permissive society and trying to lead the South African youth astray (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen was later to experience a sense of retribution when, in 1978, the law was

amended as the courts and prisons could not cope with the resulting tens of thousands of marijuana-related convictions (Suzman, 1993). Eglin later reflected on their relationship and his experience of Helen (Eglin, 2006, p. 7):

Many times I have looked up to her as a role model. At times, I have had the not always easy task of being her leader... I have come to know Helen's keen intellect, to enjoy her gracious hospitality, to try to avoid her whiplash tongue and to appreciate her sense of fairness... Most of the time we have enjoyed each other's company, and at times when this was not the case, at least we endured each other with good grace...

Aunt Hansa passed away in 1972. Helen (by then 55 years old) sorted through Hansa's belongings, and remembered later in her memoirs making a significant discovery: "I came across a photograph of my father as a young man seated on a chair: next to him, with her hand on his shoulder, was a young woman – my mother" (Suzman, 1993, p. 7). This was the first time Helen had seen a photograph of her mother (Suzman, 1993).

During the 1972 session of Parliament, the Schlebusch Commission was formed, aimed at investigating the objectives and activities of four groups identified by Vorster (the SAIRR, NUSAS, the University Christian Movement, and the Christian Institute) (Suzman, 1993). Vorster recommended that Parliament should take cognisance of organisations such as these, which he felt may give rise to Communist subversion. Helen refused to have any part in the Select Committee (Pimstone, 2005), and attacked the UP for "giving the pseudo-judicial inquiry a false aura of respectability" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 245) by availing themselves to serve on the Committee. She commented: "It would have been far better... to leave the Nationalists to sit communing with themselves, like yogis contemplating their navels" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 245)

Apart from her Parliamentary work, Helen also had to reply to the numerous letters she received, many from people in need of assistance (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). The requests, hardly any of which were from Houghton constituents, varied greatly and ranged from problems with invalid passbooks and confiscated passports, to financial, legal, personal, and employment problems (Suzman, 1993). Helen commented in her memoirs:

The volume of letters that poured through my mailbox in Cape Town and in Johannesburg was immense. They came from home and abroad, from the rich and the famous, the poor and unknown and the merely curious. Most of all, though, they came from ordinary people – people who believed that I could solve anything; that my position made it possible for me to work miracles... there was nothing South Africans (and sometimes non-South Africans from neighbouring countries), Black and White, seemed to believe that the Member for Houghton could not put right. Sometimes I could. Often

I couldn't. But no letter went unanswered. So conditioned was I, that on occasions I found myself answering anonymous letters. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 114-115)

The unremitting nature of her work was beginning to take its toll on Helen. She had always argued that optimism is a prerequisite for being progressive, adding that “optimists are happier than pessimists” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 231). However, Helen now experienced moments of exhaustion and frustration, which she only shared with those close to her. In a letter to her daughter Frances, she wrote:

There is no time to read during the day and I am too damned tired at night. I long for the end of this parliamentary life so I can just laze around and read and read and do what I damn well please all day long. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 231)

Despite her fatigue, Helen was hailed for her performance during the 1973 session, which many observers felt had been her finest. However, to her own admission, she admitted that her “sunny nature” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 257) had become somewhat warped by her lonely battle in an increasingly hostile House. She no longer derived even a rare moment of amusement from Parliament and she feared that she would again find herself alone after the elections. She admitted that her 21-year battle against apartheid had not generated the numerous changes the liberals were hoping for. When asked by a reporter what exactly she had accomplished, she cynically said: “It was probably my incessant nagging that resulted in policemen having to wear identity numbers... It is useful to know who is hitting you on the head with a rubber truncheon” (Rensberger, 1974, p. 3). Later, in her memoirs, however, Helen reflected more positively on the impact she had had during these years alone:

With Jackie's help, I put hundreds of questions to ministers during those years... on housing, education, forced removals, pass law offenses. I also asked many questions relating to civil rights and the rule of law... So infuriated was one National Party Cabinet Minister that he shouted in Parliament, ‘You put these questions just to embarrass South Africa overseas.’ I replied, ‘It is not my questions that embarrass South Africa – it is your answers.’ My questions – and the answers to them – elicited a great deal of useful information. They provided a considerable volume of facts and figures which were used by researchers (and also, no doubt, by anti-apartheid organizations worldwide)... I often smiled when I recollected the foolish advice given to me by a UP whip when I was a new backbencher: ‘Avoid putting questions; they are just a cheap way of getting publicity’. (Suzman, 1993, p. 113)

The Progressive Party's failure to make electoral progress had contributed to a "certain overall weariness in her" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 257). Helen later remarked that "...like everybody else, I long to be loved..., but I am not prepared to make any concessions whatsoever - they can take me as they find me" (p. 257). Furthermore, she informed Colin Eglin that she intended to resign in the event of another sole victory in the 1974 elections. Apart from the strain of being the party's only parliamentary representative, Helen "...felt that the effort and financial cost of keeping a party functioning which could win only one seat after thirteen years of struggle, were excessive" (Suzman, 1993, p. 166). She privately made it known that she would rather devote her energy to extra-political work, like that performed by the Black Sash. Publicly, however, she made an effort to appear as optimistic and confident as ever, telling audiences about her dream of returning to Parliament to share her bench with other Progressive MPs (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

Helen's mood improved dramatically on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1974, which she referred to as "the most exciting night of my life – politically, that is!" (Suzman, 1993, pp. 167-168). As the result that came in confirming that the PP had won another seat in addition to that of Houghton, Helen was elated: "Selma and I threw our arms around each other, cried "Hooray!" and waltzed up and down the schoolroom, to the horror of our opponents, who were shaken to the core by this first ominous election result" (Suzman, 1993, p. 168). That night, the Progressive Party won five seats in addition to hers, acquiring another seat at a by-election in Cape Town shortly after the general election, bringing the solo years to a definite end:

And later, as they gathered in Helen's own constituency of Houghton in the sodden, grey autumn dawn of the following day to cheer their new MPs and MPCs and to await the final result – the victory of the Party's leader..., which set the seal on their triumph – many in that damp and exhausted gathering, drunk with relief, euphoria, fatigue and red wine, could be heard repeating to each other, over and over again, like a chant of victory: 'Helen's not alone any more!' (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 15)

### **2.2.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)**

It was rather touching to see those big chaps, all about six feet tall and more, looking like a lot of kids on their first day at school. When I walked into the House at the next opening of Parliament to take the oath with our six other MPs, a Nat member called out, 'There comes Mrs. Rosenkewitz.' (She was a woman who had had sextuplets in Cape Town a few months before.) We were back in business. (Suzman, 1993, p.170)

Helen, now aged 56, returned to Parliament looking forward to not only a significantly lighter work-load – “I have shed portfolios like a python sheds its skin, with a vast shrug of relief” (Lewson, 1991, p. 256) – but also valuable camaraderie (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). During her Report Back meeting that year, she stated that she found it “impossible to describe the pleasure... of having friends with me in the House: to talk to, to laugh with, consult with, have a drink with” (Lewson, 1991, p. 256), and to receive their “hear hears” when she sat down after making a speech (Suzman, 1993, p. 170). The new Progressive Party MPs, except for Colin Eglin, were all newcomers to Parliament. Therefore, Helen shared a front bench with the party leader:

Colin is a huge man with hands like hams... I cowered in the far corner, expecting to be struck unconscious at any moment, as he delivered his speeches with frequent chopping motions of those large paws. Nationalist Party MPs on the other side of the House would watch this scenario with fascination and hope. (Suzman, 1993, p. 169)

Helen was approached in 1974 with a nomination for chancellorship of Wits University. After considerable hesitation due to the extra demands it would make on her time, she agreed. The two other candidates were Birch Bernstein and Alan Paton, the author of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, with whom Helen had had a “long-distance friendship” (Suzman, 1993, p. 184) over many years. Helen commented that because she and Paton were expected to compete for votes from the same section of liberal Wits alumni, suggestions were made that one should withdraw. She stated that, however, they both remained in the running, based on their shared belief in democratic principle. Both were defeated (Suzman, 1993).

During that year, Helen’s attention was again drawn to the forced removals under the Group Areas Act (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). The chief of the Mayen people in the Northern Cape had written to her, asking the “Most respectful Mother Suzman” to discuss the matter on their behalf. Helen did, but without success and the Mayen were removed (Suzman, 1993). She had on numerous occasions raised the inequities that occurred as a result of forced removals and Group Area proclamations and had in the past argued that the forced removals would result in poverty and broken families. Helen was disappointed at Vorster’s lack of sympathy for the Mayen people, especially in the light of the promises he had made in an earlier speech:

In 1974 Vorster made a speech in which he asked the world to ‘give us six months,’ implying that change was in the offing. I told him he had aroused great expectations in the United States, which I had been visiting at the time, and advised him, as one golfer to another, that having made his backswing, he had better follow through. (Suzman, 1993, p. 80)

Against the backdrop of increasingly strained relations between South Africa and the international community, Helen visited Australia in 1975. There she felt like a “political football” (Suzman, 1993, p. 185) as the Australian Prime Minister and the leader of the Official Opposition voiced their sentiments about South Africa. She recalled how her meetings there all followed more or less the same pattern: good attendance and an absence of interruptions during her speech, followed by hostile questions from students accusing her of being the mouthpiece of Harry Oppenheimer and “multinational corporations that exploit the Blacks” (Suzman, 1993, p. 185). She remembered a meeting in Melbourne, which she had accurately predicted would be “hot”:

There were demonstrators outside with flags, people chanting slogans and handing out pamphlets. It was very rowdy, with police in attendance, but I rescued one demonstrator who was about to be arrested. There was much foot stamping and an ANC spokesman who talked the usual rubbish about instant revolution... He was cheered and I was booed by the demonstrators, but the audience as a whole was supportive. (Suzman, 1993, p. 186)

En route home from Australia, Helen stopped over at Mauritius, where she spent 10 days as a guest of the government. At the university there, she was confronted by a group of students who banged on the desks, called her a racist and yelled for her to go home. At her suggestion they left the hall and she addressed a small group of about 60 students “who listened quietly” (Suzman, 1993, p. 186). Following this incident, a completely different kind of encounter took place over breakfast at a Mauritius hotel, which she recounted in her memoirs:

I was directed to a table occupied by a number of people readily identified by their accents as South Africans. As I sat down, a deathly hush ensued and I, dismayed, thought, ‘Oh, dear, they’ve recognized me and now it will be nothing but politics at breakfast.’ Instead, an aggressive female voice asked, ‘Aren’t you Helen Gavronsky from Germiston? I played hockey against you at school. And what have you been doing since then?’ (Suzman, 1993, p. 186)

In May of 1976, the PP won another seat at a by-election in Durban North. Later that year, merging with Harry Schwarz’s Reform Party brought about a change in name to the Progressive Reform Party (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). The party would again be renamed the following year, this time to the Progressive Federal Party, after various former United Party members also joined the Progressive ranks (Suzman, 1993). Helen struggled to adjust to these changes, particularly due to Schwarz’s presence in the party:

I had some difficulty finding myself in the same caucus as Schwarz. We had

fought each other bitterly when he was in the United Party and I was in the Progressive Party. We continued to confront each other with hostility, although we were now in the same party. I was often irritated by his angry outbursts in the caucus when he did not get his own way, and was embarrassed by his hawkish attitude towards the South African Defence Force. He in turn strongly disapproved of my frequent attacks on the South African Police. As his front bench was adjacent to mine, I could clearly hear a disapproving hum – like a large mosquito – when I was speaking on this subject. (Suzman, 1993, p. 176)

Strangwayes-Booth (1976) described this period of transition within the Progressive Party. She commented that a significant number of Progressives opposed the merger with the Reform Party and looked to Helen for leadership, which was not forthcoming:

No longer the solitary voice of the Party in Parliament, she was now once again part of a caucus: a different one from that of 1959 – 61, and she herself a far more dominant figure within it. But the Party was moving into a wider political spectrum, and the tightly-knit group of idealists who had kept it alive for so many years found themselves giving way to the pragmatism of the new MPs and their supporters... Helen, possibly with relief, had taken a back seat in the 1975 parliamentary session, allowing her new colleagues to assume a larger share of the burden she had become used to carrying alone. Now, in the debate that began to rage about the pros and cons of merger..., she maintained her low profile. Never herself ambitious for the Party leadership, she was not prepared to allow her fears as to the course the diluted Party might take and her own personal misgivings about Harry Schwarz to jeopardize her loyalty to her party, as personified by Colin Eglin. (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, pp. 263-264)

The attention of the Progs would soon be shifted away from party politics to the eruption of a national and violent crisis. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, 1976, thousands of schoolchildren from Soweto<sup>31</sup> marched in protest of the government's policy of enforcing Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in secondary schools. They clashed with police and at least one child, 13-year-old Hector Peterson, sustained a fatal gunshot wound (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007). At the time, Helen was in the United States to receive an honorary doctorate degree from Harvard University. On the day of the ceremony, she saw the front-page photograph of a young Black man carrying Peterson's body in his arms. She recalled:

It was with some trepidation that I stepped forward to receive the honorary degree, expecting hostility from the vast assembly in the Harvard Yard. Instead, I received a standing ovation. When I returned home, the Minister of Justice, Jimmy Kruger, could not resist commenting, 'And where was the Hon. Member for Houghton when all the trouble began in Soweto? She was in America receiving a degree from some obscure university.' My first

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<sup>31</sup> A Black urban area near Johannesburg, whose name was derived from South Western Townships

reaction to the news of the Soweto unrest had been to catch the next plane home. But on phoning Colin Eglin, I was reminded that I wasn't the only Prog in the House who could respond to the crisis. I was advised to fulfil my remaining commitments in the United States. The American Jewish committee in Philadelphia was to confer a human rights award on me, and I had appointments with members of the State Department and members of the Congress in Washington, D.C. When I was approached by the media in the United States for comment on the tragic happenings in Soweto, I could express only utter dismay, but no surprise. After all, had we not warned over and over again that violent confrontation was inevitable unless conditions were improved in Black urban areas? (Suzman, 1993, pp. 171-172)

After police had opened fire on the Soweto youths, mass rioting quickly ensued and swept across the township, resulting in several deaths. The unrest spread across the Republic and the Black youth were in some places soon joined by adults, Coloureds and Indians. By the end of the following year, it was conservatively estimated that 575 people had been killed and 2389 wounded in the nationwide uprising that followed the Soweto riots (Barber, 1999). Helen openly criticized the "whole neglectful, ineffectual bunch in the Bantu Administration Department" (Suzman, 1993, p. 173) for having allowed the issue of Afrikaans tuition to escalate into civil unrest, an accusation that was angrily denied by Deputy Minister Treurnicht. Helen conducted several meetings with leaders from the township, but found the Black youth leaders to be a resistant audience (Suzman, 1993). She became aware of the youth's growing intransigence and commented that it looked as if "things had gone too far for White liberals to be able to play any role other than continuing to put pressure on the government..." (p. 173). In the wake of the riots, Helen continued to receive numerous plights for assistance, this time from the parents of many township schoolchildren:

I was besieged by phone calls from desperate parents whose children had been picked up and were being held they knew not where. Some of them had slipped across the border into Swaziland or Botswana; others simply fled into the veld. There was total chaos in the townships. I spent hours on the telephone – calling hospitals, police stations, even the mortuary – trying to trace the whereabouts of missing children... Every day, somewhere or other, there were confrontations with police and the burning down of schools. Worst of all, the Internal Security Act was used widely and people involved with Black student activities were picked up; how many, no one knew, or under what particular law, or where they were held. It was a very spooky feeling, worse than ever before because the police were totally arrogant about using these powers and refused to give any information. Public reaction was minimal. The protest marches or City Hall meetings of the 1960s were not repeated. Everybody was punch-drunk and scared of being accused of inciting the Blacks. (Suzman, 1993, p. 174)

The government's strategy for managing the aftermath of the Soweto uprising included the use of preventive detention<sup>32</sup> (Suzman, 1993). Helen felt that the detainees were the very people that the Black youth trusted, and who should have been consulted with regard to diffusing the continuing unrest. She again asked for permission to visit the detainees, which was granted in November of 1977. She remembered how delighted they were to receive visits from somebody other than a near relative: "I brought them books and a large meat pie, still hot, from a local bakery. The warder asked suspiciously what was in it, so I suggested he stick his finger into it. I was allowed to deliver the pie" (Suzman, 1993, p. 175).

Helen's relationship with students at liberal English-medium universities began to deteriorate during this time, and she felt that the merger with the Reform Party was partly to blame (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). She addressed a mass meeting at Wits in 1977, and was enraged when the secretary of NUSAS advised students to boycott the ballot box and to ignore the upcoming elections:

He evidently didn't realize that if the Nats had an overwhelming victory on November 30, what they were doing now would look like a school picnic compared with what they would do thereafter. I wrote to the NUSAS president asking if the secretary's statement to two thousand students was official policy and told him that if it was I would resign as an honorary vice-president of the organisation. If it was not, I asked him to repudiate publicly the secretary's advice. He did not do so, but he assured me that NUSAS had not taken any such resolution. It did, however, within the next ten years, by which time I had been deposed as honorary vice-president, with not a word of thanks for my past efforts on behalf of the students when they were under siege at the Schlebusch Commission hearings and under attack by the police on campus. I felt this to be a sad reflection of what had been a close relationship between myself and the students in earlier years – a total rejection of shared liberal values, now replaced by radicalism. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 177-178)

Apart from these unpleasant encounters during university meetings, Helen also suffered "an attack from an unexpected quarter" (Suzman, 1993, p. 180). In February 1977, newspapers published a comment by Andrew Young, the American Ambassador to the United Nations, in which he said that the only South African he could not get along with, was Helen Suzman, owing to her 'paternal liberalism'. Helen's researcher, Brian Doctor, was infuriated and wrote a five page letter to Young, extolling Helen's virtues and commenting

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<sup>32</sup> The security police targeted students and teachers in an attempt to suppress the unrest (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007) and 136 prominent Black people were held without trial (Suzman, 1993). Student leader Steve Biko, who was arrested in 1976 for 101 days, was again arrested on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August of 1977. Following police interrogation, during which he sustained significant head injuries, Biko died in detention on September 12 (Barber, 1999; Leach, 1986).

on her dedication and hard work fighting for human rights, both in and out of Parliament. Young replied, claiming that his comments were regrettably misinterpreted, adding that Helen's determination and principles are recognized by many and that her lonely stand against apartheid in spite of personal and political attacks had earned her well-deserved admiration. Helen recalled (Suzman, 1993, p. 182):

On my next visit to the United States, he invited me to come and see him at his office at the U.N., which I did; and we made up. But I must say I thought it was very unfair of him to have made his original statement, which subjected me to ridicule by Nationalist MPs. Moreover, the last thing I could be accused of was 'paternal liberalism.' I have always been just as nasty to Blacks as I am to Whites, and that can be very nasty indeed! Simple justice was ever my motivation, not 'paternal liberalism.'

An incident at the funeral of Robert Sobukwe had also sparked conflict between Helen and Gatsha Buthelezi, Chief Minister of the homeland of KwaZulu. Helen had met Sobukwe for the first time when he was imprisoned on Robben Island. She raised his case in Parliament every year (Pimstone, 2005), "but to little avail" (Suzman, 1993, p. 215). He had, by their first meeting, served almost six additional years of imprisonment under the 1963 General Laws Amendment Act which Helen had so vehemently opposed. Helen's last visit with Sobukwe was at the Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town. He was in the terminal stages of cancer. Moira Henderson, a mutual close friend of Helen and the Sobukwe family, was also present at this visit. Helen later wrote that she was struck by "his quiet dignity, and his lack of bitterness about a wasted life which he knew was nearing its end. Perhaps he knew that although he could be banned, his ideas could not..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 215). Helen and Moira attended his funeral on March 12, 1978. Although she had been asked by Sobukwe's wife to deliver an address at the funeral, she was later informed that the young PAC members who had taken over the arrangements did not want any of the White attendants to give the funeral addresses (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Helen accepted what she saw as being part of the rejection by young politicized Blacks of White liberals, which she said she had been expecting for years (Suzman, 1993). Helen and Moira, who were sitting with the general public in the stands at the agricultural grounds where the funeral was held, were invited by one of the Black priests to join the family and friends on the platform. Seated on the platform too, was Buthelezi. Helen later recalled the events that transpired next:

As we sat waiting, there was a sound of chanting, and a procession marched along behind the field. It consisted of a large number of Blacks bearing Sobukwe's coffin, singing as they came... The procession came round onto the field, and the coffin was laid at Mrs. Sobukwe's feet on the platform.

Then the bearers caught sight of Buthelezi, and almost immediately there was an uproar... It became very nasty, because they started advancing towards the platform. The moving throng took not the slightest notice of us... There was a very ugly scene. Gatsha left in haste with his aide, who fired one shot into the air. The funeral service then was allowed to commence and continued for five hours under a blazing sun. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 216-217)

Helen commented afterward that she believed militant young Black radicals in the cities to be antagonistic towards Buthelezi because he worked within the system. A press report, however, implied that Helen had written off his leadership in the urban areas. Following this, Buthelezi remarked in the KwaZulu Assembly that Helen, Alan Paton and other 'super-liberals' "were determined as ever to do the thinking for 'us kaffirs'" (Suzman, 1993, p. 217). Helen was outraged:

I wrote to him to express my indignation at this unjustifiable attack. I had a very long reply in which he accused me of being negative towards him, of making anti-Buthelezi remarks at home and abroad, and of frequently sharing platforms with those who denigrated him. (Suzman, 1993, p. 217)

Helen faced further conflicts when P.W. Botha succeeded Vorster as Prime Minister in 1978. Although Helen was not happy at the prospect of continuing her hostile relationship with Botha in his new capacity, she recalled that tensions between her and Vorster had escalated towards the end of his time in Parliament:

Towards the end of his regime Vorster had had a bellyful of me. He turned very nasty and sarcastic, and the many unpleasant exchanges between us in Parliament led even Louis Louw, parliamentary correspondent of *Die Burger*, the most influential Nationalist newspaper in the Cape, to write an article entitled 'Why so hard on Mrs. Suzman?' (Suzman, 1993, p. 82)

The Progressive Reform Party had attained the status of Official Opposition when they returned to Parliament in January of 1978. Within the party, however, hostility between Helen and Schwarz was continuous, and had reached a peak during the 1978 party's congress held in Durban (Suzman, 1993). Helen addressed the congress, speaking in favour of a National Convention which would include leaders across the political spectrum. Schwarz, however, proposed an amendment to exclude people with previous convictions of crimes of treason or sabotage (such as Nelson Mandela). Helen admitted to being "deeply upset" (p. 177) when his amendment passed and contemplated resigning from the party. She was swayed and decided to stay only because the PFP had changed its qualified franchise policy to that of a universal adult franchise (Suzman, 1993).

In 1980, Helen was for the second and last time during her long career, ordered to

leave the debating chamber by the Speaker. Her offence was insulting Prime Minister Botha and refusing to withdraw the remark. Helen's anger originated from events that unfolded during the previous Parliamentary recess, when she had learnt that the government had been tampering with her mail. Her daughter Frances had long complained that Helen's letters were taking longer to reach her in London, but it wasn't until *The Observer* published documents obtained from a Bureau of State Security defector, Arthur McGiven, that Helen became aware that she was being treated as a security risk. The documents carried the codename Operation Knoopsgat<sup>33</sup> - Helen was identified by number W/V<sup>34</sup> 24596 - and contained correspondence between her and overseas contacts, such as a letter from her to confirm her visit to Harvard University. Helen sarcastically remarked in her memoirs that another letter from an American professor contained "the dangerously subversive information that he and his wife would be visiting South Africa..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 193). Helen confronted the government, charging them with illegally tapping her phone and tampering with her mail. She asked for a parliamentary select committee to investigate what she considered to be a breach of parliamentary privilege. Helen felt that she had the right to be exonerated from the government's implied accusation of treason through the monitoring of her communication. She added that:

...instead of having its ear to the ground and informing the cabinet, for example, that serious unrest is brewing in Soweto in 1976, the government had its ear to my telephone. 'Perhaps the one comforting thought I got out of this whole disgusting affair,' I added, 'was that over the years when the government was tapping my telephone, it must certainly have heard some home truths from me about themselves, often couched in good Anglo-Saxon terms.' (Suzman, 1993, p. 193)

During Botha's reply he called Helen a "vicious little cat" and made it clear that a select committee will not be appointed. Helen then called him a coward, and was sent out of the house for refusing to withdraw the remark (Suzman, 1993, p. 194). Her animosity towards him, however, had been longstanding (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). On one occasion, she had said of Botha that if he had been female he would have arrive in parliament on a broomstick ("Flags to fly at half mast", 2009). She later referred to him as an "irascible bully" (Suzman, 1993, p.199) and described him as "...My bête noire. A three-headed bête noire. He was first Minister of Colored Affairs, then Minister of Defense, then Prime Minister. I had a singularly hostile relationship with him in all three roles, stretching over

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<sup>33</sup> buttonhole

<sup>34</sup> *Wit vrou* (white woman)

many years” (Suzman, 1993, p. 82).

The year 1980 also saw the Cillié Commission’s report on the 1976 Soweto unrest. Helen, who found the Commission’s findings to be of considerable value, spoke on it in Parliament, criticising it for exonerating the police. The debate took a rather surprising turn for Helen:

I was about to conclude my speech when half my petticoat slipped to my feet. No one would have known about it, as my desk screened me from view, if I hadn’t said, ‘Oh, God,’ rather audibly and sat down and afterwards told one of my colleagues what had happened. Of course, my gossipy colleague could not resist telling John Scott, who wrote a satirical article on Parliament every day for the *Cape Times*. The way it came out in next day’s issue, one would have thought I was standing in full view of the House with my petty round my feet, and that I had been unable to finish my speech. Actually my time had expired and I had to sit down anyway. John offered to write an explanatory note the next day when I complained to him, but I decided it wasn’t worth the fuss, especially as I had recovered my sense of humour by then, after receiving a sympathetic note, with a safety pin attached, from one nationalist MP and a pair of braces from Louis le Grange, the Minister of Police and Law and Order. (Suzman, 1993, p. 196-197)

She would soon, however, have more serious encounters with Le Grange (Suzman, 1993). In August of 1981, a protest meeting was held in a Cathedral near Parliament, with the aim to present a petition to Minister Le Grange (Suzman, 1993). The procession was declared illegal and police gathered to prevent the procession from marching to Parliament. Helen intervened, and obtained permission to escort the two main speakers to Parliament. She went to St. George’s Cathedral and cautioned the procession to disperse in small groups so as to avoid arrest. Helen and the speakers arrived at Parliament’s gates to find them locked. But Helen was adamant and ordered that the constable guarding the gate with an Alsatian dog to let them in:

He said, ‘You can go in, but not the other two.’ I pointed to the minister standing large as life nearby and he signalled his consent. The constable unlocked the gates and we walked into the gardens. The dog began growling in a menacing way. Mindful of Barbara Woodhouse, whose television lessons in canine discipline I had followed with keen interest, I raised my hand and said firmly, ‘Sit’ – and the dog sat. Even the constable smiled. The minister accepted the petition and the crowd left the cathedral two by two, unmolested by the police. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 198-199)

Thereafter, Helen was accused of having taken part in an unlawful march by escorting the two protesters to Parliament. She was angry with Minister Le Grange for not giving her

credit for her role in the peaceful resolution of the protest, and for not clarifying the nature of her participation in the day's events. Another conflict with Botha ensued:

The heated argument that ensued proved irresistible to Prime Minister P.W. Botha, who snarled at me, 'You try to break the law and you will see what happens to you.' And I snarled back, 'I'm not frightened of you. I never have been and I never will be. I think nothing of you... You have been trying to bully me for twenty-eight years and you have not yet succeeded.' (Suzman, 1993, p. 199)

Helen would later describe her relationship with Le Grange as "curious and ambivalent" (Suzman, 1993, p. 242). Although they had many hostile exchanges in Parliament, they were on better terms on a personal level than she had been with his predecessors. When he became Speaker, she experienced him as courteous and remembers that he would often initiate a conversation when they met in the lobby of Parliament. Helen recalled that:

On my one visit to the Soviet Union in June 1982, I could not resist sending a postcard to Le Grange. It read; 'There is plenty of law and order here – I am coming home.' It was addressed to 'Dear Comrade Louis,' and I signed it 'Kind regards, Comrade Helen.' Le Grange claimed he never received this postcard, so it is languishing in the rusty files of the KGB or perhaps in the hands of the South African security police. (Suzman, 1993, p. 242)

During this time, Helen was presented with various accolades and awards for her work. Helen and Desmond Tutu were both nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983. When asked to comment on her nomination, she told the press that she did not feel that either she or Tutu deserved it, as they were simply performing their duties (Suzman, 1993). She and her friends later considered the possibility that her unpopular stance against economic sanctions could have been one of the reasons that the award was not given to her (Kadalie, 2010; Suzman, September 2005). In 1980, Helen visited the United States again to deliver a speech at a seminar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She was also presented with a medal by Mayor Ed Koch:

His Honor had just written and publicized a letter to P.W. Botha condemning South Africa's racial policy, so my visit was timely and the presentation may have been intended as a gesture to mollify hostile Blacks in New York. For my part, it had unexpected consequences, as Mayor Koch dropped the heavy brass medal on my foot, and I limped around New York for several days. (Suzman, 1993, p. 183)

Despite the accolades and recognition Helen received both internationally and at home, she became unpopular among many anti-apartheid activists (Godsell, 2011;

Nieuwenhuysen, 2009; Pimstone, 2005). The 1980s was marked by the controversy regarding political and economic sanctions against South Africa. Helen's philosophy had remained unchanged from the mid-1970s, when she said: "I have always held that the more rapid the economic development of this country, the more apartheid will come apart at the seams" (Rensberger, 1974, p. 5). She became a contentious figure among those more radically opposed to apartheid, including protestors on American campuses (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Godsell, 2011). Not one to shy away from controversy, Helen participated fully in the debate, once telling an audience in New York that whilst she understood their motivation for protesting, she felt that compromising the economy would not ensure a more stable and just society (Burns & Cowell, 2009). In her memoirs, she reflected on her stance and the reaction it invoked (Suzman, 1993, p. 256):

My opposition to sanctions against South Africa clouded my relationship with many people overseas and with many Blacks at home, disappointing those who expected me to be an enthusiastic supporter of punitive action against the regime I opposed over so many years. I believe I had sound economic reasons for my attitude, while as far as the cultural boycott was concerned, it was my belief that contact with the outside world was likely to be more effective than isolation in influencing public opinion in South Africa.

Helen's relationship with Tutu in particular, was clouded by this issue. She wrote that "sanctions were one of the few issues in which I differed from Desmond Tutu (who called me his "dear child," though I am fourteen years older than he is)..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 260). He had claimed that Blacks were suffering so much already that a rise in unemployment would not significantly increase their suffering. She accepted his challenge, namely, for those who were against sanctions to suggest an alternative way of pressurising the government, and suggested industrial action. She proposed that economic growth would empower Black workers and their trade unions, who could then use strikes, stay-aways and boycotts. She felt that these were the only effective weapons at their disposal, as they could easily be abandoned or reversed when the objectives have been met, whereas sanctions will lead to lost markets that cannot easily be regained (Suzman, 1993). In addition, she argued that sanctions played some part in the violence that claimed thousands of lives during this time (Schwartz, 1992).

Despite costing Helen support, she carried on with her campaign against sanctions throughout the 1980s. She wrote various articles and conducted countless television and press interviews on what she felt would be the harsh consequences of economic boycotts for Africans, both at home and abroad (Rotberg, 2011; Suzman, 1993). She voiced her belief

both locally and abroad that sanctions could “cure the disease but kill the patient” (Schwartz, 1992; Suzman, 1993). Although she had managed to convince some of her audience about the counterproductive effects she felt sanctions could have, her reception was sometimes cold and on a few occasions, even openly hostile. In her memoirs, Helen recalled one of her visits during this time:

On my visits to universities in the States I encountered surprise and disappointment because I openly opposed sanctions. I was usually given a courteous hearing on the campuses, thanks to my anti-apartheid track record. Now and then, however, I was assailed by angry students, almost invariably led by Black South African exiles, as occurred when I was invited to visit Wesleyan University in Connecticut as a Baldwin Fellow in 1989. The exiles organized a protest against my appearance on the campus. Pamphlets were distributed the day before I was due to speak, depicting me as a tool of the capitalist oppressors and grossly distorting a remark I had frequently made in Parliament. I used to taunt the government for using me as ‘Exhibit A for democracy’ by allowing me to go abroad and criticize the apartheid regime. The pamphlets proclaimed: ‘Democracy flourishes in South Africa – Helen Suzman.’ (Suzman, 1993, p. 261)

Helen did have overseas allies in her stance against sanctions. In fact, she felt that it was due to their shared attitude on the matter that Margaret Thatcher wanted to meet her. Helen had three meetings with the Prime Minister at No 10 Downing Street, and after Thatcher was deposed, Helen spent time with her during a Johannesburg visit:

I found Mrs. Thatcher extremely well informed and quite unshaken by the hostility her views on sanctions had engendered at Commonwealth meetings... I personally admired her obvious intelligence and her remarkable achievement in attaining the highest political position in a country well stocked with male chauvinists... Judging by her performance when she visited South Africa... Mrs. Thatcher’s stamina is remarkable... (her) powers of endurance and her courage are undeniable. A sense of humour, however, is not her strong point. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 264-265)

Despite the effects of the sanctions debate, Helen’s liaisons with local leaders continued during the 1980s. She received permission again to visit Nelson Mandela in 1983, when he was detained in Pollsmoor Prison. His wife, Winnie, had claimed that he was being ill-treated and that prison authorities were trying to break his spirit. Helen had a lengthy contact visit with Mandela in which she felt he talked freely and claimed to be “in good shape” (Suzman, 1993, p. 153). Helen submitted a request for a garden to be added to the exercise yard, following complaints from Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Ahmed Kathrada that they only ever saw high walls and sky. Her request was granted. She, however, openly disagreed with Winnie’s allegations:

I knew my refutation of Winnie's claims would earn me the acute displeasure of the anti-apartheid movement, but I believed that the overriding objective was to obtain the prisoners' release. Nelson and his fellow prisoners had been in jail for nearly twenty years. I was convinced that the case for their release was weakened by gross exaggeration. (Suzman, 1993, p. 153)

Mandela was one of Helen's opponents when she was again approached with a nomination for chancellorship of Wits University the following year. She was asked to assist Mandela, who was still in Pollsmoor, in signing the nomination form, and to ensure that it reaches the Wits registrar. Furthermore, she was again asked to withdraw her name from the contest, and again she refused on democratic principle. She did, to her utter astonishment, succeed in obtaining the cooperation of prison officials in assisting with Mandela's nomination process. The signed form was rushed by special plane from Cape Town to Johannesburg and was delivered by a senior police officer at five minutes to midnight (Suzman, 1993). Helen and Mandela were defeated in the election, arousing her suspicions:

Was it possible, I wondered later, that the extraordinary effort made by the prison officials in this highly unusual matter could have been inspired by political acumen and the realization that Mandela and I, in competition for the votes of the liberal alumni of Wits, would cancel each other's chances? We shall never know. But Rosholt has proved to be an outstanding chancellor. (Suzman, 1993, p. 185)

Helen visited several communities in the Transvaal, Natal and Ciskei who were threatened with forced removals during the 1980s, and took up several cases on behalf of the residents there, as always adamant to see for herself the effects of governmental policies (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She argued that the lack of infrastructure in the areas to which people are evacuated, the lack of employment opportunities for the residents, the destruction of family life and the uprooting of a community, makes the policy of removals "... a disgrace to a so-called civilized country" (Suzman, 1993, p. 200). Helen became involved in attempts to prohibit similar treatment of squatters in Cape Town. The police would repeatedly tear down the shelters of the squatters. When they were alerted of a raid, Helen and a colleague, Ken Andrews, would drive out to the settlements at dawn to try to curb police action. She recalled:

Week after week this ugly charade was played out. Year after year my colleagues and I raised the issue of the desperate shortage of accommodations for Blacks in the area, with special reference to Crossroads, some nine miles from Cape Town, where about eighty thousand people lived under primitive conditions in self-made shacks of corrugated iron and wood. (Suzman, 1993, p. 205)

The Crossroads became the scene of another violent clash between residents and police. Following a rumour that they would be forcibly evicted, barricades were erected by the Crossroads residents, who then set fire to any vehicles entering the area. Helen was one of five Prog MPs who went there to see what was happening: “We found ourselves in the mêlée, watching the crowd heaving stones at the police, who were firing back at them. It was a very ugly scene...” (Suzman, 1993, p. 206). In the parliamentary debate that followed, Helen had argued that no improvements have been made in riot-control and expressed her disapproval of the high casualty rate, referring also to how many children were killed or injured by police. She made special mention of the injuries inflicted by rubber bullets and, at the end of her speech, Helen then showed such a bullet to her audience. She recalled that some of the government MPs “were clearly taken aback at the sight of this menacing missile” (Suzman, 1993, p. 207).

Helen’s public disapproval of police tactics came under scrutiny later that year, however, when she was invited to visit a police training centre during their riot-control training:

During the course of the morning, I was asked if I would like to fire a rubber bullet, and I foolishly agreed to do so. As I raised the gun, I saw a television camera trained on me and I knew the picture of Mrs. Suzman trying out this lethal weapon would be shown to astonished citizens that evening on the television news. And of course it was. I received a number of reproachful letters from liberals, and had to reassure them I had not transferred my sympathies to the riot police! (Suzman, 1993, p. 207)

By October 1985, the PFP had 27 elected MPs. Although the PFP leader and a substantial number of these MPs were Afrikaners, their support predominantly came from affluent English-speaking voters and newspapers, as well as businessmen who supported its free market economic policy (Leach, 1986). A few months after the election, however, the party suffered a significant blow with the resignation of their leader, Van Zyl Slabbert (Suzman, 1993). Prior to the beginning of the 1986 session, he had informed Helen personally about his intention to resign at the end of that session. She hoped that he would change his mind and begged him not to announce his retirement. However, a week into the session, he had called for her and informed her that he would announce his resignation that afternoon:

I was appalled that the leader of the Official Opposition would contemplate undermining his party in so drastic a fashion at the very beginning of a session. And I told him so. He replied that there was never a good time to resign. I said, ‘But you have chosen the very worst time,’ and begged him to

reconsider. He said he had stuck it out for seven years. I replied nastily, ‘Don’t talk to *me* about seven years!’ to which Van Zyl replied, ‘but you have a built-in survival kit second to none.’ He added that he believed extraparliamentary politics was more meaningful to the country. I left his office in despair and sat next to him in our front bench while he made his windup speech, hoping against hope he would conclude without any resignation announcement. But it came, with stunning impact, right at the end of his speech. (Suzman, 1993, p. 247)

His resignation had led to a party crisis concerning leadership, which only stabilized after Colin Eglin once again assumed the position. However, his resignation did have consequences for the following elections in 1987. According to Helen, the results were affected by the lack of trust that Van Zyl had demonstrated in the parliamentary process: “He, as leader, had declared that Parliament was irrelevant. Why, then, should the rank and file of the party continue to work and raise funds to keep its representatives there?” (Suzman, 1993, pp. 247-248). The result was that many students chose to become involved in extraparliamentary organisations rather than in PFP election campaigns, and many even refused to vote, with Wits University even hosting an anti-election campaign (Suzman, 1993, p. 248). Another consequence of Van Zyl’s resignation, was an improvement in Helen’s longstanding strained relationship with Schwarz: “Harry Schwarz and I were the two most outraged members of the caucus, and our differences faded into insignificance as a result. We developed a mutual respect for one another” (Suzman, 1993, p. 177). Despite recognising Van Zyl’s successful efforts in his extraparliamentary endeavours, Helen had experienced some difficulty in restoring their relationship:

Van Zyl and I became friends again in 1989, when we found ourselves in Bermuda attending a conference on South Africa organized by the Aspen Institute, though I found it hard to forgive the way he left the party which had placed so much trust in him. (Suzman, 1993, p. 247)

A few days before the 1987 election, Helen’s opponent for the Houghton seat used a photograph of her and Winnie Mandela which was published by *Time* in May of that year. Although he was denied permission from the magazine to use the photograph, he published it in pro-Nationalist newspapers with a new caption: “With our matchboxes and our necklaces<sup>35</sup> we will liberate our country” (Suzman, 1993, p. 249). At her last pre-election meeting in Houghton, Helen “exposed the lie” (p. 249) but refused to deny her longstanding friendship with Winnie. Although her constituency gave her an ovation and a majority win of about five

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<sup>35</sup> Burning tyres placed around the necks of Blacks suspected of collaborating with the government.

thousand votes, Helen felt that the use of the photograph may have affected voting in other districts. The election results were disappointing for the PFP: seven seats were lost to the National Party, and the party lost its position of Official Opposition to the right-wing Conservative Party (Suzman, 1993). This disappointing campaign was to be Helen's last. In her memoirs, she reflected on the lighter side of her election experiences:

All in all I fought six elections during my parliamentary career (in three others I was unopposed). Campaigns had their amusing side, particularly when canvassing voters. Some were very hostile to the Progressive Party, especially those who said, 'We staunch U.P., we nonpolitical,' and slammed the door in one's face. (That lot never seemed to have any use for verbs or for us Progs.) To them our treachery in leaving the old party and thus 'splitting the opposition' was unforgivable and remained so until the United Party disappeared from the political scene. (Suzman, 1993, p. 61)

Helen was reaching the end of her parliamentary career. During the 36 years she worked in Parliament, she engaged in various leisure activities, some of which would continue well into her retirement (Kraft, 1991; Sullivan, 2009; Suzman, 1993). The weekends that she stayed in Cape Town during sessions were mostly spent on playing golf, going to the beach and regular bridge games. She had regular visits with Frances's in-laws, Emily and Jack Jowell, at Muizenberg beach in False Bay, where they swam in the sea, walked for miles along the beach and ended their evenings with a game of bridge. Helen remarked that "...Cape Town's natural beauty – superb beaches, magnificent Table Mountain and lovely inland wine country – offers a great deal of enjoyment in leisure time" (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). She found personal reward in her relationship with nature, and when she was not in Cape Town, she enjoyed travelling to other parts of the country. Her sessions of trout fishing at the Hiddendale farm in the Eastern Transvaal were particularly inspiring, and she "...thought up some of my best bons mots for speeches as I walked along the banks, only to find I'd forgotten them when I got back to the cottage. But those excursions kept me sane..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). Helen also recalled the splendour of her end-of-year visits to a game farm on the borders of the Kruger National Park: "How many people have had the pleasure of seeing seventeen giraffe, in a semicircle not fifty yards away, blinking their long eyelashes, as I did on one such visit?" (Suzman, 1993, p. 276).

Due to the nature of her work, her social activities also included frequent diplomatic functions "...some enjoyable, others boring and many simply an extension of the day's work..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). However, these frequent encounters with the ever-changing occupants of the various embassies had resulted in lasting friendships with some of the

ambassadors. On her overseas visits, Helen always took care to renew her links with the former ambassadors and their staff with whom she had built a close relationship during their tours of duty in South Africa (Suzman, 1993).

Helen retired from golf towards the end of the 1980s, because "... my game had deteriorated to a frustrating extent. The winning ethic drummed into me by Sister Columba so many years ago persisted; I hated losing" (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). Not long afterwards, she would also retire from her parliamentary career (Suzman, 1993).

### **2.2.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)**

Retirement has not relegated me to the rocking chair. Maybe now that I am no longer an MP people think I need occupational therapy, for certainly the number of requests to address organizations, prize-givings, or to attend conferences are as numerous as ever. (Suzman, 1993, p.276)

Helen was seventy-one years of age when she announced on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1989 that she would not stand for re-election to Parliament in the September elections (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She had two main reasons for stepping down (Suzman, 1993). Firstly, she "always believed that it was a good idea to leave while people still thought I should stay, rather than waiting until they wondered how to get rid of me" (Suzman, 1993, p.267). Secondly, she had concerns over the formation of the new Democratic Party based on the merger of the Progressive Federal Party with two smaller groups, namely the Independent Party (IP) and the National Democratic Movement (NDM). Suzman was of the opinion that the leadership of the Democratic Party belonged to the PFP leader, Zach de Beer. The PFP negotiators, however, formed a troika with shared leadership. It appears that conflict about leadership and the image of the new party had influenced Suzman's decision to retire. She stated:

My friend Ray Swart made a similar decision. He was infuriated by snide comments by the newcomers who said that they did not want to be 'the Progressive Party in drag,' and by their determination to expunge the 'Prog image.' We believed the Prog image should be held in high regard because of its long, proud record of fighting for civil rights and against racial discrimination... (Suzman, 1993, p. 266)

On May 18, 1989, Helen reflected on her long career during her parliamentary farewell speech, which she stated had been personally very rewarding (Suzman, 1993).

Thanking her staff, colleagues, press and constituents, Helen said the following:

I have had the unique experience of having had a ringside seat from which to watch, and indeed to participate in, the making of over three and a half decades of South African history... Certainly there have been times of intense frustration, and there have been times of crashing boredom, but there have also been some very interesting times. There have been many opportunities to meet people I would otherwise never have met, both at home and abroad, and thereby to make friendships which I shall always cherish. (Suzman, 1993, p. 270)

Her final Report Back meeting, held at its usual venue, namely the Houghton Primary School hall, was on June 26, 1989 (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Helen reported that she found it difficult to take leave of those who had supported her for so many years. She described the meeting as "... a somewhat sad and emotional occasion" (Suzman, 1993, p. 272). However, the mood was soon lifted:

The gloom was relieved by the unexpected appearance at the back of the crowded hall of South Africa's foremost satirist, Pieter-Dirk Uys, easily recognisable despite his disguise as one of his favourite victims, P.W. Botha, the recently retired State President. Pieter, an old friend and longtime supporter, pushed his way down the crowded aisle to the platform and presented me with a single chrysanthemum. Taking the microphone, he said plaintively in Botha's unpleasant voice, 'Why does Mrs. Suzman have such nice farewell parties and mine are so awful?' (Suzman, 1993, p.272)

Helen concluded her farewell speech to her constituents by relating a personal story. She recounted dining in Cape Town, and that her host wanted to present her in a favourable light to his Black waiter, Josiah. He then told the waiter that Helen spends all her time trying to help his people. Helen recalled how Josiah looked at her disdainfully and plainly said that she was wasting her time (Suzman, 1993). Reflecting on this, Helen stated that, in retrospect, she had never felt that to be true:

I think it was a tremendous privilege to have been in Parliament, to have played a part in keeping values alive which most of us believe in, to have allowed nothing to go by default, to have had eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations with the government about all its offensive actions, and especially to have been able to intercede on behalf of victims of apartheid or of police action by virtue of being an MP (Suzman, 1993, p. 272)

Helen had a successor, Irene Menell, in mind whom she believed would uphold the values she felt she had kept alive over her Parliamentary career (Suzman, 1993). In September 1989, another PFP candidate, Tony Leon, was however elected to succeed her as MP for Houghton (Rotberg, 2011; Suzman, 1993). This had placed such strain on Leon's

friendship with Helen that it took years to mend (Leon, 2009). September held another unexpected announcement for Helen, who was in London at the time: she was to be appointed an Honorary Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her work in fostering relations between South Africa and Britain (Godsell, 2011; Rotberg, 2011; Suzman, 1993). She recalled the event in her memoirs:

On the morning of October 31, 1989, I went to Buckingham Palace, accompanied by Mosie and Francie, to receive the award... It was, of course, a momentous occasion for me. The Queen stood for a solid two hours, conferring awards to citizens... Her Majesty had a personal message for each one of us; to me she said how pleased she was to make the award and asked whether I had come to England especially to receive it. I had to say 'No,' but I added that I had stayed on in London to be present for the occasion... Because I am not a British subject I am not entitled to be called Dame Helen. I have had the scroll framed and it has pride of place in my study in Blue Haze. The medal is in the cupboard, together with the scrolls of my honorary degrees and other memorabilia of my life as a public representative. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 273 -274)

Helen's daughters, who had both initially studied in Johannesburg, were settled in Britain and America respectively (Suzman, 1993). Her oldest daughter, Frances, had furthered her studies in art history at the Courtauld Institute in London, after which she obtained her doctorate from Harvard University. Her second daughter, Patricia (Patty) had qualified as a nephrologist, and was practicing in Boston. Helen had always valued regular contact and correspondence since they left home, insisting on weekly letters (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Suzman, 1993). They had also visited whenever possible, meeting up with her in South Africa or abroad (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). After her retirement, Helen's visits to her family were often facilitated by various invitations abroad:

Although both my daughters have lived abroad for most of their adult lives, we have remained closely in touch by mail, telephone, and, more recently, fax. We have been fortunate in being able to spend regular family holidays together, both in South Africa and abroad. In recent years, a bonus of my receiving honorary doctorates and giving overseas lectures has been the opportunity to drop into London or Boston to be with them. (Suzman, 1993, p. 26)

In July of 1990, Helen's career was brought full circle: She was appointed as the president of the SAIRR (Pimstone, 2005), "more than forty-five years after preparing evidence for the Fagan Commission on behalf of the institute – the project that first launched me into politics" (Suzman, 1993, p. 276). In Parliament, the contributions she had made

during her political career were honoured on 11 February 1991. Helen attended a small ceremony of acceptance of a portrait of her:

Colin Eglin, on whose initiative the portrait had been commissioned, made an affectionate speech, and the Acting Speaker, Helgard van Rensburg, a onetime vociferous opponent, described my parliamentary career in glowing terms. My own speech was less gracious, for I could not resist reminding Van Rensburg that when I had opposed bills which were now being repealed in the interests of the 'new South Africa,' he and his fellow Nationalists had accused me of being unpatriotic, a sickly humanist and a dangerous subversive. Of course it is a moot point whether my portrait, or the others, will survive in the new South Africa. They may well be relegated to the cellar. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 274-275)

In December of 1991, Helen was part of the DP delegation at the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa), during which numerous political parties were to participate in the writing of an interim constitution (Eglin, 2007; Thompson, 2006). She offered a critical observation on its composition during her address:

She observed that only ten of the two-hundred-odd delegates were women, and demanded a greater role for women in the negotiating process. In her pointed and telling manner she said: 'As with racism, so with sexism; you can enact legislation but despite this, racism and gender discrimination exist'. When Codesa reassembled a few weeks later, every delegation had at least one woman member, and women and men alternated in the chair of the negotiating councils. (Eglin, 2007, p. 270)

Helen began writing her memoirs, calling it in a letter to a friend a "tough and lonely job" (Suzman, June 1991). She wrote to friends about her experience of the process, highlighting that she finds it difficult to settle down to write as there are too many distractions. In 1991, she wrote: "my book is progressing in a series of short, sharp rushes and I am not at all sure that I am going to be happy with the final results. However I suppose I must give it a try" (Suzman, July 1991). Almost two years later, she wrote:

I am so glad the book is finally finished, though not without much pain and suffering, I might add... Well, for better or for worse the task is done and I have no doubt that it could have been a much better book, had I taken the trouble to delve into all my papers lodged in the archives of the University of the Witwatersrand, including 36 large bundles of letters over my parliamentary years. Maybe I will use this material for another book, if I ever can summon up the health and strength. (Suzman, June 1993)

During this time, Mosie continued to experience health problems, starting with a stroke in 1989 (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). Helen wrote about him to their friends, mentioning that while she was working on her memoirs, Mosie went into his

consulting rooms in the afternoon after sleeping in during the mornings. She wrote:

He is becoming an avid watcher of lousy T.V. films, but I suppose we should be grateful that he is still mobile and thank God, out of the house for half the day. Amazingly enough two or three patients seem to arrive every afternoon at his rooms and although the practice is totally uneconomic, I think it's worth keeping going if only for occupational therapy. (Suzman, June 1991)

In 1993, Suzman published her memoirs, which she titled *In No Uncertain Terms*, and dedicated the book to her fellow 'Progs'. Mandela, who wrote the foreword to the publication, recalled his first encounter with her "powerful political presence" (Suzman, 1993, p. ix), a long time before they had their first meeting on Robben Island. He wrote:

I was having a consultation in Pretoria Prison with Bram Fischer... in 1963. We were preparing for the Rivonia Trial. Bram got up and whispered almost in reverence as a woman passed in the corridor, 'Helen Suzman' – significant coming from a man whose political views would not normally lead him to respect a liberal. (Suzman, 1993, p. ix)

Mandela also touched on the criticism that had been launched against Helen: "Without apologizing for her using the South African parliamentary process, Helen's participation in opposing the complete absence of democracy in South Africa under the National Party rule must be applauded" (p. ix). Helen made a point of defending her parliamentary profession in her memoirs. She stated that because the apartheid government had respected the parliamentary process, she had the opportunity to bring the atrocities of the apartheid system to the public's attention through her speeches, motions and questions (Suzman, 1993). However, the criticisms launched at her for fighting apartheid from within the system, did not cease. Helen was often criticised for earning a salary for her participation in apartheid legislature: "No matter how many supporters of her politics will argue, they will not remove the fact that her presence in the apartheid structures gave racism and apartheid a credibility they needed desperately" (Qwelane, 2004). Others, however, argued that the use of the forum created by parliament has been advantageous (Lipton, 2007; Rotberg, 2011). For example, Lipton (2007) wrote the following: "Suzman used her parliamentary position to elicit information about pass law prosecutions, discriminatory expenditure on education and health, and the treatment of political prisoners, for whom her prison visits secured improvements, including access to further education" (Lipton, 2007, pp. 142 – 143).

Another issue that Helen reflected on in *In No Uncertain Terms* (1993), was the possibility of early cultural influences on her later career. She explored the degree of cultural influence she was exposed to as a child and the influence this may or may not have had on

her later political interests. She ascribed her political beliefs to Jewish experiences rather than the Jewish religion of philosophy (Pimstone, 2005), noting in her memoirs:

My later concentration on race relations has been confidently ascribed by several rabbis to the influence of the ‘Jewish ethos.’ If so, it was subconscious, for there was not much emphasis on Jewish philosophy or religion at home, although we lit candles on Friday nights and had large gatherings for the Jewish festivals. My father and stepmother attended synagogue on the High Holy Days. I did not. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that my knowledge of the Jewish experience of persecution heightened my awareness of the evils of race discrimination. (Suzman, 1993, p.10)

Helen understood Yiddish and had a pro-Israel stance, but she never felt she belonged to the Johannesburg Jewish community (Braude, 2009; Kraft, 1991). A friend described her as being totally uninterested in religion, and reported that she never attended synagogue. Helen had also told an interviewer once that there had not been any rabbi who ever had any influence in her life (Braude, 2009). She did, however, associate her opposition to apartheid with the Jewish culture, based on the Jewish experience of persecution:

I sometimes had occasion socially... when people used to say proudly, ‘I support the National Party,’ to say: ‘You should be ashamed of yourself! How can you? You’re a Jew, and you know what Jews went through with persecution in Russia, with pogroms, unable to move freely, no mobility! How can you support a government which is doing exactly the same thing to the Black people?’ This was not a comparison with the Holocaust – I was comparing apartheid to the treatment of Jews in Russia. (Braude, 2009, p. 3)

It was on this issue that Helen and Desmond Tutu had another disagreement. Tutu had made a statement to the American Jewish Committee delegation, wherein he likened apartheid to the Holocaust. Helen wrote: “The delegation and I objected strongly to this assertion. (I subsequently objected to a similar statement made by Nelson Mandela.)” (Suzman, 1993, p. 260).

The year after the publication of her memoirs, South Africa held its first democratic election. As Helen had remained active in defence of liberal values after her retirement, she was member of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in these 1994 elections, where she played an important part in facilitating cooperation between the parties and establishing trust in the communities (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011). Helen was the IEC Commissioner for Soweto on election day (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005). After the elections, Helen attended Mandela’s inauguration ceremony (Suzman, May 1994). Shortly afterwards, she wrote to Bob Bernstein that she had found the ceremony emotionally overwhelming and that she was too exhausted by five months of hard work for the IEC to be able to relax and enjoy the

remarkable spectacle. She commented that she found De Klerk and Mandela's speeches to be gracious, and that they instilled a sense of hope for the future government of National Unity, adding: "but in fact there are so many imponderables that it's foolish to get too swept away with enthusiasm" (Suzman, May 1994).

Helen and Mosie, who had always shared her passion for a just society, had now witnessed the beginning of the change Helen had so long advocated. However, she would be alone in watching South Africa's progress into democracy, as Mosie passed away on 11 July 1994, at age 90 (Forde, 2009a; Gibson, 1994; Du Toit, 2006). The couple had been married for over 50 years, and during Helen's parliamentary career, Mosie had accompanied her to each of her 36 annual Report Back meetings. She later commented at the opening of the *Helen Suzman: Fighter for Human Rights* exhibition: "Had Mosie been here today, he would be sitting in the front row, eyes tightly closed – very disconcerting, until I realised that he had his tape recorder on his knee" (Suzman, 2006, p. 17). For the past 25 years, after his formal retirement, Mosie worked in private practice and continued to write academic articles (Gibson, 1994). Frances (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013) recalled that even though her father had recovered enough from the stroke to continue with his private practice for a while, "he was not his old self at all" and was eventually rendered virtually blind by macular degeneration. She added that Helen had found this sad time difficult to deal with and busied herself with the writing of her memoirs and overseas visits. Early in 1993, Helen wrote to Sir Robin Renwick about the problems she experienced with Mosie's "unpredictable behaviour", mentioning that he seems to be alright when he's talking medicine with colleagues, but at other times seem to be in a state of total somnolence (Suzman, January 1993). A few months later (a day before Mosie's 89<sup>th</sup> birthday), she wrote: "he still has not accepted that he is no longer in practice and is in a state of pretty permanent depression, poor old boy. I keep telling him to count his blessings, but of course that falls on deaf ears" (Suzman, March 1993).

After Mosie's death, Helen moved to a new home in Illovo, Johannesburg, where she lived with her three dogs. She frequently granted interviews from her home study. Once, whilst sweeping her arm along the two rows of Hansard volumes which line her study walls, she told a reporter: "That's my life in there" ("Suzman: Mbeki anti-white," 2004). She remained active, and continued to serve as president of the SAIRR. Helen was also a member of the South African Human Rights Commission from 1995 to 1998 (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993). On 10 December 1996, she was invited to accompany Nelson Mandela to Sharpeville for the signing of the country's new Constitution (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011).

In 1997, Helen and three male South Africans were awarded the Order of Merit by President Mandela. Colin Eglin witnessed the proceedings at the presidential residence in Pretoria:

Mandela, in his warm genial way, said: ‘I am honoured to bestow this significant award on four distinguished citizens of our country. In deciding on three of them I followed my head. In the case of the other, I am afraid I followed my heart. I shan’t tell you who that other person is – but she gives me a lot of trouble!’ (Eglin, 2007, p. 99)

Over the years, Helen was awarded with 27 honorary doctorates from various prestigious universities, as well as numerous honours and awards from human rights groups (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Rotberg, 2011). In 2003, closer to home, Helen’s alma mater, Parktown Convent (now known as the Holy Family College), unveiled a rose garden in honour of her lifelong struggle for justice and human rights (“Remarkable Helen Suzman dies at 91,” 2009). The Helen Suzman Rose (also known as Foxy Lady), a pink and dainty bloom personally selected by Helen because of her own petite stature, grows there and in her own garden (Erasmus, 2009). She was also honoured in Jewish circles. The South African Jewish Museum paid tribute to Helen’s work in 2005 with the exhibition *Helen Suzman: Fighter for Human Rights*. The convenor urged that Helen’s contribution to the process of transformation should be remembered as South Africa begins to grapple with its contested past (Shain, 2005). Helen was awarded with the annual humanitarian award by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in 2007. Her response to what she regarded to be a belated honour was a blunt “it’s about time”<sup>36</sup> (Braude, 2009, p. 1). In 2008, the Helen Suzman Foundation and the Isaac and Jesse Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Cape Town, co-hosted the inaugural Helen Suzman Lecture (Taljaard, 2008).

Helen continued, throughout her retirement, to comment on local and international current affairs. In May 2001, after five national cricketers were caught smoking marijuana in a hotel room, Helen stepped into controversy again, when she “pooh-poohed” public outrage. When an anti-drug activist confronted her with the charge that nearly half of criminals tested positive for dagga use, Helen replied with a feisty “so what” (“Remarkable Helen Suzman dies at 91,” 2009). She also reflected during numerous interviews on her political career, especially the rows she had had with the National Party and its leaders. She stated that she had no regrets, adding that the apartheid government should regret what they had said to her (Swart, 2007). According to reporter and friend, Fiona Forde, at age 90, Helen still lived and

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<sup>36</sup> Helen had been critical of the SAJBD’s policy of political non-involvement during the apartheid era and their stance that Jews who opposed apartheid did so only in their individual capacity and not as representatives of the Jewish community (Braude, 2009).

breathed politics (Forde, 2009a). However, she became increasingly disillusioned with the political events in South Africa (Kane-Berman, 2009; Swart, 2007). She openly criticized the Mbeki government for the disappointing figures of foreign investments, as international confidence has been shaken by its equivocal stance on issues such as AIDS, xenophobic violence, and the post-election crisis in Zimbabwe (Buthelezi, 2009; Kadalie, 2010; Oakland, 2005; Swart, 2007). She was vocal about her disappointment at the exclusion of various White liberals from the displays at the Apartheid Museum, and raised her concerns that the roles of liberals were being “airbrushed” out of history. She later said in an interview: “They have made some changes, but it's still grossly underplayed” (Oakland, 2005, p. 5). Helen and Independent Democrat leader, Patricia de Lille, engaged in a public battle of wills, with Helen doubting De Lille’s sustainability, and De Lille criticizing Helen’s continued support for the DA (Pressly, 2004).

Helen weighed her words carefully when she was asked for her thoughts on the future of South Africa, and replied: “I am not optimistic, but I am hopeful” (Oakland, 2005). In addition to remaining politically active, Helen also retained her hands-on approach. In 2005, she wrote to friends abroad: “As for me, I’m still busy with odd cases that come to me in the forlorn hope that I might be able to get title deeds for Black residents in the townships, or relatives out of jail” (Suzman, September 2005). When Helen became aware of the plight of a friend’s former housekeeper, Henrietta Mqokomiso, who was being forced to relocate from her house in Alexandra, she

... wrote about this scandal in the press and then set about the tough, tedious, grinding task of fighting Henrietta’s corner, joining battle with municipal authorities to try to restore my old housekeeper’s humble heritage. You’d have thought that, well into her 80s, she might have left the matter alone, or asked some sprightlier friend to take up Henrietta’s cause. But once she had heard what was going on, she could not let it go, any more than she could let go of the apartheid bone once she had got a good, hard bit of it between her teeth. (Carlin, 2009)

As Helen aged, she remained cognitively alert and was as active as her health would allow (Forde, 2009a). She was later referred to as “a great wit and raconteur, and an inveterate bridge player almost until her death” (Rotberg, 2011, p. 119). Helen wrote in 2005: “By and large, I’m still living the life of the privileged few, with my Labrador and two Shitzus, enjoy relatively good health, albeit not as mobile as before. I read a lot, play bridge, and write nasty letters to the press complaining about disappointing aspects of governance” (Suzman, September 2005). She also wrote that she is no longer able to indulge in long

distance travel, and fears that she has lost contact with old friends (Suzman, October 2005). At age 88, Helen fell in her bedroom and broke her femur, but recovered with the help of daughter Patricia, who flew in from Boston to be with her during that time (Du Toit, 2006). In an interview shortly before her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, she reported that she had no complaints and only a single regret: never becoming a better golfer. Helen described her recreational activities: bridge twice a week, the occasional visits to the theatre or cinema, and listening to *Bandstand* every Saturday evening on the radio. This, Helen commented, made her feel “...very sad... I used to be a very good dancer. I mean, a real dancer” (Forde, 2009a, p. 15). John Kane-Berman, the CEO of the SAIRR, described Helen’s habits and interests as follows:

No blue stocking, Helen Suzman was down-to-earth, relished hitting back in debate, sometimes used socially language the Speaker would have disallowed, loved her cats and her dogs and her garden, ate plainly -‘I’m strictly meat and potatoes’-, enjoyed a Scotch and soda -‘don’t drown in it’-, and always dressed elegantly. She was delighted when South Africa could play international sport again – ‘I sit glued to the television’. (Kane-Berman, 2009, p.1)

Shortly before her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Helen was approached for an interview, and she asked the reporter with a perky smile: “Are you preparing my obituary?” When the reporter commented that they were, in fact, marking the milestone of her birthday, her reply was: “Oh for goodness’ sake... a retired old creature like me? Who cares?” (Forde, 2009a; Forde, 2009b). This reporter and Helen soon became friends, and Helen would regularly invite her over:

Every few weeks she would call, and the message rarely changed. ‘Darling, would you like to come over for a drink?’ she would ask. And when I arrived, the silver tray would be on a small table by the glass patio doors that lead to the back garden of which she was so proud... We would have one, maybe two drinks at most, as we nattered. And the conversation would always turn to politics... (Forde, 2009b)

Helen seemed to have had a practical approach to her own mortality and a stoical attitude about her advancing age (Forde, 2009b; F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). She agonised for months over finding good homes for her three dogs, a black Labrador named Benjie, and two Shitzus named Chang and Joey (Forde, 2009b; Thakali, 2009). She would matter-of-factly tell the dogs “Now you must behave when I’m gone” (Forde, 2009b). Forde reported that Helen’s approach to receiving gifts was similarly practical. Helen had told her how she appreciated the flowers Mandela and his wife, Graca,

had sent her on her birthday, stating: “They know not to buy me gifts. What would I do with a gift at my age, because I’m going to die soon?” Her response was similar when asked what she would like for Christmas: “No dear. Nothing, I’m shedding, not hoarding” (Forde, 2009b).

In the time before her death, close friends and family observed that she seemed to become intensely frustrated by her failing health and increasing dependence on the assistance of others (Forde, 2009b; F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). Her mobility was restricted to the use of a Zimmer frame, and she would say “Look at me, what a nuisance I’ve become” (Forde, 2009b). De Klerk and his wife had met Helen for drinks several months before her death, during which she said that she did not feel as if she had much left to live for, and the end was near (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009). Helen and Patricia visited her seaside apartment in Plettenberg Bay late in November, 2008. “This will be my last time... I’m too old to make a journey like this again,” she said before their departure (Forde, 2009b). Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert visited with her the week before her death, and thought that she was anticipating the fact that her time was near. Colin Eglin, who had spoken to Helen a few days afterwards, clearly recalled Helen’s frustration with the loss of her independence. On the Tuesday before her death, Helen lay in bed and touched caregiver Betty Ramatse’s hand, saying “Betty I need to go” (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009). She then underwent a cataract operation with Frances at her side, who had flown in to be with her mother (Isaacs & De Lange, 2009; Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009; Thakali, 2009). A few days later, on New Year’s Eve, 2008, Helen was admitted for a few hours to Milpark Hospital, in order to receive a blood transfusion. When she returned home, an exhausted Helen immediately retired to bed. The following morning, at 09:30, Helen died peacefully in her Johannesburg home, with Frances and Betty at her side (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009).

As news of her passing spread, condolences and tributes streamed in from Helen’s political allies and friends. Colin Eglin called her an exception to the political rule, as her primary concern was with the wellbeing of the underprivileged (Joubert, 2009). Helen Zille, leader of the Democratic Alliance, said that Helen was ahead of her time, and possessed distinctive qualities such as integrity, bravery, intelligence and perseverance (Zille, 2009). Former DA leader, Tony Leon, commented on her remarkable stamina and courage, as well as how she maintained an unsentimental perspective on current events (Leon, 2009). David Quail, the MP for Houghton, referred to her as a role model and icon, who empathically

helped both the famous prisoners on Robben Island and the poor who struggled to obtain title deeds in Alexandra (De Lange & Azzakani, 2009a).

Leaders of other political parties also paid their respects. Former President Thabo Mbeki and his wife, Zanele, wrote to Helen's family, hailing her as a pioneer of democracy and a beloved member of the South African family (De Lange & Azzakani, 2009). Mosiuoa Lekota hailed her vision of a community in which all people can voice their opinion, and praised her for the improvements in living conditions she effected for the Robben Island prisoners. Patricia de Lille said she would remember Helen as a woman of principle who assumed an uncompromising stance when it came to the truth. Bantu Holomisa called her a pioneer in opposition politics (Buthelezi, 2009; De Lange & Azzakani, 2009; Thakali, 2009; "Suzman mourned, celebrated," 2009). Mangosuthu Buthelezi said that Helen, like many others, did not get the recognition she deserved. He highlighted her "wicked sense of humour", which he felt had carried her through the most difficult times (Buthelezi, 2009, p. 21). He also commented on Helen's Parliamentary portrait (which was as she had predicted indeed taken down after the ANC assumed power), stating: "I would like to congratulate the Speaker, because I see that Mrs Suzman's picture has re-emerged in our corridors" (Buthelezi, 2009, p. 20). He further paid tribute to her by stating:

One of the greatest privileges of my long life is to have known Helen. She was a dear friend to me and my wife, Irene, for over half a century. I liked her as much for her sheer zest for life and deadpan wit as I admired her for her great role in the struggle. No one who met her will ever forget those piercing blue eyes full of intelligence and empathy in equal measure. (Buthelezi, 2009, p. 52)

Shortly after her death, various people gave personal recollections of Helen and the impact she had had on them. One of Helen's nieces, actress Janet Suzman, told *The Times*: "You can't halfremember Helly... She made an impression wherever she went and whatever she did... It was her funniness, and her bravery about speaking about apartheid and anti-Semitism. She used humour, and the regime wasn't altogether used to that ploy" (Elliot, Malvern & Clayton, 2009). Another niece, Caroline Suzman, commented that her aunt's compassion was legendary, adding: "Wherever I went I would always meet ordinary people whose lives had been touched and who loved and revered her" (Elliot et al., 2009). Colin Eglin said that he had lost a soul mate with whom he had spent 50 years working, fighting campaigns and having fun. He fondly recalled their dinner parties, stating that even though Helen wasn't much of a cook, she was a wonderful hostess and her ability to mimic people, such as John Vorster, Marie van Zyl and the prison warders, was unmatched. He commented

that life was never dull with Helen around and that she had enriched his life through her caring attitude towards people (Joubert, 2009). Irene Menell recalled how they used to canvass together ahead of elections: “We had a wonderful series of experiences during our campaigning... She was marvellous with the comments that she made to people. She appreciated the people in her constituency. She was good in planning everything and meticulous in her demands” (Thakali, 2009). Helen Zille recalled the distinct impression Helen’s comments in the newspapers had made on her as an adolescent, and recalled that a highlight of that time was an invitation from Helen to attend the opening of Parliament (Zille, 2009). Tony Leon (2009, p. 16) said: “This exceptional, intensely human and very humorous woman was a unique politician. We should look upon her and learn from her. We will not see her like again.” Archbishop Tutu called her “indomitable” and “a powerhouse against apartheid”, who, “just by being stroppy” was able to effect change (“Flags to fly at half-mast in honour of Suzman,” 2009c). Author Nadine Gordimer said that Helen “...had the brains and dignity to stick to her weapons and their target. Her impeccably informed gift of debate hit the bull’s-eye of apartheid laws” (Elliot, Malvern & Clayton, 2009). Carolyn Projansky wrote about her first meeting with an 88 year old Suzman, who is one of the main characters in her documentary film “Breaking the Rules”<sup>37</sup>.

I’ll never forget the first time I met her. She invited me to tea. She was the picture of propriety at 9am but by 11am, after we’d been engrossed in a fascinating conversation about South Africa’s troubled history, she got a twinkle in her eye and asked if I’d join her in a shot of gin! (Projansky, 2009a, p. 1)

Helen’s family planned a private funeral for the people who had close contact with Helen followed by a public memorial (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Slier, 2009). Helen was buried in the Jewish section of Johannesburg’s West Park cemetery, next to Mosie and in accordance with Jewish rites (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Slier, 2009; Goldstein, 2009; Thakali, 2009). The service, which although private was attended by scores of political and public figures, such as then president, Kgalema Motlanthe, former president F. W. de Klerk, Mamphela Ramphele, and Winnie Mandela, as well as the press (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Slier, 2009). Rabbi Goldstein commented:

She used her parliamentary privilege to prod, attack and discredit the National Party government. But she did so with one of her most effective weapons, her wit and humour. She sparkled with life. She had a keen sense of humour

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<sup>37</sup> A film about the white South Africans who opposed apartheid.

which was used very effectively in parliamentary debates – a sense of humour which demonstrated that despite her unshakeable conviction of the righteousness of her cause, she was not self-righteous. Her humour also reflected her fiery independent spirit that challenged conventional wisdom and was able to pierce the façade of the webs that people spin. In short, she had *chutzpah*. And she used that *chutzpah* to tackle the bullies. (Goldstein, 2009, p. 8)

Motlanthe insisted that her persistent and courageous opposition to apartheid had earned her a place in the country's political history. He declared that the national flag at all flag posts throughout the country be flown at half-mast ("Flags to fly at half-mast in honour of Suzman," 2009). A memorial service was held on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2009 by the SAJBD in Cape Town, with friends Colin Eglin and Rhoda Kadalie as speakers (Eglin, 2010; F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Kadalie, 2010). On the first of March, a memorial service was held at the University of the Witwatersrand, with Desmond Tutu as the main speaker (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Kane-Bernman, 2009; Rotberg, 2011). Nicky Oppenheimer stated: "Her courage was infused and powered by something even greater than courage: moral clarity. If she was fearless it was because she knew she was right, guided not by policy or ideology but by principle" (Oppenheimer, 2009, p. 55). Helen's daughter Frances commented in her speech:

I can't resist mentioning how she would probably have reacted to these accolades and to this celebratory event. I can hear her saying, in her inimitable way: 'Oh for goodness sake, what is all the fuss about? I was only doing my job.' (Jowell, 2009, p. 40)

Raenette Taljaard wrote in the Editorial of the Suzman Tribute Edition of the Focus Magazine, a publication by the Helen Suzman Foundation:

This is a moment of reflection accompanied by an outpouring of grief, both locally and abroad, that has been breathtaking in both scale and scope – a collective emotion that saw our nation's flags flown half-mast in tribute to a daughter of the struggle who gave every sinew of her spirit to the fight for justice and the cause of democracy in her beloved country. But it is also a celebration of how South Africans of all walks of life and political persuasions united in paying tribute to a life which, in its richness of friendships offered and countless kindnesses extended, was a lived celebration of the enduring values of honesty, fairness, trust, compassion and integrity. (Taljaard, 2009, p. 2)

A year after her death (Godsell, 2011), her tombstone was unveiled, revealing an epitaph from the Torah: "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue" (Deuteronomy, 16:20).

### **2.3 Chapter Summary**

This chapter highlighted the major sociohistorical events in the life of Helen Suzman. These events will be reflected upon during later chapters. Following theoretical discussions regarding the theory and model used in this psychobiography, as well as methodological discussions regarding the psychobiographical endeavour itself, the findings regarding Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and holistic wellness are discussed in Chapters 8, 9 and 10. One of the frameworks used in this study, namely the theory of psychosocial development, is discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### ERIKSON'S THEORY OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on Erik Erikson's theoretical perspective of human development across the entire lifespan, as one of the psychological theories utilised in this psychobiography. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is, firstly, placed within its historical context and the contributions made by him to the fields of developmental psychology and psychoanalysis are briefly described. The concepts and propositions of the theory are then discussed. The reader is also provided with a review of selected empirical studies related to psychosocial development theory, as well as theoretical expansions and extensions proposed by researchers in the field. The main criticisms against the theory of psychosocial development are then outlined. Lastly, the relevance of Erikson's work to the field of psychobiography is briefly discussed.

#### 3.2 Historical Perspective and Theoretical Contribution

Erik Homburger Erikson (1902-1994), best known for concepts such as *identity crisis* and his focus on development across the entire life cycle, has been hailed by many as an influential psychoanalyst and post-Freudian thinker whose work not only disseminated psychoanalytical ideas, but also contained important post-Freudian developments and contributions to personality theory (Schachter, 2005; Stevens, 2008). Originally a painter of children's portraits, Erikson was introduced to psychoanalysis in 1927 (Roazen, 1976). He trained in Vienna with Sigmund and Anna Freud until 1933, when he moved to the United States with his wife, Joan, who became his lifelong collaborator and co-author<sup>38</sup> (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Hoare, 2005; Roazen, 1976; Woodward, 1994).

Erikson's work shifted the focus from the traditional Freudian psychoanalytical stance towards investigating the relationship of the *self* with the *environment* (Erikson, 1963; Hoare, 2005). When he first published *Childhood and Society* in 1950, he declared that his intention was to shed light on the relation of the ego to its environment. He argued that psychoanalysis

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<sup>38</sup> The references in this study made to Joan M. Erikson's theoretical contributions are cited with her initials in order to assist the reader to locate the appropriate entry in the reference list. All other text citations where only the surname is stated refer to the works of E.H Erikson.

was in the process of shifting its emphasis from the study of the individual's ego, to the study of the ego's foundation in society (Erikson, 1963). Erikson therefore used the term *psychosocial* in order to complement the dominant focus on *psychosexual* development (Erikson, 1997). Furthermore, he extended the theoretical approach to psychological developmental beyond the age of sexual maturation, becoming the first theorist to also explore psychological development during adulthood (Freiberg, 1987; Hoare, 2005). Erikson accordingly became known for not only demonstrating the interplay between the sociocultural and sociohistorical processes of society and our psychological development, but also for including the entire human lifespan in his conceptualisation (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Hoare, 2005; Schachter, 2005). Barresi and Juckes (1997, p. 708) commented:

Erikson gives special attention to the problem of time not only in the life cycle of the individual but in the history of the culture. It is the match and mismatch between fragments of identity that the individual acquires from close relationships in personal time and the stable as well as transforming aspects of the society through which the person grows in historical time that determine how easy or difficult the acquisition of a social identity will be for the individual.

Erikson's theoretical propositions stemmed from his own research, which included psycho-anthropological studies on the childrearing practices of the American Indian tribes of the Sioux and Yurok, as well as explorations of the national identities of Americans and Germans and analyses of enemy leaders during the Second World War (Erikson, 1963; Hoare, 2005; Pietikainen & Ihanus, 2003; Schachter, 2005). Although Erikson had developed his psychosocial theory primarily through his observations in clinical practice, he also utilised "autobiographical materials and biographies of well-known historical individuals either to elaborate his descriptions of phenomena or because of his particular interest in understanding the individual's personal development and cultural influence over others" (Barresi & Juckes, 1997, p. 708). Erikson's interest in case histories and lifespan development had also turned his attention to the field of psychobiography (Stevens, 2008). Here, too, Erikson attempted to elaborate on the work of Freud, whose psychoanalytic interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci in 1910 had been widely criticised (Stevens, 2008). Through his essays on historical figures such as Freud, Einstein, Hitler, Shaw and James (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Stevens, 2008), as well as his books on Martin Luther (Erikson, 1958/1993) and Mahatma Ghandi (Erikson, 1969), Erikson demonstrated a significantly wider focus than that of Freud's *Leonardo* and thus became influential in the field of psychobiography (Pietikainen & Ihanus, 2003; Stevens, 2008). In keeping with his

psychosocial approach, Erikson's work in the field of psychobiography included in-depth explorations of the influence of social factors on ego development (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Stevens, 2008).

Erikson and other "ego psychologists" such as Anna Freud, did not view the ego as a mere mediator between the id and the superego (Shaffer, 2002). Instead, the ego is conceptualised as a synthesising power within an individual, one that creates an identity through the process of dealing with personal, societal, historical and familial forces as the individual strives to master the environment (Gross, 1987; Wastell, 1996). Erikson focused much of his work on the concept of identity and as he endeavoured to describe the place of identity within the life cycle, he also conceptualised the development of different ego qualities. He, furthermore, provided a framework within which he explained the emergence of these ego qualities during critical periods of the life cycle (Roazen, 1976; Stevens, 2008). According to Erikson, these ego qualities enable the individual to "...demonstrate that his ego, at a given stage, is strong enough to integrate the timetable of the organism with the structure of social institutions" (Erikson, 1963, p. 238).

Erikson's approach is, therefore, an integrative one, taking into account the different aspects that may interact to produce human behaviour and experience. He proposed that social, cultural and environmental factors are embedded in the core of the human personality (Schachter, 2005). Erikson declared his fundamental assumption to be that human development continuously depends on three complimentary processes of organisation, namely the *soma* (i.e., the biological, hierarchical organisation of organ systems), the *psyche* (i.e., the psychic organisation of individual experience through the process of ego synthesis) and the *ethos* (i.e., the social milieu) (Erikson, 1997; Stevens, 2008). In order to demonstrate this interrelatedness of the *soma*, *psyche* and *ethos*, the broad social context of each of the psychological crises facing an individual during development and physical maturation is also explored in Erikson's theory (Erikson, 1963, 1997). He also suggested various institutions and societal practices which safeguard the development of the different adaptive ego strengths (Capps, 2004). Each of the stages is, therefore, related to a basic element of social organisation, established by the link between the evolution of the human life cycle and that of societal institutions (Erikson, 1963).

Erikson's approach incorporated an epigenetic viewpoint, according to which the sequence of the psychosocial stages was designed. The term *epigenesis*, borrowed from embryology, describes "the relativity governing human phenomena linked with organismic growth" (Erikson, 1997, p. 27). The principle of epigenesis holds that organisms grow

according to a ground plan, and that the parts of the organism will arise from this plan according to their specified time of ascendancy, until all parts have developed into a functioning whole (Erikson, 1980). Erikson (1963, 1980) proposed that human growth and development in all spheres will, therefore, follow parallel and corresponding patterns. However, the succession of developmental stages is not the only significant process in epigenesis. This viewpoint also proposes that the different growing parts are interrelated: “each part exists in some form before ‘its’ decisive and critical time normally arrives and remains systematically related to all others so that the whole ensemble depends on the proper development in the proper sequence of each item” (Erikson, 1997, p.29). For example, should individuals not successfully resolve crises during particular developmental stages, they will subsequently experience difficulties with successive stages (Jenkins, Buboltz, Schwartz & Johnson, 2005).

Erikson’s theoretical contribution also extends the nature of psychological understanding and with his emphasis on relativity, he demonstrated that no theory could be intrinsically objective. He used paradox and polarity in his work to convey the idea that the ego’s essential function is to integrate oppositional forces. Erikson described these forces as contrary dispositions – one syntonic and the other dystonic (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1989). Erikson made such extensive use of the interplay of polarities throughout his writing that he successfully conveyed the importance of dialectical thinking in psychology (Stevens, 2008). He described his model of lifespan development as dichotomous forces in a progression of eight stages (see Table 3.1), which he termed the *eight ages of man* (Erikson, 1963, 1997). Every one of these stages contains a *crisis*, a term Erikson used to denote a necessary turning point, brought on by the creative tension between the opposing forces during each stage of the life cycle (Gross, 1987; Kroger, 2005). The stages are, therefore, all characterised by (a) the ego’s task of integrating certain oppositional forces and (b) the specific resulting ego strength or quality which is gained should such integration take place successfully (Erikson, 1997). Erikson refers to these ego strengths as virtues which develop if the ego is able to create a working balance between the opposing forces during a developmental stage (Gross, 1987; Roazen, 1976). Growth is achieved through the ego’s capacity for integration, not alienation, of opposing forces (Roazen, 1976). For example, it is not the eradication of one of the opposites, such as *mistrust*, in favour of the other force, namely *trust*, that will lead to optimal development, but rather a ratio between the two that favours the syntonic pole (Erikson, 1997; Gross, 1987; Roazen, 1976).

Erikson proposed that each stage has the potential for both *maladaptive tendencies* (resulting from an overemphasis of the syntonic pole) as well as for *malignant tendencies* (resulting from an overemphasis of the dystonic pole) (Capps, 2004; Erikson et al., 1989) (see Table 3.1). Erikson et al. (1989) argued that maladaptive tendencies are open to later correction, which may be achieved through spontaneous or therapeutic re-adaptation. Malignant tendencies, however, represent more severe disturbance which call for more radical correction. To illustrate these differences, Erikson referred to a maladaptive tendency as a *neurotic* disturbance and to a malignant tendency as a *psychotic* one, with maladaptive and malignant tendencies collectively referred to as *maldevelopment* (Erikson et al., 1989).

Table 3.1

*Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development*

	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Maladaptive Tendency</b>	<b>Syntonic Tendency</b>	<b>Adaptive Ego Strength</b>	<b>Dystonic Tendency</b>	<b>Malignant Tendency</b>
I	Infancy (birth – 18 months)	<i>Sensory maladjustment</i>	<b>Basic Trust</b>	Hope	<b>Basic Mistrust</b>	<i>Withdrawal</i>
II	18 months – 3 years	<i>Shameless wilfulness</i>	<b>Autonomy</b>	Will	<b>Shame and Doubt</b>	<i>Compulsion</i>
III	Early Childhood (age 3 - 6)	<i>Ruthlessness</i>	<b>Initiative</b>	Purpose	<b>Guilt</b>	<i>Inhibition</i>
IV	Middle and Late Childhood (age 6 - 12)	<i>Narrow virtuosity</i>	<b>Industry</b>	Competence	<b>Inferiority</b>	<i>Inertia</i>
V	Adolescence (age 12 - 20)	<i>Fanaticism</i>	<b>Identity</b>	Fidelity	<b>Role Confusion</b>	<i>Repudiation</i>
VI	Early Adulthood (age 20 - 35)	<i>Promiscuity</i>	<b>Intimacy</b>	Love	<b>Isolation</b>	<i>Exclusivity</i>
VII	Middle Adulthood (age 35 - 65)	<i>Over-extension</i>	<b>Generativity</b>	Care	<b>Stagnation</b>	<i>Rejectivity</i>
VIII	Late Adulthood (age 65 onwards)	<i>Presumption</i>	<b>Integrity</b>	Wisdom	<b>Despair</b>	<i>Disdain</i>

*Note.* Adapted from “The decades of life: Relocating Erikson’s stages,” by D. Capps, 2004, *Pastoral Psychology*, 53(1), 3-32, and “Evaluating self-concept and ego status in Erikson’s last three psychosocial stages,” by D. Hamachek, 1990, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 68(6), 677-683.

Table 3.1 shows the eight stages of the developmental process as proposed by Erikson (1963) and Erikson et al. (1989). It also depicts the approximate age ranges of the stages as proposed by Hamachek (1990), as well as the possible adaptive ego strengths resulting from their successful resolution. In addition, the maladaptive and malignant tendencies that can develop during the different stages are shown adjacent to their corresponding poles. These stages of psychosocial development are discussed in the following section.

### **3.3 Psychosocial Development: The Eight Ages of the Life Cycle**

As mentioned in the previous section, Erikson proposed that the process of psychosocial development occurs over eight stages across the lifespan (Graves & Larkin, 2006). He remained “gentle and implicit” (Roberts & Newton, 1987, p. 154) regarding age linkages of these stages in his proposed developmental sequence and, therefore, did not indicate specific ages at which a stage begins or ends. Although Erikson described the different crises as occurring at specific chronological intervals, he acknowledged the possibility of individual variability in their timing (Erikson, 1963, 1997). Such individual differences in developmental trajectories may arise due to the impact that the environmental context may have on the individual. Furthermore, in accordance with epigenetic principles, each stage is grounded in the stages preceding it, and the development of new ego qualities or strengths will add additional meaning to those already developed during previous stages (Erikson, 1997). Therefore, stages may be revisited later in life, or may be initiated earlier than proposed (Sneed, Whitbourne & Culang, 2006). For example, Erikson stated that the experience of an identity crisis (which moves to the forefront during adolescence) is not confined to only one developmental stage, but should rather be seen as a life-long process which needs to be revisited and resolved even in old age (Woodward, 1994).

The eight stages, as well as the proposed time of their emergence during the lifespan, are discussed in the following sections. For the purposes of this study, the approximate age ranges proposed by Hamachek (1990) were utilised in order to develop a framework for the study of Suzman’s lifespan development. Each stage is, firstly, described within its developmental context, in particular referring to the principal biological and/or social changes that occur during that stage. Secondly, the psychological crisis is then described and its antitheses are explored. Thirdly, the ego quality resulting from the successful resolution of each crisis, as well as its implication for future development, is described and contextualised within the life cycle. Finally, Erikson’s view of the influence of the broader social context

(e.g., social institutions, structures or principles) relevant to the resolution of a particular crisis is summarised.

### 3.3.1 Stage I: Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust – Hope

Erikson (1963) proposed that the first core crisis, namely the antitheses of *basic trust* and *basic mistrust*, occurs during the first year of life. According to Hamachek (1990), the approximate time span of this stage is from birth to 18 months. The infant, being completely dependent on his caregiver for survival, has to master the first important task: coping when the mother is out of sight. Infants can achieve this if they experience consistency, continuity and reliability – experiences which enable them to internalise the mother. The infant has to recognise that there is “an inner population of remembered and anticipated sensations and images which are firmly correlated with the outer population of familiar and predictable things and people” (Erikson, 1963, p. 247). Maternal care is, therefore, needed for the successful resolution of the *basic trust* versus *basic mistrust* conflict. Erikson (1963), however, noted that it is especially the quality of the maternal relationship rather than “absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love” (p. 241) that enables the infant to balance the opposing forces of *basic trust* and *basic mistrust*.

Erikson used the term *basic* to denote the unconscious nature of the attitude of trust or mistrust towards oneself and the world (Erikson, 1980). The development of *basic trust* implies that not only do infants learn to rely on their environment to be stable and reliable, but they also develop a sense of their own trustworthiness as they learn to trust themselves to cope with urges (Erikson, 1963). *Basic mistrust*, on the other hand, develops when infants are exposed to inconsistent or neglectful caregiving, leaving them feeling deprived or abandoned. Their experience of periods of overwhelming hunger, or of being left dirty and irritable, implies that the infant’s bodily needs are not being met. Their social, sensory and bonding needs remain unfulfilled when the quality of the relationship with the caregiver is poor and is characterised by careless holding and an absence of sensory stimulation (Freiberg, 1987).

During this stage, maldevelopment may be characterised by either *sensory maladjustment* at the one extreme, or *withdrawal* at the other. Infants should be able to protest against food that is inappropriate in some way, and against inadequate care. Erikson et al. (1989) argued that too much trust can inhibit their ability to do so, resulting in disorientation and sensory maladjustment. For older infants, this may manifest as either

overrestriction or overstimulation, for example when inappropriate demands are made of the child, such as walking before the muscles have adequately developed. The malignant tendency of withdrawal, as an overdevelopment of mistrust, may result from understimulation and neglectful caregiving. It is characterised by little or no mutuality between the infant and the caretaker, or the infant's mistrust in his or her own senses (Erikson et al., 1989).

Should the infant achieve integration of the opposing conflicts during this first stage of development and acquire a sense of basic trust in his or her environment as well as in his own coping abilities, the ego quality of *hope* emerges (Erikson, 1997). Hope forms the basis for many of the other stages and will find renewed expression later in the life cycle. According to Erikson (1963, 1997), hope is crucial for the development of subsequent ego qualities, namely *will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love* and *care* due to its inherent orientation towards the future. The life cycle will reach completion when the hope of infancy develops into the faith of old age (Erikson, 1997). Conversely, should the infant be unable to develop hope, the outcome may be withdrawal and excessive caution (Stevens, 2008). Erikson (1997, p. 79) described the possible outcomes of this stage as follows: "Hope is, so to speak, pure future; and where mistrust prevails early, anticipation, as we know, wanes both cognitively and emotionally". The early relationship which fosters a sense of basic trust which develops into hope, therefore, "becomes the anchor-point for all the developments which culminate, at the end of adolescence, in the establishment of psychosocial identity" (Erikson, 1958/1993, p. 119).

Erikson sees religion as the societal context in which an individual's trust becomes a common faith (Capps, 2004). In his view, parental hope and the need to provide the young with a hope-sustaining image, has generally found its expression in religion (Graves & Larkin, 2006; Roazen, 1976). Erikson maintained that individual life cycles interact with one another, and in this spirit, he proposed that the infant's development of trust is supported by the faith of his or her parents, whose faith is in turn also inspired by the hope of their infants (Erikson, 1963; Roazen, 1976). For Erikson, this has throughout history been maintained and institutionalised through organised religion:

All religions have in common the periodical childlike surrender to a Provider or providers who dispense earthly fortune as well as spiritual health; some demonstration of man's smallness by way of reduced posture and humble gesture; the admission in prayer and song of misdeeds, of misthoughts, and of evil intentions; fervent appeal for inner unification by divine guidance; and finally, the insight that individual trust must become a common faith, individual mistrust a commonly formulated evil, while the individual's

restoration must become part of the ritual practice of many, and must become a sign of trustworthiness in the community. (Erikson, 1963, p. 242)

### 3.3.2 Stage II: Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt – Will

The second of Erikson's stages takes place approximately between the ages of 18 months and 3 years (Hamachek, 1990). In psychosexual terms, this correlates with the anal stage (Shaffer, 2002). Neuromuscular development opens up a new world in which the child learns to walk, run, climb, push, pull, and so forth. The child also develops the cognitive and language capability necessary to think about actions and convey his or her will to caregivers (Freiberg, 1987). Erikson (1963, 1997) noted that, as children begin to explore their environment, caregivers should strike a delicate balance between being restrictive and being permissive. Ideally, they should set boundaries for exploration that promote the child's curiosity without letting the child cross the boundaries of safety or social mores (Graves & Larkin, 2006). In addition to environmental exploration, the child also develops control over excretory processes, which allows the infant to experiment with two social modalities: holding on and letting go (Erikson, 1963; Freiberg, 1987). For the resolution of the crisis to be successful, Erikson suggested that outer control must be firmly reassuring:

Firmness must protect him against the potential anarchy of his as yet untrained sense of discrimination, his inability to hold on and to let go with discretion. As his environment encourages him to 'stand on his own feet', it must protect him against meaninglessness and arbitrary experiences of shame and of early doubt. (Erikson, 1963, pp. 243 – 244)

*Autonomy* is connected to a sense of inner goodness, self-control, good will and pride, which enables the child to be appropriately assertive and protects them against a loss of self-esteem (Freiberg, 1987; Erikson, 1963). As an opposite to autonomy, Erikson uses the term *shame* to indicate self-consciousness – the feeling that a part of the self, which is not ready to be visible, is exposed (Erikson, 1963). Another psychological opposite of *autonomy* is *doubt*, which refers to the fear of the unknown, including aspects of the self that are out of sight (Gross, 1987). Erikson theorised that *doubt* has much to do with the aggressive and libidinal focus of the anal stage, as this is when the child gains consciousness of an area of the body which they cannot see and which at the same time is dominated by the will of others, often leading to the experience of *shame* (Erikson, 1963).

Maldevelopment at this stage may be characterised by *shameless wilfulness* as a result of the overdevelopment of autonomy at the one extreme. At the other extreme, an inclination

toward *compulsion*, especially severe compulsive self-doubt, may develop as a result of an intensification of shame and/or doubt (Erikson et al., 1989). Erikson (1963) proposed that such compulsive doubting may find adult expression in paranoid fears concerning hidden persecutors or secret persecutions.

The successful resolution of the conflict between *autonomy* versus *shame* and *doubt* results in the emergence of *will* (Erikson, 1997). Erikson (1997) commented that rudimentary willpower supports the development of exercising both free choice and self-restraint, in spite of the unavoidable instances of early shame and doubt. The emergence of will holds important implications for future development and will inevitably play a part in the psychosocial crises to follow, as described by Erikson (1963, pp. 245 – 246):

This stage, therefore, becomes decisive for the ratio of love and hate, cooperation and wilfulness, freedom of self-expression and its suppression. From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of good will and pride; from a sense of loss of self-control and of foreign overcontrol comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame.

Erikson also relates the crisis of integrating *autonomy* to its societal context, by postulating that the safeguarding of the enduring gains of *autonomy* and *will* has been institutionalised in society through the principle of law and order and sense of justice (Erikson, 1963; Roazen, 1976; Stevens, 2008). Privileges and rights, as well as obligations and limitations of the self and others, are appropriated in everyday life by this principle (Erikson, 1963). It, furthermore, establishes the boundaries between what the child learns he or she may, or may not do (Stevens, 2008). A reciprocal relationship, therefore, exists between a sense of *autonomy* and a sense of justice in economic and political life (Erikson, 1963). According to Erikson (1980), a sense of the lawful independence and rightful dignity of the parent creates in the child a confidence that the autonomy fostered in childhood will not be frustrated later in life. Furthermore, it promotes a social hierarchy which influences the relationships between parents, between parent and employer and between parent and state. Erikson sees this principle of justice as being especially important because much of the *shame* and *doubt* experienced by the child occurs as a result of the parents' frustration in marriage, work and citizenship (Erikson, 1980).

### 3.3.3 Stage III: Initiative versus Guilt – Purpose

During what is also referred to as the *play age*, approximately between the ages of 3 and 6 years, the antitheses of *initiative* versus *guilt* present the pre-school child with the third psychosocial crisis (Erikson, 1997; Hamachek, 1990). The development of the child at this stage is marked by maturing motor control and continued cognitive development, which enable the child to learn new skills such as mastering a physical play activities and mimicking adult behaviour in play (Gross, 1987). Developments in language ability permit children to enquire about their environment and to communicate with those around them, which further expands their imagination (Erikson, 1980). The child's development during this stage also denotes the first distinction Erikson made between genders: "In the boy, the emphasis remains on phallic-intrusive modes; in the girl it turns to modes of 'catching', in more aggressive forms of snatching or in the milder form of making oneself attractive and endearing" (Erikson, 1963, p. 247). Erikson included Freud's psychosexual concepts of the oedipal crisis and the subsequent development of the superego in his description of this stage (Erikson, 1963).

Erikson explained that his use of the term *initiative* was not intended to evoke an industrial connotation. He rather sees having a sense of *initiative* as necessary for every action or learning a person can undertake. He further elaborated: "Initiative adds to autonomy the quality of undertaking, planning and 'attacking' a task for the sake of being active and on the move" (Erikson, 1963, p. 247). He described the child's sense of initiative as a surplus of energy which enables him or her to forget failures quickly and to approach goals with improved effort (Erikson, 1980). The antithesis of initiative is conceptualised by Erikson as the experience of a sense of *guilt* over one's goals and actions. Should parents or significant adults fail in modelling to the child appropriate conscience and responsibility, the *guilt* that the child experiences during this stage may be crippling (Gross, 1987). Erikson emphasises the psychological distress caused by this by stating that the theme of one of the deepest conflicts in life is the hate for a hypocritical parent. Should a parent be caught attempting to hide the transgressions which the child has learnt not to tolerate in the self, the result could be a moralistic individual who is a danger to his or her own ego, as well as the egos of others (Erikson, 1963).

According to Erikson et al. (1989), the child is at risk of developing maladaptive *ruthless* tendencies if there is an overdevelopment of initiative without the sufficient development of a capacity for empathy and conscience. Likewise, a severe impairment of the

sense of purpose, and the development of too much *guilt*, may manifest as an excessive tendency towards malignant self-inhibition (Boeree, 2006). Erikson cautioned that: “the superego of the child can be primitive, cruel, and uncompromising, as may be observed in instances where children overcontrol and overconstrict themselves to the point of self-obliteration” (Erikson, 1963, p. 248).

Should the child succeed in balancing *initiative* and *guilt*, the ego quality of a sense of *purpose* emerges. During this stage, the child develops a sense of morality regarding what is permissible, as well the imagination to envisage what may be possible (Erikson, 1963). The child is now “more loving, relaxed, and brighter in his judgement” (Erikson, 1963, p. 247). The *purpose* of this stage develops into an ethical sense later in life and, should playfulness be retained, remains a driving force throughout the lifespan, also giving rise to the development of a sense of humour (Erikson, 1997; Gross, 1987).

In order to support children in the development of a sense of purpose, social institutions present them with what Erikson (1963) calls an *economic ethos*. This provides children with ideal prototypes for them to emulate, which take the form of ideal adults easily recognisable by their uniforms and functions, and who now replace the heroes of fairy tales. Children can now through play turn towards setting goals for adulthood through work-identification with adults in clearly defined occupations (Erikson, 1963). Through the use of toys, children are able to recreate their environment and explore different adult roles. Stories also offer children “cultural templates for initiatives they themselves may someday sustain” (Stevens, 2008, p. 49). Erikson also referred to this stage as the dramatic age, best reflected later in life in the adult world of the theatre, which he referred to as mature man’s inspired toy (Capps, 2004; Stevens, 2008).

### **3.3.4 Stage IV: Industry versus Inferiority – Competence**

The fourth stage correlates with the stage which Freud’s psychoanalytic theory refers to as the latency stage, approximately from age 6 until age 12 (Erikson, 1997; Hamachek, 1990; Shaffer, 2002). The conflict between *industry* and *inferiority* become paramount during this stage. Children now move outside the boundaries of their homes and are exposed to the broader environment as teachers and peers now play a significant role in their development (Boeree, 2006; Stevens, 2008). Children enter the classroom where they are required to master new skills in order to complete the tasks assigned to them. Furthermore, they are expected to cooperate with their peers as they learn the principle of division of

labour (Freiberg, 1987). Erikson (1963, p. 250) described the context within which the development of the child now takes place, as follows:

The child must forget past hopes and wishes, while his exuberant imagination is tamed and harnessed... he now learns to win recognition by producing things... He has experienced a sense of finality regarding the fact that there is no workable future within the womb of his family, and thus becomes ready to apply himself to given skills and tasks, which go far beyond the mere playful expression of his organ modes or the pleasure in the function of his limbs.

Erikson (1997) described *industry* as the sense that one has adapted to the laws of the *tool world* as well as to rules of cooperation inherent to the structured tasks one is faced with. He commented that the child can now “become an eager and absorbed unit of a productive situation”, adding that the child’s desire to “bring a productive situation to completion is an aim which gradually supersedes the whims and wishes of play” (Erikson, 1963, p. 251). On the other hand, children can be at risk for developing a sense of *inferiority* when they fail to achieve recognition for their efforts, or when they are criticised for inadequacy or mediocrity while peers are praised and recognised. Children who now begin to feel *inferior* will experience disappointment in their own abilities (Erikson, 1963). Adults contribute to this by making prejudicial judgements about the child’s efforts or accomplishments, or by failing to balance their criticism with constructive suggestions and recognition of the child’s efforts (Freiberg, 1987).

Maldevelopment at this stage may be characterised by what Erikson et al. (1989) termed *narrow virtuosity* as a result of the overdevelopment of *industry* at the one extreme. At the other extreme, an inclination toward *inertia*, may develop as a result of a malignant inclination towards inferiority (Erikson et al., 1989). This *inertia* threatens to paralyse the productive life in the same manner as the tendency towards *inhibition* in the preceding psychosocial stage (Erikson, 1997).

The synthesis resulting from a successful resolution of this stage is *competence*. The child feels ready to handle the tools and utensils used in the adult world, and now learns to do so in collaboration with others (Erikson, 1963). Erikson describes the virtue of *competence* as the sense that the developing individual should integrate “all the maturing methods of verifying and mastering *factuality* and of sharing the *actuality* of those who cooperate in the same productive situation” (Erikson, 1997, pp. 75 – 76).

Regarding social institutions designed to support this stage of development, Erikson referred to the technological ethos present in society. Games are transformed into

competition and cooperation, and imagination is communicated through the child's attention to methods and techniques as he or she applies it to defined tasks (Erikson, 1997; Stevens, 2008). Children in all societies are exposed to some form of culturally appropriate systematised instruction in order to prepare them for adult life (Erikson, 1963). Society also instils within them a sense of the division of labour, as well as of differential opportunity, and through the technological ethos, the sense of competence that emerges in this stage, can be preserved (Capps, 2004; Erikson, 1963; Roazen, 1976).

### 3.3.5 Stage V: Identity versus Role Confusion – Fidelity

This stage, which lasts through adolescence, between ages 12 and 20, is marked by the challenge of each youth to resolve successfully the conflict between *identity* and *role confusion* (Gross, 1987; Hamachek, 1990). Erikson's view of adolescence acknowledges the influence of the changing sexual libido on the individual's self-concept, but he departed from Freud's stance in that the acquisition of a sexual partner is not seen as sufficient for the development of a mature self-concept (Freiberg, 1987). Erikson noted that adolescents are moved into this new stage of their development by the physiological *revolution* brought on by puberty, which entails rapid physical growth and sexual maturity (Erikson, 1963). Furthermore, adolescents become aware of the adult tasks that await them, such as finding an occupational direction and forming their own political, social, religious and economic values (Freiberg, 1987).

Erikson's extensive work on the concept of *identity* has greatly influenced how the concept is viewed in the social sciences (Gross, 1987). He refers to the sense of identity as individuals' conscious sense of their uniqueness, as well as their unconscious striving towards continuity of experience (Kroger, 2005). The potential core pathology of this stage is *role confusion*, which manifests as an uncertainty about one's sense of self and often leads to the imitation of others (Freiberg, 1987). Role confusion can also take the form of delinquency, which originates from the over-identification with the heroes of cliques, gangs and crowds (Erikson, 1963). Apart from developing an individual sense of *identity*, Erikson (1963) proposed that development during this stage also entails that youths search for a social identity. As they are increasingly concerned with comparing how they are viewed by others to their own sense of self, adolescents are prone to forming groups and can be cruel in their exclusion of those who are different from themselves in some way. Their intolerance of diversity should, however, be understood as a defence against *role confusion* (Erikson, 1963).

During this stage, maldevelopment may be characterised by either *fanaticism* at the one extreme, or *repudiation* at the other. According to Erikson et al. (1989), the adolescent may become fanatic as a result of the overdevelopment of identity. This becomes evident in an adolescent as a rigid system of beliefs and ideas, and the “puritanical intensity with which young people maintain their membership of cults and ideologies” (Stevens, 2008, p. 51). A malignant repudiation of otherness may result from the overdeveloped tendency towards role confusion. Erikson (1997), states that repudiation can manifest as diffidence, which is characterised by distinct slowness and weakness in relation to identity potential, or as systematic defiance, which he describes as the preference for the negative identity (i.e., a combination of unacceptable yet affirmed identity elements). Youths can repudiate their need for identity and reject the approaching tasks of the adult world sometimes by fusing with a group that has distanced itself from what society requires of them (Boeree, 2006).

According to Erikson (1997), the successful outcome of the adolescent struggle for *identity* is *fidelity*. This refers to the ability to sustain commitment and loyalties to the chosen roles, beliefs, and affiliations despite the inevitable contradictions and confusions inherent to different value systems (Markstrom, Berman, Sabino & Turner, 1998; Stevens, 2008). During its development, fidelity is readily and often perversely tested by adolescents, especially in social groups or cliques where they stereotype both themselves and those whom they perceive to be their enemies (Erikson, 1963). A further expression of the development of fidelity is seen in the generally ideological nature of the values youths initially aim to uphold to the exclusion of other ways of life (Gross, 1987). Erikson described fidelity and its connection to other developmental stages as follows:

The specific strength emerging in adolescence – namely *fidelity* – maintains a strong relation both to infantile trust and to mature faith. As it transfers the need for guidance from parental figures to mentors and leaders, fidelity eagerly accepts their ideological mediatorship – whether the ideology is one implicit in a ‘way of life’ or a militantly explicit one. (Erikson, 1997, p. 73)

Ideology, though it may be problematic, presents youths with different beliefs and social values for them to investigate in the development of their identity (Erikson, 1963; Stevens, 2008). Erikson wrote about the young person’s search for ideology, which can range from a militant system “with uniformed members and uniform goals” (Erikson, 1958/1993, p. 41) to way of life or worldview which “is consonant with existing theory, available knowledge, and common sense, and yet is significantly more: an utopian outlook, a cosmic mood, or a doctrinal logic...” (p. 41). Erikson (1958/1993, p. 118) wrote:

Ideological formula, intelligible both in terms of individual development and of significant tradition, must do for the young person what the mother did for the infant: provide nutriment for the soul as well as for the stomach, and screen the environment so that vigorous growth may meet what it can manage.

Society's support for the adolescent through this stage is, firstly, demonstrated by the provision of a psychosocial *moratorium* – a period of sanctioned postponement of definitive commitment (Erikson, 1997). Erikson viewed the moratorium as an important developmental process during which youths can experiment freely with numerous adult roles in order to find a unique fit (Kroger, 2005). Furthermore, society also provides the adolescent with various rites of passage that help to mark the transition from powerless and irresponsible childhood to responsible and powerful adulthood (Boeree, 2006).

### 3.3.6 Stage VI: Intimacy versus Isolation – Love

Occurring approximately between the ages of 20 and 35, this stage is the first to focus on the developmental crises facing adults (Hamachek, 1990; Shaffer, 2002). Young adults, after successful resolution of the previous psychosocial stage, develop the urge to reach out and fuse their identity with that of others. Their social circle expands and, having left the family of origin and distanced themselves from schoolmates and teachers, they now seek out new friendships and relationships (Freiberg, 1987). The crisis they now face is that of integrating the conflicting forces of *intimacy* and *isolation*. Erikson (1963, p. 255) described this crisis as follows:

Body and ego must now be masters of the organ modes and of the nuclear conflicts, in order to be able to face the fear of ego loss in situations which call for self-abandon: in the solidarity of close affiliations, in orgasms and sexual unions, in close friendships and in physical combat, in experiences of inspiration by teachers and of intuition from the recesses of the self.

Erikson defined *intimacy* as the ability to commit oneself to concrete partnerships even though it may entail significant personal sacrifice and compromise (Erikson, 1963; Freiberg, 1987). A secure sense of identity allows the young adult now to establish a sense of intimacy with another person, and even with the self. The more certain the young adult becomes of him- or herself, the more he or she seeks out to establish psychologically intimate relationships with others (Erikson, 1980). *Isolation*, as the antithesis of *intimacy*, entails distancing oneself from people and forces that are seen as a threat to an unstable sense of

identity (Erikson, 1963). The risk for developing *isolation* is increased by experiences such as victimization, abuse or exploitation (Freiberg, 1987). Erikson's description of *isolation* is nuanced, and he sees it as having a defensive tone. He uses the word *distantiation* in this context to refer to themes of repudiation, prejudicial and rejective attitudes which stem from: (a) a sense of self-endangerment; (b) differentiation between the familiar and the foreign; and (c) complex interactions between intimate and combative relations (Capps, 2004).

Maldevelopment at this stage may be characterised by *promiscuity* at the one extreme, as the young adult may overdevelop *intimacy* without the capacity for selective intimacy (Erikson et al., 1989). At the other extreme, an inclination toward a hate-filled and self-isolating *exclusivity* may develop as a result of a malignant inclination towards *isolation* (Erikson et al., 1989). If young adults fail to establish intimate relationships, they might find themselves, at best, in highly stereotyped and formal interpersonal interactions devoid of spontaneity and warmth (Erikson, 1980).

Should the individual successfully balance the opposing forces of intimacy and isolation, the ego gains the capacity for *love* (Erikson, 1963). This ego strength Erikson described as the "mutuality of mature devotion that promises to resolve the antagonisms inherent in divided function" (Erikson, 1997, p. 71). Gross (1987) stated that the resulting ego strength of *love* enables the person to, because of the development of hope resulting from the successful resolution of the first life stage, endure times of *isolation*. The capacity for intimacy, balanced with the need for some isolation, enables the individual to love and be loved and to engage with others with true mutuality (Erikson et al., 1989). Furthermore, it enables the young adult to cultivate styles of in-group living in which the individual identity is preserved. Individuals from diverse backgrounds now form a new milieu for themselves and their offspring, as they are now able to fuse together their own habitual ways and create a new shared pattern of living (Erikson, 1997).

Erikson (1963) stated that as adult tasks become delineated, and as the competitive encounter and the sexual embrace become differentiated during this stage, the *ethical sense* develops, which he sees as characteristic of adulthood. This ethical sense helps the individual to be selectively intimate, and to guard against the destruction or isolation of what is considered foreign (Erikson, 1963). Societies provide individuals with a ritual for the celebration, fostering and protection of intimacy, most commonly, in the form of marriage (Stevens, 2008).

### 3.3.7 Stage VII: Generativity versus Stagnation – Care

Erikson's seventh stage occurs during middle adulthood and is therefore the longest stage in the life cycle of most individuals, beginning at approximately age 35 and lasting until the age of retirement, at approximately 65 (Hamachek, 1990; Gross, 1987). During middle adulthood, individuals may find themselves in the position of having to guide their own offspring through the psychosocial stages of development (Freiberg, 1987). Erikson stressed that adults are as dependent on children as they are on them, due to their significant "need to be needed" (Erikson, 1963, p. 258). Outside the context of the nuclear family, adults are required to be productive members of their communities. They become more aware of their responsibilities to society and to those who are younger, weaker, less experienced, or in some way subordinate (McAdams, De St. Aubin & Logan, 1993).

Against this backdrop, *generativity* can be viewed as an involvement in and contribution to one's environment or the welfare of future generations. Erikson (1963, p. 258) referred to this as the "concern in establishing and guiding the next generation". This concern is expressed through nurturing, mentoring or contributing through civic and community causes (Freiberg, 1987). Products and outcomes are generated by the individual for the benefit of society and the promotion of its continuity from one generation to the next (McAdams et al., 1993). Generative concern, therefore, includes procreation, productivity and creativity (Erikson, 1997). The experiences essential to this stage of generativity (e.g., caring, nurturing and maintaining) provide the stages of the lifespan with a cyclical quality by binding together the life cycles of each generation to those which gave it life, and to those for whose life it is responsible (Erikson et al., 1989). Erikson (1963), however, stated that the establishment of *generativity* involves more than merely producing and caring for offspring. He also included other tasks and investments as inherent in the development of *generativity*, and stated: "the ability to lose oneself in the meeting of bodies and minds leads to a gradual expansion of ego-interests and to a libidinal investment in that which is being generated" (Erikson, 1963, p. 258). *Stagnation*, as the antithesis of *generativity*, occurs when ego-interests are not expanded (Erikson, 1963). It also involves regression to past conflicts (Erikson, 1997), as evident through the occurrence of pseudo-intimacy, self-indulgence or the lack of a sense of faith or hope in humankind (Erikson, 1963).

Maldevelopment at this stage may be characterised by what Erikson et al. (1989) described as an *overextension* of generative concern and care to people and interests which are beyond the capacity of the individual. On the other hand, an inclination towards

generalised *rejectivity* represents a malignant inclination towards stagnation, a state in which the individual “simply does not care to care – for anybody” (Erikson et al., 1989, p. 44). Individuals with tendencies for *rejectivity*, become unwilling to include others in their generative concern. Erikson (1997) stated that some selectivity, and therefore, some distinct *rejectivity* is necessary, and ethics, law and insight define the bearable measure of *rejectivity* in any group. When unrestricted, *rejectivity* can result in, for example, cruelty against one’s children and moralistic prejudice against parts of one’s family or segments of one’s community. Erikson (1997) also argues that *rejectivity* is periodically manifested collectively, as evident by wars against other groups of people who are perceived to be dangerously different to one’s own group.

For the development of *care* through *generativity*, individuals need to shift their focus from themselves towards the teaching, guidance and encouragement of children or younger protégés (Graves & Larkin, 2006). It implies that the individual has developed the capacity to give without expectations of any return, and that the adult now overcomes the ambivalence inherent in adhering to irreversible obligations (Stevens, 2008). The acquisition of the previous ego strengths (i.e., *hope, will, purpose, fidelity* and *love*) is essential for this task of guidance which then aims to promote these same virtues in the next generation (Erikson, 1997).

Erikson (1963, 1997) argued that all social institutions in some way reinforce the notion of generativity and that it is supported by parental, didactic, productive and curative ritualisations. As an example, the concept of generativity is reflected in religious images of God as teacher and father, and generative actions focused on the broader community are often characteristic of religious organisations – especially where celibacy is required and generativity can, therefore, not be expressed through the raising of one’s own children (Stevens, 2008). Furthermore, it is now the responsibility of the individual in this stage of the life cycle to maintain and develop all societal institutions which are needed for the survival and development of successive generations (Erikson et al., 1989).

### **3.3.8 Stage VIII: Integrity versus Despair – Wisdom**

In late adulthood, beginning at the age of retirement, the final nuclear conflict occurs between the antitheses *integrity* and *despair* (Erikson, 1963; Hamachek, 1990). During this stage of life, the individual is often burdened by physical limitations and finds planning for the personal future increasingly difficult, as the duration of a personal future becomes

increasingly uncertain. Faced with their own mortality, individuals become aware of unrealised goals (Stevens, 2008). Erikson et al. (1989) reported on interviews that were held with a sample of elderly participants who mostly experienced setting new goals as more challenging, and for some, surviving for as long as possible became the only goal they focused on. Some considered their grandchildren to be extensions of themselves into the future, in the absence of thoughts about a personal future. Many were plagued by thoughts and fears surrounding the process of death. Erikson et al. (1986) argued that the elderly should engage in the process of finding their own guides for the progression through this stage, and often do so by looking back to the elders they had previously admired, such as their own parents or grandparents. Apart from identifying their own guides, the elderly now also enter into a position where they must serve as guides to those who follow.

The older adult is tasked with gaining acceptance of the self and the life's work, which Erikson termed *ego integrity*. This is accomplished through the vital task and process of reflecting on the life lived (Erikson, 1963). This process of reflection is aimed at avoiding the resentment, guilt and regret associated with *despair* (Haber, 2006) and when it yields positive results, it consequently leads to the development of integrity (Graves & Larkin, 2006). Important components of this process of life review include: (a) acknowledgement and acceptance of past choices; (b) acceptance of the inalterability of the past; and (c) acknowledgement and integration of legitimate feelings of despair (Erikson et al., 1989). Erikson (1980) wrote that integrity not only involves the acceptance of one's own life cycle, but also an acceptance of the people who played a significant role in it. For example, integrity, therefore, implies a new and different kind of love of one's parents, devoid of wishes that they should have been different. Integrity is thus an acceptance of responsibility for one's own life, and the defence of one's life style despite being aware of the relativity of various possible life styles (Erikson, 1980). Should a reflection on the life lived result in intense dissatisfaction, then despair, in the form of dread, hopelessness and the fear of death, occurs (Erikson et al., 1989; Graves & Larkin, 2006). The individual in despair is burdened by the feeling that there is not enough time left for them to attempt another life or alternate roads to integrity (Erikson, 1963).

During this stage, maldevelopment may be characterised by either *presumption* at the one extreme, or *disdain* at the other. Erikson et al. (1989) proposed that both of these tendencies may result in the isolation of the elderly individual, as both a pompous pretension to wisdom as well as a tendency towards disdain may prevent others from providing the individual with much needed help and assistance. Disdain can result from the older adult

feeling confused and helpless, or seeing others in such states (Erikson, 1997). An overemphasis of despair can also manifest as disgust and repugnance toward persons, institutions and objects that exist in the diminishing life-world of the aging adult (Capps, 2004), which also signifies the individual's contempt of the self (Erikson, 1980).

*Wisdom* results from the balancing of integrity and despair, and is defined as a “detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself” (Erikson et al., 1989, p. 37). During this final stage of development, the individual should, ideally, consolidate their sense of wisdom without excluding legitimate feelings of hopelessness and cynicism, but should rather integrate some realistic feelings of despair as an unavoidable component of old age (Erikson et al., 1989).

As previously discussed, Erikson (1963, 1997) conceptualised human development as a life cycle. At every stage of this cycle, earlier conflicts and ego strengths are integrated in order to resolve the current conflict. It is, thus, during this final developmental stage that the life cycle “weaves back on itself in its entirety, ultimately integrating maturing forms of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love and care, into a comprehensive sense of wisdom” (Erikson et al., 1989, pp. 55 – 56). The ego's first task of establishing a sense of *trust* can be viewed as the reliance on the *integrity* of another person, with *integrity* becoming the ego's focus during the last stage of life (Graves & Larkin, 2006). This cyclical nature, thus, refers to a generational relationship between adult *integrity* and infantile *trust*: “healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death” (Erikson, 1963, p. 261).

The human need for integrity is reflected by philosophy and the elderly are often prized for their knowledge and wisdom, with traditional societies practicing complex rituals for soliciting the advice from their elders (Stevens, 2008). Erikson (1963, pp. 260 – 261) reflected on the role of cultural institutions in the support of the individual development of integrity:

In order to approach or experience integrity, the individual must know how to be a follower of image bearers in religion and in politics, in the economic order and in technology, in aristocratic living and in the arts and science. Ego integrity, therefore, implies an emotional integration which permits participation by followership as well as acceptance of the responsibility of leadership.

The following section focuses on a selection of research publications in which Erikson's stage model of psychosocial development, or aspects thereof, was the focus of

empirical investigation. For the studies included in this discussion, the research methodology is briefly outlined and the major findings of the studies are presented.

### **3.4 Empirical Investigation**

As stated by Stevens (2008, p. 111), the majority of Erikson's ideas are "too subtle and elusive to be pinned down in the measurement and categories of empirical work." Psychologists have only begun to explore Erikson's hypotheses empirically during the last few decades. For example, the majority of research on generativity only appeared since the early 1980's (James & Zarrett, 2006; Peterson & Duncan, 1999), whilst integrity versus despair has received little empirical attention (James & Zarrett, 2006). Much of the research generated by Erikson's developmental theory has only focused on isolated stages of the lifespan, such as the development of identity and generativity (James & Zarrett, 2006).

McAdams and De St Aubin (1992) expanded on the concept of generativity and proposed that generativity consist of seven psychosocial features, namely: (a) cultural demand, (b) inner desire, (c) generative concern, (d) generative belief, (e) generative commitment, (f) generative action, and (g) generative narration. Furthermore, they proposed a methodological framework in which generativity may be studied. Subsequently, they investigated Erikson's proposition that generativity reaches a peak during middle adulthood and declines somewhat in old age, using a stratified random sample of 51 young adults (ages 22 - 27), 53 participants in middle adulthood (ages 37 - 42), and 48 older adults (ages 67 - 72) (McAdams et al., 1993). The study focused on age-cohort differences in four features of generativity, namely generative concern, generative commitments, generative actions, and generative narration. These aspects were assessed in different ways, including a behaviour checklist, as well as open-ended questions that focus on key autobiographical recollections. Their results showed mixed support for Erikson's propositions regarding generativity. When the four features are taken together, adults in midlife obtain higher generativity scores than did the younger and older groups combined. However, scores for generative concern and generative action, do not show a statistically significant difference. Furthermore, older adults obtained surprisingly high scores on generative commitments and narration, significantly higher than those obtained by young adults. Based on these results, the researchers emphasised the importance of employing multiple conceptual and measurement perspectives when investigating generativity. They also concluded that in their study, the autobiographical

methodology yielded the richest data regarding themes of generativity (McAdams et al., 1993).

In a later study which analysed the narrative accounts of 70 adults (of which 40 may be considered as highly generative and 30 as less generative), McAdams, Diamond, De St. Aubin and Mansfield (1997), found a correlation between generativity and the use of commitment stories. Such stories contain themes of (a) early family advantage; (b) sensitization to the suffering of others at an early age; (c) moral steadfastness as observed through a clear and stable personal ideology; (d) redemption sequences in which bad scenes are transformed into positive outcomes; and (e) goals for the future which will benefit society. Again, the value of an autobiographical and nomothetic research approach in the research of psychosocial constructs was emphasised by the authors. Westermeyer (2004) found young adult predictors for later generativity to be a warm family environment without troubled parental discipline, the presence of a relationship with a mentor, as well as favourable peer group relationships. Eighty-six men were assessed in this study at age 21 and again at age 53. The results also suggested that generativity is associated with marital satisfaction, work achievements, close friendships, altruism and overall mental health.

Generativity was also the focus area for Peterson and Duncan (1999) who reported on two studies from the United States of America. The first used two samples (91 undergraduate students and 126 midlife women) and the second study analysed data gathered from 159 participants (all of them the parents of students at the University of New Hampshire). The researchers focused on the relationship between generativity and political commitments and orientation. Firstly, they found that generativity was positively related to political awareness, interest and contribution. Secondly, generativity was also linked to political ideology, as it was found to be positively related to contributions to and support for the Democratic Party, liberal national politics, and local politics. Their findings suggested that republicanism “may not draw as clearly on generative concerns to marshal support. This finding is unexpected because the rhetoric of both the right and the left depend on generative imagery” (Peterson & Duncan, 1999, p. 114). The researchers, therefore, argued that generativity as a construct needs to be developed further. Specifically, research should focus on the possibility of diverse content areas or specialised arenas of generativity (e.g., political, parental, artistic). Multiple forms of generativity, as well as how different generative strivings might conflict within the individual, therefore, need to be investigated to improve and expand on the concept of generativity (Peterson & Duncan, 1999). More recently, Peterson and Duncan (2007) used data from 81 women who formed part of a longitudinal study. Results indicated

a positive correlation between generativity and satisfaction with marriage and motherhood, as well as successful aging. These findings may support Erikson's notion that the successful development of psychosocial intimacy is a prerequisite for the development of generativity (Peterson & Duncan, 2007).

The developmental sequence proposed by Erikson has also come under investigation. Sneed, Whitbourne and Culang (2006) used data from the Rochester Adult Longitudinal Study in which 175 men and women were assessed at four intervals during a 34-year period. They confirmed their hypothesis that three of Erikson's stages, namely trust versus mistrust, identity versus role confusion and ego integrity versus despair would follow unique developmental paths which, primarily, supported Erikson's developmental sequence. Furthermore, important individual differences were noted which "substantially support Erikson's focus on the idiosyncrasies of the individual's personality evolution over the life course" (Sneed, Whitbourne & Culang, 2006, p. 165). In a review of two 40-year prospective studies, with a total number of 486 male participants, Vaillant and Milofsky (1980), observed that the stages of the men's life cycle seem to occur sequentially and that the failure to master one stage did preclude successful resolution of subsequent stages. Secondly, the ages at which the developmental crises occur demonstrated significant variation. In their review, they noted that adult psychosocial development was not significantly influenced by social class and education, but was dependent on whether trust, autonomy and initiative was attained during childhood. The authors furthermore proposed that a career consolidation stage occurs between the crises of intimacy versus isolation and generativity versus stagnation.

In a South African study of the cross-cultural validity of Erikson's theory, data were gathered from 1 859 South Africans, ranging between the ages of 15 and 60 (Ochse & Plug, 1986). The study compared the responses of White men and women to Black men and women who completed, among other instruments, a questionnaire on the first seven of Erikson's developmental stages. Results suggested that identity and intimacy do not invariably reach ascendancy as proposed by Erikson's theory with regard to timing and sequence. The data from this study suggested that White women may resolve the crisis of identity versus role confusion at a younger age than White men, a result the researchers maintained could not simply be attributed to identity foreclosure with regard to vocational choice. Similarly, White women also seemed to develop intimacy sooner than White men. It also seemed that the critical point for the development of identity in men occurred after the age of 25, and that this does not necessarily precede the development of intimacy. Findings

regarding the Black participants suggest that the critical age for the development of identity for Black men may only be after age 40, and that psychosocial development of Black women, regarding identity and intimacy, may be frustrated. These findings urged the researchers to highlight the need for further studies into the nature and sequence of the psychosocial development of Africans (Ochse & Plug, 1986). They may also point to the possibility of a cultural bias inherent to Erikson's theory (see section 3.6) and the impact of the sociohistorical context on cross-cultural research, as this study was conducted during the last decade of apartheid.

Graves and Larkin (2006) examined the re-experience of autonomy across the lifespan from a theoretical perspective. In particular, they compared the search for autonomy in early childhood with the older adult's efforts to maintain it. The authors argue that the re-experience of the struggle against shame and doubt by older adults is evident in their need for the maintenance of dignity and a measure of control. According to them, trust also re-emerges in adults as faith and religion and, in older adults, is maintained through the quest for spiritual autonomy and moral independence. The authors, furthermore, supported Erikson's notions that a generational connection exists through the relation between trust in offspring and integrity in their elders.

As noted by Schwartz (2001), Erikson's writings have been criticised for a lack of theoretic precision which made it difficult to extract operational definitions. However, some researchers who have attempted such a task have developed models and hypotheses based on Erikson's work. Apart from, and often complementary to empirical investigation, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development has, therefore, been the subject of theoretical articles focussing on proposed expansions of and extensions to his developmental model (Schwartz, 2001; Wastell, 1996). The following section provides an overview of some of the main theoretical developments based on Erikson's work.

### **3.5 Theoretical Expansions and Extensions**

As noted by Wastell (1996), researchers have expanded on Erikson's original model, but have not made substantial alterations to it. Marcia (1966) focused on Erikson's concept of identity and constructed an identity status model which proposed different styles with which adolescents engage in the process of identity formation (Kroger, 2000). This model is considered to be the first neo-Eriksonian identity model to stimulate significant research, with more than 300 theoretical and empirical publications based on Marcia's work (Kroger, 2000;

Schwartz, 2001). Marcia proposed that two dimensions are important in the understanding of identity formation, namely that of *exploration* and *commitment* (Marcia, 2001), with each of these dimensions consisting of a high and a low level. Marcia then juxtaposed each level of one with each level of the other (Schwartz, 2001). This resulted in four independent identity statuses: (a) *identity diffusion*, which contains a low level of exploration and a low level of commitment, (b) *identity foreclosure*, which has a low level of exploration and a high level of commitment, (c) *identity moratorium*, in which there is high levels of exploration and a low level of commitment, and (d) *identity achievement*, which is characterised by both high exploration and commitment levels (Marcia, 1966; Schwartz, 2001).

Although Marcia originally intended that *identity achievement* represents the end result of the identity formation process, it has been argued that the four identity statuses better represent distinct types than stages in a developmental process (Schwartz, 2001). Marcia's model has been criticised for under-representing Erikson's concept of identity, a criticism which Marcia readily acknowledged (Marcia, 2001; Schwartz, 2001). However, he defended his position by stating that it "seemed impossible to measure objectively the interior variables (e.g., synthesis of inner drives, constitution, unconscious wishes, goals, childhood identifications, etc.) that Erikson derived from his observations during psychoanalytic sessions" (Marcia, 2001, p. 59). Marcia's research later progressed to investigate the other stages of adult psychosocial development. He expanded his theory to include statuses relating to intimacy, generativity and integrity, by using the same general paradigm with which he constructed his identity status theory (Marcia, 2002).

Levinson (1986) drew on the work of Erikson and conceived the life cycle in a series of *eras*, each with its own biopsychosocial attributes. The four eras, or seasons as Levinson described them, of the human life cycle are: pre-adulthood, early adulthood, middle adulthood, and late adulthood. Periods of *cross-era transition* (generally of a five year duration), mark the termination of one era and the beginning of the next. Levinson proposed that individuals experience eras of relative stability, with transitional periods occurring between these eras during which individuals often consider changes as they re-evaluate their existing life structures (Louw & Louw, 2009). Levinson also departed from Erikson's theory by proposing that stages and transitions in adult development are tied to specific ages, whilst Erikson's stages were not designed to follow such specific timing (Westermeyer, 2004).

Capps (2004) argued for the retention of Erikson's eight developmental crises, but proposed that the stages should rather refer to different decades in the lifespan as opposed to the age ranges used by Erikson. He suggests that the first stage of trust versus mistrust can be

conceptualised as occurring during the first decade of life, the second stage during the second decade, and so forth. This reconfiguration was seen as moving the theory further away from Freud's psychosexual model and focusing more attention on adult development (six of the stages would now be situated in adulthood). According to Capps (2004), this proposal is in keeping with Erikson's notion of the constant flow between the eight stages as well as with the creative spirit in which Erikson had first formulated his life cycle.

J. M. Erikson (1997) continued with the development of Erikson's theory after his death. She wrote chapters on an additional stage of psychosocial development which were included in their last collaboration and published after Erikson's death. She extended the life cycle to a ninth stage in order to illuminate the demands and difficulties of old age in the ninth and tenth decade of life. During the ninth stage, she proposed that all previous psychosocial crises are revisited, with the dystonic element (e.g., mistrust) placed before the syntonic qualities (e.g., trust) in order to emphasise their prominence for the elders.

The following section explores the criticism that has been directed towards Erikson's theory of psychosocial development.

### **3.6 Criticism of the Theory**

Wastell (1996) argued that the criticisms against Erikson's theory of psychosocial development can be grouped in two broad categories. The first category contains criticisms regarding the intrinsic weaknesses of the model. Wastell (1996, p. 576) noted these include the following points of critique:

- (a) Mechanisms for resolving crises are not delineated;
- (b) conditions of transition from one stage to another are not clearly explained;
- (c) the specific stages, particularly in adulthood, have not been empirically demonstrated; and
- (d) the specific way in which society influences development has not been elaborated.

The second category of criticism relates to the nature of the model of development, with particular focus on the biases concerning culture and gender (Wastell, 1996). As far as a possible cultural bias is concerned, Erikson's theory has been frequently criticised for its eurocentric emphasis. Even though Erikson spent a considerable amount of time studying different cultures, such as the Sioux and Yurok, he recognised that his theory of identity and the life cycle was essentially a contemporary Western theory (Erikson, 1963). This acknowledgment, however, did not prevent him from applying his theory to the case of

Martin Luther (Stevens, 2008). Proponents of Erikson's theory argue that it can be universal and culturally neutral, because the theory focuses on structure (which is universal) and not content (which is dependent on context). For example, the content of the identity could be to be liberal or conservative, Muslim or Buddhist, and is, therefore, irrelevant to the structure of identity formation (Schachter, 2005). According to Schachter (2005), however, a "preferred structure of identity is no less value laden than a preferred content. Nor are cultures impartial to the structure of identity" (p. 148).

A substantial amount of the criticism of Erikson's psychosocial theory of development has, therefore, been levelled at the emphasis on developmental process "at the expense of cultural variability and cohort effects" (Haber, 2006, p. 158). According to Schachter (2005), Erikson's theory has been considered to be an example of individualistic thinking, a claim which he finds ironic, "because more than any other of the early psychoanalysts and personality theorists, Erikson... is well known for his insistence on delineating the interplay between the psychological and the social across the lifespan" (p. 137). He argues that the cultural and contextual aspects of the theory have been, mostly, overlooked by neo-Eriksonians who based their work on his theory, resulting in the overemphasis of individualistic aspects of his original theory. Schachter (2005), however, also explored further problematic aspects of Erikson's theory: (a) that the theory has, increasingly, been considered as irrelevant to current social conditions, and (b) research based on theories outside the realm of Erikson's identity theory, has developed new perspectives that threaten to undermine its basic premises. Following an evaluation of Erikson's theory from a postmodernistic perspective, Schachter (2005) concluded that:

Erikson's writings contain significant concepts that can be used to constructively address many of the concerns of postmodernists. Erikson's concept of identity structure as a goal-oriented configuration of identity elements created through the interaction of the individual and society, coupled with his portrayal of multiple possible cultural goals and values guiding childrearing practice, are seen as key concepts with which Erikson's theory can explain and acknowledge diverse and context-sensitive structures of identity. (Schachter, 2005, p. 137)

Apart from its possible cultural bias, critique has also been launched against Erikson's theory for the possibility that it may also contain a gender bias, as it utilises male development as the model for normal development (Wastell, 1996) and does not adequately recognise the distinctiveness of women's experiences (Horst, 1995). Over the past few

decades, development in feminist psychology had brought about the question: How well would the “eight ages of man” describe the psychosocial development of women?

Horst (1995) re-examined claims made by much of the feminist critique against Erikson’s theory. The majority of such criticisms concerned Erikson’s views on the social status of women, and his portrayal of gender differences as being anatomically based. Horst (1995) argued that Erikson’s work reflected the sexism of his sociohistorical context, insofar as he wrote little on the experiences unique to women when compared to his extensive work on the male experience. Furthermore, his approach to the identity development of women “reflects a social system in which maintaining a marriage and family is a legitimate career goal for women and not for men” (p. 273). However, Horst (1995) argued that evidence existed that Erikson had not been content with the traditional allotment of career tracks, as he had spoken enthusiastically about the potential unique and valuable contributions women could make in different careers. Horst (1995) agrees with other critics that Erikson had emphasised gender differences rather than ignore them, and that his focus on the anatomical determinants did reinforce the notion that gender differences are rigidly fixed.

In an analysis of Erikson’s theory of identity formation from a feminist perspective, Sorell and Montgomery (2001) questioned the applicability of his theory to contemporary human development, due to: (a) Erikson’s own search for a personal and social belonging; (b) the incorporation of the ideals of American capitalism, (c) the emphasis on the experience of middle class Caucasian men, and (d) the theory’s definitions of psychosocial normality. The authors concluded that Erikson’s concept of identity remains of significant value in the constant pursuit of understanding human lives and that its biopsychosocial processes correlate with contemporary thinking. They however noted that some of his assumptions about normal development may carry an androcentric bias and, therefore, describe development from a masculine point of view: “We believe that the developmental trajectory proposed in Erikson’s theory could, and should, be revised to reduce the most obvious bias of emphasizing the triumph of independence over connectedness in the content of developmental conflicts” (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001, p. 122).

This criticism concerning the focus on individuation to the expense of interpersonal attachment was also expressed by Franz and White (1985). According to them, the theory’s most serious weakness is the emphasis on the development of the “individuated, socially connected personality” (p. 254) and the resulting neglect of the “attached, interpersonally connected, care-oriented personality” (pp. 254-255). They are of the opinion that Erikson’s emphasis on the expanding social network within which identity is developed is insufficient:

While Erikson emphasizes that this development occurs within an expanding network of significant persons, we believe that his theory does not account adequately for the development of various forms of interpersonal connectedness or attachments. While Erikson views identity and intimacy ... as equal in value, his emphasis on the antecedents and consequences of identity to the neglect of the antecedents and consequences of intimacy means that his theory fails to do justice to the coherence and interrelatedness of both sets of processes in both sexes. (Franz & White, 1985, pp. 224 – 225)

In order to reduce a possible gender bias regarding issues of independence and attachment, Franz and White (1985) proposed that the model should be expanded to a two-path model of development, consisting of an individuation pathway as well as an attachment pathway (Franz & White, 1985). In this model, these two strands or pathways are conceptualised to follow the same developmental stages as proposed by Erikson, but their psychological crises and the potential ego strengths have been adapted. The two pathways share the first and final stages of *trust versus mistrust* and *integrity versus despair*. The proposed individuation pathway contains most of the stages as described by Erikson, but the stages *intimacy versus isolation* as well as *generativity versus stagnation* (which are moved to the attachment pathway) is replaced by *career and lifestyle exploration versus drifting* and *life-style consolidation versus emptiness*, respectively. The proposed attachment pathway contains new crises, such as: *object & self-constancy versus loneliness & helplessness* (stage II: ages 1-3), *playfulness versus passivity or aggression* (stage III: early childhood), *empathy and collaboration versus excessive caution or power* (stage IV: middle to late childhood), and *mutuality/interdependence versus isolation* (stage V: adolescence).

Horst (1995), however, argued that if Erikson's complex use of the terms identity and intimacy are fully understood, there is no need to review his stages in order to better represent the experiences of women. She commented that:

Erikson never intended identity and intimacy to represent the polar opposites of separateness and connection. This is not because Erikson ignored the importance of this polarity in human experience. Returning to Erikson's discussion of intimacy, we find that balancing the tension between separateness and connection is the essence of the intimacy task. The polarity belongs within the intimacy task, not between the tasks of identity and intimacy. (Horst, 1995, p. 275)

In the following section, the use of Erikson's psychosocial development theory in psychobiographical studies is discussed.

### 3.7 Psychobiography and Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

Erikson took a keen interest in the use of psychology to enrich the art of biography (Stevens, 2008). According to Roazen (1976), Erikson held the opinion that both historians and psychologists stand to gain from the combination of their perspectives. Specifically, psychoanalysis would be able to clarify the psychological obstacles which stem from the past and obstruct present thinking or decision-making. History's contribution would be to provide a perspective on those concepts which psychoanalysis, too often, consider as universal rather than time-bound (Roazen, 1976).

Erikson's own psychobiographical studies of Gandhi (Erikson, 1969) and Luther (Erikson, 1958/1993) are widely considered as a model for the study of individual lives through the combination of psychology and history (Barbenbaum & Winter, 2003; Barresi & Juckes, 1997). In these works, Erikson had chosen to investigate the lives of ideological innovators, and tried to better understand the phenomenon and origins of greatness itself (Roazen, 1976). Although criticised for the paucity of evidence in his study of Luther, Erikson's work was hailed as elegant and sensitive, and Erikson took care to recognise the tentative nature of his psychoanalytic interpretations (Stevens, 2008). In *Young Man Luther* (Erikson, 1958/1993), Erikson successfully illustrated how the theoretical concepts of his psychosocial theory could be applied, but neglected to offer a precise methodological approach to a psychobiography. As noted by Stevens (2008), "anyone who sought to emulate his example would be forced onto their own resources of skill and art without the guidance of an explicit technique" (p. 94).

Erikson's psychobiographical work on these and other people and populations had illuminated the influence of social factors on ego development across the entire lifespan (Stevens, 2008). He also highlighted methodological considerations in the psychological study of historical figures, especially with regard to the researcher's own reactions to and interaction with the data and the subject (Roazen, 1976). Erikson reflected extensively on his personal experiences during his study on Gandhi, and how he interacted with the data he collected (Erikson, 1969).

Erikson's theory has been used in a limited number of academic psychobiographies in South Africa. For example, in their review of psychobiographical research in South Africa, Fouché, Smit, Watson and Van Niekerk (2007) found that two of the 12 academic psychobiographies between 1995 and 2004, had employed Erikson's theory. Since that review, psychobiographical studies on the lives of Mahatma Gandhi (Pillay, 2009), Jeffrey

Dahmer (Chez , 2009) and Vincent van Gogh (Muller, 2010) utilised Erikson’s psychosocial development theory. Chez  (2009) emphasised that the study demonstrated the value of using Erikson’s theory to explore and understand the processes involved in an individual’s development.

The use of Erikson’s theory holds intuitive appeal when undertaking the study of an individual life, due to its integrative approach, its capacity to describe key concerns across the entire lifespan, as well as the careful consideration given to the impact of the sociohistorical milieu on individual development. Furthermore, Erikson’s interest in the phenomenon of greatness and the study of qualities such as leadership, success and creativity, adds to the theory’s appeal in the study of the life of a “great” individual. Erikson’s developmental theory was chosen for this study as it provides a conceptual framework within which the childhood and adult development of Suzman can be described and investigated.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

The lifespan approach of personality development makes Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development a particularly promising framework for psychobiographical research. In this chapter, the theory of psychosocial development was presented as a conceptual framework in which the life cycle of an individual can be explored and described. As previously noted, Erikson’s own psychobiographical work demonstrated that his psychosocial approach can be applied to an individual life history. Therefore, this theory could prove useful in explaining the psychological development of the subject as well as, simultaneously, being informally tested in terms of its relevance to her development, considering important variables such as gender, culture and sociohistorical milieu. Chapter 8 focuses on the application of Erikson’s theory to the life of Helen Suzman. The following chapter is dedicated to the exploration of the second approach that was applied in this psychobiographical study, a neo-Adlerian holistic wellness model as developed by Thomas J. Sweeney, J. Melvin Witmer and Jane E. Myers (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE HOLISTIC WELLNESS MODEL

#### 4.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter discusses the conceptualisation of holistic wellness, as proposed by wellness researchers, Thomas J. Sweeney, J. Melvin Witmer and Jane E. Myers (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Firstly, wellness as a construct is contextualised by providing the reader with an overview of the development of wellness as a concept within positive psychology. Thereafter, an in-depth description of the holistic wellness model is given. The chapter concludes with an overview of the empirical investigations regarding the model, its use in psychobiographical research, as well as criticisms related to the wellness movement.

#### 4.2 Positive Psychology and the Wellness Movement

Positive psychology has, over the past two decades, received considerable attention as a psychological movement. It has been the focus of various research projects, journal articles, conferences and courses. Several journal issues, books, textbooks, university programmes and international associations are dedicated to its promotion (Linley, Joseph, Harrington & Wood, 2006). However, the plea to shift psychology's focus away from pathology and dysfunction is not new:

The science of psychology has been far more successful on the negative than on the positive side. It has revealed to us much about man's shortcomings, his illness, his sins, but little about his potentialities, his virtues, his achievable aspirations, or his full psychological height. It is as if psychology has voluntarily restricted itself to only half its rightful jurisdiction, and that, the darker, meaner half. (Maslow, 1954, p. 354)

Prior to World War II, psychology had focused on three objectives: (a) curing mental illness, (b) improving the quality of life for all people, and (c) nurturing and cultivating talent (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). After the war, however, the field became more concerned with the assessment and treatment of psychopathology (Strümpfer, 2005). Martin E. P. Seligman, the president of the American Psychological Association in 1998, publicly criticised psychology's shift in focus towards a disease model because of the increased post-

war focus of the treatment of mental illness. During his Presidential Address to the APA, he committed himself to returning psychology's focus to a more positive psychology (Linley et al., 2006; Strümpfer, 2005). The stage was set for ideas by earlier theorists, such as Maslow, to resurface: "Perhaps this health psychology will give us more possibility for controlling and improving our lives and for making ourselves better people" (Maslow, 1962, p. 5).

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) described positive psychology at the subjective level as being concerned with valued subjective experiences, such as well-being, contentment, satisfaction, hope, optimism, and happiness. They distinguish between the application of the term on (a) an individual level – which denotes positive traits such as the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, talent, and wisdom, and (b) its application on a group level – where it is concerned with civic virtues and the institutions, such as responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In the introductory article for the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, Linley et al. (2006) reviewed the current definitions and literature on positive psychology. They identified core themes and consistencies between definitions, and proposed an integrated definition of positive psychology:

Positive psychology is the scientific study of optimal human functioning. At the meta-psychological level, it aims to redress the imbalance in psychological research and practice by calling attention to the positive aspects of human functioning and experience, and integrating them with our understanding of the negative aspects of human functioning and experience. At the pragmatic level, it is about understanding the wellsprings, processes and mechanisms that lead to desirable outcomes. (Linley et al., 2006, p. 10)

An overview by Coetzee and Viviers (2007) of South African studies in the field of positive psychology indicated that South African researchers had responded to the field's international launch by directing their research initiatives accordingly, with the earliest positive psychology studies appearing locally in the 1970s. A landmark in the growth of the positive psychology movement in South Africa was the publication of *Salutogenesis: A new paradigm*, by Strümpfer (1990). In this work, which he based on that of Antonovsky (1987), Strümpfer linked salutogenesis to five constructs, namely, sense of coherence, hardiness, potency, stamina and learned resourcefulness. Five years later, Strümpfer (1995) also included self-efficacy and locus of control. He also coined the term *fortogenesis* (i.e., the origins of strength), as he broadened the concept of salutogenesis (the origins of health) to include dimensions of resilience such as engagement, meaningfulness, subjective well-being,

positive emotions, and proactive coping, all of which he referred to as fortigenic constructs (Coetzee & Viviers, 2007). This enabled the emergence of a new subdiscipline, namely, psychofortology, which was proposed by Wissing and Van Eeden (1997). They argued that not only should the origins of psychological well-being be studied, but its characteristics, manifestations, and the subsequent enhancement and development of psychological well-being should receive empirical attention (Wissing and Van Eeden, 1997).

A central concept in the positive psychology movement is that of wellness (Roscoe, 2009). Its origins can be traced to the work of prominent earlier psychological theorists, such as Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, although some of them may have underemphasised certain wellness dimensions, such as physical health (Hattie, Myers & Sweeney, 2004; Myers, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). These theorists have referred to a human drive towards wholeness and a universal pursuit of health, and acknowledged holism – referring to the unity of mind, body and entire personality (Fouché, 1999; Strümpfer, 2005; Sweeney, 2009; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). For example, Adler's Individual Psychology is characterised by a holistic approach. It considers the individual to be socially embedded, and acknowledges the social context in which development occurs (Adler, 1927/1992; Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956/1964). Maslow (1962) argued for a growing focus on building a psychology of health, and used the term *self-actualisation* to stress the importance of the fulfilment of an individual's potentialities. In line with these traditions, holism as the acknowledgement of the inseparability of body, mind and spirit is considered to be integral to the wellness perspective (Myers, 2009).

Fouché (1999) reflected on the origins of the term wellness, and noted that it first entered modern American vocabulary during the 1950s, as a result of lectures by Dr H. Dunn to a Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C., and his influential book, *High-level Wellness*, which was published in 1961. One of Dunn's students, John Travis, became the first physician to formalise wellness education through his Wellness Resource Centre, and is credited with pioneering the modern wellness movement (Fouché, 1999; Strohecker, 2005). The concept of wellness has since developed in several disciplines, such as behavioural medicine, psychology, anthropology, sociology, education, and religion (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

The construct of wellness had since become an accepted paradigm in the field of academic and professional psychology, which resulted in the development of both counselling models and assessment instruments (Els & De la Rey, 2006; Myers, 1991; Myers, 2009). The profession of counselling proved a natural partner in the wellness movement, and

became an advocate for the promotion of optimum health and well-being (Myers & Sweeney, 2007). In 1992, an entire issue of the *Journal of Counselling and Development* was devoted to the topic “Wellness Throughout the Life Span” (Myers, 1992). Subsequently, commitment to the wellness model as a paradigm for counselling and development over the lifespan was expressed (Fouché, 1999).

The wellness movement has had a global impact on various sectors of society (Fouché, 1999). The role of wellness in both preventative and curative healthcare services has been advocated by many medical professionals in the United States health care system, and has been acknowledged through its inclusion in the fields of health education and promotion (Bloch, 1984; Fouché, 1999). Health education has advocated that advances in medical technology and significant progress in the treatment of disease do not remove the ultimate responsibility for health from the individual (Bloch, 1984). Wellness has also been incorporated through various programmes in the workplace, which aim at reducing employee absenteeism, exposure to risk, and medical expenditure, as well as increasing productivity (Fouché, 1999; Leurent, Reddy, Voûte & Yach, 2008). Wellness programmes are also prevalent in higher education, pointing to institutional efforts to improve the quality of life and optimise psychological well-being of students (Hermon & Hazler, 1999).

Several definitions of wellness have been proposed. Because of its multidisciplinary roots, the concept has been in eclectic use and has, therefore, been defined by various disciplines in their particular jargon, resulting in definitions which vary between being reductionistic or holistic (Fouché, 1999). Most wellness theorists argue that wellness should be defined, not only as the absence of illness, but as the movement on a continuum towards optimal functioning, dependent upon an individual’s self-responsibility and motivation (Roscoe, 2009). For example, Myers et al. (2000, p. 252) defined wellness as “a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being, in which body, mind and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully within the human and natural community”. Apart from aspects of the individual, Cowen (1991) had argued that wellness is influenced by various aspects of the individual’s environment:

A full consideration of the topic of psychological wellness requires that attention be directed to key sources of influence that advance or restrict such an outcome, that is, the life circumstances and family milieu in which a child develops, the effectiveness of a child's total educational experience including both home and school inputs, the molding impact of significant social settings and systems in which the person interacts, and the extent to which a larger society and its mediating structures are just, empowering, and offer hope. (Cowen, 1991, p. 405)

Roscoe (2009) argued that wellness is seen as a multidimensional concept in which various factors interact in a complex, integrated and synergistic manner. This dynamic interaction or equilibrium necessitates that all dimensions of wellness are integral to the whole and that no dimension operates in isolation. Various conceptual models of wellness have been developed, with a significant amount of consistency in the description of the nature of wellness between most models, although they emphasise different dimensions of wellness (Myers, 1992; Roscoe, 2009). These models include those of Crose, Nicholas, Gobble and Frank (1992), Hettler (1980), Depken (1994), Adams, Bezner and Steinhardt (1997), and Renger et al. (2000). In a recent review of wellness theory and assessment, Roscoe (2009) investigated the nature of the wellness dimensions as described in wellness literature. For instance, Hettler's six-dimensional model (Hettler, 1980) and the systems model of wellness proposed by Crose et al. (1992), focused on intellectual, emotional, physical, social, occupational, and spiritual wellness, whilst other models also included other dimensions, such as psychological wellness and environmental wellness (Adams et al., 1997; Renger et al., 2000; Roscoe, 2009). Roscoe (2009) argued for the integration of major wellness theories, and in doing so, outlined seven distinct dimensions of wellness. These correlated to those dimensions identified by Fouché (1999) as the prominent core components of wellness identified in the literature, namely: (a) social wellness, (b) emotional wellness, (c) physical wellness, (d) intellectual wellness, (e) spiritual wellness, (f) occupational wellness, and (g) environmental wellness.

The holistic wellness model is an example of a wellness model that was developed to conceptualise wellness as a multidimensional, synergistic construct (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). It is this integrative and holistic focus on the different wellness dimensions that made the holistic wellness model an appropriate choice for this psychobiographical study. The model and the wellness dimensions it incorporates are discussed in the following section.

### **4.3 Holistic Wellness**

Similar to the wellness models described in the previous section, the holistic wellness model was developed by integrating wellness dimensions from the existing knowledge base of wellness theories and research. The theorists behind the original publication of this model, Thomas J. Sweeney, and J. Melvin Witmer, both professors emeriti at Ohio University, wanted to extend Alfred Adler's theory through the incorporation of more current knowledge,

and then present wellness as a paradigm for use in the promotion of positive mental health in homes, schools, business and community institutions (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Sweeney, 2009).

The uniqueness of this model's approach lies in its application of the concepts of Individual Psychology as a classifying and explanatory theme to the different components of wellness (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). According to Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992), modern research on wellness stems from Adler's theory of Individual Psychology, as is evident from the emphasis placed on the importance of wellness promotion by Adlerian practitioners. For example, a 1984 special issue of *Individual Psychology* was devoted entirely to aspects of holistic health and wellness. Therefore, the authors of the holistic wellness model considered the model to be a logical extension of Adler's theory, which they had augmented with current knowledge across various disciplines (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991). Whilst the model's psychological foundations originated from the fields of personality, social, developmental, clinical and health psychology, theoretical concepts and empirical literature from anthropology, education, sociology and religion were also incorporated (Hattie et al., 2004; Hermon & Hazler, 1999). The authors elaborated on this multidisciplinary approach:

Clearly, this conceptualization of human development based on a paradigm of wellness is not new to Adlerians. The body of research literature in other disciplines, however, offers a rich and substantial case for developing these ideas further. We believe that we can build a sound foundation upon Adler's theory and, then, go beyond! (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991, p. 538)

Fouché (1999) noted that the roots of the holistic wellness model can be found in the Adlerian concepts, such as *social interest* and *lifestyle*. Social interest, or *gemeinschaftsgefuehl*, is regarded as the cornerstone of mental health and refers to the sense of community and human fellowship (Adler, 1927/1992). It entails an innate desire to serve the community and promote positive social relationships which incorporate equality, reciprocity, and cooperation (Adler, 1927/1992; Fouché, 1999). According to Lemire (2007), social interest is embodied by, and expressed through, four human goals, namely: involvement, encouragement, improvement, and accomplishment. Adler (1927/1992) used the term *lifestyle* to refer to the complex of an individual's personal philosophy and beliefs, as well as his or her characteristic approach to life. Adler wrote that the individual's lifestyle is representative of his or her response to early life experiences, which then in turn influences his or her perceptions about the self and the world (Adler, 1927/1992). The individual's

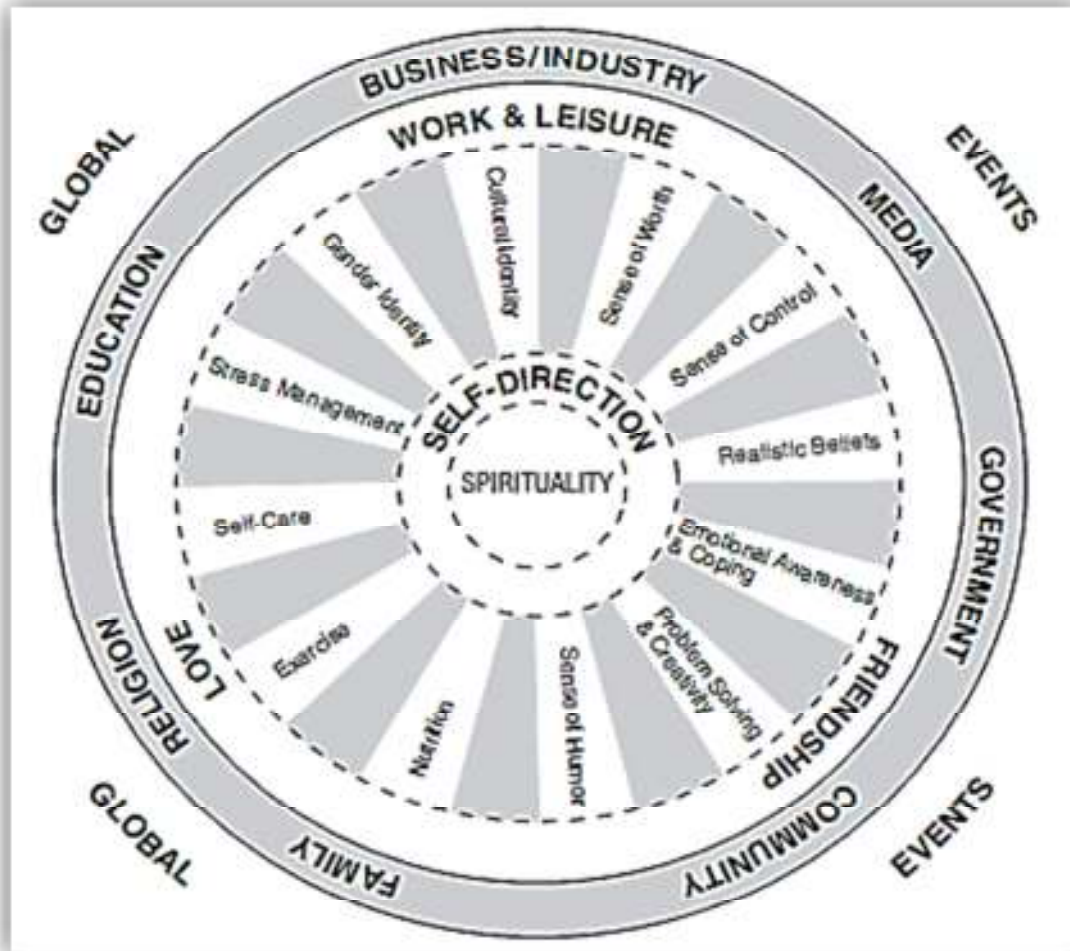
emotions, motives, goals and actions are thus also influenced by his or her lifestyle. The development of a constructive lifestyle enables the optimal development of the individual (Adler, 1927/1992; Fouché, 1999).

Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) used the five life tasks of neo-Adlerian Individual Psychology to organise the different components of wellness (Myers, 2009). As noted by Sweeney (2009), Adler had identified three tasks that he considered central to an individual's development, namely *work*, *friendship* and *love*, to which Mosak and Dreikurs (1967, 2000) later added an additional two tasks, namely *self-regulation* and *spirituality*. They argued that Adler had alluded to these tasks in many of his writings, without specifically naming them (Mosak & Dreikurs, 2000). The fourth life task, therefore, was conceptualised as “dealing with one's spiritual self in relation to the universe, God, or higher power” (Sweeney, 2009, p. 17). The fifth life task, namely self-regulation, “concerns the individual's success in coping with self as subject, I, and as object, me” (Sweeney, 2009, p. 17).

In 2000, the original holistic wellness model was modified in the light of new developments in wellness theory and research. One such change was to expand the life task of *work* to also incorporate *leisure*. Furthermore, the task of *self-regulation* was renamed *self-direction* and modified to contain 12 defined subtasks – five more than in the original model (Myers et al., 2000). The dimensions of wellness included in the wheel of wellness, can be seen in Figure 4.1.

The holistic wellness model is diagrammatically represented in Figure 4.1 by the wheel of wellness. This multidimensional and dynamic model examines the life tasks of the individual, namely spirituality, self-regulation, work, love and friendship as they interact with external forces including family, community, media, education, religion, business or industry and government. It shows the interconnectedness of life tasks and life forces, and examines how these are impacted upon by global events (Hattie et al., 2004; Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). In the wheel of wellness, the life task *spirituality* was placed at the centre of the wheel. The life task *self-direction* surrounds it, containing its twelve subtasks, namely: *sense of worth*, *sense of control*, *realistic beliefs*, *emotional awareness and coping*, *problem solving and creativity*, *sense of humour*, *nutrition*, *exercise*, *self-care*, *stress management*, *gender identity* and *cultural identity*. Surrounding these self-regulating mechanisms are the three remaining life tasks, namely *work and leisure*, *friendship* and *love*. The dynamic relationship between the processes of self-direction and the other life tasks is clearly illustrated in the wheel of wellness. Further dynamic interaction is

also indicated by the surrounding circle of *life forces* that impact upon the preceding life tasks. This circle includes forces such as business or industry, media, government, community, family, religion, and education. These life forces are, in turn, influenced by the broad context of *global events*, which is placed on the outer edges of the model (Myers, 2009).



**Figure 2. The Wheel of Wellness.** From “Wellness Counseling: The Evidence Base for Practice,” by J. E. Myers and T. J. Sweeney, 2008, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 86(4), p. 483. Reprinted with permission.

The holistic model of wellness has been developed to depict the interconnectedness of the life tasks, life forces and the characteristics of the healthy person. All five life tasks interact either for the well-being or to the detriment of the person (Sweeney, 2009). Myers et al. (2000) proposed that any changes that occur in one of the abovementioned aspects will bring about changes in other aspects as well. They further argued that dimensions of

wellness occurring at one stage of development will also influence subsequent development, with different aspects being salient at different developmental periods.

The three elements of the holistic wellness model, as included in the wheel of wellness (i.e., *life tasks*, *life forces* and *global events*), are discussed individually in the following sections. Firstly, the five life tasks are discussed in terms of their Adlerian beginnings, as well as their use in the holistic wellness model. The discussion then contextualizes these life tasks by exploring the life forces as well as larger system of global events. The following sections, therefore, provide the theoretical framework from which the researcher investigated indicators of Suzman's holistic wellness over her lifespan.

### **4.3.1 Life Tasks**

#### ***4.3.1.1 Spirituality***

Witmer and Sweeney (1992) described spirituality as the assumption of “certain life-enhancing beliefs about human dignity, human rights, and reverence for life” (p. 141). In the holistic wellness model, spirituality is discussed as a central life task, distinguishable from the narrower institutionalised concept of religiosity, and is defined as the individual's “awareness of a being or force that transcends the material aspects of life and gives a deep sense of wholeness or connectedness to the universe” (Myers et al., 2000, p. 9).

Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) described this “existential task” in terms of five dimensions or subtasks, namely:

1. *The description of God.* According to them, a person is, firstly, faced with the religious task of deciding whether to believe in God, followed by the task of formulating a description of how God is viewed. The individual, furthermore, has to investigate the nature of his or her relationship and communication with God. Consequently, the believer also assumes an attitude towards non-believers and those who view and relate to God differently. Atheists and agnostics in a similar manner also explore their belief system or worldview, decide on how to put this into practice and formulate a stance towards believers (Mosak & Dreikurs, 2000).
2. *The choice and practice of religion.* The task of choosing a religion also includes all philosophical or ethical stances that have been transformed into “religions”. Matters

of religious observance, religious identity and religious goals and intentions, now confront the individual as he or she has to decide how their religion is best put into practice (Mosak & Dreikurs, 2000).

3. *A conceptualisation of humankind's place in the universe.* Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) stated that different religious, philosophical and psychological doctrines or theories conceptualise humankind in dramatically different ways. They argued that every individual's image of humankind's place in the universe influences their own relationship with the universe, as well as with God (if he or she is a believer), society and themselves.
4. *A consideration of the nature of immortality.* Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) pointed out that religion and philosophy raise issues concerning the existence of an afterlife and the matter of salvation or eternal damnation, as well as the nature of the soul and its ability to persist after death. They also comment on the day-to-day endeavour of humans to ensure immortality through achievements and contributions, as well as the production and guidance of the next generation.
5. *A contemplation of the presence and nature of the meaning of life.* Mosak and Dreikurs (2000) cited some of the different approaches to how meaning may be found, for example: in suffering, death, the process of overcoming or having overcome, through self-mortification, love, the search for pleasure, self-actualisation, social interest or through religious tasks or experiences.

As noted by Sweeney (2009), spirituality has only recently become a prominent consideration in the helping professions, and there exists "a growing awareness that it is part of the human condition to need and want to deal with personal existential issues" (p. 18). The concept of spirituality as used in the holistic wellness model, is broad and multidimensional (Fouché, 1999; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). In the holistic wellness model, the life task of spirituality, and in particular the beliefs connected to it, has the following dimensions (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer and Sweeney, 1992):

1. Belief in a power beyond oneself (Myers et al., 2000).

2. Prayer, worship, meditation, contemplation, introspection and self-reflection in relationship to the Infinite (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).
3. Transcendence and the sense of timelessness, inner peace and harmony. According to Witmer and Sweeney (1992), the human desire for a sense of inner peace and wholeness is recognised by formal religions as well as spirituality, which the authors of the holistic wellness model refer to as a need for oneness. According to Myers et al. (2000), this dimension also includes a sense of oneness with nature, the universe or the Infinite.
4. Meaning and purpose on which one bases your philosophy of life (Myers et al., 2000). This component of spirituality has ensured the central place of the life task in the holistic wellness model, as Witmer and Sweeney (1992) underlined the importance of purpose and meaningfulness in coping with stress and enhancing well-being. Sweeney and Witmer (1991) proposed that, although the outer circles of the wheel of wellness (i.e., global events and social institutions), continuously influence the individual, the interpretation of such events and forces is determined by the central component (i.e., spirituality), as this enables the person to ascribe meaning to events. Thus, spirituality is considered the central characteristic of well-being (Myers, 2009).
5. Hope and optimism as the confident and hopeful expectation that the best possible outcome may occur in a situation (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer and Sweeney, 1992). In the holistic wellness model, optimism is seen as fundamental to effective coping with stress (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). For example, in a study of a non-clinical population, optimism was one of the prime variables that characterised participants who coped better with anxiety and had fewer anxiety-related physical symptoms, a finding which was confirmed in a follow-up study (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992; Witmer, Rich, Barcikowski & Mague, 1983).
6. A moral dimension and ethical set of values (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer and Sweeney, 1992). Values are seen as guiding an individual's actions towards the promotion of wellness, as well as the demonstration of respect and compassion for the well-being of others (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

7. Together with optimism and inner harmony, values may, therefore, also result in the promotion of the common good and social interest (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991). The final dimension of the life task of spirituality is, therefore, conceptualised as compassion, love and service towards others (Myers et al., 2000).

#### **4.3.1.2 Self-direction**

The life task of self-direction, or self-regulation as it was referred to in earlier publications of the holistic wellness model (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992), refers to the ability of individuals to coordinate and direct their behaviour in a goal-directed manner. Mosak and Dreikurs (1967) had proposed that the ability to get along with the self, and, thus, resolve intrapersonal conflict, be considered as a life task in Adlerian theory. This ability enables them to promote their own well-being within the norms of society. Life tasks and long-term goals are met through mindfulness, personal attributes as well as disciplined and purposeful action (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). The growing awareness of the importance of the task of coping with the self is reflected in the abundance of self-help materials in popular literature, in which concepts such as self-esteem and self-efficacy are commonly found (Sweeney, 2009).

Wellness literature frequently refers to those characteristics that constitute a stress-resistant personality (Myers et al., 2000). The competencies, or personal characteristics, inherent to this task were included in the holistic wellness model, and form the spokes of the wheel of wellness (see Figure 4.1). Originally, the model contained seven areas of competence necessary for self-direction (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Later revisions included an additional five areas of competence, and modified some of the previous characteristics (Myers et al., 2000). The task of self-direction, therefore, currently contains 12 abilities or characteristics. These are discussed individually in the following section.

1. *Sense of Worth:* A sense of worth and a sense of control are often referred to in literature as *self-esteem* (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Positive self-esteem has been found to correlate with more effective coping with stress, as it was one of the psychological constructs in an exploratory study that was able to discriminate significantly between those that cope well and those that cope poorly (Witmer et al., 1983). Maslow's (1970) research indicated that healthy individuals demonstrated a

sense of satisfaction with the self and an acceptance of their own weaknesses. He had previously proposed that psychological health can only result if the individual and significant others accept, love, and respect the person's core (Maslow, 1962).

2. *Sense of Control*: According to Witmer and Sweeney (1992), a sense of control (or an internal locus of control) involves feelings of mastery and confidence, along with an attitude of persistence and pro-active effort. Myers et al. (2000) reported that those who have a sense of control over what happens to them are more likely to experience positive outcomes than those who perceive themselves to lack personal control. For example, Beckingham and Watt (1995) argued that the perception of personal control is strongly correlated with positive outcomes in the elderly, and a perceived lack of personal control with negative outcomes such as depression. Witmer et al. (1983) reported improved stress management and fewer physical ailments amongst those who have a subjective experience of control over their lives. A sense of control has also been associated with increased participation in healthy behaviour, including positive health practices such as physical exercise (Ali, 1996; Birkimer, Johnston & Berry, 1993; Myers et al., 2000).
  
3. *Realistic Beliefs*: The ability to form accurate appraisals of the self and the environment, as well as to distinguish the rational and logical from wishful and distorted thinking, enables the individual to accept themselves as imperfect, limit unhealthy behaviours in response to external events, and, therefore, establish and maintain mental health (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). *Private logic* is the Adlerian conceptualisation of personal beliefs, which describes the individual's subjective view of reality that guides his or her feelings and behaviour (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956/1964; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Its subjective nature, therefore, renders it vulnerable to possible discrepancies with objective reality (Sweeney, 2009; Myers et al., 2000). Myers et al., (2000) argued that the individual's potential for unhealthy behaviours in response to life events will increase in accordance with the discrepancy between his or her private logic and objective reality. This relationship between realistic thinking and wellbeing had been confirmed in the study by Witmer et al. (1983), who reported that participants who scored lower on measures of irrational beliefs, were also less anxious and reported fewer physical symptoms.

4. *Emotional Awareness and Coping:* The holistic wellness model reflects Maslow's view of the key elements of self-actualisation (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991). Maslow (1970) described the emotional responses of self-actualising people as being spontaneous and authentic. The experience of positive emotions may also hold direct health benefits, as it appears to enhance immune function (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). One example of research that supports this hypothesis is a study by Stone, Cox, Valdimarsdotti, Jandorf and Neale (1987), in which results suggested that not only did a negative mood result in poorer immune functioning, but a positive mood had increased the antibody response. The holistic wellness model proposes that the ability to experience, manage and express emotion is an indicator of healthy interpersonal functioning, physical and mental health, and a subjective sense of well-being (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991).
  
5. *Problem Solving and Creativity:* Sweeney and Witmer (1991), Witmer and Sweeney (1992) as well as Myers et al. (2000) summarised wellness literature in which problem solving, intellectual stimulation and creative undertaking were linked to self-actualisation, significantly improved quality of life and increases in longevity. For example, Elliott and Marmarosh (1994) reported that the perception of effective problem solving skills was associated with more positive health expectancies, higher expectancies for control, increased stress hardiness, fewer irrational beliefs, as well as a decreased tendency towards self-criticism. Furthermore, creativity was found to have a positive link with life satisfaction (Goff, 1993). Maslow (1962) had proposed that the ability of self-actualising people to freely express ideas without fear of ridicule was an essential aspect of their creativity. Furthermore, he described creativity in self-actualising people as spontaneous, innocent, and effortless, commenting that his self-actualising subjects (who were in their 50's and 60's) had either retained, or regained, aspects of childlikeness. These childlike aspects included being open to experience and being spontaneously expressive (Maslow, 1962).
  
6. *Sense of Humour:* The holistic wellness model endorsed Maslow's (1970) proposition that certain types of humour (i.e., humour that is spontaneous, philosophical and free of ridicule or prejudice) is characteristic of self-actualising, well-adjusted people (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991). Myers et al. (2000), Witmer and Sweeney (1992) as well as Sweeney and Witmer (1991), summarised the wellness research relating to the

benefits of humour and laughter. For example, humour has been positively correlated with perceptions of physical health and with ageing well, whilst humour that showed little compassion was associated with increased health concerns (Carrol, 1990; Solomon, 1996). On a psychological level, humour has been significantly associated with a healthier, stable and positive self-concept, improved coping with stress, improved interpersonal and family relationships, perceived control, and enhanced enjoyment of positive life experiences (Kuiper & Martin, 1993; Martin, Kuiper, Olinger & Dance, 1993; Solomon, 1996).

7. *Nutrition:* The positive effect of good nutrition on health and longevity, mood, cognitive functioning, behaviour and performance has been recognized by research (Myers et al., 2000). For example, Walker and Beauchene (1991) found that poor physical health was related to dietary deficiencies in the elderly who lived independently. Their study also found loneliness to be related to dietary inadequacies. Myers et al. (2000) emphasised the need for a lifespan approach to nutritional wellness, due to its association with successful ageing and longevity, as well as improved health, mood, performance and self-actualisation. Sweeney (2009) noted that preliminary data in wellness research is compelling, as it demonstrates that those who attend to exercise and nutrition tend to live longest. However, Sweeney (2009) cautioned against the current trend which widely promotes these two components of physical wellness to the exclusion of the other aspects of holistic wellness.
8. *Exercise:* On a biological level, exercise is viewed as essential in disease prevention, healthy ageing, and has been found to positively impact upon chronic illness (Myers et al., 2000). Numerous studies have established the positive impact of exercise on psychical and mental health. For example, exercise has been associated with the preservation of social identity and the increase of self-confidence (Fontane, 1996), as well as a reduction in depressive symptoms and an increased internal locus of control (Brandon & Loftin, 1991). Physical training has also been correlated with a significant reduction in state-trait anxiety scores (Cramer, Nieman & Lee, 1991).
9. *Self-Care:* Added to the original holistic wellness model by Myers et al. in 2000, the concept of self-care is described as the individual's "personal habits of preventative behaviour as well as remedial treatment" (Myers et al., 2000, p. 255). This ability is

inherent in the assumption of responsibility for one's own wellness, and encompasses dimensions such as safety behaviours, routine medical and dental check-ups and the avoidance of potentially harmful substances (Broman, 1993).

10. *Stress Management*: The individual's ability to identify stressors and subsequently implement strategies to reduce stress has been linked to more positive mental and physical health (Myers et al., 2000). For example, researchers have demonstrated that high scores related to resistance to psychological stress are associated with positive affect and personal growth, as well as enhanced immune system responsiveness (Compton, Smith, Cornish & Qualls, 1996). Strategies for stress management include biofeedback, relaxation techniques, social support, skills training in assertiveness and communication, modification of faulty appraisals, as well as problem solving and exercise (Brandon & Loftin, 1991; Chen, 1995; Keita & Jones, 1990; Myers et al., 2000).
11. *Gender Identity*: This refers to a culturally constructed feeling of being male or female, and includes the individual's satisfaction with and confidence in being male or female (Myers et al., 2000). The individual's introspective self-definition of gender, as well as the gender role behaviours that they have acquired through socialisation (Maccoby, 1990), have been argued to be linked to the experience of wellness or illness in adulthood (Nicolas, Gobble, Crose & Frank, as cited in Myers et al., 2000).
12. *Cultural Identity*: Cultural identity may facilitate growth and development and has been positively linked with well-being (Myers et al., 2000). Its inclusion in the holistic wellness model was further motivated by the fact that different cultures define concepts related to health and well-being, including self-care, self-esteem, mental health, and happiness, in different ways (Ailinger & Causey, 1995; Lu & Shih, 1997; Myers et al., 2000; Whaley, 1993).

#### ***4.3.1.3 Work and Leisure***

In describing this life task's Adlerian origins, Sweeney (2009, p. 17) pointed out that society expects of individuals to become "more responsible, cooperative, and able to cope

with life situations” as they move through their development. In line with Adler’s (1927/1992) view of work, as including any action that benefits others, the definition of work also included activities outside formal employment, such as childrearing, homemaking, educational activities, volunteer work, and so forth (Adler, 1927/1992; Myers et al., 2000).

Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992), and later Myers et al. (2000), argued that, when one considers the negative effects of unemployment as indicated by research, such as an increased risk for mental illness, suicide, homicide, physical illness and social problems, the importance of this life task becomes clear. They also summarise research that found a positive relationship between work satisfaction and other indicators of physical and psychological wellness. For example, work experiences and outcomes were found to be consistently and positively related to self-reported emotional well-being (Burke & McKeen, 1995). Furthermore, the ability to work provides the individual with social and economic resources and, therefore, enables them to increase opportunities for social interaction and potential friendships, to engage in leisure activities and to access goods and services (Myers et al., 2000). Sweeney (2009) commented that early failures in this life task (at school level) may result in the child experiencing a loss of confidence and sense of worth.

Sweeney and Witmer (1991) stated that they further wanted to expand the concept of work to include childhood play and adult leisure activities. Myers et al. (2000) summarised some of the benefits of leisure activities, which include improved self-esteem, perceived wellness and resilience to stress by enlarging the social support network and reducing the effects of stress through activities such as exercise. For example, leisure participation and leisure satisfaction were found to be positively associated with perceived wellness (Ragheb, 1993). Furthermore, leisure activities have been proposed to assist in stress management by developing psychological hardiness and providing social support (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993).

#### ***4.3.1.4 Friendship***

This life task involves those social relationships that do not entail marital, sexual or familial commitment (Myers et al., 2000). It requires of the individual to, within a relationship based on positive regard, take risks, assume responsibilities and disclose aspects of the self. The holistic wellness model acknowledges Adler’s belief that social interest is innate to human nature, and that it is manifested by empathy, cooperation and altruism (Adler, 1927/1992; Myers et al., 2000).

In the holistic wellness model, this life task requires individuals to acquire the necessary social skills to feel comfortable in social settings, make use of social support when needed, as well as provide others with such support; ultimately, leading to a sense of connectedness and the sense that one is not alone in facing life events (Myers et al., 2000). The life task of friendship, therefore, entails the individual's sense of social interest, as well as the availability of social support.

Those who are successful in this life task may benefit by receiving emotional support, tangible support and informational support. The establishment and maintenance of satisfying social support systems have been found to promote both quality of life and longevity, with positive effects on mental and physical health across the lifespan (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992; Myers et al., 2000). For example, Dalgard, Bjork and Tambs (1995) found that social support provided a protection against the development of mental disorders such as depression, particularly for those who do not have a strong internal locus of control. Friendships have also been argued to enhance self-esteem (Cramer, 1994).

#### ***4.3.1.5 Love***

According to Sweeney (2009), the life tasks of friendship and love, demand more from the individual with regard to cooperation, reciprocity and respect than the other life tasks. The fifth life task, *love*, refers to the individual's ability to maintain long-term commitments (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). The qualities of such relationships include trust, intimacy, the experience and expression of nonpossessive caring which respects the uniqueness of the other, cooperation, companionship, stability, long-term commitment, compassion, fulfilment of one's need for physical closeness or satisfaction with one's sexual life, and the facilitation of self-disclosure (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992; Myers et al., 2000).

Myers et al (2000) argued that loving relationships may promote physical and mental health, quality of life, as well as longevity. For example, Sweeney and Witmer (1991) cited earlier researchers which concluded that being in loving relationships with one's friends, spouse, parents, and children could predict good mental health. Furthermore, researchers have also found higher mortality rates for individuals who are divorced, single or widowed (Berkman & Syme, 1979). Furthermore, negative behaviour, such as hostility, during marital conflict has also been associated with immunological down-regulation (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1993).

The dimensions of the life tasks discussed above are summarised in Appendix A. The dimensions of the holistic wellness model comprises not only of life tasks, but also life forces. These life forces and how they are conceptualised in the model are discussed in the following section.

### 4.3.2 Life Forces

The individual's mastery of the five life tasks is influenced by what Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) referred to as life forces. These are defined as the "major societal institutions that impinge on the health and well-being of each individual" (Witmer and Sweeney, 1992, p. 537). In the wheel of wellness (see Figure 4.1), the different life forces are placed in a band surrounding the life tasks. They include institutions such as family, religion, education, community, media, government, and business or industry.

The influence of *family* on individual wellness is asserted by Witmer and Sweeney (1992). They referred to research by Stinnett and DeFrain in 1985 (as cited in Witmer & Sweeney, 1992), who had proposed that the six major qualities of strong families are: (a) commitment to each other's wellbeing and happiness, (b) expression of mutual appreciation, (c) good communication skills, (d) spending time together, (e) spiritual wellness, and (f) effective coping skills.

Witmer and Sweeney (1992) stated that *religion* can function as a source for inner peace, hope, values, social harmony and meaning in life, and as such require further exposition. They argued that the religions which have stood the test of time all recognise a higher power and promote reverence for human life. They also highlighted potential dilemmas in this area with their observation that in certain cultural groups, the youth have largely abandoned the religion of their parents, as well as the values inherent to that religion (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

*Education* as a life force is highlighted by the developers of the holistic wellness theory for its potential for "creating a community in which the characteristics of the healthy person can be nurtured" (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992, p. 146). The developmental process of wellness across the life-span can, therefore, be facilitated by an encouraging educational climate, in which a life-style of holistic health and wellness is modelled (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

Witmer and Sweeney (1992) also included *community* as a life force, as they argue that it is a societal institution that exerts an influence on the well-being of the individual. They commented on potential factors, such as industrialisation and urbanisation, which may fragment a sense of community. A feeling of connectedness, whilst retaining independence, should be nurtured through community building, as this may contribute towards fulfilling our social needs (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

Witmer and Sweeney (1992) are of the opinion that the *media* may influence public policies as well as individual values, beliefs, attitudes and desires. Being shaped by the norms of society, the media's influence can be beneficial to wellness or hamper its development (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Its influence is also significant, as it has the ability to bring the daily events from around the globe into the individual's home (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991).

Sweeney and Witmer (1991) stated that, as an example of the influence of *government* as a life force, discriminatory governmental practices may distract from citizens' optimal development. Governments do also have the ability to positively impact upon the development of wellness of every citizen if they create policies with prevention and wellness in mind (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Witmer and Sweeney (1992) cited, as an example of such policies, the United States' formulation of a national goal of health promotion and disease prevention, and emphasised that governmental policies and practices do have a significant impact on the behaviour and attitudes of citizens.

Lastly, *business or industry* can promote aspects of wellness by creating working environments that encourage and foster health, in which employees would be more productive and creative, cooperative, competent and committed (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Witmer and Sweeney (1992) emphasised that because industry has come to recognise this relationship between health and productivity, large companies have Employee Assistance Programmes and other wellness initiatives aimed at promoting wellness among their employees.

According to the Wheel of Wellness, these life forces which impact upon the life tasks are in turn also influenced by global events. The contextual factors related to global events are discussed in the following section.

### 4.3.3 Global Events

In the Wheel of Wellness, global events are positioned on the outer edges of the life forces band (see Figure 4.1). Global events and issues, such as war, disease, poverty, pollution, overpopulation, and economic exploitation, exert an influence on the lives of all individuals, affecting their everyday functioning and quality of life because of the manner in which they “influence the dynamics of our existential world” (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991, p. 538).

The events and occurrences of the “global village” to which all human beings belong should be taken into consideration in the process of establishing a community committed to wellness (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). As noted by Sweeney (2009), our global context and the events which occur within it, “become increasingly personal to us through the media, especially television and increasingly the Internet” (p. 40), which may increase the potential effects of world events on the wellness of individuals.

The following section highlights important empirical investigations of the holistic wellness model as well as the measures of assessment and theoretical conceptualisations that developed from it.

## 4.4 Empirical Investigation

The holistic wellness model has inspired the creation of an assessment instrument, namely the Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle (WEL), and, accordingly, most of the research on the holistic wheel of wellness model has utilised the WEL. The WEL was developed to assess the life tasks and subtasks as outlined in the holistic wellness model as first described by Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) (Myers et al., 2000). The WEL-S, is a 120-item questionnaire utilising a five point Likert scale. Myers et al. (2004) reported test-retest reliability coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.88 for the different subtasks, and Hattie et al. (2004) reported Cronbach alpha estimates for the subtasks ranging from 0.61 to 0.89. The estimates of reliability are sufficiently high to encourage meaningful interpretation of the scale scores, and the items are firmly grounded in a meaningful psychological model of well-being (Hattie et al., 2004). The holistic wellness model, as the theoretical basis for the WEL, has therefore been defended by this research. Researchers conceded that more research is needed on both the WEL and on the factor

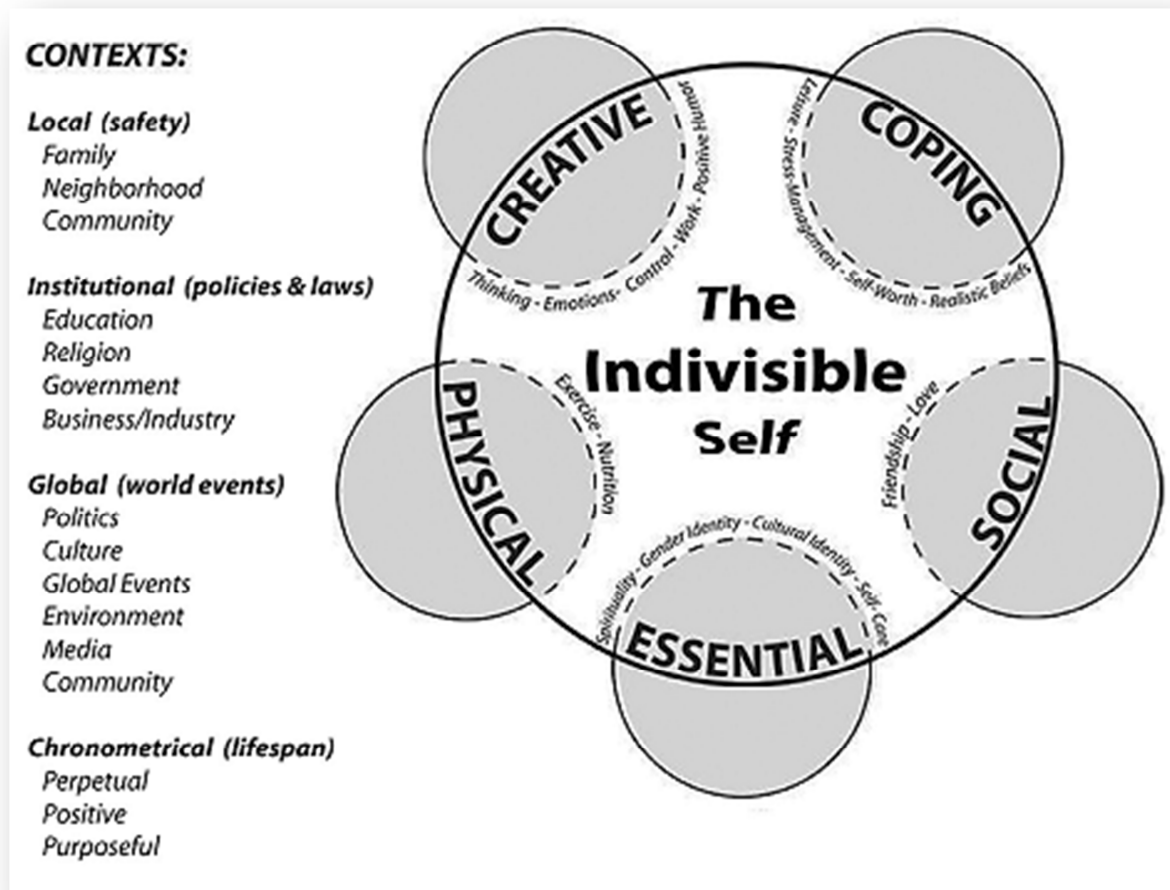
structure underlying this measure, as well as to confirm this structure across populations (Hattie et al., 2004).

A study conducted by Hermon and Hazler (1999) investigated the relationship between college students' perceived psychological well-being and their quality of life on five variables associated with the holistic *wellness* model. The *WEL* was included in the battery of inventories completed by 155 undergraduate students attending at a large midwestern United States university. The researchers found, through multivariate regression analysis, a significant relationship between five dimensions of *wellness* and both short-term state and long-term trait constructs of psychological well-being. They subsequently conducted a univariate analysis, and found that students' ability to self-regulate, identity with work, as well as their friendships contributed the most to their psychological wellbeing. They concluded that the holistic *wellness* model's utility can also be linked to the evaluation, assessment, and accreditation of wellness programs at campus counselling centres (Hermon & Hazler, 1999).

In 2004, after various research studies regarding the holistic wellness model, as portrayed through the Wheel of Wellness, as well as the WEL assessment instrument, Hattie, Myers and Sweeney conducted a hierarchical factor analysis of the WEL (Hattie et al., 2004; Myers & Sweeney, 2005). This confirmed the original 17 dimensions of the holistic wellness model as depicted in the wheel of wellness, as distinct third-order factors (Hattie et al., 2004; Myers, 2009; Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The factor analysis also resulted in the identification of five second-order dimensions (i.e., *creative*, *coping*, *social*, *essential*, and *physical*) and one high-order factor, namely *wellness*. A new evidence-based model of wellness, namely The Indivisible Self, was then developed in accordance with this factor structure (see Figure 4.2) (Myers, Luecht & Sweeney, 2004; Myers & Sweeney, 2005). This new model represented the culmination of efforts to explain the findings of a series of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses using the database from the WEL inventory (Myers & Sweeney, 2005).

As can be seen from Figure 4.2, the model of the Indivisible Self contains the same elements of the holistic wellness model as portrayed in the Wheel of Wellness, although the classification of the aspects of wellness is not grouped into the theoretical categories of life tasks and life forces. Instead, in the Indivisible Self these aspects are grouped within the five second-order factors, portrayed in Figure 4.2 as grey circles, each representing the five selves (i.e., *coping self*, *social self*, *essential self*, *physical self* and *creative self*) which make up the whole person, or *indivisible self* (Myers, 2009; Myers & Sweeney, 2005). Each of the selves

contains the third-order factors which were the original 17 tasks of the holistic wellness model (the five life tasks as well as the 12 subtasks of self-direction) (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The contextual variables of the holistic wellness theory are also reflected in the Indivisible Self model (Myers & Sweeney, 2005).



**Figure 3. The Indivisible Self.** From “The indivisible self: An evidence-based model of wellness,” by J. E. Myers and T. J. Sweeney, 2005, *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 61(3), p. 272. Reprinted with permission.

From Figure 4.2, it can be seen that the model acknowledges the impact of four contexts, namely local, institutional, global and chronometrical. These contexts remain theoretical, as they emerged from literature reviews and not from empirical studies, because these characteristics were not measured by the WEL (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The Wheel of Wellness can be seen as a theoretical model, whilst the Indivisible Self was developed based on empirical findings in which the components of the initial model were supported (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The researcher would like to argue that the holistic wellness

model, as depicted in the Wheel of Wellness, remains a useful conceptual model, especially in qualitative research, and the hierarchical factor structure identified in the IS-Wel model is likely less to be useful for a qualitative exploration of the subject's life story.

Criticism has been directed at the wellness movement in general, as well as the holistic wellness model in particular. The following section highlights the main points of critique.

#### 4.5 Criticism of the Holistic Wellness Model

The wellness movement has received criticism from the fields of biomedicine and medical sociology. Fouché (1999) noted that much of this criticism incorrectly targets the holistic wellness movement, as it is often erroneously seen as synonymous with the biopsychosocial movement and the lifestyle movement. He summarises the criticisms aimed at these movements, from researchers such as Levenstein (1994) and Antonovsky (1987, 1994). Firstly, the biopsychosocial and lifestyle movements are criticised for supporting a reductionistic approach in which the physiological and pathogenic aetiology of disease is downplayed. This overemphasis on psychosomatic theories and risk factors in lifestyle, may assign a disproportionate amount of blame to patients for their health problems. Secondly, not only the pathogenic and genetic causes, but also the sociohistorical, cultural and economic factors which play a role in disease aetiology and prevention, are neglected in favour of lifestyle factors such as fitness, diet and exercise. Thirdly, the wellness movement fails to provide an in-depth explanation of coping and stress management (Fouché, 1999). Although these areas of criticism are acknowledged, Fouché (1999) concludes that “to generalise this criticism to all models of wellness, especially holistic models of wellness such as the neo-Adlerian model, remains debatable” (Fouché, 1999, p.42).

A significant example of the debate surrounding the biopsychosocial model, was the discovery of the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori*, which brought into question the biopsychosocial model's psychosomatic theory of the aetiology of peptic ulcers (Levenstein, 1994). However, Levenstein reported that evidence had emerged during the 1990's which demonstrated that the incidence and recurrence of peptic ulcers, as well as the course of inflammatory bowel disease, demonstrate the unique interactions among psychological, immunologic, endocrine, infectious, and behavioural factors (Levenstein, 2002; Levenstein, Ackerman, Kiecolt-Glaser & Dubois, 1999). She noted that the interactions between psychosocial and bacterial disease are complex (Levenstein, 2002) and that peptic ulcers

cannot be explained by *Helicobacter pylori* infection and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs as the only aetiological factors (Levenstein et al., 1999). According to Levenstein (2002), psychosocial factors may intensify *Helicobacter pylori* infection, affect health behaviour, stimulate corticosteroid secretion, and increase duodenal acid load. In conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease, psychosocial factors may impair immune functioning and lead to poor treatment adherence (Levenstein, 2002).

Regarding the origins of the holistic wellness model, criticism has been launched against the neo-Adlerian inclusion of the two additional life tasks of spirituality and self-regulation by Dreikurs and Mosak (Gold & Mansager, 2000). Their inclusion as life tasks in the holistic wellness may, therefore, draw the same critique. However, the concepts themselves are not in question, but rather whether it is permissible to label them as life tasks in Adlerian theory. In the article by Mansager et al. (2002), Edmund Kal raised the opinion that spirituality, being at the core of our existence, will influence the individual's approach to the life tasks: "thus, spirituality presents itself not as one among the life tasks, but rather as the root of, and in a way the overarching, unifying principle of all other ones" (Mansager et al., 2002, p. 183). One can assume that this stance would, therefore, whilst disagreeing with the terms used, not be in opposition to the placement of spirituality in the model's conceptualisation as depicted in the wheel of wellness.

The use of the holistic wellness model in psychobiographical research is discussed in the following section.

#### **4.6 Psychobiography and the Holistic Wellness Model**

An example of the use of the holistic wellness model in psychobiographical research is the study of South African statesman, Jan Christiaan Smuts, by Fouché (1999). Fouché (1999) explored the status of the subject's holistic wellness throughout his lifespan, and concluded that Smuts displayed a relatively high level of holistic wellness. However, when the researcher examined wellness indicators in the context of the historical periods in the subject's life, he found that Smuts also experienced periods in which his holistic wellness in the different life tasks were at a relatively low level. Fouché (1999) commented that the holistic wellness of Smuts "did not reach a relative stable localisation of 'mean strength' (p.435). This, Fouché (1999) argued, seemed to be related to the strong emphasis on behavioural components of lifestyle, such as physical fitness and health habits, which are susceptible to variation. Other components of wellness, such as spirituality are less

susceptible to behavioural change and variation. In the case of Smuts, Fouché (1999) found that “his spiritual wellness tended to be more enduring and persuasive than, for example, his physical health or wellness” (p. 436).

Fouché (1999) concluded that the value of the use of the holistic wellness model was related to its positive definition of health (i.e., its eugraphic approach), its multidimensional framework, systemic nature, as well as its clear conceptualisation. In a study of the life of Bram Fischer (Swart, 2010), the researcher maintained that the use of the holistic wellness model guided the study away from some of the pitfalls associated with the psychobiographical endeavour, particularly reductionism.

Fouché (1999) highlighted limitations regarding the use of the holistic wellness model in psychobiographical research. Firstly, he noted the lack of wellness indicators or criteria for the different developmental stages across the lifespan, or the gender or culture of an individual. Secondly, the model does not provide an explanatory framework as to development of holistic wellness. Thirdly, Fouché (1999) criticised the model for failing to address the issue of whether a critical stage for the development of wellness exists. The model also does not adequately address the influence of the immediate ecological environment on the wellness of the individual. Lastly, he argued that the multidisciplinary nature of the model created difficulties regarding the provision of comprehensive descriptions, and that it did not allow for a “more in-depth and psychologically disciplined presentation and discussion of Smuts’s wellness” (Fouché, 1999, pp. 439 – 440).

The researcher considers the holistic wellness model to be a valuable framework for psychobiographical research, for the following reasons:

1. One of psychobiography’s core strengths lies in its ability to investigate and develop psychological theory, especially regarding subdisciplines such as personality, career, health, developmental and positive psychology (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010).
2. Secondly, the use of wellness models in psychobiographical research is indicated by Coetzee and Viviers (2007), who recommended that more qualitative and longitudinal research within the field of positive psychology is needed, especially to investigate concepts such as fortology.

3. Thirdly, many psychobiographical subjects have been extraordinary or great historical figures (see section 5.3.5), who may provide psychobiographical researchers with the optimal opportunity for the study of wellness and related concepts.
4. The theoretical framework of holistic wellness will provide an alternative viewpoint from the psychoanalytic and psychopathological stance usually found in psychobiographical studies. This, therefore, answers the call by Elms (1994) for psychologists to help move psychobiography from theoretical narrowness towards theoretical choice, as well as shift the focus of psychobiography from pathology to the examination of psychological health.

#### **4.7 Chapter Summary**

The holistic wellness model and its use as a framework for the conceptualisation of human wellness were discussed in this chapter. The framework provided by the holistic wellness model will be used as an additional and complementary theory to the psychosocial development theory of Erikson in this study, in order to investigate the subject's experience of holistic wellness over her lifespan, whilst, simultaneously, being informally tested in terms of its relevance to the her life. The findings from the application of the holistic wellness model to the life of Helen Suzman are discussed in Chapter 9. The following chapter focuses on the theoretical overview of the development and practice of psychobiographical research.

## CHAPTER 5

### PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH

#### 5.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter contextualises the development and practice of psychobiographical research as a case study approach within the domain of qualitative research. Qualitative research is, firstly, introduced and described. Thereafter, specific emphasis is placed on case study research as a specific methodological approach. Psychobiographical research is then defined and distinguished from related concepts. The reader is provided with an overview of the development of trends in psychobiography, followed by an outline of its development within the South African context. The value of utilising the psychobiographical approach is then discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the criticisms against and challenges facing the psychobiographical research method.

#### 5.2 Qualitative Research

##### 5.2.1 Introduction

A primary distinction in the social sciences has been made between quantitative and qualitative research methodologies (Bryman, 2012; Flick, 2006; Manning, 1982). Even though the usefulness of this distinction has been questioned by some researchers, others regard it as a fundamental contrast (Bryman, 2012). Positivism, a philosophical paradigm underlying quantitative research, proposes that: (a) reality consists only of what is available to the senses, and (b) knowledge is mostly empirical in nature (Huges, 1990; Ponterotto, 2010). Despite the fact that qualitative research methodology had been prominent during the early development of psychology as a discipline, the profession showed a strong preference for positivist and postpositivist research paradigms (Ponterotto, 2010). Psychology has therefore traditionally attempted to follow the exactness of the natural sciences model, focusing its attention on the development of quantitative and standardised methods of enquiry (Flick, 2006; Martin, 1996). Although the hold of positivism has weakened over the last three decades, its influence can still be seen in most of the instruments used in social science research, such as questionnaires, surveys, statistical models, and the conceptualisation of

research as a process of hypothesis testing (Huges, 1990). Simonton (2003) noted that the typical empirical study in a mainstream psychological journal reports on quantitative data which seldom has any intrinsic value: “both the participants and the data they provide are merely the means to an end: the testing of nomothetic hypotheses about human thought, affect, or behavior” (p. 618).

An alternative to this quantitative approach has been represented by the field of qualitative research. Qualitative research, as the term suggests, emphasises processes and meanings that are not experimentally investigated or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) proposed that a “complex interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term” (p. 3), which include the traditions associated with positivism and postpositivism, foundationalism and postfoundationalism, poststructuralism and the perspectives connected to cultural and interpretive research. Qualitative research has been conceptualised as anchored in three research paradigms, namely: (a) postpositivism, (b) constructivism-interpretivism, and (c) the critical-ideological perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Ponterotto, 2010). Postpositivism entails the belief that a true reality exists, but only imperfectly and probabilistically and that the researcher should remain as dualistic and objective as possible by assuming the *disinterested scientist* stance (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Ponterotto, 2010). The second research paradigm of constructivism-interpretivism, proposes that multiple socially constructed realities exist, and that a highly interactive researcher-participant relationship leads to the discovery of meaning (Ponterotto, 2010) as the researcher assumes the *passionate participant* stance (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). Thirdly, the critical-ideological perspective posits a reality shaped by political, cultural, economic, ethnic, gender and social factors and values, and advises the researcher to assume an interactive and proactive role, as a *transformative intellectual* whose focus is on emancipation, advocacy and transformation through research (Guba & Lincoln, 2008; Ponterotto, 2010). To illustrate the often complex interaction between paradigms that may underpin the qualitative research endeavour, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) paraphrased the definition first formulated by Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg (1992):

Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On the one hand, it is drawn to a broad, interpretive, postexperimental, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is drawn to more narrowly defined positivist, postpositivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis. Further, these tensions can be combined in the same project, bringing both postmodernism and

naturalistic, or both critical and humanistic, perspectives to bear. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 10)

Morrow (2005) argued that although some of the standards used to assess the quality of research are fairly universal across paradigms, the qualitative inquiry is mostly assessed according to its paradigmatic underpinnings, as well as the standards of the discipline in which it is conducted. For example, a research project that is based on the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm, such as a grounded theory study, or a postpositivist consensual qualitative research investigation in counselling psychology, will be substantially different from a critical ethnography in education, and will therefore be subjected to different standards for evaluation (Morrow, 2005).

Qualitative research is not based upon a singular methodological or theoretical concept (Flick, 2006), but rather encompasses a broad range of investigative procedures and methods to examine diverse subjects and explore human experiences, motivations, behaviours and perceptions (Manning, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010). The qualitative inquiry may, therefore, focus on diverse aspects such as: (a) the socially constructed nature of reality, (b) the relationship between researcher and subject, (c) the situational constraints that shape the inquiry, and (d) the value-laden nature of the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) noted: “Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, pp. 4-5).

The placement of the researcher within the environment he or she wishes to study implies that issues of researcher subjectivity and reflexivity warrant attention. In contrast with quantitative methods (which strive towards researcher objectivity), qualitative researchers readily acknowledge their own subjectivity in the processes of data gathering and analysis (Morrow, 2005). Depending on the underlying paradigm, researchers may attempt to either limit, control, and manage their own subjective reactions and reflections, or embrace these reactions and use them as data in their own right (Flick, 2006; Morrow, 2005). Reflexivity – the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2008) – is discussed in greater detail in Chapters 6 and 7.

Ponterotto (2010) summarised the advantages of qualitative research specific to the discipline of psychology, across the different research paradigms:

1. Constructivist qualitative methods often involve studying the emotive and cognitive aspects of participants' lived experiences, as well as formulating interpretations within the context of their socially constructed worldviews.
2. Qualitative methods are useful in exploratory phases of research given their emphasis on "discovery" rather than "explanation".
3. Qualitative research adds descriptive depth to quantitative data.
4. The inductive, iterative process of ongoing data collection, analysis, and interpretation makes qualitative methods excellent for theory development.
5. Qualitative research is particularly adept at studying and understanding the processes involved in psychotherapy.
6. Complex psychological phenomena can be studied, as qualitative research is not restricted to preselected and limited variables, but rather open to examining all variables as they emerge during the research process.
7. Qualitative research is excellent at establishing the clinical relevance of research, given participants' active involvement in defining research questions, and in assessing and interpreting data – ultimately increasing clinical relevance.
8. The general public's receptivity to and understanding of research may be enhanced by qualitative inquiries.
9. Qualitative research can bridge the rift between the objective hypothetico-deductive model of science and subjective everyday experience.
10. Qualitative research is effective in establishing "procedural evidence" (i.e., intelligible, consistent, and credible findings become self-evident during the analysis process).

Qualitative research encompasses a broad range of methodological approaches to the analysis of data (Manning, 1982; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Tavallaei & Abu Talib, 2010). One such an approach is the case research method. Psychobiography, an idiographic research method situated in the field of qualitative research, can be considered as a form of case study research (Edwards, 1998; Fouché, 1999; Simonton, 2003). In order to contextualise psychobiographical research within the broader research domain, the following section focuses on a brief outline of the case study approach as a qualitative methodology.

### 5.2.2 Qualitative Approaches to Case Study Research

A case study can be defined as an intensive investigation and systematic presentation of a single case, in which the variables under study are examined in considerable depth (Edwards, 1998; Gilgun, 1994; Runyan, 1982; Van Wysberghe & Khan, 2007). The composition of the unit or case can vary (i.e., a person, family, event, clinical session, group, organisation, community, or country) and case study research may focus on single or multiple cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gilgun, 1994; Yin, 1981). The case study approach has received growing attention in literature since the latter half of the previous century (Edwards, 1998; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1981). Van Wysberghe and Khan (2007) summarised the features common to all forms of case study, and proposed that the prototypical case study would have the following features:

1. The case study approach entails in-depth study of a specific unit of analysis.
2. The reader is provided with highly detailed and contextualised descriptions.
3. Research occurs in a naturalistic setting where there is little control over the situations studied (i.e., behaviour, events, or organisation).
4. The description provided by the case study has a specific temporal and spatial boundary in order to contextualise the unit under study.
5. Working hypotheses are based on what is uncovered or constructed during data collection and analysis.
6. Converging lines of inquiry facilitate triangulation in order to generate accurate and convincing findings.
7. Case studies can enrich and potentially transform the understanding of a phenomenon, as researchers analyse complex social interactions in order to coalesce and articulate these relationships in context.

The case study research approach has been argued to hold specific points of value: (a) connecting theory to practice; (b) utilising and capitalising on unique or problematic experiences which enables the development of practice relevant theory; and (c) generating rich observations which allow for the productive modification or adaptation of existing theories (Kressel, 2009; Stiles, 2009). Case studies are therefore useful for the in-depth study of problems, to illuminate the stages of processes, and to gain an understanding of situations in context (Gilgun, 1994).

Van Wysberghe and Khan (2007) proposed that the case study should be regarded as transparadigmatic. For example, within the *postpositivist* paradigm, cases can generate and test hypotheses about the real world. When conducting case research from this orientation, the researcher discovers the case, the units or variables of interest in the case and the context in which the case exists is of little interest or value to the researcher. From an *interpretivist* orientation, however, the focus of the case study is on the particular reality which is relevant to the phenomenon under study. The analysis, therefore, emphasises the story-like rendering of the phenomenon, as well as the iterative process involved in constructing the case study. A third example is case study research which is conducted from a *critical theory* paradigm. The focus of the research will be on the sociohistorical context, and the study will, therefore, examine in detail the development of contradictions, with regard to the roles of culture, race, ethnicity and gender, which may have given rise to injustices (Van Wysberghe & Khan, 2007).

Case studies do not belong exclusively to the realm of qualitative data, and either quantitative or qualitative methodologies, or a combination thereof, can be used in case study research (Yin, 1981, 2009). Simonton (2003) discussed how historical data can be analysed from a psychological perspective through both quantitative and qualitative approaches. One example is the practice of *historiometry* – the quantitative analyses of historical data – which entails the application of adapted versions of established psychometric measures to data on historical figures. The aim is to assess diverse characteristics such as intelligence, personality, motivation, psychopathology, interests, beliefs, and values (Simonton, 2003). According to Edwards (1998), quantitative multivariate methods have the advantage of enabling researchers to measure and control variables. He cautioned that such methods could fail to acknowledge the characteristics unique to the individual case.

Qualitative case studies are particularly suited to generate novel theories which are likely to be testable and empirically valid (Eisenhardt, 1989). For this reason, scholars from various disciplines, such as medicine, law and business, have employed the case study method to develop theories on a variety of diverse topics (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gilgun, 1994; Van Wysberghe & Khan, 2007). The use of case studies has always been central to the process of theory development in fields such as clinical psychology, personality psychology, developmental psychology, psychotherapy, as well as in humanistic and transpersonal clinical methods (Edwards, 1998; Kressel, 2009).

Various case-based qualitative methodologies have emerged in the literature (Edwards, 1998; Runyan, 1982). In his work on the establishment of a conceptual framework

for case-based research, Edwards (1998) summarised the assumptions shared by different case-based research approaches, as follows:

1. Mapping human behaviour and experience in terms of variables from which predictions can be made, is not the ultimate task of scientific inquiry. The relationship between factor analytic models and actual psychological and interpersonal processes is not without limitations.
2. Quantification, such as the estimation of means, statistical regression and variances of population distributions, is not an end in itself.
3. The quality of data determines the quality of the scientific endeavour. For example, case-based theories are formed on in-depth case material as opposed to the impoverished data used by factor analytic models.
4. The researcher has a respectful attitude towards the research participants, and sees their narratives as worthy of exploration and understanding. Participants may even become collaborative partners or co-researchers.
5. A sufficient range of qualitative data should be collected so that it can be contextualised.
6. Research should be case-based and case-centred, which implies that case material is used for theory development. This may then enhance the researcher's understanding of future cases.

According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), the popularity and relevance of the use of case studies in theory development, is due to the manner in which it bridges qualitative evidence with deductive research. They proposed that the case study approach could be seen as complementary to mainstream deductive reasoning as it produces theories which are accurate, interesting, and testable. This is indicative of the cyclical nature of research in theory generation: the inductive process of theory building based on data from case studies produces new theories which can, in turn, be subjected to deductive theory testing by using case data, in order to complete the cycle (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Edwards (1998) had described this cyclical approach to research, and emphasised that case study research may play an important role throughout the entire research process. His propositions in this regard are depicted in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1  
*Case Study Work at Different Phases of the Research Process*

Phases of the Research Process	Categories of Case Study Work
Descriptive work	Exploratory-descriptive work
	Focused-descriptive work
Theoretical-heuristic work	Grounded theory building
	Hermeneutic work
Theory testing work	Testing propositions within grounded theory
	Metatheoretical deconstruction

*Note.* Adapted from “Types of case study work: a conceptual framework for case-based research,” by D. J. A. Edwards, 1998, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 28(3), pp. 36-70.

As shown in Table 5.1, different categories of case study work relate to the three phases of the research process, which Edwards (1998) described as a descriptive phase, a theoretical-heuristic phase, and a theory testing phase. During the first research phase, the focus is on the detailed observation and unbiased description of a phenomenon, especially, when a relatively new area or phenomenon is being researched. The case study approach may therefore contribute to *exploratory-descriptive work*, during which a relatively unknown phenomenon is examined in an ideographical manner with the aim of producing an organised and coherent presentation of the phenomenon. When the phenomenon has already been described, it could be examined in more detail during *focused-descriptive work*. During the second research phase, the case study approach can also be valuable in using the descriptions generated during the first phase as a basis for theory building. *Grounded theory building* consists of: (a) categorisation, (b) identification of correlational relationships, (c) definitions of psychological structure, (d) propositions about process, and (e) propositions about causal relationships. The theory derived from *hermeneutic work* is appropriated not as an absolute truth, but is recognised to have been culturally and historically constructed. Theories can now be refined through disciplined investigation and critical debate. During the third and final phase in the research process, the case study approach may be more useful than an experimental research design, as *testing propositions within grounded theory* can be done through the examination of individual cases. *Metatheoretical deconstruction* is a process of theoretical reformulation based on the use of material from case studies to expose the assumptions on which a psychological theory is based (Edwards, 1998).

As noted by Stiles (2009), a researcher may use a case study approach in applying theory to the case in order to better understand the case, or may apply case observations to theory, in order to evaluate and improve on the theory. He described the logical operations involved when a case study approach is used in theory building, namely deduction (i.e., making inferences based on theoretical statements which are logically consistent and interconnected), induction (i.e., applying observations to theory), and abduction (i.e., creating and modifying the theory). Psychobiography, as a form of case study research (Edwards, 1998), may use either inductive or deductive case research, or both (Fouché, 1999). Therefore, the approach enables the researcher to aim for the development and/or testing of aspects of psychological theory.

The following section focuses in greater detail on the psychobiographical research design. Firstly, the reader is provided with relevant definitions and descriptions, followed by an overview of the field's historical development and its application within the South African context. The value of conducting psychobiographical research is highlighted, followed by a critical analysis of the case study design in general and the psychobiographical approach in particular.

### **5.3 Psychobiographical Research**

#### **5.3.1 Definition and Description**

The lives of enigmatic or paradigmatic personalities have intrigued scholars in both the disciplines of psychology and biography (Howe, 1997; McAdams, 1988, 1994). These two fields sought answers to questions such as: (a) How do some people develop into remarkably competent, exceptionally creative, especially happy and fulfilled, or unusually productive men and women?; (b) How can we best comprehend a person's life course?; and (c) What is the most effective medium for viewing the evolution of a single life? (Fouché, 1999; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Howe, 1997; McAdams, 1994). However, it was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that psychological concepts were formally applied to biographical writings for the purposes of interpreting the life of the subject, thus, forging a symbiotic, yet uneasy, alliance between psychology and biography (Elms, 1994; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005).

Psychobiography can be defined as the determined and explicit use of psychological theory and/or research in the interpretation of and individual life (Schultz, 2001a, 2001c). It

can be described as the “systematic use of psychological (especially personality) theory to transform a life into a coherent and illuminating story” (McAdams, 1988, p. 2), which attempts to make both literary and psychological sense of a subject (Schultz, 2001c). The psychobiographical interpretation is aimed at revealing the aspects of the subject’s life (Schultz, 2001c), and reaching an understanding of the individual life through psychological principles, methods and themes (Kramer, 2002). It is a longitudinal life history research method which investigates the personality development of exemplary and finished lives (Carlson, 1988). Schultz (2001c) described the psychobiographical endeavour as follows:

It goes beyond merely coincidental connections between life and work by illuminating gestalts, repetitions of theme or subject, persistent modes of defense, formal symmetries, preferred narrative structures or tropes, constellating metaphors. It is a meaning-making enterprise which, by subjecting a life to what is known about people generally, uncovers hidden or partially obscured psychological structures. (Schultz, 2001c, p.3)

Simonton (1999), by comparing the psychobiographical research tradition to the historiometric, psychometric and comparative traditions in the study of significant samples, provided a description of psychobiography in terms of various research dimensions. He noted that psychobiography almost always contains qualitative analyses of single cases and follows an idiographic and longitudinal approach. Furthermore, he highlighted that the psychobiographical approach often has a confirmatory aim of hypothesis testing and almost always consists of the analysis of a microanalytical unit (the individual) through indirect assessment.

Van Niekerk (2007) proposed five universal characteristics shared by various descriptions of psychobiographical research. These are: (a) the use of qualitative data, (b) the preference for lifespan research as opposed to the study of compartmentalised historical episodes, (c) the clear identification of the research subject as opposed to the anonymity awarded to most quantitative research participants, (d) the use of biographical data which have mostly been collected by researchers such as historians and biographers, and (e) the choice of a famous, exemplary or enigmatic research subject based on the historical and psychological significance of their life story, rather than collecting data with the aim to solve predetermined research questions. With these characteristics in mind, the following section aims to clarify some of the concepts related to the psychobiographical endeavour.

### 5.3.2 Psychobiography and Related Concepts

#### 5.3.2.1 *Autobiography and Biography*

*Autobiography* refers to the documentation of a life, or an aspect of that life, told in the first person singular, in which the individual is the author of their own life story (Becker, 2009; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005). Becker (2009) argued that although the autobiographer is committed to maintaining a close connection between his or her own narrative and what an objective investigation might discover, there is always a selection bias present in that the author might have selected the material in such a manner that he or she can present to the reader a preferred picture of the self, ignoring that which “would be trivial or distasteful to him, though of great interest to us” (p. 4).

*Biography* refers to the story of an individual’s life written or told by somebody else (Lee, 2009), which may or may not involve the subject’s cooperation (Fouché, 1999). Biographers record and interpret the lives of real people (Hamilton, 2008) and therefore share with psychobiographers their interest in life stories. Both draw on biographical data, such as diaries, personal correspondence, autobiographies, and existing biographies, during the research process, but differ in their interpretation of such data (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010).

A mutually beneficial relationship can be built on the common ground shared by biography and psychology (Schultz, 2001c), although their alliance has been described as uneasy (Elms, 1994). The difference between biography and psychobiography lies in the degree to which psychological theory is used in the process of interpretation, and whilst psychobiography’s use of psychological theory is explicit, biographers follow a more subjective and intuitive approach in an attempt to make literary sense of their subject (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; McAdams, 1988). Based on the increasing presence of psychology in biographical work, Schultz (2001c) raised the question whether some psychological orientation has not become necessary to the practice of life writing. He commented that in most biographies, “...psychological conclusions seem to land on the page as if by magic, their sources in theory or research obscured, or at least underexamined” (Schultz, 2001c, pp. 3 – 4). He concluded that an explicit and deliberate introduction of psychology into life writing would make the researcher’s assumptions available for scrutiny and an assessment of their efficacy or suitability, ultimately producing a more satisfying story in which the motives behind the subject’s behaviour could be better illuminated (Schultz, 2001c).

### 5.3.2.2 *Life Stories, Life Narratives and Life Histories*

*Life stories* or *life narratives* can be described as the narrator's own accounts of the lived experiences, in which the person authors meaning to these events, as well as their life (Etherington, 2009; McAdams, 2010). McAdams (2010) noted that a life story enables the author to explain "how I came to be, who I am today, where I am going in the future, and what I believe my life means within the psychosocial niche" (p. 179) provided by the author's context (i.e., family, friends, work, society, and cultural, and ideological resources). These autobiographical accounts could be analysed through various methodological approaches, ranging from quantitative content analysis to qualitative hermeneutic work (McAdams, 1988). Life story research methodologies tend to focus on the subjective accounts of individuals regarding particular aspects of their lives and experiences (e.g., bereavement, illness, trauma) against the backdrop of their entire life (Etherington, 2009).

The *life history* approach entails a deliberate attempt at a theoretical description of an individual's development within his or her cultural milieu, with an emphasis on the individual's experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In contrast to the biographical or autobiographical author, the researcher who compiles a life history, is "...less concerned with artistic values than with a faithful rendering of the subject's experience and interpretation of the world" (Becker, 2009, p. 4). Whilst the life history is approached mostly from a single-case research design in psychobiography, the life history method can accommodate a multiple case design in which comparative biographical studies of subjects are conducted (Fouché, 1999; McAdams, 1988).

From sociological and social-psychological perspectives, life history research has traditionally emphasised the manner in which societal and cultural narratives are reflected in the stories of individual lives (McAdams, 1988). According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), the life history method has three key strengths: (a) it describes the entire life course of the subject, enabling the reader to enter vicariously into the individual's experiences; (b) hypotheses are generated which can be tested by further studies; and (c) comparative studies can be based on a number of life histories in which phenomena such as behavioural processes or personality types are indicated. They noted: "Life history methodology emphasizes the value of a person's own story and provides pieces for a 'mosaic' or total picture of a concept" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 97). This approach has prominent multidisciplinary links and receives attention by researchers in sociology, linguistics, history, anthropology and psychology, where the two main approaches to life history research, are (a) study of lives of

exceptional people (psychobiography), and (b) the therapeutic use of reminiscence as a technique during the process of live-review writing (Bertaux & Kohli, 2009).

Both life narratives and psychobiographical research share the use of narrative, story and biography as frameworks which guide the study of human development (Fouché, 1999; McAdams, 1988). According to Schultz (2001c), psychological life writing has begun to employ emerging narrative models of self as an additional method for the interpretation of an individual life, with Dan McAdams, Silvan Tomkins, Rae Carlson, Ted Sarbin and Jerome Bruner cited as some of the influential narrative researchers in the field. McAdams (1988) had emphasised the value of the narrative approach, and attributed the upsurge in interdisciplinary interest in the concept of narratives to the proliferation of hermeneutic research approaches “which ultimately construes human lives and other social phenomena as *texts* to be interpreted” (p. 3). Schultz (2001c, p.3) elaborated on the application of the narrative approach with the following statement:

If we are what we remember having said or done, and if personality is, maybe more than anything else, a story we tell ourselves and others, a scripted fiction in which we appear as one among a larger cast of characters, also invented, the life writing may proceed by identifying the structure of a biographical subject’s “narrative”: the stories he tells, the scenes he constructs, the characters or “*imago*’s” he employs, and the metaphors in which he cloaks himself.

### **5.3.2.3 Psychohistory**

Runyan (1988b) highlighted the fact that confusion surrounds the definition and scope of the concept *psychohistory*, due to the tensions underlying the two disciplines involved, namely, psychology and history. Psychohistory should be differentiated from *historical psychology*, which has been defined as the history of psychology or psychological phenomena, and/or the conceptualisation of psychology as a historical science (Fouché, 1999; Runyan, 2003). Similarly, it could be distinguished from the concept of *historiography*, which refers to the construction of historical explanations based on the use of various sources of historical data (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005).

According to Runyan (1988a), important contributions have been made to the field of psychobiography by the Institute of Psychohistory, through the studies of figures such as Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. The director of the Institute of Psychohistory, and the editor of the *Journal of Psychohistory*, Lloyd DeMause, began using the term psychohistory in the 1970s (Campbell, 2009). His use of the term psychohistory evolved from his concept

of psychogeneology – the science of the evolution of the psyche through generations, defined as the investigation of the “evolution of parent-child relations as the basic cause of man's personality” (Campbell, 2009, p.3). Runyan (1984, 1988b) defined *psychohistory* as the explicit use of formal or systematic psychological theory in history, which he associates with the definition of psychobiography as the use of formal or systematic psychology in biography. Pozzuto (1982) stated that psychohistory developed to address the gap between our knowledge of the individual and our understanding of sociohistorical processes. A primary distinction, according to Runyan (1984), is to divide psychohistory into two main branches, namely, individual psychohistory (e.g., psychobiography) and group psychohistory, which deals with the characteristics or formative experiences of groups.

### 5.3.3 Trends in the Development of Psychobiographical Research

The narrative nature of humans is reflected by numerous forms of our storytelling, ranging from folk tales and myths to pantomimes and motion pictures (Elms, 1994; Fouché, 1999; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; McAdams, 1994). Elms (1994) noted that these stories demonstrate humans' capacity for producing narratives in which they reflect on their past as well as anticipate their personal and societal future. Even in cultures where biographic traditions had not been formalised, informal means were used to convey individual life histories, such as gossip, rumour and personal confession (Elms, 1994). Humankind's stories have, throughout human history, reflected the instinctive desire to create psychologically-rooted life histories of significant people: “Bringing psychological insights to bear on lives began with the Greeks, with Plutarch, Xenophon, and Thucydides. The Gospels, too, and tales of Buddha, are less biographies than psychological portraits of a spectacularly compelling personality lovingly revealed” (Schultz, 2001c, p.1).

Although earlier informal uses of psychology in historical works have been documented (Runyan, 2003), biography's alliance with psychology was only formally forged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the publication of Freud's work, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, which has been credited with being the first formal psychobiography (Carlson, 1988; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; McAdams, 1988; Schultz, 2001b, 2001c) and a landmark work in the development of genuine qualitative analysis (Simonton, 2003). With this work, Freud had provided a set of guidelines regarding the methodology for psychological life writing; guidelines which he himself had failed to adhere to (Schultz, 2001c). He became not only the father of psychoanalysis, but also of the application of

psychoanalysis to the study of historical lives (Anderson & Winer, 2003). Although other works in the field had appeared earlier, Freud's work is widely considered to be far more influential (Runyan, 1988). He completed other psychobiographical studies of historical figures, such as Moses and Dostoevsky, but the majority of Freud's life writing was based on clinical case studies (Schultz, 2001b).

In the centuries preceding the publication of *Leonardo*, the dominant tradition was one of hagiography, through which, especially in ancient Egypt, Babylonia and Syria, records of individual lives were intended to glorify the subject. This continued during the Middle Ages, with the central motivation being moral edification and the glorification of God and the saints (Elms, 1994; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; McAdams, 1988; Meissner, 2003). During the Victorian age, idealised testimonials typically neglected the vulnerabilities, feelings, desires and fantasies of the subject (McAdams, 1988). Biographies then developed a pretence of objectivity, but this often only served as a pretext "for the latest compilation of malicious gossip" (Elms, 1994, p. 3). According to McAdams (1988), the biographer Lytton Strachey is often "credited (and blamed) for changing the biographer's mission from deferential eulogist to psychological surgeon" (McAdams, 1988, p. 3). His work on eminent Victorian figures, such as Florence Nightingale and Cardinal Manning, was first published in 1918. Strachey had attempted to move away from the trend of idealising biographical subjects, which was especially prominent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He used psychological concepts in his biographical sketches to explore and illuminate "...the hidden and often tawdry truths underneath the facades of greatness" (p. 4). McAdams (1988), however, noted that Strachey's rebellion can be considered as extreme and commented that his work often bordered on character assassinations.

With his 1910 publication, Freud had intended to undertake a corrective endeavour to the existing trends of hagiography and pathography, emphasising that one should guard against demeaning or idealising one's subject (Schultz, 2001b, 2001c). Freud suggested that life historians should not base their conclusions on inadequate data and that the internal and external validity of biographical anecdotes needs to be investigated. He furthermore urged psychobiographers to compare the subject's behaviour with that of his or her contemporaries, and to resist attributing meaning to isolated, unrepeated events or circumstances (Schultz, 2001c). Freud himself, however, violated these rules by alternating between pathographising and idealising his subject, as well as reaching conclusions of causality on insufficient data (Elms, 1994; McAdams, 1988).

Runyan (1988) provided an overview of psychobiography's growth throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century following Freud's *Leonardo*. His research indicated that, up to the end of the 1970s, a total of 617 English language publications in psychobiography appeared in the United States and Europe. Early works during the 1910s and 1920s included analyses of William Shakespeare, Richard Wagner, Giovanni Segantini, Martin Luther, Socrates, Margaret Fuller, Samuel Adams, Edgar Allan Poe and Abraham Lincoln. During the 1930s, psychobiographies appeared of Tolstoy, Moliere, Sand, Goethe, Coleridge, Nietzsche, Poe, Rousseau, Caesar, Napoleon, Darwin, and Alexander the Great. The 1940s saw a decline in the number of published psychobiographies, with a study on George III appearing in 1941, and another on Adolf Hitler written in 1943. The production of psychobiographies renewed during the 1950s, during which studies of Jonathan Swift, Lewis Carroll, Beethoven, and Woodrow Wilson emerged (Runyan, 1988). Erikson's psychobiographical studies of Martin Luther (1958) and Mahatma Gandhi (1969) are widely considered as tremendously influential in the field, and became examples of the maturation of the psychobiographical approach (McAdams, 1988; Pietikainen & Ihanus, 2003).

Peitikeinen and Ihanus (2003) reflected on the impact that William Langer's presidential address to the American Historical Association in December of 1957 had had on the development of psychoanalytically informed psychohistory. According to them, he had predicted that psychology would play an increasingly important role in the interpretation of history. A few academics followed his advice and received psychoanalytic training in order to apply the theory to their work as historians. In 1964, H. Stuart Hughes argued that historians should also undergo personal analysis, and emphasised that the psychological insights offered by psychoanalysis would become crucial for historical understanding in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Peitikeinen & Ihanus, 2003).

Runyan (1988) noted that from the 1960s onwards, public figures such as writers, artists, musicians, scientists, political and religious leaders became the subjects of a vast number of psychobiographical analyses. For example, social scientists tended to choose historical or political figures as their subjects, while humanistic scholars focused their attention on creative artists and psychologists analysed their own disciplinary forerunners (Carlson, 1988). A significant increase in publications occurred in the early 1960s, which gained further momentum in the 1970s, with more than half of the total 617 publications published in that era (Runyan, 1988). This momentum also led to the increased utilisation of finished psychobiographies in different disciplines and contexts. Torres (1977), for example, proposed that psychobiography could be used as a psychoeducational tool for parents

enrolled in a social welfare program, in order to teach psychoanalytic developmental theory by utilising their interest in a psychobiographical subject. The increased interest in the field of psychobiography has also been reflected by its growing institutionalisation, as evident by the number of organisations, conferences and conventions, speciality journals and dissertations in psychobiographical research in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Runyan, 1988), despite the limited academic institutionalisation by the late 1970s (Runyan, 1988).

Schultz (2001c, 2005a) stated that defining contributions in the field of psychobiography include Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (1958) and *Gandhi's Truth* (1969), as well as Allport's *Letters from Jenny* and Henry Murray's *Endeavors in Psychology* which were published in 1965 and 1981 respectively. In 1982, William Runyan's *Life Histories and Psychobiography: Explorations in Theory and Method* appeared. Six years later, the *Journal of Personality* devoted an entire issue to articles on psychobiography and life narratives. The year 1990 saw the publication of Alexander's *Personology: Method and Content in Personality Assessment and Psychobiography*, as well as *Acts of Meaning* by Jerome Bruner. These works were closely followed by McAdams' *The Stories We Live By* and Elms's *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology*, both published in 1994. In 2005, the *Handbook of Psychobiography*, edited by Schultz, was published. Recently, prominent psychobiographical works were published in the Oxford University Press series *Inner Lives*, which included psychobiographies on George W. Bush (McAdams, 2011), Diane Arbus (Schultz, 2011a) and Truman Capote (Schultz, 2011b).

The interdisciplinary nature of psychobiography is evident from the wide range of disciplines which have made contributions to the field. Psychobiographers have made up a diverse group of researchers and range from psychoanalysts and personality psychologists, to historians, political scientists, sociologists, occupational therapists, anthropologists, literary critics, psychohistorians and those from the disciplines of education, religion, as well as music, art and scientific history (Cara, 2007; Runyan, 1988). For example, the psychological study of American presidents has long attracted psychoanalytically inclined historians, political scientists and psychiatrists (Elovitz, 2003). The practice of psychobiography by scholars from other fields outside of psychology, has, however, evoked criticism. Munter (1975) stated that, due to the significant popular interest in the discipline of psychology, clinically unsophisticated historians and writers often include various psychological hypotheses in their work on historical figures, which only occasionally is done under the guidance of a trained clinician. She argued that these writers risk the omission of psychologically significant information, and urged psychologists to become more involved in

the field of psychobiography in order to ensure a more accurate psychological perspective, and therefore distinguish psychobiography from merely insightful reportage.

Current practice in psychobiography points to an eclectic use of a range of psychological theories. Throughout the field's development, however, the use of psychoanalytic theory seemed to have been one of the most prominent trends. Since Freud and his followers regarded psychobiography as a form of applied psychoanalysis (Runyan, 2003), psychoanalysis has long been considered to be the standard conceptual framework for a psychobiographical study (Carlson, 1988; Schultz, 2001b). Anderson and Winer (2003) noted that Freud and Erikson have remained the theorists best known to psychobiographers, and argued that psychobiographers would benefit from drawing on the works of Post-Freudian and Post-Eriksonian theorists, such as Donald Winnicott, Otto Kernberg, and Heinz Kohut. In recent years, psychobiography's evolution has led to a "...more eclectic and differentiated self-conception" (Runyan, 1988, p. 296) as the approach became more popular with scholars from various disciplines (Carlson, 1988). In contemporary psychobiography any kind of formal or systematic psychological theory can be used. Accordingly, psychobiography has begun to draw on theories from social, developmental, cognitive and abnormal psychology (Runyan, 1988). As previously mentioned, a prominent trend in the field is the use of emerging narrative models of self as frameworks for the study of individual lives (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Schultz, 2001c). The interest in narrative approaches has become evident in various areas within psychology (i.e., developmental, social, cross-cultural, and cognitive theory, personology and psychotherapy) (Howard, 1991; McAdams, 1988). McAdams (1988) proposes that the interest of personality psychologists in methods such as psychobiography is reflective of an increased interest among scholars from various disciplines in the concept of narratives.

#### **5.3.4 Psychobiography in the South African Context**

Van Niekerk (2007) provided an overview of local psychobiographical endeavours. The first South African psychobiographical study, which was on the life of an extraordinary South African - Cornelis Jacobus Langenhoven, appeared in 1939. Its author, Burgers, later also completed a psychobiography on another South African personality, Louis Leipoldt, in 1960. Almost two decades later, Van der Merwe completed his psychobiographical work on the life of South African poet, Ingrid Jonker, as part of a doctoral study (Van Niekerk, 2007). Another period of almost 20 years passed between the work on Jonker and the 1996

publication of Manganyi's work on Gerard Sekoto, one of South Africa's most famous painters (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). In 1999, a psychobiographical study of General Jan Smuts was conducted as a doctoral research project by Fouché, which served as a precursor to various academic psychobiographical endeavours at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and Rhodes University (RU) (Van Niekerk, 2007).

The field of psychobiographical research had slowly gathered momentum in South Africa, and at the turn of the century, experienced a boom. Psychobiographies on the lives of various subjects, including international personalities, emerged (Van Niekerk, 2007). Some local psychobiographers have since studied aspects of the lives of those who have made significant contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle, for example Stephen Biko (Kotton, 2002), Alan Paton (Greeff, 2010) and Bram Fischer (Swart, 2010). Similarly, the lives of apartheid-era statesmen such as Hendrik Verwoerd (Claasen, 2007) and B.J. Vorster (Vorster, 2003), have also been examined through the psychobiographical lens. In a systematic review of psychobiographical research in South Africa between 1995 and 2004, Fouché, Smit, Watson and Van Niekerk (2007) illuminated local trends during that timeframe. They reported that Levinson's model (Levinson, 1986) was the most widely used theory, followed by the Five-factor Model (Digman, 1990) and Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963). From the review, trends regarding the gender and ethnicity of subjects also became apparent, with the vast majority being White males. The only two Black psychobiographical subjects during this time were Biko and Sekoto. Helen Martins and Mother Theresa were the only women studied by female psychobiographers during that period (Fouché *et al.*, 2007; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Furthermore, most of the local psychobiographical studies during that timeframe were conducted as part of postgraduate research projects and the majority of subjects chosen were South African personalities, particularly prominent political figures (Fouché *et al.*, 2007).

After the period covered by the systematic review discussed above, the psychobiographical approach enjoyed further academic institutionalisation in South Africa. Psychobiography has been introduced as a strategic research focus area at various local psychology departments (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). The recent awakening of psychobiographical interest in South African academic institutions is clearly reflected in the increase in completed postgraduate master's and doctoral degrees in this research focus area. Academic psychobiographies, which mostly consisted of postgraduate research projects for degree purposes, are currently produced by various South African universities, such as the University of Johannesburg (UJ) the University of the Free State (UFS), Rhodes University

(RU), and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). Postgraduate research output in the field of psychobiography since the systemic review by Fouché *et al.* (2007) has included master's and doctoral level studies on the following subjects (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; Perry, 2012; Pillay, 2009; Van Niekerk, 2007):

- Cornelis Jacobus Langenhoven (2005)
- Karen Horney (2006)
- Wessel Johannes Cronjé (2006)
- Christiaan Barnard (2007)
- Hendrik Verwoerd (2007)
- Ray Charles (2007)
- Melanie Klein (2008)
- Herman Mashaba (2008)
- Isie Smuts (2009)
- Helen Keller (2009)
- Jeffery Dahmer (2009)
- Kurt Cobain (2009)
- Emily Hobhouse (2009)
- Mahatma Ghandi (2009)
- Ralph John Rabie (2010)
- Ernesto Guevara (2010)
- Frans Claerhout (2010)
- Alan Paton (2010)
- Jackson Pollock (2010)
- Christiaan de Wet (2010)
- Bram Fischer (2010)
- Vincent van Gogh (2010)
- Brenda Fassie (2011)
- Olive Schnreiner (2012)

In South Africa, the majority of the relatively limited amount of academic psychobiographical research has, therefore, only been conducted within the past decade. Fouché and Van Niekerk (2010) attributed the recent growth in its popularity to the following: (a) the logistical benefits of psychobiographical methodology in postgraduate degree programmes, (b) the migration of psychobiographical supervisors to various local universities, (c) the academic institutionalisation of psychobiography as a research focus area, (d) the call for theory-driven postgraduate research, (e) the acknowledgement of extraordinary South Africans, as well as (f) the momentum of the positive psychology

movement. According to Fouché and Van Niekerk (2010), academic psychobiography in South Africa faces the following challenges:

1. To pursue and further develop postgraduate psychobiographical studies at universities in Southern Africa.
2. To conduct more studies on females and Black personalities as chosen subjects.
3. To utilise a wider array of psychological theories or models to uncover the lives of the subjects.
4. To enhance public and academic exposure to academically institutionalised psychobiography by means of congress presentations and article publications.

In the light of the upsurge in both national and international interest in psychobiographical research, it is not surprising that various researchers have advocated its value (e.g., Carlson 1988; Elms, 1994; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010; McAdams, 1988, 1994; Runyan, 1984, 1988; Schultz, 2001c, 2005). The following section provides an overview of the more specific advantages of utilising a psychobiographical approach as a qualitative case study research design. The rationale for the use of the psychobiographical research approach in this study is further elaborated upon by discussing these specific points of value as they pertain to the study of the life of Suzman in particular.

### **5.3.5 Value of Psychobiographical Research**

The specific advantages of utilising the psychobiographical approach entail its contributions in the following five areas:

#### ***5.3.5.1. The Uniqueness of the Individual Case within the Whole***

Psychobiography's morphogenic approach ensures respect for the subject's uniqueness and enables the researcher to provide a holistic description of the person's life. This has been described as a major advantage by many researchers in the field as it emphasises the individuality and uniqueness of the subject (Carlson, 1988; Elms, 1994; Runyan, 1988). The term *morphogenic* refers to the study of individualised patterning processes in personality (Elms, 1994). Previously, Gordon Allport used the term *idiographic* – the concern for what is specific to an individual case – to describe his approach to the study of lives and in particular, the unique dimensions of personalities.

He contrasted this sharply with the *nomothetic* approach used by positivists and statisticians who search for general laws with the aim to generalise psychological findings to a given population (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Hermans, 1988; Hevern, 1999). The nomothetic-versus-idiographic distinction was met with considerable criticism as the dichotomous classification could not provide a satisfactory explanation of the individuality of the whole person (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Rosenwald, 1988). According to Elms (1994), Allport attempted to rectify this strong contrast by the use of a less extreme term: *morphogenic*.

McAdams (1994) stated that psychobiographers examine complete lives with the aim to structure the central story of an individual's life according to psychological theory. This endeavour may be of significant value to the field of psychology in general, and to the discipline of personality psychology in particular. As stated by Runyan (1988), both personality psychology and psychobiography share the objective of developing a better understanding of an individual person, and as such, progress made in the psychobiographical field also contributes to advancements in personality psychology as a whole. Schultz (2001c) argued that the study of a single life history restores the individual to psychology, as it highlights the nuances, complexities and richness of the lived life. He described psychobiography as a radical "antidote" for what can be regarded as psychology's illnesses - reductionism, scientism, trivialness and irrelevance (Schultz, 2005). He further described the psychobiographical endeavour as follows:

Its subjects weren't anonymous. It had nothing to do with groups. It did not require statistics. It made little effort to discover general principles applicable either to everyone or to subsets of subjects. Rather, it was all about taking up one lonely life at a time and trying to make whatever sense one could of that life. One seeking mind, armed with theory and research, directed at the details of another – that is psychobiography. (Schultz, 2005, p.3)

In this vein, Schultz (2005) noted that one of the significant contributions of psychobiography is that it provides us with knowledge about the subject's uniqueness – an important consideration seeing that subjects are often those figures whom knowing more about, may be of particular value: "These are the figures who define the limits and the architecture of the human mind, in all its horror or magnificence. We must know them, because to know them is to know ourselves" (Schultz, 2005, p. 4). Apart from illuminating an individual life story in its complexity and providing the researcher with data rich enough to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the subject, psychobiography is also the most popular strategy for the study of significant or eminent individuals (Simonton, 1999).

Therefore, the value of psychobiographical research for the field of psychology is further enhanced by the unique nature of the subjects under study. Simonton (1999) noted that these eminent individuals are distinguishable from the essentially interchangeable subjects usually encountered in empirical research, as they are neither ordinary nor anonymous, have not randomly been selected from the population of *Homo sapiens*, and cannot be seen as interchangeable. Instead, he noted that "...these individuals are presumably selected precisely because they are, at least to some extent, *sui generis*" (Simonton, 1999, p. 425).

Similarly, Izenberg (2003) proposed that a psychobiographical investigation is in fact required to explain the most original and idiosyncratic of an individual's artistic or intellectual creations, as they are the ones "most clearly marked by the individuality as well as the genius of their creators" (p. 32). He argues that whenever creations "go beyond the cultural conventions of the *Zeitgeist*" (p. 32), the researcher may find the input from the individual's personality to be significant. He, however, cautions against applying this as an *a priori* principle, stating that explanations should always be based on sufficient evidence and reasonable inference.

#### ***5.3.5.2. The Sociohistorical Context***

In addition to the holistic and unique description of the individual under study, the psychobiographical approach also aims to understand the subject within the gestalt context (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Runyan, 1984). The use of life history material enables the researcher to uncover and, therefore, better understand the subject's sociohistorical context and the influences it has had on the subject (Fouché, 1999) as it illuminates the cultural and subcultural influences on development (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Runyan, 1984). This ensures a more holistic description of the subject, providing a detailed look at the impact of cultural influences on individual psychological development (Carlson, 1988; McAdams, 1994; Runyan, 1984). McAdams (1994) noted that the argument for the use of psychologically informed biography has been raised by theorists such as Alfred Adler (1870-1937), Erik Erikson (1902-1980), and Henry Murray (1893-1988), who have suggested that it is probably the best means of capturing a life within its historical context.

#### ***5.3.5.3. Process and Pattern over Time***

A third advantage of the psychobiographical approach lies in its ability to investigate processes and patterns within the context of time (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Runyan, 1984). As the life of the subject under study is considered to be a “finished life”, the individual’s development can be traced across their entire life span as opposed to merely investigating a fragment of their existence (Carlson, 1988; Munter, 1975). The life history research approach, therefore, allows for a comprehensive description of developmental patterns and behavioural processes as they occurred and unfolded over time, from birth to death (Carlson, 1988; Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Munter, 1975).

#### ***5.3.5.4. Subjective Reality***

A fourth advantage of the psychobiographical approach lies in its hermeneutical and phenomenological perspective, which enables the researcher to better describe and convey the subjective reality and inner experiences of the subject (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005; Howe, 1997). This, in turn, facilitates the development of empathy and sympathy with the subject, resulting in the creation of a vivid and compelling life story (Runyan, 1984). Howe (1997) stated that the aspects of events which are observable to others are not as significant to the particular individual as their own perception and experiences of the events. Itzkowitz and Volkan (2003), in comparing examples of psychobiographies to narrative biographies on the same subjects, concluded that the psychobiographical studies added more depth to the understanding of the subjects than could conventional historical studies, in part due to the extensive focus on illuminating their internal motivations.

#### ***5.3.5.5. Theory Testing and Development***

Finally, psychobiographical studies provide researchers with a way in which hypotheses can be generated and novel theoretical directives can be tested (Carlson, 1988). Schultz (2005) stated that speculations derived from a single case study can lead to formal propositions which could then be tested against larger populations. Because psychobiography may give rise to the development of theories or hypotheses, researchers

interested in certain themes or phenomena can therefore benefit from the psychobiographical approach. For example, one of the areas of study in which a psychobiographical approach may prove to be of significant value, is that of suicide. Kramer (2002) argued that in the study of the lives of people who have committed suicide, psychobiography can create a coherent account of an otherwise incomplete life narrative, and is an apt choice of research methodology as it is sensitive to the individuality of each case.

Howe (1997) proposed that psychological studies of individual lives may be more beneficial than examining samples of people with the aim to derive generalisations. This is especially relevant when the individual under study is extraordinary in some way, “even more so when their very uniqueness is a primary reason for taking an interest in them” (Howe, 1997, p. 241). Carlson (1988) argued that psychology’s primary responsibility is to develop basic personality theory, and stated that the psychobiographical approach offers a much better opportunity for the study of individual personality development than is possible through usual or clinical longitudinal research:

Life history materials constitute a perfect laboratory for developing and testing basic personality theory... Judicious use of choice of materials permits us to consider various sociohistorical contexts, avoid inconveniences of “informed consent,” and achieve a degree of consensual validation beyond the best hopes of clinical case studies. (Carlson, 1988, p. 106)

Apart from theory development, psychobiography also provides an opportunity for testing the applicability of existing psychological theories or concepts. Analytic generalisation, in contrast to statistical generalisation, denotes the process of generalising from the case study to theory (Yin, 2009). Where a theory or a concept does not adequately explain psychological phenomena, it can be revised or altered and psychobiography can be used as an experiment to either provisionally refute or confirm psychological theory (Schultz, 2005a).

This section highlighted some of the main arguments raised by advocates of the psychobiographical approach. However, these viewpoints have not been unopposed, and significant ambivalence exists in psychology about the study of lives (Rosenwald, 1988). Critics of psychobiography have claimed that the entire enterprise has proved disappointing (Runyan, 1984). The following section examines the main criticisms that have been launched against idiographic qualitative case study research in general, and the psychobiographical approach in particular.

### 5.3.6 Critical Analysis of the Psychobiographical Research Design

Important limitations to case-based theory building have been highlighted in the literature. Firstly, the resultant theory may be overly complex if the empirical data is used intensively: "...given the typically staggering volume of rich data, there is a temptation to build theory which tries to capture everything" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 547). On the other hand, theories built on case study research may be narrow and idiosyncratic, and may only have a limited level of generality, or only describe idiosyncratic phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Eisenhardt (1989, 1991) and Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007) have argued that whilst a single case approach can provide rich descriptions of phenomena, it is a much weaker base for theory building when compared to what is provided by multiple case studies. This viewpoint has, however, been criticised for failing to acknowledge the important impact single case studies have had in the social sciences, as well as disregarding the value of the contextual insight gained from single case investigations (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991).

Gerring (2004) argued that because the term *case study* lacks clear definition, the profusion of meanings attached to the term prolongs the debate between the proponents and opponents of this method of inquiry. From the political science framework, Gerring (2004) pointed to a paradox, namely that even though much of the knowledge in the field is drawn from case studies, which constitute a large proportion of the research conducted by political scientists, the methodology of the approach has largely been disregarded. Gerring (2004, p. 341) referred to a "methodological limbo" in which case study research exists due to the ambiguities of its research design.

Hermans (1988) commented on the criticisms generally launched against idiographic approaches, noting that the most persistent objection has been that such approaches ultimately undermine the establishment of general principles of personality, with some critics even bringing into question the scientific status of an idiographic approach. Hermans (1988) addressed these criticisms by arguing that the complementary use of both the nomothetic and idiographic methods in personality psychology allows for the exploration of the specific potentialities of each method.

Runyan observed that: "academic psychology had developed in such a way that quantitative and experimental methods were prized, but case studies were often devalued or marginalized" (Runyan, 2003, p. 123). He summarised the arguments that have frequently been made against psychobiographical or life history research, with the main criticisms

related to the questioning of the validity of retrospective and introspective data and subjective reports, as well as the method's ability to test the hypotheses it has generated (Runyan, 1982, 1984, 1988b). For example, psychobiographical research has the disadvantage of relying mostly on historical data, which may not always be as reliable as data from more conventional sources (Simonton, 2003). In this regard, Simonton (2003) noted that historical records may contain "informational gaps or errors that can contaminate any analysis, whether qualitative or quantitative" (Simonton, 2003, p. 628).

Questions have therefore been raised regarding the internal and external validity of the research method, as alternative explanations regarding the subject can often exist and the information derived from the individual case cannot be generalised safely (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Runyan, 1982, 1984). Runyan (1988b) noted that one argument against utilising a biographical approach in disciplines such as psychology, history, sociology and anthropology, involves issues regarding whether a single individual is representative of a larger group or population. Runyan (1988b) responded to this criticism by stating that the issue is irrelevant, as the biographer is in fact drawn to subjects who had an unusual influence on history or hold unusual interest for the researcher.

According to Elms (1994), one of the most frequent criticisms of the psychobiographical research method, is the high frequency with which researchers rely on Freudian interpretations. Its pervasiveness in psychobiography can be attributed to the ability of psychoanalysis to provide possible explanations for an array of emotional issues central to many individual life stories. "But the basic elements of psychoanalytic explanation have been overused and under-elaborated" (Elms, 1994, p. 9). In addition to utilising psychoanalytic theory, many psychobiographers also apply psychoanalytic method to their research, which in many cases, relies mainly on the analyst's intuitive approach to data analysis. This, Elms (1994) claimed, "often leads to interpretations of biographical data that strike the unconverted as far-fetched at best" (p. 10). Psychoanalytic psychobiography, in particular, has frequently been accused of formulating interpretations based on inadequate evidence, as well as speculating about or reconstructing childhood experiences where there exists paucity of evidence of such experiences. Another criticism that has been launched against psychoanalytically informed biography, is the reductionistic tendency of many researchers to write pathography by approaching their subject from a clinical-diagnostic perspective (Elms, 1994; Runyan, 1988b). This may also be true of psychobiographies which are informed by other theoretical approaches, as psychology in general, and even contemporary psychological approaches such as cognitive and neuropsychology, is largely a

reductive field. Critics have pointed out how the psychobiographer's aim of reducing the complexity of a human life to the simplicity of an interpretation, is "often pursued with too much enthusiasm and too little subtlety" (Elms, 1994, p. 11).

Despite these points of criticism, the field of psychology has witnessed an increase in interest in single case research over the past few decades. Its value has been advocated by various scholars in the scientific community, many of whom have developed research procedures and structures to help ensure the efficacy of psychobiographical studies (Elms, 1994; McAdams, 1988; Runyan, 1988; Schultz, 2005). Elms (1994) suggested several ways in which psychobiography can respond to the criticisms launched against it. Firstly, the criticism of theoretical narrowness can be addressed by increasingly making use of theories that developed from and beyond psychoanalysis, and he urged contemporary researchers to "...incorporate as much eclectic diversity" as possible (p. 10). Furthermore, in response to the criticism of methodological looseness, the methodological restraint practiced in other areas of research psychology, should be applied to the field of psychobiography. The focus of psychobiography should also shift from a pathographic account of an individual life, to a eugraphic approach in which the researcher expects some abnormality in their subject, but focuses on the subject's adaptation to the demands of life. He also argued that psychologists can further develop the field of psychobiography by moving away from a reductionistic approach to one in which the complexity of human beings and the psychological findings and explanations are embraced (Elms, 1994).

As stated by Schultz (2001c), the knowledgeable, clear-headed, circumspect use of psychological theory in the analysis of a life history can result in a deeper, fuller, and more satisfying biographical interpretation of the individual life. Such a result is, he argues, made possible by a sound understanding of the psychobiographical methodology: "If the urge to psychobiographize in biography is really difficult to suppress... then let the urge express itself – but advisedly, wisely, with the best it has at its disposal" (Schultz, 2001c, p. 4). The management of the various methodological difficulties and potential areas of criticism is discussed in further detail in Chapter 6.

#### **5.4 Chapter Summary**

The researcher attempted, in this chapter, to contextualise psychobiography within the field of qualitative research and explore its development. The value of the psychobiographical endeavour was also highlighted, and the criticisms against the approach

were described. The following two chapters describe the methodological aspects of this psychobiographical study. In Chapter 6, the relevant ethical and preliminary methodological considerations are outlined and their application to this study is explored. In Chapter 7, the psychobiographical research methodology, including elements such as the study's design, data collection and data analysis procedures, are described.

## CHAPTER 6

### PRELIMINARY METHODOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

#### 6.1 Chapter Preview

In this chapter, methodological issues and challenges which might impact upon the quality of psychobiographical work are highlighted. The researcher presents a theoretical exploration of the obstacles and criticisms inherent to psychobiographical research methodology, and provides an account of the strategies employed in this study to address these methodological considerations in order to reduce their influence on the quality of the research process and the validity of the findings. This chapter also includes an exploration of ethical considerations in psychobiographical research and how these were managed in this study.

#### 6.2. Methodological Considerations in Psychobiographical Research

Runyan (1984) emphasised that psychobiographical studies should offer explanations which are logically sound, comprehensive, consistent with the full range of available evidence, credible relative to other hypotheses, resistant to attempted falsifications and in accordance with more general psychological knowledge about human mental life or about the person in question. Schultz (2001c) elaborated on these criteria, adding that a “good” psychobiography “makes the previously incoherent in a life, coherent” (p. 3).

However, the achievement of this aim remains a challenge, as psychobiographers are faced with various obstacles and constraints. Despite the numerous advantages of the psychobiographical method as discussed in the previous chapter, the approach is not without methodological difficulties (Anderson, 1981; Runyan, 1983, 1984). As a research design, psychobiography has received much criticism, and many enthusiastic psychobiographers have acknowledged that many of these criticisms are justified (Anderson, 1981; Fouché, 1999).

According to Elms (1994), Freud had set in motion the methodological development of psychobiography by proposing several guidelines in his analysis of *Leonardo*. His consideration of methodological difficulties, coupled with his violation of his own guidelines, marked the beginning of a continuous process aimed at improving and refining the craft of

psychobiography (Elms, 1994). Despite the methodological developments which had occurred over the following decades, Anderson (1981) commented that the many examples of narrow, reductionistic and disparaging psychobiographies showed that marked disparity remained between psychobiography's actual execution and its potential.

In order to ensure that the quality of the psychobiographical work is not adversely affected by the presence of methodological challenges, the psychobiographer should be familiar with the specific difficulties and potential methodological pitfalls inherent to the psychobiographical approach, as identified by both critics and psychobiographical theorists (Anderson, 1981; Runyan, 1984). Coupled with the conscious application of compensatory strategies, such awareness is central to the quality of the finished work and combines biographical and psychological knowledge in a much more effective manner (Howe, 1997). This provides psychobiographers with a coherent approach which

... requires the psychobiographer to do thorough research and immerse himself in the source material; to develop an empathic relationship with his subject, a relationship which aids him in "listening" to the material through his model of the subject's personality; to eschew dogmatic personality theories; and, by continually going back and forth between hypotheses and the data, gradually to build a portrait of the subject. (Anderson, 1981, p.474)

This chapter draws on the synthesis (as conceptualised by Fouché, 1999) of the major constraints and obstacles inherent to the methodology of psychobiography, based largely on the writings of Anderson (1981), Elms (1988, 1994), Runyan (1982, 1984, 1988b), Schultz (2005a), and Yin (1993, 2009). The different preliminary methodological considerations are discussed in the following subsections, accompanied by an exploration of the methods employed by the researcher in an attempt to control these difficulties, or at least mitigate their effects.

## **6.2.1 Researcher Bias**

### ***6.2.1.1 Explanation of Researcher Bias***

Freud had cautioned against either pathographising or idealising one's subject, a proposition he himself violated during his work on Leonardo da Vinci (Elms, 1988). Elms (1988) warned psychobiographers against assuming that they are less susceptible to psychobiographical error than Freud had been. Apart from bias resulting from the researcher's attitude towards the subject, there also exists the possibility of selection bias

during the research phases of data selection and data reduction, which particularly refers to the omission of data which could be problematic for the researcher's favoured assumptions (Edwards, 1998). Edwards (1998) wrote in this regard: "enthusiasm for a particular interpretation, or desire to make a particular point can lead to writing case synopses which are distorted by the aims and assumptions of the writer" (p. 18).

Elovitz (2003) reviewed numerous psychobiographies of American presidents by different authors. He highlighted the ability of one of the researchers to explore her own feelings and ambivalence about her subject as the key to the success of that particular psychobiography. Elovitz (2003) also complimented another writer on having openly acknowledged her bias against a subject. He concluded that the nonjudgemental stance of the psychoanalyst towards the patient could be used to great effect in psychobiography, as the practice could then be approached with "disciplined subjectivity" (Elovitz, 2003, p. 141). He cautioned that in instances where the subject is "almost universally idealized or detested" (p. 142), the psychobiographer may be less likely to conduct critical self-examination, and more likely to act on countertransference feelings without analysing them.

Anderson (1981) discussed the tendency in psychobiography to become disparaging about one's subject, and commented that "pathologically oriented theory offers a ready conduit for an author who wishes to denigrate his subject" (p. 461). He cautions that researchers may even unconsciously vent their dislike of the subject by placing an emphasis on the pathological elements of the subject's personality. He argued that countertransference could, however, be turned into an advantage, should the researcher recognise it. It could then give an indication as to how others might have reacted towards or felt about the subject (Anderson, 1981). In this regard, he noted that the "difficulty is for the psychobiographer to understand the sources of his feelings well enough so that he will be able to differentiate what feelings he may expect others also to have and what feelings may be idiosyncratic to himself" (p. 464).

These arguments correlate with the stance assumed by many in the field of qualitative research: researchers should readily acknowledge the impact of their subjectivity upon the processes of data gathering and analysis, and may embrace their own subjective reactions and reflections, which can be used as data in their own right (Flick, 2006; Morrow, 2005). Reflexivity, the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 2008), is therefore of significant interest to the psychobiographer, who may develop complex emotional reactions towards the subject due to the long-term and in-depth nature of psychobiographical research (Anderson, 1981; Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004).

In order to manage the effect of possible researcher bias on the quality of the psychobiography, the following strategies have been proposed:

1. Elms (1994) recommended that the researcher choose a subject about whom he or she feels considerable ambivalence in order to avoid writing about an idolised or detested figure. This ensures that the researcher would be open to learning more about an admired figure's imperfections, as well as accepting the human worth of a disliked figure.
2. Anderson (1981) proposed that the psychobiographer carefully examine his or her own feelings about the subject. This could be done by including a section in which the researcher explores his or her motivations to analyse the subject under study as well as his or her emotional reactions towards the subject throughout the course of the study (Anderson, 1981; Cara, 2007; Fouché, 1999).
3. Anderson (1981) recommended that the psychobiographer should develop empathy for the subject, by taking into consideration various aspects such as the subject's unique characteristics, experiences, defences, attitudes, values and fantasies. This could safeguard against the researcher assuming a disparaging stance towards the subject (Anderson, 1981; Elovitz, 2003; Fouché, 1999).
4. Fouché (1999) noted the potential value of obtaining comments on the researcher-subject relationship. This can be done through various sources, such as the subject him- or herself (in the form of auto critique), as well as intimate acquaintances of the subject, biographical specialists, and scholars who specialise in the study of lives (Fouché, 1999; Schurink, 1988). This strategy correlates with the proposal by Yin (2009) to have participants and informants review the case study draft, in order to also improve the validity of the data on which the case was based.

#### ***6.2.1.2 Application***

The researcher chose a subject about whom she had limited prior knowledge. Whilst she was ambivalent about the subject as a person, the researcher was fascinated by Suzman's role in South African history. Throughout the research process, the researcher took care to

examine her own countertransference reactions to the subject. This was done by means of brief reflective diarising and discussions of her personal reactions towards the subject with people such as her research promoters, her supervisor and a fellow psychobiographer, who helped explore her emotional reactions to the subject. Comments regarding this process of researcher reflexivity are contained in sections 1.4 and 11.5. The development of empathy for the subject also received attention in an attempt to avoid making distorted psychological interpretations. An empathic understanding for the subject was sought through enhancing the researcher's own understanding of the sociocultural forces that formed part of the subject's historical context, as well as getting a sense of the subject's unique life experiences by consulting Suzman's photographs and letters in addition to examining her speeches and published works for data collecting. Finally, in order to improve the validity of the data used in this study, the final draft of the research findings was submitted to one of Helen Suzman's daughters for comment.

## **6.2.2 Reductionism**

### ***6.2.2.1 Explanation of Reductionism***

As noted by Martin and Dawda (2002, p. 38), the reduction of psychological phenomena "to fit the demands of psychological laboratories, measures, models and explanations", remains a controversial topic within contemporary psychology. They argue that this practice within psychology was first inspired by the success with which the natural sciences could produce explanations and predictions. In the field of psychology, however, the application of natural sciences methods necessitated "a reduction of psychological phenomena (such as recollection, imagination, self, thinking, and experiencing) to presumably more basic, constitutive phenomena amenable to the methods of natural science" (Martin & Dawda, 2002, p. 38). They emphasised the importance of finding ontological, epistemological, and methodological alternatives to reductionistic and positivistic methods in psychology (Martin & Dawda, 2002).

Even though the practice of psychobiography lends itself to a more holistic analysis of human development in all its complexity when contrasted with quantitative methods, reductionism remains an important consideration. An illustration of this is Runyan's (1984, 1988b) argument that progress in the field of psychobiography is measured by, among other factors, the production of interpretations which are more sophisticated and "which avoid the

reductionistic errors of considering the psychological at the expense of the social and historical, the pathological at the expense of the adaptive, and infantile determinants at the expense of life-long formative processes” (Runyan, 1984, p. 245).

Anderson (1981) argued that psychobiographers are at risk of assuming that “the application of fixed psychological formulas to the lives of historical figures constitutes sufficient analysis” (p. 456). He, furthermore, pointed to inadequacies in psychological theory, and argued that the theories used in psychobiography, therefore, tend to neglect cultural factors, rendering them “unvalidated and simplistic” (p. 476). He urged psychobiographers to, during their reconstruction of the personality of their subject, keep in mind that character is complex and that personality psychology should not be applied in a wholesale fashion:

Psychological theory cannot explain an individual; but, by pointing to areas on which to focus and suggesting possible connections between different aspects of the subject’s personality, it can guide the investigator in his attempt to draw from the data a coherent portrait of his subject. (Anderson, 1981, pp. 469-470)

Anderson (1981) described two areas of possible reductionism. Firstly, an explanation may overemphasise childhood factors at the expense of later ones; in a process which Erikson had given the gently sarcastic label of “originology” (Elms, 1994). Runyan (1982) also cautioned against an overemphasis on early childhood experience as explanatory of later personality and behaviour. Whilst childhood influences may have had significant influence on personality development, and as thus may be a definite factor in understanding the subject, it should never be an exclusive factor in a good psychobiography (Schultz, 2005a). Howe (1997) argued that researchers should avoid attributing too much importance to single early events in people’s lives, a practice in biography which is often referred to as *eventism*.

Secondly, owing to the overdevelopment of those parts of psychological theory that focus on psychopathology, psychobiographers may overemphasise their subject’s psychological difficulties (Anderson, 1981). Schultz (2005a) referred to such a tendency towards “psychobiography by diagnosis” (p. 10) as *pathography*, in which the complex whole of the personality is reduced to static diagnostic or psychopathological categories or symptoms. Runyan (1982) noted that the reductionistic error of an excessive focus on psychopathology may lead to the researcher’s disregard for factors such as normality and creativity.

Runyan (1982) expanded on these two possible areas of reductionism. He also cautioned against the following reductionistic errors: (a) an overemphasis of psychological variables to the exclusion of external social and historical factors, (b) a ‘critical period fallacy’ which entails limiting the study of an individual’s life around a particular ‘key’ period of development, and (c) ‘eventism’ which is the view of a certain event in an individual’s life as the ‘turning point’ from which all subsequent behaviour originates.

Anderson (1981) also warned against the indiscriminate use of psychological jargon, urging researchers to give their terminology “force” by ensuring that there is sufficient data as a foundation. According to Anderson’s viewpoint, the psychobiographer should also recognise that events most often do not result from a single psychological cause, but that they are brought about by multiple causes. Another precaution proposed by Anderson (1981) to avoid reductionism, is for the researcher to appreciate the complexity of the subject’s personality, and refrain from assuming that any psychological analysis would be able to fully capture it. The use of a eugraphic approach should also be considered, as it reduces the likelihood of reductionistic errors such as originology and overpathologising of the subject (Elms, 1994; Fouché, 1999).

Anderson (1981) stated that although a reductionistic interpretation may not necessarily be incorrect, it most certainly will be insufficient to create an understanding of the subject’s life. He proposed that researchers develop a complex understanding of their subject and conduct thorough research in which they use primary materials as far as possible. Fouché (1999) advised that thorough research based on multiple sources will not only enhance the accuracy of information, but also provide the researcher with the social and historical context of the subject’s life.

### ***6.2.2.2 Application***

The researcher made an effort to reduce reductive errors by utilising the following strategies:

1. To investigate the life of Suzman holistically, the researcher reflected throughout the study on the impact of the sociohistorical context in which she had lived. This was achieved through an extensive and thorough literature study, which also focused on sociohistorical literature related to the cultural and historical milieu of Suzman’s life. The theoretical frameworks used in this study also emphasise the importance of

broader social, cultural and historical factors in the development of an individual, which further guards against a reductionistic portrayal of the subject in which only psychological dimensions are explored.

2. To avoid pathologising the subject, the researcher included the emphasis on the development of wellness in Suzman's life. This was facilitated by the incorporation of the eugraphic approach of the holistic wellness theory.
3. To minimise the reductionistic focus referred to as originology, the researcher applied developmental theories in which the entire life span is considered. Therefore, the researcher did not limit the study to any particular period of development, and rather followed a lifespan approach.
4. Lastly, the researcher took care to avoid the 'critical period fallacy' and 'eventism' which Runyan (1982) had cautioned against. Accordingly, periods and events in the life of the subject were viewed as prototypical of Suzman's behaviour, rather than interpreting any single event as a 'turning point' in her life.

### **6.2.3 Cross-Cultural Differences**

#### ***6.2.3.1 Explanation of Cross-Cultural Differences***

Psychobiographers often undertake studies of individuals who lived in a culture significantly different from their own, or present-day culture (Anderson, 1981; Fouché, 1999). Criticism has, accordingly, been directed against psychobiography for applying psychological theories or concepts which were developed for a particular culture and historical period to an individual who may belong to another culture or historical period (Anderson, 1981). These concepts, therefore, might not be applicable to the life of the subject, or might be insensitive to the subject's culture (Anderson, 1981).

Runyan (1984) conceded that psychobiographers have, at times, neglected to take into consideration cultural and historical differences during their interpretations. He argued, however, that the avoidance of ethnocentrism and temporocentrism does not pose an insoluble problem, as long as the psychobiographer learns enough about the sociohistorical context of the subject to develop an adequate frame of reference. In this regard, Anderson

(1981) had commented that the development of an empathic understanding of the subject demands extensive historical research in order to gain familiarity with the subject's culture. Literature reviews, therefore, need to include material about the cultural and historical context of the subject.

### ***6.2.3.2 Application***

The researcher shared with the subject a South African nationality. However, differences include home language, religion and cultural group. Furthermore, the subject lived in a significantly different historical period compared to that in which this study was conducted. In order to be sensitive to the cultural considerations inherent to the study of the life of Suzman, the researcher conducted an extensive and thorough literature study regarding the cultural and historical milieu in which Suzman had lived. The researcher also visited exhibitions, museums and memorials to further improve her understanding of the era in which the subject lived.

The theoretical frameworks used in this study also emphasise the importance of social, cultural and historical factors in the development of an individual. Although Erikson could be considered as Suzman's contemporary (they were born 15 years apart) and they shared some cultural similarities related to a Jewish upbringing, his theory of psychosocial development has been criticised for biases regarding gender and culture. The wellness model used in this study can be considered to be a neo-Adlerian approach to lifestyle and holistic wellness – concepts which the researcher acknowledges were not as widely advocated during much of Suzman's life as they have been during the past few decades.

## **6.2.4 Analysing an Absent Subject**

### ***6.2.4.1 Explanation of Analysing an Absent Subject***

A significant challenge for the psychobiographer is that the information obtainable from historical sources may be considerably less than what would have been available from direct contact with the subject (Anderson, 1981, Runyan, 1988b). Furthermore, the required information cannot be obtained through direct questioning of the subject and hypotheses cannot be refined by presenting them to the subject for comment (Anderson, 1981). As noted by Meissner (2003, p. 183):

While the psychoanalyst is used to dealing with a living, talking, and responding subject, he now finds confronting him all the obscurities and opacities of the historical process. The immediacy of the psychoanalytic situation is replaced by the distant removal and the concealing veil of time. Instead of the vitality and spontaneity of a patient associating and interacting with the analyst, he is met with the residues of history: faceless facts, dates, names, monuments, and the infinitely obscure impenetrability of documents.

However, the absence of the subject may also hold certain advantages for the psychobiographer. The psychobiographer, when compared with a psychotherapist, enjoys an advantageous position as he or she (a) has access to informants other than the subject, such as family, friends and colleagues (Anderson, 1981); (b) is able to investigate the patterns of the entire lifespan of the subject from a distant vantage point (Anderson, 1981; Runyan, 1988b); (c) is not limited by therapeutic considerations and may offer a more balanced description of the subject as the focus is not merely on maladaptive behaviour (Anderson, 1981); and (d) psychobiographer has access to the subject's creations, which would include a wealth of creative materials when studying literary or creative persons (Runyan, 1988b).

#### ***6.2.4.2 Application***

An extensive literature study was undertaken by the researcher in order to minimise the effects of an absent subject. This included the works produced by Suzman herself (e.g., her memoirs, public speeches and personal communications) as well as those produced by others (e.g., the biography written by Strangways-Booth in 1976, as well as various published interviews with her, newspaper articles on her life and work, and media interviews with, or speeches by family, friends and colleagues). A family informant (one of Helen's daughters) was also approached as the final draft of the research findings was submitted to one of Helen Suzman's daughters for comment. Excerpts from the notes received from Dr Jowell are presented in Appendix C.

### **6.2.5 Elitism and Easy Genre**

#### ***6.2.5.1 Explanation of Elitism and Easy Genre***

Psychobiography has been criticised for being elitist in that it focuses on the rulers, leaders and privileged members of society whilst ignoring the lives of ordinary men and

women (Runyan, 1988b). Runyan (1988b) noted that although it may be virtuous to learn about the oppressed and those neglected in historical accounts, social class should not be confused with the level of aggregation. He argued that psychobiography is suited to studying individual lives from any social stratum, and that the subject should be chosen according to personal characteristics, rather than social class, adding that the classification of a study as elitist depends not only on the chosen subject, but also on the interpretations offered by the researcher and “how the individual is related to his or her social, political, and historical context” (Runyan, 1988b, p. 38).

In addition to the above, psychobiography has also been criticised for being too easy a genre, as it takes on a predictable shape based on the lifespan of the biographical subject (i.e., birth, development, death) (Runyan, 1988b). Whilst Runyan agreed that a superficial biography would indeed be quickly and easily written, he argued that a thorough biography would require significant effort on the part of the biographer. The biographer needs to consult a great range of sources, acquire extensive knowledge of the subject’s sociohistorical milieu and arena of professional activity, as well as demonstrate literary skill and psychological insight in his or her descriptions and interpretations of the subject’s life (Runyan, 1988b). Runyan reflected on the existence of an extensive body of knowledge on the “art and science of biography” (Runyan, 1988b, p. 39) as an indicator of the complexity of the biographic endeavour.

#### ***6.2.5.2 Application***

Critics could argue that a study of a privileged individual such as Suzman is elitist. The researcher would like to argue, however, that the psychological study of Suzman’s life bears significant contemporary relevance in the South African context. One of the significant contributions of psychobiography is that it provides us with knowledge about a subject’s uniqueness (Schultz, 2005a), which makes it such a popular strategy for the study of significant or eminent individuals (Simonton, 1999). The subject’s social class was, therefore, not a relevant factor when she was chosen for this study, but rather the value of illuminating the psychological development of such a unique and outstanding individual. As noted by Runyan (1988b), one is often interested in studying those individuals “who because of position, chance, or personal characteristics have unusual interest for use or had an unusually great influence on the course of history” (p. 39).

The choice of subject was informed by various potential areas of value. Suzman, as an individual who lead a long and extraordinarily productive life, is a suitable example for the study of psychological well-being. It is the researcher's opinion that wellness and psychofortology are highly relevant areas of research which could benefit the broad South African community, and this research project would contribute to the existing body of knowledge on wellness. Secondly, this study also sheds light on the psychological and personality development of an individual from one of South Africa's minority groups. Although her socioeconomic position had been one of privilege, as a liberal Jewish woman during the apartheid era, Suzman's position during most of her political life represented that of many in the country who did not form part of the privileged elite. Thirdly, the researcher would argue that the renewed focus on anti-apartheid activists could be of great value in the current South African context and the process of constructing a narrative of the nation's troubled past. The illumination of Suzman's life and psychological development is, therefore, warranted and relevant in our current society.

Regarding the criticism of psychobiography being an easy genre, the researcher would counter-argue that creating a holistic portrait of Suzman's multidimensional life and personality made this study an exceptionally complex endeavour. In addition, the broad nature of the literature study in order for the researcher to become familiar with the subject's cultural and sociohistorical context further increased the difficulty of this study. The use of two psychological theories, furthermore, called for the collection and analysis of additional data as well as the integration of two sets of findings.

## **6.2.6 Infinite Amount of Biographical Data**

### ***6.2.6.1 Explanation of Infinite Amount of Biographical Data***

Psychobiographers often encounter potential difficulties with extracting relevant data from the "vast profusion of information" (Elms, 1994, p. 245) with which they are confronted (Alexander, 1988, 1990; Fouché, 1999). In this regard, psychobiographers are faced with the challenge of how to treat the data so that the important information is revealed (Alexander, 1988). Simonton (1999) pointed out that, because most psychobiographical studies are almost exclusively qualitative, an important methodological issue is "whether the psychologist has handled the biographical materials in a competent, scholarly fashion" (p. 438).

Alexander (1988) had proposed an approach to managing biographical data which would reduce the quantity of the data by identifying salient material in need of further scrutiny. Firstly, the psychobiographer poses questions to the data in order to structure the manner in which large amounts of data are sorted. Secondly, the researcher can sort the raw data according to nine identifiers of saliency: (a) primacy, (b) frequency, (c) uniqueness, (d) negation, (e) emphasis, (f) omission, (g) error or distortion, (h) isolation, and (i) incompleteness (Alexander, 1988). These salience indicators are discussed in detail in section 7.5.1.

#### ***6.2.6.2 Application***

The available information on Suzman is extensive. The researcher primarily utilised published documents, which ensured that the researcher had continuous access to the information so that it could be cross-checked and engaged with over the entire course of the study. The need for the consultation of archival documents was limited as a biographer, Stangwayes-Booth and other authors (including Suzman herself), had incorporated most of her private correspondence and documents into their publications. During the course of writing about Suzman and the party she represented in Parliament, Stangwayes-Booth (1976) had had direct access to Suzman and those close to her. This enabled the researcher to collect and analyse the personal data as published in Stangwayes-Booth's work. In order to ensure the validity of the data, archival information housed at the University of the Witwatersrand was consulted (which enabled data triangulation).

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher, therefore, utilised the methods proposed by Alexander (1988) in order to reduce the biographical data to a manageable quantity, and comply with Simonton's (1999) call for the competent and scholarly management of biographical data. These methods and strategies, as opposed to the unsystematic and indiscriminate exclusion or inclusion of data, were used to enhance the quality of the research project. Firstly, the researcher sorted the data in search of answers to specific questions related to the psychological theories used in this study. Secondly, all available information was sorted using the saliency indicators in order to identify information that requires further scrutiny. These methods for the reduction of data to manageable quantities are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

## **6.2.7 Inflated Expectations**

### ***6.2.7.1 Explanation of Inflated Expectations***

Anderson (1981) argued that inflated claims regarding psychobiography seem to be largely a fear voiced by critics rather than an actual concern in psychobiography. However, he did caution researchers not to focus exclusively on psychological factors and to keep two particular limitations of psychobiography in mind: Firstly, he argued that psychobiographers should recognise that psychological interpretations cannot replace other types of explanations, such as historical, political and economic forces, but rather only add to them. Secondly, all explanations should only be considered as speculative (Anderson, 1981).

### ***6.2.7.2 Application***

The researcher applied the propositions by Anderson (1981), firstly, in appreciating that psychological explanations merely enrich other explanations instead of replacing them, and, secondly, in recognising psychological explanations as speculative. The researcher, thus, recognised the limitations inherent to the study of an individual's life primarily from a psychological perspective. In this study, therefore, various social, political, cultural and historical factors are acknowledged as exerting significant influence on Suzman's development over her lifespan. One of the psychological theories used in this study – the holistic wellness model – particularly reflects this sensitivity for the influence of social and political forces in the individual's milieu and their psychological functioning (see section 4.3).

This study's focus was specifically on Suzman's personality development and her experience of holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. The researcher, accordingly, limited the discussion to the framework provided by the chosen psychological theories discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The researcher considers the expectations of this study to be realistic, as the study does not attempt to analyse aspects of Suzman's life which fall outside of the framework provided by these psychological theories. The researcher, furthermore, admits that, as no psychological theory can ever be seen as unquestionably true, the aim was to sketch a plausible psychological profile of Suzman in a manner that has internal consistency, rather than proposing any finished conclusions about her life.

## 6.2.8 Validity and Reliability Criticisms

### 6.2.8.1 Explanation of Validity and Reliability Criticisms

One of the most widespread criticisms of the psychobiographical research design and methodology relates to issues regarding its validity and reliability (Fouché, 1999; Runyan, 1983). As discussed in section 5.3.6, questions have been raised about: (a) the validity of retrospective and introspective data as well as subjective reports, (b) the method's ability to test the hypotheses it has generated, (c) the internal validity of the approach as alternative explanations regarding the subject can often exist, and (d) the external validity of the research method, as the information derived from the individual case cannot be generalised safely. Yin (2009) noted that the quality of any study design can be judged by how it performs on the four tests common to all social sciences research methods, namely: (a) internal validity, (b) external validity, (c) construct validity, and (d) reliability. In qualitative research, these tests are often referred to as: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) confirmability, and (d) dependability (Krefting, 1991; Perry, 2012). These tests, as well as their relevance to the case study method, are discussed below:

#### 1. *Internal validity and credibility*

According to Yin (2009), internal validity is predominantly a concern for explanatory case studies in which the investigator aims to explain causal relationships and, therefore, does not apply to descriptive or exploratory studies. For case studies, Yin (2009) noted that the concern over internal validity “extends to the broader problem of making inferences” (p. 43). He proposed that, in order to begin to deal with the problem of internal validity, the researcher would have to ask questions about the accuracy of the inferences, whether all alternative explanations and possibilities have been considered and whether the evidence is airtight and convergent.

Similarly, Elms (1988) reflected on the quality of psychological interpretations, and proposed that the psychobiographer remain cognisant of the one of Freud's earlier guidelines, namely to avoid building arguments upon a single clue. In this regard, Freud had warned that singular references cannot be used satisfactorily in the psychobiographical analysis and had cautioned against drawing strong conclusions from inadequate data (Elms, 1988). Adequate submersion in and engagement with the data has been proposed as a strategy to ensure the credibility of

research, as it enables the researcher to identify and validate recurrent patterns (Krefting, 1991).

Researcher bias and subjectivity also poses a potential threat to the credibility of the qualitative study (Fouché, 1999; Krefting, 1991). Bias may result from the researcher's attitude towards the subject (Elms, 1988) as well as their enthusiasm for a certain theoretical assumption or interpretation (Edwards, 1998). This threat, as described in section 6.2.1, can be addressed through the practice of reflexivity (Krefting, 1991).

The use of multiple sources of data to enhance internal validity also leads to the strategy of triangulation, where the same questions are asked of different data sources (Krefting, 1991; Patton, 1987; Yin, 1993). According to Yin (1993), the occurrence of events can be established with relative confidence through this strategy, as facts can be considered robust should three or more data sources all coincide. However, the positive impact of triangulation on internal validity may be limited to the establishment of simple facts and should be used with caution when it comes to the comparison of different interpretations found in different data sources (Richards, 2005). Patton (2002) argued that the test for consistency between sources is also an important consideration in triangulation, as an understanding of any inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data could be of significant value. He added that such inconsistencies do not necessarily weaken the credibility of data or results, but could yield "opportunities for deeper insights into the relationship between the inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study" (Patton, 2002, p. 556). Patton (1987, 2002) mentioned four types of triangulation that could be useful in case study research, namely: (a) asking the same question of different data sources (i.e., triangulation of sources), (b) using different evaluators or interviewers (i.e., analyst triangulation), (c) using multiple methods of enquiry (i.e., methods triangulation), and (d) utilising different theories to interpret the same data set (i.e., theory triangulation). Triangulation as a strategy to enhance the trustworthiness of a study also impacts positively upon confirmability and dependability (Krefting, 1991).

## 2. *External validity and transferability*

The concern of external validity relates to whether the findings of the study can be generalised beyond the immediate case study (Yin, 2009). As discussed in section 5.3.6, Runyan (1988b) had noted that one argument against the case study approach

involves whether a single individual is representative of a larger group or population. Both Runyan (1988b) and Yin (2009) commented on this problem of external validity, warning researchers not to fall into the trap of aiming to generalise their findings to other cases or a larger population. Transferability of findings becomes a less significant goal when data have inherent descriptive worth (Krefting, 1991), such as is the case with psychobiographical studies (Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004). Yin (2009) argued that single cases provide a poor basis for generalising findings and, accordingly, argued for the distinction between *statistical generalisation* (as with survey research), where the sample is intended to generalise to the larger population, and *analytic generalisation* (as with case studies and experiments), where a particular set of results is generalised to some broader theory.

3. *Construct validity and confirmability*

The test for construct validity relates to the researcher's correct identification of operational measures for the concepts under study and establishment of a chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). A data analysis matrix (Yin, 2009), as applied to psychobiographical research (Fouché, 1999), is another strategy to ensure the clear presentation of the study variables and operational definitions (Perry, 2012). Yin (2009) proposed that in order to increase construct validity, data collection should be approached in a manner that encourages convergent lines of inquiry. This could be achieved through triangulation (Krefting, 1991) and, therefore, the use of multiple sources of evidence. Furthermore, the draft case study could be reviewed by key informants, such as those close to the subject (Yin, 2009).

4. *Reliability and dependability*

According to Yin (2009), the goal of reliability is to minimise errors and biases in the study, so that if another researcher were to follow the same procedures and conduct the same case study all over again, that investigator should arrive at the same conclusions and findings. In this regard, Yin (2009) proposed the use of a case study protocol and the development of a case study database, which would enable future researchers to repeat the study, and for external reviewers to ascertain its reliability. Yin (2009, p. 45) proposed the following as a guideline: "conduct the research so that an auditor could in principle repeat the procedure and arrive at the same results" (Yin, 2009, p. 45). Similarly, Richards (2005) stated that the researcher's methods of

examining, categorising and storing data should be consistent, transparent and well-documented.

#### ***6.2.8.2 Application***

The researcher considered the following approaches and applied the relevant strategies in order to address the aforementioned concerns regarding reliability and validity:

##### *1. Internal validity and credibility*

Concerns over internal validity are of less concern to exploratory and descriptive studies (Yin, 2009) and, therefore, posed no major concerns for this psychobiography. However, having taken into consideration Yin's (2009) application of this validity concern to the process of making inferences, the researcher aimed at maintaining a high level of credibility in this regard. The internal validity of this study was, firstly, maintained through extensive and prolonged engagement with the biographical data on the life of Suzman. This involved in-depth exploration and analysis of all data samples. Secondly, the researcher applied triangulation and consulted multiple sources of data, which were examined and cross-referenced (i.e., triangulation of sources). The researcher also used two theoretical perspectives in the study, both of which examine the optimal development of the individual within their environment (i.e., theory triangulation). The researcher's own methods and analyses were presented to the study promoter and co-promoter for feedback (i.e., analyst triangulation). Thirdly, reflexivity was employed in order to minimise researcher bias and comments were obtained on the researcher-subject relationship, as proposed by Fouché (1999). Comments regarding the process of reflexivity are contained in sections 1.4, 6.2.1.2, and 11.5.

##### *2. External validity and transferability*

Regarding external validity, this research study did not aim to generalise its findings to other cases or to a larger group. The researcher was, therefore, not concerned with maintaining external validity for the purposes of statistical generalisation, as it aimed for analytic generalisation, where a particular set of results is generalised to a broader theory. The researcher focused on comparing the findings of this study to the broader theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

3. *Construct validity and confirmability*

In order to ensure construct validity, the researcher clearly and unambiguously identified the concepts under study and their operational measures. The available literature on the two theoretical frameworks used in this study, namely, psychosocial development (see Chapter 3) and the holistic wellness model (see Chapter 4) informed this conceptualisation. The conceptual frameworks for these two theories and the data analysis matrices are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7. The strategy of triangulation was applied to this study, as discussed previously in this section. Multiple data sources were used and key informants, such as Suzman's daughter, were also given the opportunity to comment on the manuscript.

4. *Reliability and dependability*

To ensure reliability, the researcher followed a consistent approach to data selection and analysis. Evidence was selected for analysis by implementing the nine guidelines proposed by Alexander (1988). The coding scheme consisted of two conceptual matrices, which enabled the researcher to categorise the data according to the constructs of the psychosocial development theory and the holistic wellness model. This coding scheme (discussed in detail in Chapter 7), therefore ensures that the current study can be audited and replicated. Although the establishment of a presentable database, as proposed by Yin (2009), may not be feasible within the psychobiographical approach (Perry, 2012), the researcher focused on published information on the subject to achieve the same effect of having the evidence available for scrutiny by an external observer and replication by another investigator.

In this section, the potential areas of methodological difficulty were highlighted and coupled with a discussion of the general strategies proposed by prominent researchers and theorists. This section also provided information regarding the application of these strategies to this psychobiographical study in particular. The psychobiographer, in addition to the methodological considerations discussed in this section, is, however, also faced with ethical considerations which are vital to the psychobiographical endeavour (Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004). The following section outlines the potential ethical dilemmas which are inherent to the process of conducting a psychobiographical study. The approaches followed by the researcher to ensure the application of ethical principles throughout the course of this study are also described.

## 6.3 Ethics in Psychobiography

### 6.3.1 Overview of Ethical Considerations

With regard to the domain of qualitative research, Ponterotto (2010) emphasised the importance of acknowledging that qualitative research methods present some unique ethical challenges “given the researcher’s often intense, personal, and prolonged interaction with participants in their own community environments” (p. 587). Haverkamp (2005) noted that the dilemmas that are likely to emerge in qualitative research include competence, multiple relationships, confidentiality, and informed consent. She commented (p. 148):

The recognition that a particular moment contains the possibility of harm or wrong becomes the starting point for the researcher’s conscientious application of a structured decision-making process that includes attention to one’s professional ethical standards, aspirational principles, and ethical theory... The characteristics of qualitative research methods increase both the likelihood of “ethically relevant moments” and the ambiguity of how, or whether, specific ethical standards apply to the question at hand.

According to Elms (1994), there are few available ethical guidelines for psychobiographical research. He noted the limited involvement of the American Psychological Association when contrasted with the American Psychiatric Association’s attention to the ethics of psychobiography and psychohistory. The latter had established a taskforce to design ethical guidelines for psychobiography in 1976. These guidelines stated that psychobiographies may only be conducted on: (a) deceased subjects, who preferably have no surviving relatives who are likely to be embarrassed by any unsavoury revelations, and (b) living subjects who gave informed consent (Elms, 1994). Elms (1994, p. 251) explored the questions facing psychobiographers when he wrote:

Do I do research on live people or only on dead ones? Recently dead or long dead? Then there are questions about what kinds of data it’s permissible to use: anything I can get my hands on, or only officially archived materials, or only what the subject’s family wants me to see? And what do I say in print: only what the subject or the family wants to hear, or a diplomatically but honestly phrased presentation of my major data and conclusions – or do I try to meet the competition of the mass-market biographers by stripping naked every hint of sex and selfishness in my subject’s life?

Elms (1994) emphasised the importance for psychobiographers to treat all information on a subject respectfully and to reflect on the ethics of their work, including an ethical evaluation of the aim of their study. He argued that the psychobiographical endeavour should

not just avoid blatant unethical practice, but should aim at making a meaningful contribution to “our human understanding of ourselves and other human beings” (p. 255).

### **6.3.2 Application of Ethical Principles**

This study posed fewer ethical problems due to its academic nature and the fact that it is not intended for publication. The data gathered for this study predominantly exists in the public domain (such as memoirs, speeches, newspaper articles, and press interviews) and, therefore, the chances for potential embarrassment for any of Suzman’s surviving relatives, friends or colleagues, were slim. Although these factors rendered the issue of obtaining informed consent less critical, the subject was still alive during the planning of this study. Therefore, the research protocol was sent to Suzman with the help of the Helen Suzman Foundation. Helen Suzman gave her consent for the study to proceed on the condition that she not be subjected to lengthy interviews, as she felt these would not be possible due to her advanced age. Her response to the request for permission is included in Appendix B. The researcher, however, never had the opportunity to conduct interviews with her, as she passed away a few months later on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2009 (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009).

Throughout the duration of the study, the researcher reminded herself of her duty to treat all gathered information with respect and empathy, as per Elms’s (1994) guidelines. The researcher further aimed to uphold the general ethical responsibilities relevant to any psychologist conducting research.

## **6.4 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided the reader with an overview of the principal methodological difficulties inherent to the psychobiographical approach. The discussion also presented the strategies used by the researcher to overcome, or at least minimise the impact of, these challenges. The chapter was concluded with a brief exploration of the prominent ethical considerations encountered in psychobiographical research and the management of these during this study. The following chapter focuses on the research methodology of this psychobiographical study.

## CHAPTER 7

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 7.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter provides the reader with a description of this study's research aim, design and methodology. Information regarding the psychobiographical subject is also presented, followed by a discussion of the research method, as well as data collection, extraction and analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with an overview of how reliability, validity and ethical concerns were managed in this study.

#### 7.2 Research Aim, Design and Method

The primary aim of this study was to explore and describe Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and her holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. This aim falls within an inductive research approach, and reflects the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study. Accordingly, the process of investigating this research objective involves an in-depth exploration and rich description of the single case within its sociohistorical context (Edwards, 1998; Yin, 2009). As noted in Chapter 1, case study research such as the psychobiographical approach, therefore, allows for both inductive and deductive approaches and its nature can be described as exploratory-descriptive as well as descriptive-dialogic (Edwards, 1998; Yin, 2009) with the former being the primary aim of this study. This study, therefore, also provided an opportunity to *informally test* aspects and facets of the content of the theory of psychosocial development and the holistic wellness model by forming a dialogue between the exploratory-descriptive findings on the one hand and the theoretical conceptualisations and propositions on the other (Edwards, 1998; Fouché, 1999; Stroud, 2004).

As a psychobiographical enquiry, this study can be described as a form of life history research in which a qualitative research design was used to holistically investigate a single case over the entire lifespan (Runyan, 1984; Yin, 2009). According to this approach, psychological theory was employed in a systematic manner in order to reconstruct the life story of a single research subject into a coherent psychological narrative (McAdams, 1988; Schultz, 2005a). This qualitative psychobiographical study can further be described as both exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogic in nature (see section 7.4 for further discussion).

As discussed in Chapter 5, psychobiographical research falls within the domain of qualitative research, and follows a single case research design. The nature of the psychobiographical method can be described as being qualitative-morphogenic. This method enables the configuration of individuality within both the nomothetic (i.e., the general) and idiographic (i.e., the particular) approaches. The qualitative-morphogenic approach to a single case emphasises the individuality of the whole person, as it enables the researcher to formulate holistic, rich descriptions of a single case within its sociohistorical context (Edwards, 1998; Elms, 1994; Schultz, 2005a; Van Wysberghe & Khan, 2007).

The methodology of the psychobiographical approach poses numerous challenges to the research process. These potential obstacles were discussed in the previous chapter as preliminary methodological considerations, coupled with descriptions of the researcher's attempts to overcome them or mitigate their effects in this study of Suzman's life. The following section further explores the choice of psychobiographical subject.

### **7.3 The Psychobiographical Research Subject**

The subject chosen for the psychobiography through purposive sampling (Flick, 2006) is South African born Helen Suzman (1917 – 2009), a renowned politician and anti-apartheid activist (Shain, 2006). The biographical and sociohistorical information pertaining to her life was presented in Chapter 2. The identification of Suzman as the subject was based on the following factors (apart from the researcher's personal motivation as discussed in section 1.4):

1. An initial literature review (by means of an EBSCOHost and University of the Free State Library catalogue search) revealed that a significant body of information exists on Helen Suzman, allowing for an in-depth and comprehensive investigation into various aspects of her life. In addition, none of the existing publications about her has a formalised psychological focus. A psychobiographical study would, therefore, not constitute a replication of existing research on Helen Suzman.
2. Furthermore, it appeared that the life of Suzman would have applicability regarding the psychological theories which were to be used in this study. Firstly, regarding the psychosocial development theory of Erikson (1963), all the stages of this lifespan model could be used to investigate Suzman's life. Secondly, the model of holistic

wellness (Myers et al., 2000; Myers & Sweeney, 2008; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) seemed to be highly relevant to a study of her life as the preliminary literature suggested a high degree of productivity, resilience and exceptional coping abilities (Eglin, 2010; Lewson, 1991; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

3. Various researchers and theorists in the field of psychobiography had emphasised the value of the study of greatness and the illumination of the lives of exemplary and exceptional figures (Elms, 1994; Howe, 1997; Runyan, 1984; Simonton, 1999, 2003). From the available information on Suzman's life and work, it was clear to the researcher that she had lead a long, rich and productive life and was an exceptional figure in South Africa's recent history (Eglin, 2009; Lewson, 1991; Shain, 2006; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

#### **7.4 Data Collection**

The search for, and collection of, data were conducted via the world-wide-web as well as the information-system services at the Library of the University of the Free State, which included journal and book collections from various South African universities as well as local and international journals and media publications. There are, in general, two sources of historical data, namely primary sources (i.e., those written documents produced by the subject, albeit private or public) and secondary sources (i.e., works by others which focused on the subject) (Simonton, 2003). Both primary and secondary sources of information were consulted for the data collection during this study. Autobiographical and biographical materials relevant to the primary aim of this psychobiography were, therefore, included as sources of data used for the collection of units of analysis in this study.

As noted by Alexander (1990, p. 12), "adequate samples of the written or recorded oral productions of the subject constitute a major vein of source material" in psychobiographical studies. The primary sources from which data was collected for analysis included a variety of published materials such as Suzman's memoirs (Suzman, 1993), her speeches (a significant number of which were published by Lewsen in 1991), as well as media interviews. Unpublished archived information (such as letters and notes) written by Suzman herself was also accessed at Historical Papers at the University of the Witwatersrand after her death, with the permission of her family.

Secondary sources used included, inter alia, the biography written by Strangways-Booth in 1976, various published newspaper articles on her life and work, published works such the memoirs of Colin Eglin (2007), the overview of her life by Godsell (2011), as well as media interviews with, or speeches by family, friends and colleagues.

The researcher fully documented all the data sources, as this has been argued to: (a) enhance the study's trustworthiness during the data collection phase; and (b) provide other researchers with a database that can be accessed and retrieved for later perusal (Fouché, 1999; Yin, 2009). Researchers have argued that possibly one of the most daunting tasks facing the psychobiographer entails the examination, extraction, categorisation and analysis of the collected material (Alexander, 1988, 1990; Fouché, 1999; McAdams, 1994; Schultz, 2005b). The procedures for the extraction and analysis of data are discussed in the following section.

## **7.5 Data Extraction and Analysis**

### **7.5.1 Alexander's Model**

Alexander (1988, 1990) proposed two analytic strategies for the organisation, extraction, prioritisation and analysis of data. The first of Alexander's (1988, 1990) proposed methods of data extraction has the twofold purpose of reducing the data to manageable proportions and to "break the conscious communicational intent of the content" (1990, p. 12). He referred to this approach as "letting the data speak" (1990, p. 13). This approach, therefore, specifically applies to selecting data produced by the subject and marking it for further investigation of possible underlying conscious and unconscious intent. For this purpose, Alexander postulated nine indicators of salience (1988, 1990), which he based on those guidelines found in literature on psychotherapy and psychoanalytic approaches to the interpretation of material. These indicators can be used to determine which of the events reported in the wealth of available biographical data by the subject warrant closer examination and demand further scrutiny, thus providing psychobiographers with a way of organising and prioritising the biographical data (Alexander 1988, 1990).

In describing these indicators, Alexander makes use of means-end structures or sequences as a way of analysing the content (Alexander 1988, 1990). Information regarding events and the subject's experience of these events are analysed in this manner in order to gain insight into psychologically relevant aspects such as relationships, conflicts, and

schemas (Alexander, 1988, 1990). By using these indicators or guidelines, the researcher could approach the collected data with cognisance of the different ways in which content could contain salient information. These nine indicators are described individually in the subsections below, followed by an example from the data of how these indicators presented in Suzman's writings.

1. *Primacy*: Information, especially in a text, which is given first can be revealing of something psychologically significant and, therefore, deserves close inspection (Schultz, 2005b). As noted by Alexander (1990), the importance of primacy is seen by the way in which therapists consider the opening communication in a therapeutic hour as a key or a foundation stone for what will follow. According to Alexander (1988), this is due to the longstanding association of *first* with importance. He commented: "...the first as the 'foundational stone' upon which structures are built is also a common metaphor in language. The first as 'the key' to the unfolding of meaning is also a prevalent idea in our culture" (Alexander, 1988, p. 269). Psychobiographers would, therefore, pay closer attention to information such as early memories, first experiences, and introductory comments (Elms, 1994).
2. *Frequency*: This refers to repeated communications, themes, events, patterns, obsessions, or symbolic repetitions (Schultz, 2005b). The repetition of a theme may indicate increased certainty regarding its importance (Alexander, 1988; Elms, 1994) and may be an expression of "powerful conscious value schemas" (Alexander, 1990, p. 15). Alexander (1988) commented on the complexity of establishing its value for discovery of dynamic material, stating that frequency may only reveal less conscious schemas when coupled with other salience indicators.
3. *Uniqueness*: The subject may mark information as being unique or unprecedented, and may include events such as unique memories or especially singular events (Schultz, 2005b). More subtle signs of uniqueness may "arise from either departures of expression from those commonly held in the general language, or more importantly, clear departures from the usual language expressed by the subject" (Alexander, 1988, p. 271). Furthermore, unexpected outcomes in the sequence being analysed also point to the salience indicator of uniqueness (Alexander, 1988).

Alexander (1990) noted in this regard that an unexpected or unexplained outcome in an event sequence, therefore, needs further examination.

4. *Negation*: This marker of psychological saliency is characterised by a “strenuous disavowal especially in the absence of any positive assertion to the contrary” (Schultz, 2005b, p. 44). This is another Freudian marker of salience, and is considered to point to repressed material which comes into consciousness “thinly disguised by the cover of unlikelihood or impossibility” (Alexander 1988, p. 272). Alexander (1990) argued, however, that what is phrased in the negative should merely be the focus of further investigation, noting that entertaining the likelihood of the statement without the negative component is not the only possibility. He, therefore, proposed that the negative statement should merely be tagged for further study without immediately “assuming the exact nature of its importance” (Alexander, 1990, p. 17). As noted by Elms (1994), the psychobiographer rightfully pays attention to what the subject pronounces him- or herself to be, adding that “when the subject tells you who she or he *isn't*, you should pay at least as much attention, and sometimes even more” (Elms, 1994, p. 246).
5. *Emphasis*: Events which have been emphasised by the subject should be noted as psychologically salient by the psychobiographer (Elms, 1994; Schultz, 2005b). Alexander (1988) stated that because a subject might have several motives for providing emphasis, many emphasis indicators may not reveal psychologically significant information. He suggests that more subtle forms of emphasis may be of greater value to the psychobiographer. These forms of emphasis can be categorised as over-, under- or misplaced emphasis of the event or information. In overemphasis, attention is focused on an event or information which the reader is likely to consider commonplace. With underemphasis, the opposite occurs and the reader is struck by the paucity of attention paid to seemingly important information. In the case of misplaced emphasis, the outcome is not credibly linked to the stated or implied means (Alexander, 1988).
6. *Omission*: This refers to what is missing, in particular the omission of expected content (Alexander, 1988; Schultz, 2005b). Elms (1994) referred to this as the “Sherlock Holmes” rule, which dictates we “ask more questions when a dog doesn’t

bark than when it does” (p. 246). Alexander (1988) also proposed that a lack of information regarding the subject’s affect is usually a prominent form of omission when rich descriptions of events are favoured by the author.

7. *Error or distortion*: Psychological saliency is often indicated by the errors and distortions made by the subject, which mostly involve mistakes about people, places and times (Schultz, 2005b). Alexander (1988) stated that this marker of salience, based on the work of Freud who considered slips, errors and distortions to be indicative of important hidden motives, might often go by undetected.
8. *Isolation*: This indicator denotes information which stands out from the text, an isolated fragment of information which the psychobiographer should link to the “web of unconscious ideas for which it stands” (Schultz, 2005b, p.44). These seemingly out of place associations or aside comments alert the psychobiographer to unconscious material which either has an associative connection to the topic at hand, or such compulsive power that it is expressed in consciousness (Alexander, 1988). Elms (1994, p. 247) referred to this indicator as the “Come again?” criterion.
9. *Incompletion*: Incompletion refers to what remains unfinished, pointing to the subject’s failure to conclude a story or another form of expression (Alexander, 1988; Schultz, 2005b). This may be evident from the subject abruptly ending a sequence before its closure, the use of distraction without a return to the original sequence, or the completion of a means-end sequence which lacks an explanatory means-end relationship (Alexander, 1988).

The salience indicators were used in this study to identify specific sections of data produced by Helen Suzman for closer examination. An events sequence investigation was then done for these salient data sets. The data sets which assisted with the aim of this research project – to explore and describe Helen Suzman’s psychosocial development and her holistic wellness throughout her lifespan – were included and described fully in the study findings (see Chapters 8 and 9). An example of a resulting data set identified from Suzman’s memoirs is the following:

My time at university was carefree and wholly enjoyable [*emphasis*].  
I was a keen participant in innumerable faculty dances [*frequency*],

which may have been one of the contributory factors to my failure in the exams at the end of the third year. I also went on two student tours overseas... bliss for a young South African who had never before left her native shores [*primacy*]. I longed to remain in London after the second tour [*frequency*] and finish my degree there. But Pa said 'No.' So back I came to Wits, dropped out before I graduated [*omission of affect*], and got married [*uniqueness, incompleteness*]. (Suzman, 1993, p. 9)

Certain life events are judged to be “central, constellating, defining, nuclear” (Schultz, 2005b, p. 43). In order to create a deliberate focus on such life events in the writing of a psychobiography, Alexander’s indicators of psychological salience are often utilised (Schultz, 2005b). The second of Alexander’s (1988, 1990) strategies entails ‘asking the data questions’. The aim of this method is to extract units of analysis which are relevant to the objectives of the study. The researcher, therefore, approached the collected data on the life of Suzman with the following general questions in mind:

1. “Which of the data contained in the collected material would enable and facilitate the exploration and description of Suzman’s psychosocial development and holistic wellness throughout her lifespan?”. In order to answer this question, the researcher, firstly, conceptualised Suzman’s life history in terms of Erikson’s (1963) theory of psychosocial development (as discussed in Chapter 3), and, secondly, according to the holistic wellness model as developed by Sweeney, Witmer and Myers (Myers et al., 2000; Myers & Sweeney, 2008; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) (see Chapter 4). Data pertaining to the propositions and conceptualisations of these theoretical frameworks was, therefore, selected for extraction. This reflects the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study.
2. “To what extent does the content (i.e., propositions and conceptualisations) of the psychosocial development theory and the holistic wellness model, relate to, compare with, or match the indicators of psychosocial development and holistic wellness, as reflected in the extracted data, and vice versa?”. In creating a dialogue between the exploratory-descriptive research findings and the theoretical frameworks used in this study, the researcher critically compared the extracted information with the aspects or facets of the propositions and conceptualisations of both theoretical frameworks. This descriptive-dialogic approach provided the opportunity to *informally test* aspects and

facets of the content of the theory of psychosocial development and the holistic wellness model through the process.

Alexander's strategies provided the researcher with guidelines for consistent and systematic reflection on the collected data (Alexander, 1988, 1990; Fouché, 1999). Alexander's model was also utilised by the researcher as one of the case study analysis strategies proposed by Yin (2009) for the examination, extraction, categorisation and recombination of evidence. Two of Yin's (2009) strategies are: (a) data analysis guided by the theoretical propositions, approaches and objectives; and (b) a case description. In the first strategy, the researcher relies on the theoretical orientation and research objectives to identify and selectively focus attention on salient data in the collected material. This requires the researcher to raise questions that will provide insight into the objectives of the study and the content of the theoretical approaches utilised (Fouché, 1999; Yin, 2009). In order to methodically employ such a strategy, the researcher utilised Alexander's model as discussed in this section.

The second of Yin's (2009) strategies is to develop a descriptive framework to organise and integrate case information, in order to formulate a case description. A specific descriptive technique suited to this strategy is to develop a conceptual matrix that facilitates data extraction (Fouché, 1999) and was used by the researcher in this study. This strategy is discussed in the following section.

### **7.5.2 Conceptual Framework and Matrices**

The proposition of establishing a data analysis matrix (Yin, 2009) as applied to psychobiographical research (Fouché, 1999) was implemented in this study. The researcher developed two conceptual matrices for the categorisation of data, which were used as "screening-grids" during the data analysis procedures. Each matrix was developed according to the framework of one of the psychological theories used in this study. The first matrix, the *Matrix of Psychosocial Development over the Historical Lifespan of Helen Suzman*, was designed to categorise data in the framework proposed by the psychosocial development theory (see Table 7.1). The second matrix, namely, the *Matrix of Holistic Wellness over the Historical Lifespan of Helen Suzman*, was designed to categorise data related to the indicators and characteristics of holistic wellness (see Table 7.2).

In Table 7.1, the stages of the theory of psychosocial development (shown in eight columns at the top right of the table) is schematically represented with relation to the historical periods in the lifespan of Suzman (shown in the eight rows at the bottom left of the table), as they were identified in Chapter 2. As discussed in Section 3.2, the approximate age ranges for Erikson's (1963) eight psychosocial stages as proposed by Hamachek (1990) were used in this study. During data collection, extraction and analysis procedures, the researcher focused on the salient biographical data related to Suzman's psychosocial development that corresponded to the developmental stages as proposed by Erikson (1963) and discussed in Chapter 3. The eight historical periods in the life of Suzman and the eight psychosocial crises as they were operationalised in this study can be seen from Table 7.1. The findings related to Suzman's psychosocial development, are discussed in Chapter 8.

In Table 7.2, the life tasks of the holistic wellness model (shown in the five columns on the right of the table), as discussed in Chapter 4, is schematically represented with relation to the historical periods in the lifespan of Suzman (shown in the eight rows at the bottom of the table), as they were identified in Chapter 2. The impact of global events and life forces upon the expression of holistic wellness through the life tasks, was also considered. During data collection, extraction and analysis procedures, the researcher focused on the salient biographical data related to the components and indicators of holistic wellness as they are expressed through the five life tasks. These life tasks were evaluated within all eight of the historical periods, and the findings related to Suzman's experience of holistic wellness across her entire lifespan, are discussed in Chapter 9.

The two matrices, as schematically represented in Table 7.1 and Table 7.2, enabled the researcher to aim for the systematic and consistent analysis of the biographical data collected on the life of Suzman. In this manner, the researcher attempted to construct a longitudinal portrait of each of the stages of psychosocial development and the components of holistic wellness, respectively.



Table 7.2

*Matrix of Holistic Wellness over the Historical Lifespan of Helen Suzman*

<b>HISTORICAL PERIODS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUZMAN</b>	<b>COMPONENTS OF HOLISTIC WELLNESS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE LIFE TASKS</b>				
	<b>Global Events</b>				
	<b>Life Forces</b> (business / industry, media, government, community, family, religion, education)				
	<b>1. Spirituality</b>	<b>2. Self-Direction</b>	<b>3. Work</b>	<b>4. Friendship</b>	<b>5. Love</b>
1. <b>Childhood</b> (1917 – 1933) 0 – 16 years					
2. <b>The Early Student Years</b> (1934 – 1936) 16 – 19 years					
3. <b>Marriage, Motherhood and World War II</b> (1937 – 1945) 19 – 27 years					
4. <b>Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament</b> (1945 – 1959) 27 – 41 years					
5. <b>Formation of the Progressive Party</b> (1959 – 1962) 41 – 44 years					
6. <b>The Solo Years</b> (1962 – 1974) 44 – 56 years					
7. <b>Continued Apartheid Opposition</b> (1974 – 1989) 56 – 71 years					
8: <b>Retirement and death</b> (1989 – 2009) 71 – 92 years					

## 7.6 Ensuring Trustworthiness

One of the most widespread criticisms of the psychobiographical research design and methodology relates to issues regarding its validity and reliability (Fouché, 1999; Runyan, 1983). Firstly, concerns about the possible limitations inherent to a qualitative approach in general were explored in the previous chapter (see section 6.2.8), together with the strategies

employed to mitigate the possible threats to credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability. Secondly, specific threats to the integrity of the psychobiographical project in particular, also received careful consideration. These preliminary considerations, as well as the strategies employed by the researcher to address them, were discussed in the previous chapter. In summary, the researcher employed the following strategies to ensure the study's trustworthiness during the research process:

1. Triangulation of data sources, analyst triangulation, as well as employing more than one theoretical approach.
2. Prolonged, in-depth engagement with the data on the subject.
3. Enhancing the researcher's knowledge and understanding of the subject's historical and sociocultural context.
4. Establishing a eugraphic focus through the application of the theoretical frameworks focusing on desired development and holistic wellness.
5. Utilising a life span approach in which all historical periods of the subject's life were included.
6. Striving for procedural rigor through the application of established guidelines for sorting data and using clear operational measures, coding schemes and conceptual matrices.
7. Aiming for analytical generalisation instead of statistical generalisation.
8. Reflexivity as a means to monitor and explore the researcher's reactions to the subject.
9. Using a relative as an informant on the final draft.
10. Recognising all findings as speculative.

In addition to concerns regarding the trustworthiness of the study's findings, the researcher was also sensitive for the ethical considerations posed by this study. Preliminary ethical considerations related to the psychobiographical endeavour were discussed in section 6.3. Concluding remarks on the researcher's management of such considerations are discussed in the following section.

## 7.7 Ethical Considerations

This study posed few ethical problems due to its academic nature and the fact that it is not intended for publication. Consent for the study was obtained from Helen Suzman and consent to consult with archived information at the University of the Witwatersrand was obtained from her daughter after Helen's death. The data gathered for this study mostly exists in the public domain (such as memoirs, speeches, newspaper articles, and press interviews) and, therefore, the chances for potential embarrassment for any of Suzman's surviving relatives, friends or colleagues, were slim. Data triangulation was applied in order to ensure that the data used in this study and the inferences made from such data, were credible. Triangulation also enabled the researcher to give an account of the subject's life that upheld ethical standards by excluding any unverified information or refuted claims in the data set.

An example in this study arose from the claims made in a recent biography of New Zealand sportswriter Terry McLean that a romantic relationship existed between him and Helen Suzman, claims which have since been challenged in South Africa. Terry's son and co-author of the biography, Jock McLean, claimed that two letters proved such a relationship, but that the letters had been destroyed by the McLean family (Stone, 2010). Three letters between Suzman and McLean were found and examined by one of Helen's former colleagues who concluded that the letters contained no evidence of an intimate relationship (Fabricius, 2010). These letters formed part of the collection of the archived correspondence at the University of the Witwatersrand. No evidence of an affair could be found by the researcher and McLean's claim was excluded from the data set as it did not meet the standards of credibility. An inclusion of such unsubstantiated speculation would have not only jeopardised the validity of the findings, but also constituted unethical research practices.

## 7.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to provide the reader with an overview of the research objective, design and methodology of this study. The subject of this psychobiography and the procedures for data collection, extraction and analysis were discussed. The chapter also focused on the use of Alexander's model, regarding the questioning of the data and the application of indicators of saliency, as well as the development of conceptual matrices for the categorisation of data. The chapter concluded with a reflection on concerns regarding

validity, reliability and ethical research practices. The findings and discussion are presented in Chapters 8, 9 and 10. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the discussion of the findings as they relate to the psychosocial development of Helen Suzman and the findings and discussion related to her holistic wellness are provided in Chapter 9. Chapter 10 consequently integrates these two sets of findings and provides the reader with a comparative discussion of the psychological development and wellness of Helen Suzman over her lifespan.

## CHAPTER 8

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 8.1 Chapter Preview

In this chapter, the psychosocial development of Helen Suzman is presented and discussed. The chapter, firstly, provides the reader with a conceptual outline followed by the presentation of the biographical data as it relates to the concepts and propositions of the selected theory of psychosocial development (as discussed in Chapter 3). The findings are presented across the eight stages proposed by Erikson (1963) as they relate to the eight historical periods of Suzman's life. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the key findings relating to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development as applied to the life of Helen Suzman.

#### 8.2 Conceptual Outline to the Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The researcher followed an exploratory-descriptive approach to the research findings in this chapter. Therefore, the collection, extraction, analysis and presentation of salient biographical data regarding the subject are conducted within the framework of a psychological theory; in this case Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963, 1980, 1997). This theory, therefore, served as the framework within which the psychosocial development of Helen Suzman was described.

Suzman's long life spans all eight stages of the life cycle as proposed by Erikson (1963). The following section contains the findings related to the psychosocial development of the subject throughout her lifespan, presented and discussed here in terms of Erikson's proposed life stages, developmental conflicts and proposed synthesized ego qualities (see Chapter 3). The researcher presents examples from the biographical account of Suzman's life which relate to the developmental aspects relevant to the specific stages of psychosocial development, thereby analysing the collected data within the framework of Erikson's theory. The researcher used a conceptual matrix (see Table 7.1), for the categorization of data as discussed in the previous chapter.

### 8.3 Suzman's Psychosocial Development throughout her Lifespan

In the sections to follow, the findings regarding all eight historical periods of Suzman's life is presented within the context of Erikson's theory. For every developmental stage, a brief summary of the theoretical propositions specific to that to that stage is followed by discussions of the relevant historical periods, as identified in Table 7.1. It should be noted that only the time span within the historical period that is relevant to a specific developmental stage, is described under that particular stage. The discussion focuses on the following: (a) Suzman's development regarding the resolution of the relevant dominant psychosocial crisis according to Erikson's stage model, and (b) the development of the ego strength relevant to the particular stage. Examples from the biographical data are provided to support the discussion of the relevant stage of psychosocial development.

#### 8.3.1 Stage I: Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust – Hope (0 – 18 months)

Erikson (1963) proposed that the first core psychosocial crisis occurs during the first year of life. According to Hamachek (1990), the approximate time span of this stage is from birth to 18 months. During this stage, unconscious attitudes of trust or mistrust towards oneself and the world become the opposing forces in need of integration (Erikson, 1963, 1980). Should the infant achieve such integration during this first stage of development and acquire a sense of basic trust in his or her environment as well as in his own coping abilities, the ego quality of *hope* emerges (Erikson, 1963, 1997). This stage occurs during the first historical period of Helen Suzman's life.

##### 8.3.1.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)

Biographical data related to this time in Helen Suzman's life were presented in section 2.2.1. At two weeks old, Helen's mother passed away and she, her father and older sister lived with close relatives (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). It is suggested by the findings that after Frieda's death, much of the responsibility for the care of the infant, therefore, shifted to Helen's maternal aunt.

Erikson (1963) emphasised the importance of the quality of relationship between the infant and the primary caregiver for the successful resolution of this crisis, which in this study refers to the relationship between Helen Suzman and her aunt, Hansa. Even though she was

described as a cold and distant person by Helen's older sister, it was suggested that Hansa reacted in a maternal manner towards the infant, as she lavished her with attention and affection (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Hansa can, therefore, be considered a central attachment figure during Helen's early childhood, possibly enabling the infant to achieve integration of the developmental conflicts of this stage.

Basic trust is seen as related to the mutuality of life's first relationship, with Erikson noting that "basic trust in mutuality is that original 'optimism,' that assumption that 'somebody is there,' without which we cannot live" (Erikson, 1958/1993, p. 118). As already noted, Strangwayes-Booth (1976) claimed that Hansa was affectionate towards and "emotionally involved" (p. 16) with young Helen. Despite the death of her mother, Helen's early experiences could have still been characterised by consistency, continuity and reliability, as there is no evidence to suggest that Hansa's caregiving was neglectful or inconsistent during Helen's infancy. Years later, when Helen's father remarried, Hansa resented their departure and felt that her child – Helen – was being taken from her (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). This reaction may, furthermore, support the notion that Hansa experienced a sense of attachment to Helen, which could have started during her infancy. It is hypothesised that even though Hansa's stance towards the other children in the home might have been one of cold detachment, she could have been a consistent and reliable caregiver for Helen during this stage, based on her reported high emotional involvement with, and subsequent attachment to young Helen. The researcher infers from the limited data that Helen's very young age (two weeks) at the time of her mother's death, as well as Hansa's own childlessness and grief over the recent loss of her sister, may have influenced her attitude towards young Helen. Samuel's grief over his wife's death might have had a significant impact on Helen's development if he had to assume the role of primary caregiver during this stage, which may also have influenced Hansa's bonding with the infant. Evidence suggests that, to some degree, Hansa was as invested in caring for the infant Helen as if she were her own child (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Erikson noted that when basic trust does not develop during this stage, children "do not respond nor learn; they do not assimilate their food and fail to defend themselves against infection, and often they die physically as well as mentally" (1958, p. 188). From the historical data on Helen's infancy (as discussed in section 2.2.1), as well as the manner in which she navigated subsequent developmental stages, there is no indication of an early triumph of basic mistrust. Erikson (1963) emphasized that it is especially the quality of the relationship with the primary caregiver rather than "absolute quantities of food or

demonstrations of love” (p. 241) that enables the infant to balance the opposing forces of basic trust and basic mistrust. The researcher argues that the potentially harmful effects of the early loss of her mother were, therefore, mitigated by an environment in which Helen received the care and affection equivalent to what Erikson had considered to be conducive for the successful navigation through this conflict.

Based on this successful navigation, the researcher infers that Helen would most likely have developed the ego quality specific to this stage, namely *hope*. Its emergence depends on the infant’s ability to achieve integration of the opposing conflicts during this first stage and acquire a sense of basic trust in his or her environment as well as in his or her own coping abilities (Erikson, 1997). According to Erikson (1963, 1997), hope is crucial for the development of *will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love* and *care* due to its inherent orientation towards the future. Hope forms the basis for many other stages and will find renewed expression later in the life cycle as it has “the function of carrying out the numinous image of the primal other through the various forms it may take in the intermediate stages, all the way to the confrontation with the ultimate other – in whatever exalted form...” (Erikson, 1997, p. 79). The biographical data highlight aspects of Helen’s expression of hope during later stages of this historical period as the available data suggest that Helen may have been a cheerful, confident and optimistic child who performed in concerts, was active in sports, achieved academically and was seen as charismatic by her peers (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993; Jowell, 2007). Early in the following historical period, Helen seemed to have retained her hopeful attitude: at age 16, she was confident that she would eventually obtain a postgraduate law degree (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Throughout her lifespan, numerous instances in the biographical suggest that Helen demonstrated what could be interpreted as a basic hopeful stance towards the future, despite periods of frustration (see sections 2.2.2 – 2.2.8). Examples include her service to the Allied Forces during World War II, her participation in the establishment of a new political party, and her continued opposition to apartheid legislation (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen saw optimism as an essential quality for the maintenance of a progressive stance (Suzman, 1993), possibly reflecting the importance to her of maintaining hope for a more desirable future.

The findings pertaining to the second stage of psychosocial development are discussed in the following section.

### 8.3.2 Stage II: Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt – Will (18 months – 3 years)

The second of Erikson's stages takes place approximately between the ages of 18 months and three years (Hamachek, 1990). This stage entails the balancing of the forces of autonomy versus that of shame and doubt (Erikson, 1963). *Autonomy* is connected to a sense of inner goodness, self-control, good will and pride, which will enable children to become appropriately assertive whilst protecting them against a loss of self-esteem (Freiberg, 1987; Erikson, 1963). As opposites to autonomy, *shame* indicates self-consciousness and *doubt* refers to the fear of the unknown (Erikson, 1963; Gross, 1987). According to Erikson's theory, the emergence of will as a resulting ego strength holds important implications for future development and will inevitably play a part in the psychosocial crises to follow (Erikson, 1963), as the sense of autonomy and the development of will "are oriented toward a future that will remain open, in play and in preparatory work, for the choices of one's economic, cultural and historical era" (Erikson, 1997, p. 79). This stage occurs during the first historical period of Helen Suzman's life.

#### 8.3.2.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)

Biographical data on this stage of Helen's development (which still forms part of the first historical period) is sparse, but suggest that no major changes took place during this time regarding Helen's environment (see section 2.2.1). Helen, her father and her older sister still resided with Oscar and his wife, Hansa (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Erikson (1963, 1997) noted that, as children begin to explore their environment, caregivers should strike a delicate balance between being restrictive and being permissive. Ideally, they should set boundaries for exploration that promote the child's curiosity without letting the child cross the boundaries of safety or social mores (Graves & Larkin, 2006). Aunt Hansa was Helen's primary caregiver during this time (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) and the task of guiding the young Helen through the conflicts of this stage, therefore, would have mostly fell on Hansa and Helen's father (see section 2.2.1).

Available data indicate that throughout Helen's early childhood, Aunt Hansa's emotional involvement with her continued to some degree (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). However, Hansa also frequently withdrew from the children in the household, also leaving the young Helen alone during the afternoons when she retired to her

room “with a bandage soaked in vinegar over her forehead to relieve her headaches, apparently brought on by her domestic responsibilities” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). Her absence seemed to make little impression on young Helen, whose “burgeoning self-reliance... was also attributable in some part to her father, who adored her” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). The periods of Hansa’s absence were, however, highlighted by Helen in her memoirs: “There was, obviously, an absence of maternal affection. Perhaps that engendered in me the strong spirit of independence which persists to this day” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). The researcher infers that when Hansa retired in the afternoons, Helen would have been left to explore her immediate environment autonomously and independently, whilst simultaneously protected by the “close-knit”, “secure” and “self-enclosed” nature of her family context (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). The conditions could therefore have been favourable for the development of autonomy, as young Helen’s environment was neither restrictive nor permissive. Although historical data on this time of Helen’s life is sparse, it can be inferred that the psychosocial conflict of this stage was navigated successfully. This inference is supported by the absence of any evidence suggesting a tendency towards self-consciousness or reluctance to explore stemming from a fear of the unknown in the young Helen.

Based on the successful navigation of the central conflict of this stage, the researcher proposes that Helen could have developed the ego quality of *will*. Erikson (1989, 1997) commented that rudimentary will power supports the development of exercising both free choice and self-restraint, in spite of the unavoidable instances of early shame and doubt. This strength relates to a “future ability to combine an unimpaired will with ready-self-discipline, rebellion with responsibility” (Erikson, 1958/1993, p. 255). There is no evidence from the available data to suggest that Helen did not develop this rudimentary will power during this stage. During the other stages in the historical period of Childhood, Helen’s experience of will has been evident in the available data (see section 2.2.1). For example, Helen’s autonomous ability to exercise free will is reflected in her keen participation in extracurricular activities during her school years and in social activities during her student years (Jowell, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen’s apparent failure to balance her will with self-discipline towards the end of this historical period, leading to her academic failure during her last university exams, is discussed further in section 8.3.5.2. Helen’s career and her persistent opposition of the apartheid government could be seen as a lifelong demonstrated of the ego quality of will (see sections 2.2.2 – 2.2.8).

The findings pertaining to the third stage of psychosocial development is discussed in the following section.

### 8.3.3 Stage III: Initiative versus Guilt – Purpose (ages 3 – 6)

Erikson proposed that between the ages of three and six years, the antitheses of *initiative* versus *guilt* present the pre-school child with the third psychosocial crisis (Erikson, 1997; Hamachek, 1990). During this stage, the child develops a sense of morality regarding what is permissible, as well as the imagination to envisage what may be possible (Erikson, 1963). Should they be able to balance and integrate the opposing forces of initiative versus guilt, they develop the resulting ego quality – a sense of purpose. This stage occurs during the first historical period of Helen Suzman’s life.

#### 8.3.3.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)

Biographical data related to this time in Helen Suzman’s life were presented in section 2.2.1. Significant events during this time in Helen’s life include the family’s move to Berea, Johannesburg when she was four years old (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Helen then became a pupil at the nearby St George’s School (Strangways-Booth, 1976). By then, two teenage children had also joined the household, following the death of another of Hansa’s sisters (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993).

During this stage of their development, children should use play to turn towards setting goals for adulthood through work-identification with adults (Erikson, 1963), as well as listen to stories which offer them “cultural templates for initiatives they themselves may someday sustain” (Stevens, 2008, p. 49). Erikson argued that a sense of *initiative* is necessary for every action or learning a person can undertake (Erikson, 1963, 1980). He described the child’s sense of initiative as a surplus of energy which enables him or her to forget failures quickly and to approach goals with improved effort (Erikson, 1980). One example of the effort with which Helen approached goals can be seen from her persistent search for reading material in the Berea house, where she could only find newspapers and the *Zionist Record* (Suzman, 1993). During this developmental stage, Hansa’s emotional involvement with Helen, despite her frequent withdrawal from all the children in the home as noted in the previous section, had caused that Helen was viewed by her sister and cousins as ‘Auntie’s pet’ and as a result, she was always excluded from their “games and secrets” during the afternoons (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 17). Helen, who demonstrated a “burgeoning self-reliance” (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 17), later linked the “absence of maternal affection” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8) during her childhood to the development of her sense of

independence. The researcher argues that this resilience, together with her active efforts at learning as mentioned above, might indicate a well-developed sense of initiative. It is, furthermore, important to note that Helen's environment had expanded at age four to include primary school (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976), where she would have been given the opportunity to engage in the play activities from which she had been excluded at home. Helen's environment could, therefore, have been conducive for the development of initiative.

As noted by Gross (1987), the *guilt* that the child experiences over their own goals and actions during this stage may be crippling if parents or significant adults fail in modelling appropriate conscience and responsibility. For example, Samuel's encouragement of her curiosity by placing significant emphasis on her education (Suzman, 1993), could have protected her from any feelings of guilt over her goals. Strangwayes-Booth (1976) described Helen's family unit as close-knit, secure, and self-enclosed. In the context of Helen's secure relationship with her father and the close-knit nature of their family life, it can be inferred that the adults in her life would have been able to provide the young Helen with the appropriate modelling of adult roles and responsibility. There is no indication from the available literature that Helen developed an early propensity for guilt, and the researcher infers from the data on Helen's childhood that the psychosocial crisis of initiative versus guilt was most likely successfully navigated during this developmental stage.

Based on Helen's successful navigation of this developmental stage, the researcher infers that Helen could have also developed the ego quality of a sense of *purpose*. Young Helen's self-reliance and goal directed efforts are indicative of the beginnings of a sense of purpose. The sense of purpose of this stage develops into an ethical sense later in life and, should playfulness be retained, it remains a driving force throughout the lifespan, also giving rise to the development of a sense of humour (Erikson, 1997; Gross, 1987). During the other psychosocial stages within the historical period of Childhood, Helen's sense of purpose is evident from the available biographical data which imply goal directed effort, such as her intellectual curiosity and active participation in extracurricular activities (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen's ethical sense later in her lifespan (see section 8.3.6), and her well-known sense of humour (Buthelezi, 2009; Eglin, 2010; Elliot et al., 2009; Goldstein, 2009; Joubert, 2009) serve as possible examples of the ego quality of purpose throughout her lifespan.

The findings pertaining to the fourth stage of psychosocial development is discussed in the following section.

### **8.3.4 Stage IV: Industry versus Inferiority – Competence (ages 6 – 12)**

The fourth stage of Erikson's proposed life spans from approximately age six until age 12 (Erikson, 1997; Hamachek, 1990; Shaffer, 2002). Erikson (1997) described *industry* as the sense that one has adapted to the laws of the *tool world* as well as to the rules of cooperation inherent to the structured tasks one is faced with. In the psychosocial theory, children can be at risk for developing a sense of *inferiority* when they fail to achieve recognition for their efforts or when they are criticized for inadequacy or mediocrity while their peers are praised and recognised (Erikson, 1963). Should the child successfully navigate the conflict between industry and inferiority, he or she develops a sense of competence and feels ready to handle the tools and utensils used in the adult world and to learn to do so in collaboration with others (Erikson, 1963). This stage occurs during the first historical period of Helen Suzman's life.

#### **8.3.4.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)**

During this time, various changes occurred in young Helen's environment (as discussed in section 2.2.1). In 1927, when she was nine years old, Samuel remarried and she consequently left Hansa's care. Helen would spend the remainder of her childhood in the family's new Parktown residence and continued with her schooling at the Parktown Convent (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Young Helen's curiosity had contributed to the strong bond between her and her father, who adored her "...because her quick and lively mind matched his own" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). Her father insisted on providing quality education to Helen and her sister: "Like Jewish immigrants the world over, my father believed that a good education for his children was essential" (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). Based on the importance he attached to education and the adoration he had for Helen's curiosity, it is therefore postulated that Helen's father could have played an important role in recognising and reinforcing Helen's intellectual efforts both at home and at school.

The findings suggest that, in addition to such recognition from her family, her school environment could have had a significant influence on Helen's ability to successfully resolve the psychosocial conflict central to this stage. The majority of Helen's school career was spent at a private Catholic school where Helen – a curious pupil who longed to read – had access to a well-stocked library (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Academically, she was

viewed by her teachers as a well above average learner, who also excelled at extramural activities, especially swimming (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Research findings suggest that the nuns at the convent, especially Sister Columba, served as influential figures in Helen's early development, particularly relating to the development of her sense of industry (O'Regan, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Helen later credited them and Sister Columba with having helped develop her good memory and with instilling in her certain values, such as being determined, punctual and conscientious (see section 2.2.1).

The researcher infers from the aforementioned evidence regarding Helen's sense of initiative and the manner in which it was supported by her environment, that this stage was probably navigated successfully. This inference is further supported by the absence of any evidence suggesting a tendency towards experiencing a sense of inferiority during this stage of her development.

Based on this successful navigation of the conflict of this stage, the researcher infers that Helen would have developed the ego strength of *competence* (Erikson, 1997). Based on Helen's management of the central conflicts of this stage through her academic success and extracurricular achievements (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), the researcher infers that she would most likely have been able to develop a sense of competence during this period. An example of Helen's experience of a sense of competence during the last stage of this historical period can initially be found in her early goal of obtaining a postgraduate law qualification and later in her desire to complete her studies abroad (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The researcher also proposed that the numerous awards Helen would later receive (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), could facilitate a continued sense of competence throughout her lifespan. Helen's dedicated and conscientious efforts during her parliamentary career (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Taljaard, 2009) could serve as an example of the expression of the ego quality of competence throughout most of her life.

The findings pertaining to the fifth stage of psychosocial development is discussed in the following section.

### 8.3.5 Stage V: Identity versus Role Confusion – Fidelity (ages 12 – 20)

This stage, which lasts through adolescence (between ages 12 and 20), is marked by the challenge to resolve successfully the conflict between *identity* and *role confusion* (Erikson, 1963; Gross, 1987; Hamachek, 1990). Erikson's theory of psychosocial development refers to the sense of identity as individuals' conscious sense of their uniqueness, as well as their unconscious striving towards continuity of experience (Kroger, 2005). The potential core pathology of this stage is *role confusion*, which manifests as an uncertainty about one's sense of self and often leads to the imitation of others (Freiberg, 1987). According to Erikson (1997), the successful outcome of the adolescent struggle for identity is fidelity. This refers to the ability to sustain commitment and loyalty to the adolescent's chosen roles, beliefs, and affiliations despite the inevitable contradictions and confusions inherent to different value systems (Markstrom et al., 1998; Stevens, 2008). This developmental stage spans over the historical periods of Childhood (section 8.3.5.1), The Early Student Years (section 8.3.5.2), as well as the first year of the period Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (section 8.3.5.3).

#### 8.3.5.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)

Biographical data related to this time in Helen Suzman's life were presented in section 2.2.1. During the part of this developmental stage that occurs during the first historical period, Helen was still enrolled at Parktown Convent until age 16 (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Evidence related to Helen's sense of identity during her high school years is sparse. However, when the 16 year old Helen enrolled as a Bachelors of Commerce student at the University of the Witwatersrand (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993) she dreamed of eventually obtaining a postgraduate law degree (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). When one considers her later perception of herself as "ombudsman" and her creed of "simple justice" (Suzman, 1993, p. 182), the inference can be made that her developing sense of identity had already incorporated themes surrounding justice and the law and that some striving towards continuity of experience was most likely already present when Helen, as a high school student, was deciding on her future career. This reflects Erikson's notion of the importance of ideology for the young person in that it presents them with different beliefs and social

values to investigate in the development of their identity (Erikson, 1963; Stevens, 2008).

Adolescents, therefore, become increasingly more aware of the adult tasks that await them, such as finding an occupational direction and forming their own political, social, religious and economic values (Freiberg, 1987). The researcher infers from young Helen's ambitions for her future after secondary school that she probably had gained such awareness to a certain degree. However, political and social ideology (being of particular importance in Helen's case because of her later investment in liberal values) was not shown in the data to have been of specific interest for Helen as a young teenager. From the data, it does not seem as if Helen was exposed to significant debate regarding different political ideologies during her early adolescent years (see section 2.2.1). She later commented: "It was only years later that I was struck by the incongruity of the practice of my writing "specials" night after night authorizing our domestic adult male employee to be away from our house after the 9 p.m. curfew" (Suzman, 1993, pp. 9 – 10).

Helen's academic and career interest in justice and the law (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), however, could indicate that despite her early limited awareness of political ideology, she had most likely succeeded in constructing an identity which incorporated the ideological framework, beliefs and cultural values in which she had been socialised. Helen's investigation of different ideological systems, particularly different political and sociological ideologies, continued throughout the following historical periods in her lifespan (as discussed in sections 2.2.3 – 2.2.8) as she would eventually come in contact with the local political and sociological issues from which she had been sheltered as a child (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Apart from developing an individual sense of individual *identity*, Erikson (1963) proposed that development during this stage also entails that youths search for a social identity as they become increasingly concerned with comparing how they are viewed by others to their own sense of self. Evidence suggests that as an adolescent Helen was popular amongst her peers (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976) and, therefore, would have had the opportunity to construct a social identity. The later description of a charismatic young Helen by one of her fellow learners, Sister Maria Bindon, sheds some light on the manner in which Helen could have been perceived by her peers: "She had an instinctive ability to command respect, not only because she was so good-looking and intelligent but because she had the gift of appearing to be interested in the least of us" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 23).

Helen's continued experience of the conflict between identity and role confusion, as well as the psychosocial moratorium period during her years as a student, are discussed in the

following section.

### ***8.3.5.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)***

Biographical data on Helen's years as a young university student is presented in section 2.2.2. During this historical period, Helen became the first member of her family to enrol at university as she became a student at the University of the Witwatersrand at age 16 (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), Helen did quite well during her first year of university study, "but subsequently seems to have undergone a form of collapse" (p. 24). She eventually dropped out of University before she could complete her degree (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen later highlighted the role of her young age as playing a role in her academic failure: she felt that had she matriculated a few years later, she would have achieved better matriculation results and her university career might have taken a different course; possibly leading to the postgraduate law degree she intended to obtain (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). The discrepancy in academic performance between high school and university can be seen as indicative of the developmental changes Helen underwent during her adolescent years, which in the final years of this stage, also reflects rebellion against the wishes of her father (see section 2.2.2). In the framework of Erikson's theory (1963, 1980, 1997), these changes and difficulties could in part be attributed to a psychosocial moratorium period – a period of sanctioned postponement of definitive commitment (Erikson, 1997). During a moratorium period, Helen would have experimented freely with numerous adult roles (Kroger, 2005).

Helen's later successful completion of her studies (see section 2.2.3) indicates that her difficulties were temporary and, therefore, could be explained by developmental factors at play during adolescence rather than academic incompetence or the failure of an early ego quality such as *will*. As discussed in section 8.3.2.1, *will* enables the individual to balance rebellion with responsibility, and free will with self-discipline (Erikson, 1958/1993). The researcher proposes that Helen's apparent insufficient ability to demonstrate self-restraint during her late adolescence could be seen as typical of the moratorium proposed by Erikson's (1997) theory and is, therefore, still within the description of expected psychosocial development. The researcher therefore proposes that evidence during Helen's late adolescence may indicate the presence of a psychosocial moratorium during which a degree of role confusion could have been present. This period may have been characterised by

experimentation with different roles, which in Helen's case, could have included that of student, future lawyer, and wife:

I was a keen participant in innumerable faculty dances, which may have been one of the contributory factors to my failure in the exams at the end of the third year. I also went on two student tours overseas... bliss for a young South African who had never before left her native shores. I longed to remain in London after the second tour and finish my degree there. But Pa said 'No.' So back I came to Wits, dropped out before I graduated, and got married. (Suzman, 1993, p. 9)

Based on Helen's navigation of this developmental stage, the researcher infers that Helen could have started to develop a sense of *fidelity*, as proposed by Erikson (1963) as the emerging ego quality of this psychosocial stage. An expression of the development of fidelity is seen in the generally ideological nature of the values youths initially aim to uphold to the exclusion of other ways of life (Gross, 1987). The researcher argues that Helen's interest in economics and law as future career paths, as well as her initial intention to continue with her education to a postgraduate level (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), could be seen as demonstrations of a sense of fidelity to the values instilled in her, even though her fidelity to these notions were tested during the psychosocial moratorium thereafter. Helen's experience of *fidelity* as the synthesis of this developmental stage is discussed in the following section.

### **8.3.5.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)**

The biographical data on this historical period was presented in section 2.2.3. Only the first year of this historical period is considered here in order to explore Helen's experience of the conflict between *identity* and *role confusion*. During this time Helen left the university before completing her degree and married Mosie Suzman (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Helen had met Mosie, a physician from a large, well-known and respected Jewish family, at a Johannesburg riding school (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She later described the start to this new historical period as follows: "I longed to remain in London after the second tour and finish my degree there. But Pa said 'No.' So back I came to Wits, dropped out before I graduated, and got married" (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). Helen's decision to shift from the role of student to that of wife may in part have been an act of rebellion against her father for refusing that she continues her studies abroad,

as well as an indication of the continued adolescent experimentation with various roles and life styles associated with the psychosocial conflict between identity and role confusion. She noted that: “I led the life of a privileged young White South African housewife during that period – the only time I ever reverted to type” (Suzman, 1993, p. 12).

Erikson noted that fidelity “transfers the need for guidance from parental figures to mentors and leaders, fidelity eagerly accepts their ideological mediatorship – whether the ideology is one implicit in a ‘way of life’ or a militantly explicit one” (Erikson, 1997, p. 73). Helen’s husband, who was 14 years her senior, could possibly have been such a figure. Furthermore, they could have established an implicit way of life which formed part of Helen’s identity formation (see section 2.2.3). Furthermore, her apparent happiness in her marriage and lifelong commitment to their partnership (see sections 2.2.3 – 2.2.8) supports the inference that Helen most likely attained the ego quality of fidelity – a natural consequence of the successful navigation of the conflict between identity and role confusion. Helen’s later return to university (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) and her eventual self-description as “ombudsman” fighting for “simple justice” (Suzman, 1993, p. 182), could indicate *fidelity* to aspects of her identity and chosen adult roles.

The findings pertaining to the sixth stage of psychosocial development is discussed in the following section.

### **8.3.6 Stage VI: Intimacy versus Isolation – Love (ages 20 – 27)**

Occurring approximately between the ages of 20 and 35, this stage is the first of Erikson’s stages to focus on the developmental crises occurring exclusively in adulthood (Hamachek, 1990; Shaffer, 2002). According to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, young adults who have successfully resolved the crisis of identity versus role confusion develop the urge to reach out and fuse their identity with that of others (Erikson, 1963; Freiberg, 1987). The capacity for *intimacy*, balanced with the need for some isolation, enables the individual to love and be loved and to engage with others with true mutuality (Erikson et al., 1989). *Isolation*, as the antithesis of intimacy, entails distancing oneself from people and forces that are seen as a threat to an unstable sense of identity (Erikson, 1963). This developmental stage spans over the historical periods of Marriage, Motherhood and

World War II (section 8.3.6.1), and Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (section 8.3.6.2).

### ***8.3.6.1 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)***

This developmental stage corresponds with the entire historical period Marriage, Motherhood & World War II, as well as the first few years of Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament. During the historical period under discussion in this section, Helen lived as a housewife, gave birth to her two daughters, completed her studies and became involved in the war effort (Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Erikson (1980) noted that a secure sense of identity allows the young adult now to establish a sense of intimacy with another person, and even with the self. The more certain the young adult becomes of him- or herself, the more he or she seeks out to establish psychologically intimate relationships with others (Erikson, 1980). The crisis they now face is that of integrating the conflicting forces of *intimacy* and *isolation*. Erikson defined intimacy as the ability to commit oneself to concrete partnerships even though it may entail significant personal sacrifice and compromise (Erikson, 1963; Freiberg, 1987). Even though Helen's decision to commit to such a partnership had already occurred during the end of the previous psychosocial stage, her marital life played a significant role in illustrating her experience of the intimacy versus isolation conflict. She later reflected on this time in their lives: "Mosie and I had a wonderful time, both being fond of dancing and horse-riding. Once I joked that I had married Mosie because he had a horse I coveted. A surprising number of people took this remark seriously" (Suzman, 1993, p.12).

Erikson described the challenge young adults now face: "Body and ego must now be masters of the organ modes and of the nuclear conflicts, in order to be able to face the fear of ego loss in situations which call for self-abandon..." (1963, p. 255). From the available data, Helen encountered various such situations during this time in her development. These include her marriage and family life, motherhood, as well as her involvement in World War II (see section 2.2.3). Specific examples are given below.

- *Family life*: After their return from their European honeymoon, the couple initially lived in a large house with two of Mosie's siblings and two of his nephews (Suzman, 1993). For the first two years after their marriage, life

consisted of dinner parties, horse-riding and games of golf and tennis (Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). In addition, evidence suggests that Helen's relationship with her family of origin remained close during this and subsequent historical periods (Suzman, 1993).

- *Motherhood*: Helen gave birth to their first child a few weeks after the start of World War II, and although she was eager to join the South African Women's Auxiliary Force, she was excluded from service (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Their second child, Patricia, was born on January 1, 1943, while Mosie was stationed in Egypt, as second-in-command of the medical section of the 106<sup>th</sup> South African General Hospital at El Qassâsîn (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).
- *Participation in the War effort*: She remained committed to becoming involved and worked at the Governor-General's War Fund (Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Suzman, 1993). She later wrote: "I was most upset about being excluded from war service and decided that if I couldn't get into the army, I was at least going to complete my degree" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). She returned to Wits University in 1941, and completed all her unfinished subjects for her degree in one year. After graduation, Helen worked at the War Supplies Board (Godsell, 2011; Rotberg, 2011; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).
- *Social involvement*: Their larger social circle seemed to also have been important to the Suzmans who, after World War II came to an end, built a house on an agricultural holding north of Johannesburg in order to be closer to the children's schools, the hospitals Mosie practiced at and the neighbourhoods in which their friends lived (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Suzman, 1993).

These examples from the gathered biographical data, therefore, show that Helen was exposed to numerous kinds of intimate relationships and situations that could have necessitated differing degrees of self-abandon. There is no indication from the available historical data that Helen approached these situations with a fear of loss of identity. Furthermore, no instances from the literature could be found to indicate that Helen's psychosocial development favoured isolation during this period. In fact, the number of interpersonal commitments and relationships seemed to have increased over the course of this developmental stage. Evidence also suggests that Helen was able to cope with instances of

isolation from significant people in her life, such as when her husband was stationed abroad (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Suzman, 1993).

Erikson (1963) stated that as adult tasks become delineated and as the competitive encounter and the sexual embrace become differentiated during this stage, the individual's *ethical sense* develops, which he sees as characteristic of adulthood. This ethical sense helps the adult to be selectively intimate, and to guard against the destruction or isolation of what is considered foreign (Erikson, 1963). Helen's determination to assist in the struggle against the extremist forces in Europe during this time (Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) can be seen as a significant instance of ideological involvement on Helen's part, reflecting her developing ethical sense.

Helen enters the following historical period in her late 20s, and is therefore still tasked with balancing the conflict between intimacy and isolation. Helen's experience of this crisis until her mid-30s, as well as the resultant synthesis of *love* as a potential ego quality during this psychosocial stage, is discussed in the following section.

### ***8.3.6.2 Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)***

Biographical data on this historical period was presented in section 2.2.4. During this time, Helen worked as a lecturer in economics at the University of the Witwatersrand and was approached by her political party with a nomination to run in the next election for the position of Member of Parliament (MP) (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Helen's private life and close family bonds continued to reflect her experience of intimacy and she also entered into situations outside her home and family that demanded a degree of self-abandon (see section 2.2.4). Her role as lecturer and her involvement in local politics (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) may illustrate Helen's ability at this stage not only to experience intimate relationships at home, but also to be selectively intimate and form relationships with larger communities and explore new ideologies. Helen's ethical sense, therefore, could have developed further during this historical period as she became more aware of the human rights infringements that took place during that era (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

In 1953, the 35-year-old Helen was approached with the party nomination to run for Parliament (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The conflict Helen experienced over this decision (as described in section 2.2.4) could in part be explained by psychosocial

developmental conflicts, seeing that, chronologically, Helen could have found herself in the transition from balancing intimacy and isolation, to mastering the conflict between generativity and stagnation. Her initial reluctance to accept the offer seems to have been related to her desire to remain close to her family (see section 2.2.4). When her husband and her father (who had both had successful careers to assist them in developing generativity) demonstrated their support for her political career (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), Helen finally agreed to the campaign, albeit half-heartedly (Rensberger, 1974; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The researcher infers from this example that Helen's psychological focus could, primarily, have still been on the experience of intimacy within the context of her nuclear family, but that her attention was also beginning to shift outward, in part related to the ethical sense of adulthood, which Erikson (1963) proposed develops when the conflict of this stage is being successfully navigated. Even though this election was not the first instance of generative concern for Helen (she had been raising her children and guiding her students for several years, as discussed in section 2.2.3), the years after her first election represent a distinct new era regarding psychosocial development according to the delineation of Erikson's stages (Hamachek, 1990; Gross, 1987). The chronology of Erikson's stages, therefore, coincides greatly with the conflicts evident from Helen's life history.

The final aspect of this psychosocial stage discussed in this study is the resulting ego quality which stems from the successful balance of the opposing forces of intimacy and isolation, namely *love* (Erikson, 1963). Based on Helen's seemingly successful navigation of the conflict of intimacy versus isolation as described above, the researcher infers that she could have been able to gain this ego quality. Gross (1987) stated that the resulting ego strength of love enables the person to, because of the development of hope resulting from the successful resolution of the first life stage, endure times of isolation. Examples from Helen's adult life of times of significant isolation during this psychosocial stage include Mosie's wartime deployment (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993) during the previous historical period, as well as her election to Parliament, when she was far away from her family and faced with feeling lonely and isolated (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). These examples serve as further evidence for Helen's capacity for love and ability to endure isolation, as described by Gross (1987). Furthermore, Helen's apparent lifelong happiness and commitment to her marriage (see sections 2.2.3 – 2.2.8) supports the inference that Helen most likely attained the ego quality of love.

The findings pertaining to the seventh stage of psychosocial development is discussed in the following section.

### **8.3.7 Stage VII: Generativity versus Stagnation – Care (ages 35 - 65)**

Erikson's seventh stage occurs during middle adulthood and is, therefore, the longest stage in the life cycle of most individuals, beginning at approximately age 35 and lasting until the age of retirement (Hamachek, 1990; Gross, 1987). For the purpose of this research, the psychosocial stage of generativity versus stagnation will be limited to the age of 65, even though Helen's retirement from Parliament occurred a few years later. During middle adulthood, individuals may find themselves in the position of having to guide their own offspring through the stages of psychosocial development (Freiberg, 1987). Outside the context of the nuclear family, adults acquiring a sense of generativity are required to be productive members of their communities (Erikson, 1963, 1997). For the development of the ego quality of *care*, individuals need to shift their focus from themselves towards the teaching, guidance and encouragement of children or younger protégés (Graves & Larkin, 2006). Erikson (1997) noted that the acquisition of the previous ego strengths (i.e., *hope, will, purpose, fidelity* and *love*) is essential for this task of guidance, seeing that the generative aim is related to promoting these ego virtues in the next generation. This crisis was the dominant psychosocial crisis for many of the historical periods in Helen Suzman's life cycle and spans over the historical periods of Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (section 8.3.7.1), Formation of the Progressive Party (section 8.3.7.2), The Solo Years (section 8.3.7.3), and Continued Apartheid Opposition (section 8.3.7.4).

#### **8.3.7.1 Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)**

The biographical data on this historical period was presented in section 2.2.4. During this period, Helen became increasingly involved in local political issues, an involvement which culminated in her election as a United Party MP for Houghton in 1953 (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Erikson stressed that adults are as dependent on children as they are on them, due to their significant "need to be needed" (Erikson, 1963, p. 258). The researcher infers that Helen's experience of *generativity* could, therefore, have been facilitated in part by her role as mother. Her two daughters were both of primary school age when she was first elected to

Parliament and their young age had contributed to her hesitation in accepting the party nomination (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Earlier during this historical period, their schooling was one of the factors Helen considered when deciding against emigration (see section 2.2.4).

Erikson (1963) stated that the establishment of generativity involves more than producing and caring for offspring and included “the ability to lose oneself in the meeting of bodies and minds” (Erikson, 1963, p. 258) which leads to the expansion of one’s ego interests “and to a libidinal investment in that which is being generated” (p. 258). Helen’s parliamentary career could, over this and the following historical periods, possibly reflect such an expansion of interests and investments. Generativity as an involvement in and contribution to one’s environment and the welfare of future generations, is often expressed through nurturing, mentoring, or contributing through civic and community causes (Freiberg, 1987). Helen’s role as lecturer – and her commitment to creating awareness amongst her students of the inequalities of the sociopolitical landscape of the times (see section 2.2.3) – could, therefore, be regarded as an early act of generativity. Following this, she took great interest in establishing student branches of the political party she belonged to, and became such a prominent member of the party that she was nominated and elected as an MP (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Once she entered Parliament, Helen soon affiliated herself with liberal UP members (see section 2.2.4), possibly experiencing such a meeting of minds as Erikson (1963) referred to. During this period, Helen also demonstrated a distinct expansion of ego interests as her concern with race relations soon became the dominant focus of her career (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993).

Helen enters the following historical period at the age of 41, and was, therefore, still tasked with balancing the conflict between generativity and stagnation. The discussion of Helen’s experience of this developmental stage is continued in the following section.

### ***8.3.7.2 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)***

The crisis of generativity versus stagnation continued throughout the brief historical period discussed in this section, during which Helen was confronted with having to decide her political affiliation (see section 2.2.5). This historical period began with the 1959 United Party Bloemfontein congress, prior to which Helen had emphasised to her Divisional Committee that any further departure from party principle during the Congress could result in her resignation from the UP (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, Suzman, 1993). This decision was

brought about by Helen's dissatisfaction with the UP: "We felt we had been sent to Parliament to fight the racist policy of the National Party, and that the United Party wasn't doing the job properly" (Suzman, 1993, p. 50).

As noted by Erikson et al. (1989), generativity involves the responsibility of the individual to maintain and develop the societal institutions necessary for the survival and development of successive generations. Helen's dedication to the development and improvement of the institution of Parliament, based on her fierce opposition to the practices of racial segregation and economic inequality (as discussed in sections 2.2.4 – 2.2.7), could be seen as an expression of her generative concern. The researcher, therefore, argues that Helen's desire to distance herself from the UP's policies (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976, Suzman, 1993) could be seen as related to the conflict between generativity versus stagnation. The researcher proposes that the expression of generativity prohibited Helen from staying on in the UP despite the difficulties brought about by her resignation and the ethical dilemmas Helen faced by not also resigning her Parliamentary seat. Her impulse towards generativity could have been supported by the fact that Helen considered the UP policies to be in opposition to her ethical sense – a characteristic development of the previous psychosocial stage, according to the psychosocial development theory (Erikson, 1963).

The following historical period spans from Helen's early 40s to middle 50s and is therefore still located within the same stage of psychosocial development. The discussion of Helen's experience of this crisis is continued in the following section.

### ***8.3.7.3 The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)***

The data pertaining to this historical period were presented in section 2.2.6. This historical period begins with Helen's election to Parliament as the sole MP for the Progressive Party. During these 13 years, Helen continued to use the parliamentary platform for her anti-apartheid efforts (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Shain, 2006; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993; Taljaard, 2009).

As noted in the previous section, Erikson et al. (1989) highlighted the responsibility of the individual to maintain and develop the societal institutions necessary for the survival and development of successive generations. Helen's opposition to apartheid laws (Godsell, 2011; Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Lewsen, 1991; Suzman, 1993) may reflect a desire to contribute towards the development of future generations through the safeguarding of human

rights and the creation of governmental systems that promote justice, equality and liberty. An additional indication of her generative concern was that Helen did not limit her sense of responsibility to the constituency which had elected her, as she had extended her sense of responsibility not only to all other Progressive Party supporters, but in fact to all South Africans (and in particular Black South Africans) who did not have parliamentary representation (Lewsen, 1991; Shain, 2006; Suzman, 1993). She, furthermore, sustained her involvement with students and student politics, as well as demonstrated care and concern towards political prisoners (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

During this historical period, Helen's continued development of a sense of generativity was challenged by her position as the only representative of her party left in Parliament. Furthermore, her advocacy for change was met not only by resistance, but occasionally by overt hostility (Braude, 2009; Godsell, 2011; Rensberger, 1974; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Towards the end of this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen may have experienced some degree of a sense of stagnation (see section 2.2.6). For her, the party's failure to gain ground during elections and the limited progress she felt she was making in the struggle against apartheid, were taking an emotional toll (Rensberger, 1974; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). After 13 years alone, a frustrated Helen was considering resigning from parliamentary politics (Suzman, 1993). This might indicate that towards the end of this historical period, Helen felt increasingly disillusioned about her ability to effect change within the parliamentary system. When asked by a reporter what exactly she had accomplished, she cynically said: "It was probably my incessant nagging that resulted in policemen having to wear identity numbers... It is useful to know who is hitting you on the head with a rubber truncheon" (Rensberger, 1974, p. 3).

Helen, however, received widespread praise and acknowledgement for her work during this historical period (see section 2.2.6), which might have had a positive, or protective, influence on her sense of generativity. Evidence suggests that Helen had managed the psychosocial crisis of generativity versus stagnation effectively over the previous two historical periods (as discussed in sections 8.3.7.1 and 8.3.7.2). The researcher proposes that her development had continued on this positive trajectory during the largest part of this historical period. According to Erikson (1963), *stagnation* occurs when ego-interests are not expanded, leading to a regression to past conflicts as evident through the occurrence of pseudo-intimacy, self-indulgence, or the lack of a sense of faith or hope in humankind (Erikson, 1963). The researcher infers from the unhappiness and frustration that marked the

end of this historical period (Rensberger, 1974; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), that the challenges to Helen's sense of generativity had become increasingly difficult for her to overcome. Evidence does not suggest, however, a complete shift towards stagnation for Helen or a regression to past conflicts, even though the process of balancing the opposing psychosocial conflicts could have been more difficult during this time. The researcher argues that even though Helen's sense of generativity was challenged, a sense of stagnation did not become the dominant experience for Helen. Her ego interests remained expanded to the community at large, as she indicated her intension to continue with her anti-apartheid efforts through extra political work in the event of her resignation from party politics (Suzman, 1993).

The following historical period spans from Helen's late 50s and therefore contains the final years of the conflict between generativity and stagnation. The discussion of Helen's experience of this crisis is continued in the following section and the ego quality derived from her development during Erikson's (1963) seventh stage is discussed.

#### ***8.3.7.4 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)***

During this historical period, Helen was joined by other elected members of the Progressive Party after a lengthy period of serving as the sole representative of her party (Lewson, 1991; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Biographical data on this historical period was presented in section 2.2.7.

From the start of this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen had found it easier to navigate the opposing forces of generativity and stagnation (see section 2.2.7). For example, Helen's later reflection on the inauguration of her new colleagues serves to illuminate the sense of generativity she derived from their presence, hinting at a sense of hopefulness about the party's future after the addition of the new MPs (Suzman, 1993). Her continuation of the metaphor used by another MP might reflect that she felt comfortable in casting herself in an almost maternal role in relation to her new colleagues.

It was rather touching to see those big chaps, all about six feet tall and more, looking like a lot of kids on their first day at school. When I walked into the House at the next opening of Parliament to take the oath with our six other MPs, a Nat member called out, 'There comes Mrs. Rosenkewitz.' (She was a woman who had had sextuplets in Cape Town a few months before.) We were back in business. (Suzman, 1993, p.170)

This example suggests that Helen recovered from the sense of disillusionment and powerlessness that seemed to have occurred towards the end of the previous historical period (as discussed in section 8.3.7.3). Further evidence for her possible experience of generativity includes the fact that Helen continued to work in Parliament until she was almost 72 years old (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993), which may point towards a likely enjoyment of continued productivity. Furthermore, Helen's work during this historical period and those preceding it was characterised by commitment, involvement and concern for the community at large (see section 2.2.7). An example of such involvement outside of her parliamentary career was her acceptance of the nomination to stand for election as Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand despite the additional workload a successful election would entail (Suzman, 1993). This reflects the notion of Erikson et al. (1989) that generativity involves the acceptance of responsibility to maintain and develop the societal institutions. Helen had also begun to view the impact she had had during her years alone in a more realistic light during this period (Suzman, 1993), enabling her to better balance the conflict between the forces of generativity and stagnation. She later wrote about the large number of questions she had put before the House and the effect they had had:

My questions – and the answers to them – elicited a great deal of useful information. They provided a considerable volume of facts and figures which were used by researchers (and also, no doubt, by anti-apartheid organizations worldwide). The South African Institute of Race Relations, in their valuable annual surveys, featured many of my questions and the minister's answers. (Suzman, 1993, p. 113)

According to Erikson et al. (1989), maldevelopment in this psychosocial stage may also be characterised by an overextension of generative concern and care to people and interests which are beyond the capacity of the individual. As Erikson's theory proposes that a balance between the two opposing forces is necessary for optimal development, the overdevelopment of generativity would also be considered pathological. Despite Helen's high degree of commitment to her work throughout her career and her sense of responsibility as evident from the data (see sections 2.2.4 – 2.2.7), instances of a possible balance between the expansion of ego interests and a capacity for self-absorption could be identified from the available data. For example, Helen had written in one of her letters to her daughter: "I long for the end of this parliamentary life so I can just laze around and read and read and do what I damn well please all day long" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 231). Throughout this psychosocial stage, a balanced yet productive lifestyle was evident (see section 2.2.7), from

which the successful resolution of the conflict between generativity and stagnation can be inferred.

The final aspect of the psychosocial conflict of generativity versus stagnation is the resulting ego quality which stems from the successful balance of these opposing forces, namely *care* (Erikson, 1997). Based on the aforementioned evidence of Helen's ability to develop a sense of generativity, as well as her successful acquisition of the previous ego qualities during earlier psychosocial stages (as discussed in sections 8.3.1 – 8.3.6), the researcher infers that the ego quality of care would have resulted from her development during this psychosocial stage. Furthermore, retaining a sense of generativity was a prominent aspect of her psychological experience throughout this and the following historical period: "Retirement has not relegated me to the rocking chair" (Suzman, 1993, p.276).

The findings pertaining to the eighth and final stage of psychosocial development is discussed in the following section.

### **8.3.8 Stage VIII: Integrity versus Despair – Wisdom (ages 65 - 91)**

In late adulthood the final nuclear conflict occurs between the antitheses *integrity* and *despair* (Erikson, 1963). During this psychosocial stage the individual is tasked with developing a sense of integrity and safeguarding themselves from an overemphasis on despair (Erikson, 1963). During this final stage of development, the individual should ideally consolidate their sense of *wisdom* without excluding legitimate feelings of hopelessness and cynicism, but rather integrating some realistic feelings of despair as an unavoidable component of old age (Erikson et al., 1989). This developmental stage spans over the historical periods of Continued Apartheid Opposition (section 8.3.8.1) and Retirement and Death (section 8.3.8.2).

#### ***8.3.8.1 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)***

Biographical data on this historical period were presented in section 2.2.7. During this historical period, Helen still served as a Member of Parliament until her early 70s (Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Whilst Erikson therefore postulated that this conflict would only reach prominence for individuals after the age of retirement, namely 65 (Hamachek, 1990), in Helen's case retirement only occurred about seven years later

(Suzman, 1993). For the purposes of this study, the psychosocial stages are applied to Helen's life, according to the age ranges as suggested by Erikson (1963, 1980, 1997), Hamachek (1990) and Shaffer (2002).

*Integrity* reflects an acceptance of responsibility for one's own life, and the defence of one's life style despite being aware of the relativity of various possible life styles (Erikson, 1980). During this historical period, Helen was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 to which she responded that such an award would not have been merited, as she was merely performing her duties (Suzman, 1993). However, the researcher argues that the recognition of her efforts (not only through this nomination, but also the numerous honours and awards bestowed upon Helen, as discussed in Chapter 2), could possibly have facilitated Helen's sense of integrity by acknowledging the importance of her life's work. During this time, Helen also became unpopular among many anti-apartheid activists due to her stance on the economic sanctions against South Africa (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Godsell, 2011; Kadalie, 2010; Nieuwenhuysen, 2009; Suzman, 1993; Suzman, September 2005). Helen, however, seemed able to defend her views in this regard despite the conflict that they caused (see section 2.2.7), possibly indicating her ability to accept past choices.

Erikson et al. (1986) noted that in order to achieve ego integrity, the elderly need to engage in the process of finding their own guides for the progression through this stage, and often do so by looking back to the elders they had previously admired, such as their own parents or grandparents. Helen's close relationship with her father might have facilitated such a model for her, as she remained in close contact with him until his death in 1965, at the age of 80 (Suzman, 1993). Her husband, Mosie, who was 14 years Helen's senior (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), could have also been a guiding figure for Helen during this stage. The discussion of Helen's experience of this developmental crisis concludes in the following section, which also presents the findings on the ego quality derived during the final stage of Erikson's (1963) theory.

#### ***8.3.8.2 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)***

During this historical period, Helen adapted to life after her parliamentary career, whilst remaining an active public figure (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Kadalie, 2010; Oakland, 2005; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Biographical data on this historical period were presented in section 2.2.8.

The older adult is tasked with gaining acceptance of the self and the life's work, which is accomplished through the vital task and process of reflecting on the life lived (Erikson, 1963). This process of reflection is aimed at avoiding the resentment, guilt and regret associated with *despair* (Haber, 2006) and when it yields positive results, it consequently enables the development of *integrity* (Graves & Larkin, 2006). Important components of this process of life review include: (a) acknowledgement and acceptance of past choices; (b) acceptance of the inalterability of the past; and (c) acknowledgement and integration of legitimate feelings of despair (Erikson et al., 1989). These components as they correlated with evidence from Helen Suzman's life, are discussed below.

1. *Acknowledgement and acceptance of past choices:* During the previous historical period, Helen initiated a process of reflecting upon her choice of occupation (see section 2.2.7). During this historical period, evidence suggests that she continued with this endeavour, for example by writing her memoirs. The book also contains indicators of her acceptance of past choices:

I think it was a tremendous privilege to have been in Parliament, to have played a part in keeping values alive which most of us believe in, to have allowed nothing to go by default, to have had eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations with the government about all its offensive actions, and especially to have been able to intercede on behalf of victims of apartheid or of police action by virtue of being an MP (Suzman, 1993, p. 272)

Helen also reflected on her political career during the numerous interviews she granted reporters after her retirement, noting the rows she had had with the National Party and its leaders (Suzman, 1993). To one reporter she stated that she had no regrets, adding that the apartheid government should regret what they had said to her (Swart, 2007). Helen demonstrated the ability to integrate her past experiences into a coherent narrative, as evident by one of the reflections in her memoirs:

I have had the unique experience of having had a ringside seat from which to watch, and indeed to participate in, the making of over three and a half decades of South African history... Certainly there have been times of intense frustration, and there have been times of crashing boredom, but there have also been some very interesting times. There have been many opportunities to meet people I would otherwise never have met, both at home and abroad, and thereby to make friendships which I shall always cherish. (Suzman, 1993, p. 270)

2. *Acceptance of the inalterability of the past:* Helen seemed to have demonstrated an acceptance of the life lived (see section 2.2.8). For example, whilst sweeping her arm along the two rows of Hansard volumes which line her study walls, Helen once told a reporter: “That’s my life in there” (“Suzman: Mbeki anti-white,” 2004). In an interview shortly before her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, she reported that her only regret was that she had never become a better golfer (Forde, 2009a). Helen’s continued acceptance of and satisfaction with her life’s work could have been influenced by the numerous awards and achievements she received after her retirement, including an Order of Merit, honorary doctorates from various universities, and being named an Honorary dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her work in fostering relations between South Africa and Britain (Godsell, 2011; Eglin, 2007; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Referring to the latter, Helen stated:

I have had the scroll framed and it has pride of place in my study in Blue Haze. The medal is in the cupboard, together with the scrolls of my honorary degrees and other memorabilia of my life as a public representative. (Suzman, 1993, p. 274)

3. *Acknowledgement and integration of legitimate feelings of despair:* Evidence suggests that Helen was also able to acknowledge legitimate feelings of despair (see section 2.2.8). One example of this relates to her concerns over the formation of the new Democratic Party based on the merger of the Progressive Federal Party with two smaller groups. It appears that conflict about leadership and the image of the new party had also contributed to her decision to retire. Helen stated:

My friend Ray Swart made a similar decision. He was infuriated by snide comments by the newcomers who said that they did not want to be “the Progressive Party in drag,” and by their determination to expunge the “Prog image.” We believed the Prog image should be held in high regard because of its long, proud record of fighting for civil rights and against racial discrimination... (Suzman, 1993, p. 266)

This statement reflects not only Helen’s feelings of despondency about her position in the party’s future, but also serves to illustrate her firm commitment to her past actions and choices, as reflected in her defence of the *Prog image*. Later instances of her experience of legitimate despair could be inferred from her disappointment at the apparent exclusion of various White liberals from the displays at the Apartheid Museum (Oakland, 2005).

Towards the end of this historical period, Helen's frustration at the impairments caused by her advancing age also reflects her experience of legitimate feelings of despair. When Helen described her recreational activities to a reporter, she noted that listening to *Bandstand* every Saturday evening on the radio made her feel "...very sad... I used to be a very good dancer. I mean, a real dancer" (Forde, 2009a, p. 15). Shortly before her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, Helen was approached for an interview, and she asked the reporter with a perky smile: "Are you preparing my obituary?" When the reporter commented that they were, in fact, marking a milestone, her reply was: "Oh for goodness' sake... a retired old creature like me? Who cares?" (Forde, 2009a; Forde, 2009b). In the time before her death, close friends and family observed that despite her general stoical attitude, she seemed to become intensely frustrated by her failing health and increasing dependence on the assistance of others (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Forde, 2009b). Her mobility was restricted to the use of a Zimmer frame, and she would say "Look at me, what a nuisance I've become" (Forde, 2009b).

Erikson noted that the "lack or loss of this accrued ego integration is signified by fear of death: the one and only life cycle is not accepted as the ultimate of life" (Erikson, 1963, p. 260). Evidence suggests that Helen's approach to her own mortality did not seem to be characterised by a fear of death, but rather had a pragmatic and stoical tone (see section 2.2.8). She agonised for months over finding good homes for her three dogs and would matter-of-factly tell them "Now you must behave when I'm gone" (Forde, 2009b). In the last years of her life, her approach to receiving gifts was similarly practical. For example, Helen appreciated the flowers Mandela and his wife, Graca, had sent her on her birthday, stating: "They know not to buy me gifts. What would I do with a gift at my age, because I'm going to die soon?" (Forde, 2009b). Her response was similar when asked what she would like for Christmas: "No dear. Nothing, I'm shedding, not hoarding" (Forde, 2009b). In the final days of her life, Helen even welcomed death. According to reports, on the Tuesday before her death, Helen lay in bed and touched caregiver Betty Ramatse's hand, saying "Betty I need to go" (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009).

Erikson (1980) wrote that *integrity* not only involves the acceptance of one's own life cycle, but also an acceptance of the people who played a significant role in it. For example, *integrity* implies a new and different appreciation of love of one's parents, devoid of wishes that they should have been different. When Helen wrote her memoirs, she provided glimpses

of her affection for the parental figures in her life – her father, step-mother and aunt Hansa (Suzman, 1993). For example, in her reflections on her childhood and the peculiar behaviour and temperament of her aunt and primary caregiver, Helen demonstrated an empathic attitude by offering the explanation that Hansa was “probably deeply upset at her childlessness in a household containing other people’s children” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8).

The ego quality of *wisdom* results from the balancing of *integrity* and *despair*, and is defined as a “detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself” (Erikson et al., 1989, p. 37). Helen’s successful balancing of the opposing forces of integrity and despair as discussed in this section and section 8.3.8.1, form the basis of the researcher’s inference that she would have developed wisdom as an ego quality during the final stage of psychosocial development.

#### **8.4 Conclusion: Helen Suzman’s Psychosocial Development**

Certain key findings regarding the application of the theory of psychosocial development as described by Erikson (1963, 1980, 1997) to the life of Helen Suzman can be highlighted from the findings as presented in this chapter. These key findings are related to the similarities between and points of departure from different aspects of psychosocial development theory and the life of Helen Suzman, namely (a) the eight conflicts individuals face through the process of psychosocial development, (b) the development of ego virtues through the synthesis of the opposing forces during these developmental conflicts, and (c) the timing of the eight psychosocial stages in the individual’s lifespan.

The first aspect of Erikson’s psychosocial theory applied to the biographical data on Helen Suzman relates to the ego’s task of integrating certain oppositional forces. As presented in section 8.3, no evidence was found of maldevelopment during any of the psychosocial stages as no maladaptive or malignant tendencies were observable in the biographical data analysed. In fact, the available data suggest that Helen had successfully navigated all the conflicts inherent to Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963).

Data on most of the psychosocial stages were sufficient to facilitate the researcher’s inferences of successful integration of opposing forces, but not sufficiently detailed to fully describe Helen’s experiences of both poles of each developmental crisis. This is especially true of the psychosocial stages located in childhood. However, during her early student years, more biographical data existed on Helen’s experience of both polarities of development as the proposed moratorium period highlighted aspects regarding possible role

confusion. The stages in which both sides of the dominant psychosocial conflict have been illuminated to a greater extent occurred later in Helen's life cycle, with *generativity versus stagnation* and *integrity versus despair* being the two stages with the richest biographical data from which conclusions could be drawn. From the findings presented on these two stages (see sections 8.3.7 and 8.3.8), Helen's experiences of both opposing forces and the process of their synthesis is understood in greater depth than the preceding psychosocial conflicts.

The second aspect of Erikson's psychosocial theory applied to the biographical data on Helen Suzman relates to the synthesis of the specific ego strengths or qualities which are gained should integration of these opposing forces take place successfully. Based on the successful resolution of these stages as discussed in this chapter, the researcher proposes that Helen would have developed all of the resulting eight ego qualities namely hope, will, purpose, fidelity, love, care and wisdom. The successful synthesis of these ego qualities, therefore, fit the epigenetic nature of Erikson's conceptualization (as discussed in Chapter 3), whereby human development is seen as cyclical with every stage of the cycle integrating the earlier conflicts and ego strengths in order to resolve the current conflict (Erikson, 1963, 1997).

The third aspect of the psychosocial development theory which is seen as a key finding in the application of Erikson's theory on the life of Helen Suzman relates to the timing in the life cycle of the eight developmental stages. In general, the findings on Helen's life cycle as discussed in section 8.3 are consistent with the proposed interrelatedness of the eight psychosocial conflicts. However, the analysed biographical data also indicate notable variation in the life of Helen Suzman from Erikson's theory, which relates to the specific timing of Helen's experience of some of the developmental conflicts.

As discussed in section 8.3.6.1, evidence from the time after Helen's marriage is suggestive of a capacity for fidelity as well as a well-developed sense of self. The researcher, therefore, postulates that Helen's resolution of the psychosocial crisis of *identity versus role confusion* as well as the subsequent development of the ego quality of fidelity would have occurred around the time of her marriage at age 19. She, therefore, entered into the following psychosocial stage, namely *intimacy versus isolation*, during her adolescent years, slightly earlier than described by Erikson's theory (1963, 1997)<sup>39</sup>. Evidence, furthermore, suggests that Helen's resolution of this developmental crisis, as well as her attainment of the correlating ego quality of love, occurred early on in this developmental stage (see section

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<sup>39</sup> In this regard, the sociohistorical norms regarding age at marriage, especially for women, might play an important role.

8.3.6). These findings demonstrate some consistency with the findings of a South African study as reported on in Chapter 3. The cross-cultural validity of Erikson's theory was investigated through data gathered from 1 859 South Africans, ranging between the ages of 15 and 60 (Ochse & Plug, 1986). The data suggested that White women may resolve the crisis of identity vs. role confusion at a younger age than White men, a result the researchers maintained could not simply be attributed to identity foreclosure with regard to vocational choice. Similarly, White women also seemed to develop intimacy sooner than White men (Ochse & Plug, 1986). When one considers the possible androcentric bias of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (see section 3.6), Helen Suzman's life as investigated in this study might support the notion that the timing of the theoretical stages in Erikson's theory (1963, 1997) may better describe male psychosocial development and would need adjustment to better describe female psychosocial development. The researcher argues that this gender bias may become even more pronounced when Erikson's stages are categorised into stricter age ranges, such as those proposed by Hamachek (1990) which were used in this psychobiography.

The course of the two developmental stages of *identity versus role confusion* and *intimacy versus isolation* as they presented in the life of Helen Suzman does not necessarily signify a completely different developmental trajectory as was proposed by Erikson (1963, 1997). These findings may reflect the interconnectedness between these two developmental stages. The developmental process described by Erikson (1963, 1997) not only refers to the succession of stages, but highlights that the different growing parts are interrelated by existing "in some form before 'its' decisive and critical time" (Erikson, 1997, p. 29) and re-emerge later in an individual's developmental cycle (Graves & Larkin, 2006).

For example, the ideological awareness and involvement which Erikson postulated as necessary for the development of a sense of identity was present only to a limited degree during Helen's early adolescence. Biographical data indicate that Helen was raised in a "self-enclosed" environment (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 17) and only became aware of and involved in important political and sociological ideologies later in her lifespan (which would chronologically fall within the developmental stage of intimacy versus isolation). Another example refers to the consolidation of her occupational identity, which Helen seemed to have only achieved after the third decade of her life. Another example of the presence of a developmental aspect "in some form before 'its' decisive and critical time" (Erikson, 1997, p. 29) is Helen's experience of intimacy with regard to her romantic involvement with Mosie, which took place during her adolescent years, culminating in her marriage at age 19. These

examples may serve to illustrate Westemeyer's (2004) assertion that Erikson's tasks should not be viewed as necessarily being mutually exclusive or tied to specific ages (2004).

The researcher proposes that the biographical data used in this study is too limited to draw definitive conclusions about whether the data on these two psychosocial stages in the life of Helen Suzman represent an example of the interrelatedness of Erikson's stages or a different trajectory altogether. However, the researcher argues that enough evidence exists about the life of Helen Suzman to question the applicability of the timing and sequence of these stages as described by Erikson (1963, 1997) and Hamachek (1990) to South African women from Helen Suzman's cultural and historical milieu.

## **8.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings and discussion of the psychosocial development of Helen Suzman throughout her lifespan. The findings were presented and discussed in terms of the eight stages of the lifespan as proposed by Erikson (1963, 1980, 1997). The applicability of Erikson's theory on the life of Helen Suzman was highlighted. The following chapter presents the findings related to the holistic wellness model.

## CHAPTER 9

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: HOLISTIC WELLNESS

#### 9.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter provides the reader with the presentation and discussion of the research findings regarding Helen Suzman's holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. The conceptual outline is described, following which the biographical findings are presented and discussed in terms of the five life tasks of the holistic wellness model (as discussed in Chapter 4). The life forces and global events which may have influenced Helen's wellness are then discussed. Concluding remarks and summative tables are then presented to the reader.

#### 9.2 Conceptual Outline for the Presentation and Discussion of Findings

The researcher followed an exploratory-descriptive approach to the research findings in this chapter. Therefore, similar to Chapter 8, the collection, extraction, analysis and presentation of salient biographical data regarding the subject are conducted within the framework of a psychological approach. Biographical data were, therefore, analysed in relation to the holistic wellness model as proposed by wellness researchers, Thomas J. Sweeney, J. Melvin Witmer and Jane E. Myers (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). This model, therefore, served as the framework within which the holistic wellness of Helen Suzman was described.

The following section contains the findings related to the holistic wellness of Helen Suzman throughout her lifespan, presented and discussed in terms of the five life tasks proposed by the holistic wellness model (see section 4.3.1). This is achieved by presenting examples from the biographical data on Helen's life which relate to the expression of wellness within a particular life task during a particular historical period.

#### 9.3 Life Tasks throughout Helen Suzman's Lifespan

##### 9.3.1 Life task I: Spirituality

In the holistic wellness model, spirituality is discussed as a central life task, distinguishable from the narrower, institutionalised concept of religiosity, and is defined as

the individual's "awareness of a being or force that transcends the material aspects of life and gives a deep sense of wholeness or connectedness to the universe" (Myers et al., 2000, p. 9). Witmer and Sweeney (1992) described spirituality as the assumption of "certain life-enhancing beliefs about human dignity, human rights, and reverence for life" (p. 141). The following sections will discuss the life task of spirituality during the historical periods of Helen Suzman's life. The findings are presented according to the seven dimensions of this life task, namely (a) belief in a power beyond oneself, (b) spiritual practices such as worship, prayer, meditation, and self-reflection, (c) transcendence, (d) meaning and purpose, (e) hope and optimism, (f) moral and ethical values, and (g) love, compassion and service to others (see section 4.3.1.1) (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). The life forces and global events that could have been influential in the spiritual life task are highlighted where applicable.

### **9.3.1.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)<sup>40</sup>**

Helen was raised in a Jewish family, with both her paternal and maternal family being of Jewish East-European descent (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). However, no definitive biographical evidence was found regarding Helen's personal *belief* in a higher power during childhood. Helen later wrote: "we lit candles on Friday nights and had large gatherings for the Jewish festivals. My father and stepmother attended synagogue on the High Holy Days. I did not" (Suzman, 1993, p. 10). This statement constitutes the little information available from the literature regarding Helen's *spiritual practices* – another dimension of spirituality, according to the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000).

*Transcendence* refers to the sense of oneness, or connectedness, with nature, the universe and the Infinite (Myers et al., 2000). As suggested by Helen's lifelong enjoyment of numerous outdoors activities and the pleasure she derived from nature (as described in Chapter 2), her relationship with the natural environment would become an important aspect of spirituality throughout her lifespan. Although data regarding transcendence for the historical period of childhood is sparse, evidence suggests that the family's move to Parktown after her father's remarriage (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) could have made Helen more aware of life's aesthetic dimensions and laid the

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<sup>40</sup> During this historical period, evidence regarding one dimension of this life task, namely *meaning and purpose*, was too limited to support any inferences or descriptions.

foundations for her sense of connectedness with her natural environment. She later reflected on this transition:

Debbie's enthusiasm for beautiful possessions introduced a new dimension into my life. We moved into a sprawling old stone house in the suburb of Parktown, built by the famous English architect Sir Herbert Baker, with a large garden shaded by huge oak trees, and a tennis court. I loved the house, though it was freezing in winter... (Suzman, 1993, p. 8)

*Hope and optimism* constitute another dimension of the holistic wellness model's spirituality life task (Myers et al., 2000) and is seen as an expression of confident and hopeful expectation that the best possible outcome may occur (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). Helen was cheerful and confident at school and displayed an optimistic attitude (see section 2.2.1). As a high school student, Helen decided to enroll as a Bachelors of Commerce student at the University of the Witwatersrand, positive that she would eventually obtain a postgraduate law degree (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Helen's cultural upbringing and the religion of her family of origin (as discussed in section 2.2.1) seems to be influential in the development of her *moral and ethical values*. Helen later reflected on the impact her Jewish roots may have had on the internalisation of certain values and concluded: "there can be no doubt that my knowledge of the Jewish experience of persecution heightened my awareness of the evils of race discrimination" (Suzman, 1993, p. 10). Helen also wrote that there was "not much emphasis on Jewish philosophy or religion at home" (Suzman, 1993, p. 10), although she did have access to at least some Jewish literature, such as the Zionist Record (Suzman, 1993) as a child. The researcher therefore infers that Helen's upbringing may have included the moral and ethical values of the Jewish faith and philosophy, although her upbringing was not in strict accordance with traditional religious practices.

At school, young Helen found in the head nun, Sister Columba, a mentor whom she credited with instilling within her numerous values such as dedication, determination, punctuality, and conscientiousness (Suzman, 1993). Helen was also exposed to another belief system, Catholicism, during her school years which from the available evidence had a significant influence on Helen's ethical and moral development rather than on any experience of religiosity (see section 2.2.1). Furthermore, Helen's stepmother was also English-born (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993) and her exposure to cultures and belief systems different to those of her family of origin could have contributed to the development of other values, such as respect for diversity and human dignity. Helen recalled that she was taught to be well-

mannered and polite to everybody (Suzman, 1993), an attitude which was noted by one of her fellow learners, who commented that Helen had “the gift of appearing to be interested in the least of us” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 23). Her respectful and affirming interpersonal stance could be seen as the foundation for her future sense of *compassion* and dedication to being of *service to others*. Helen’s experience of a multicultural milieu was limited to her exclusively Anglo-Jewish home and school environment during this historical period (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). It would not be until much later that Helen came to realise the full impact her environment had had on her internalisation of the ethical values of human equality and respect for human dignity, particularly across racial lines (Suzman, 1993). The following section focuses on Helen’s spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.1.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)***<sup>41</sup>

Biographical data as presented in section 2.2.2 suggested that Helen’s decision to go to university might have initially given her a sense of *meaning and purpose*, as she was enthusiastic about eventually obtaining a postgraduate law degree (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). However, towards the end of this historical period, Helen approached her studies at Wits without much enthusiasm and eventually dropped out (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976), possibly indicating a decline in her sense of meaning and purpose.

Similarly, evidence suggests that Helen continued to experience a sense of *hope and optimism* at the start of this historical period (see section 2.2.2). She referred to her time at university as “carefree and wholly enjoyable” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). Her hopeful and positive attitude was, however, challenged by her father’s refusal of her request to continue her studies overseas. She recalled that after two international student tours, she “longed to remain in London after the second tour and finish my degree there. But Pa said ‘No.’ So back I came to Wits, dropped out before I graduated, and got married” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). The following section focuses on Helen’s spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

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<sup>41</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen’s degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *belief in a power beyond oneself*, (b) *spiritual practices*, (c) *transcendence*, (d) *moral and ethical values*, and (e) *love, compassion and service to others*.

### 9.3.1.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)

With regard to a *belief* in a power beyond oneself and *spiritual practices* during this historical period, it is worth noting the similarities between Helen and her husband's cultural and religious heritage (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), which implies that Helen's cultural and religious milieu remained mostly unchanged from the previous historical period. There is, as with the previous historical period, not sufficient evidence on Helen's experience of a belief in a higher power with no salient biographical accounts identified on which to base descriptions of Helen's wellness in this regard. As an adult, Helen's cultural and philosophical Jewish heritage was reflected in the fact that she understood Yiddish and would later assume a pro-Israel stance (Braude, 2009; Suzman, 1993). She reported that, when looking back over her life, she had never felt a sense of belonging to the Johannesburg Jewish community, never actively observed the Jewish faith, and that no Rabbi had ever had any significant influence in her life (Braude, 2009).

During this historical period, *transcendence* as a dimension of spirituality was again best reflected in Helen's life by a sense of connectedness with nature. Helen's active participation in leisure activities such as horse-riding and golf (see section 2.2.3) involved spending time outdoors and with animals. When the Suzmans built a house on an agricultural holding north of Johannesburg, she and Mosie placed emphasis on the natural surroundings by naming it Blue Haze – inspired by the morning mist in the valley their property overlooked (Suzman, 1993).

Evidence suggests that Helen derived a significant sense of *meaning and purpose* from her involvement in the war effort (see section 2.2.3). The sense of purpose she attached to joining the army seemed to have motivated her to return to university when she was not accepted for service: "I was most upset about being excluded from war service and decided that if I couldn't get into the army, I was at least going to complete my degree" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). After graduation, Helen was accepted at the War Supplies Board where she performed "boring but essential" duties (Suzman, 1993, p. 13). This description given by Helen implies that a sense of purpose could have been important to her continuing with her work there. Helen's dedication to a victory for the Allied Forces (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) could also have been an indication of another dimension of spirituality, namely *hope and optimism*, as it demonstrates a confident and hopeful expectation that the best possible outcome may occur in a situation (Myers et al., 2000; Witmer and Sweeney, 1992).

Evidence also suggests significant emphasis on the moral dimension of spirituality during this historical period (see section 2.2.3). In her personal life philosophy, Helen became increasingly more concerned with *moral and ethical values* as she focused more on issues regarding human rights, equality and respect for human dignity. During this period, Helen's heightened awareness of the crimes committed by Nazi Germany and the sense of purpose she experienced in her active involvement in the war effort (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) enabled her to further develop a framework of values as well as formulate a worldview that would guide her pursuit of meaning and purpose in life. She later wrote that "before and during World War II, I was much more concerned about the defeat of Nazism than about the disabilities of Black South Africans" (Suzman, 1993, p. 15). Evidence therefore suggests that the establishment of her values during this stage could have led to the application of these values in her later political interests.

According to Sweeney and Witmer (1991), the combination of optimism, inner harmony and values may also result in the promotion of the common good and social interest (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991), which Myers et al. (2000) referred to as the dimension of *love, compassion and service* to others. Helen's service at the War Supplies Board (Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) could therefore also most likely be seen as an expression of this spiritual dimension. The following section focuses on Helen's spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.1.4 Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)***<sup>42</sup>

Evidence suggests that Helen's experience of *transcendence* again found expression in her sense of connectedness with nature. When she settled in the Clifton Hotel during her first parliamentary session, she wrote home to Mosie, stating how rewarding she found the ocean view to be. She described how she enjoyed watching the sea at sunset whenever she had time to do so (Suzman, 1993). Furthermore, her uneasiness about her family's future in South Africa seemed to have been, in part, displaced by her ever growing sense of connectedness to her environment and her sense of purpose. In her memoirs, she recalled:

The natural beauty of the country was another compelling reason for staying in South Africa – its wonderful climate, the opportunities for playing golf and tennis, the magnificent beaches and its incomparable game parks. In short,

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<sup>42</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *belief in a power beyond oneself*, and (b) *spiritual practices*.

the sunny comforts of South Africa proved too good to leave. (Suzman, 1993, p. 18)

Helen's political involvement seemed to offer her an opportunity to express her sense of *meaning and purpose*, particularly related to her concerns over race relations (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She later reflected: "...I was a late starter in the field of race relations, but once I got going, I became utterly preoccupied with it" (Suzman, 1993, p. 15). Soon after Helen's parliamentary career began, evidence suggests that she experienced a new sense of purpose as an MP. Absorbed by the growing discord in the UP, Helen started to affiliate with like-minded MPs: "I have settled down now and feel that I am really fulfilling a very necessary function in the caucus" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 70).

Findings suggest that during this period in her lifespan, Helen's sense of *hope and optimism* was challenged by her environment, possibly to a greater degree than during the previous historical periods. One example of this is her reaction to the UP's defeat during the 1948 elections, when Helen felt "as if the world had come to an end" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 45). She later recalled: "Utter gloom pervaded our group. I thought despairingly, 'We will never get the Nats out.' That prediction held good for more than forty years" (Suzman, 1993, p. 17). Furthermore, due to the opposition to South Africa's involvement in the war and the 'anti-British' support for Germany, "...none could doubt the support for Nazism among Afrikaners throughout that period..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 17) and Helen felt "extremely uneasy at the prospect of such a government taking power" (p. 18). Her concerns in this regard had even lead to the consideration of emigration (see section 2.2.4). Helen was also initially reluctant about her parliamentary nomination (Rensberger, 1974; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She was far from enthusiastic about going to Parliament, and after a failed attempt at handing over her Houghton seat to another party member, Helen went to Cape Town to attend her fist session of Parliament, "shaking in my boots" (Suzman, 1993, p. 23). Possibly linked to the new sense of purpose she found in her work there, as already discussed in this section, Helen made every attempt to maintain an optimistic attitude during her early parliamentary years (see section 2.2.4). For example, despite intense intra-party conflict Helen had displayed a sanguine attitude towards the future in her 1954 Report Back speech, which was later referred to as a possible "...triumph of hope over experience" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 90), as Helen believed some positive changes were bound to happen (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen's hopes were crushed when

Strauss failed to oppose measures of separation and discrimination and intraparty conflict escalated (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). It seems as if Helen struggled to maintain optimism after the introduction of the Senate Bill in 1955 as she compared South Africa's position to that of Germany in the 1930s: "the destruction of our old Senate is of course not analogous to the burning down of the Reichstag, but it is certainly going to be packed to suffocation with Nationalist candidates..." (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 98). Even within her own party, Helen remained unhappy and admitted later that she had harboured doubts about whether she should stand again in the 1958 elections (Suzman, 1993).

The researcher infers from the findings on this historical period (see section 2.2.4) that Helen's sense of meaning and purpose in her political activities may also reflect the development of her *moral and ethical values*. During her years as a lecturer, Helen became increasingly more interested in ethical matters relating to human rights. Although initially interested in international politics, she became concerned about local political issues, especially South Africa's racially discriminatory laws and began to incorporate information on local segregation policies during her lectures (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Her work for the SAIRR had further developed her ethical awareness, as she became more aware of the impact of South Africa's racially discriminatory laws and the migratory labour system that resulted from it (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She also became more vocal about her political beliefs in Parliament, arguing that apartheid could not be supported (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen's opposition of apartheid legislation brought her to the centre of conflict when the majority of the UP supported the Separate Amenities Bill and she refused to vote in its favour. She referred to this as her "first act of defiance" (Suzman, 1993, p. 30), and it clearly reflects the consolidation of her values and belief system: "In somewhat unladylike language I told him what he could do with my political career, for nothing in the world would make me vote for a bill of that kind" (Suzman, 1993, p. 38).

The resignation of Dr. Bernard Friedman (see section 2.2.4) not only impacted upon Helen's sense of optimism, but also gave rise to an ethical dilemma for Helen. She felt uneasy at her decision not to resign as she had previously threatened after she was persuaded to remain as part of "a pressure group within the United Party to advance liberal values" (Suzman, 1993, p. 39). Even after the Houghton Divisional Committee passed a vote of confidence in her, Helen continued to engage in distressed reflection. She wrote to Joyce Harris "I have just gone through the worst week of my life... I know too that whatever decision I may have taken would have led to regrets and questions and ruminations"

(Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 102). It seemed as if Helen's resolution of her conflicting feelings was tied to her sense of purpose: "My original decision to enter politics had one main objective, to bolster up the sagging remains of the major Opposition Party. It is still my task to try and do that" (p. 102).

Helen's commitment to her Houghton constituents and the importance she attached to being accountable to them through her Report Back speeches (see section 2.2.4), as well as South Africa's people and her dedication to the opposition of the apartheid government (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993; Taljaard, 2009), could be seen as reflecting of her desire towards the promotion of the common good and social interest, which Sweeney and Witmer (1991) conceptualised as a dimension of spirituality they termed *love, compassion and service to others*. The following section focuses on Helen's spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.1.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)***<sup>43</sup>

*Transcendence* seemed to have been a constant source of wellness during this and the following two historical periods, according to the available evidence (see sections 2.2.5 – 2.2.7). Evidence suggested that Helen's experience of transcendence found expression through her sense of connectedness with nature as she reflected on the personal reward she had found in her relationship with nature throughout her life (see sections 2.2.3 and 2.2.7). From her memoirs it could be inferred that her sense of connectedness with nature was a continuous experience for her throughout her entire 36-year Parliamentary career (Suzman, 1993). Helen remarked that "...Cape Town's natural beauty – superb beaches, magnificent Table Mountain and lovely inland wine country – offers a great deal of enjoyment in leisure time" (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). When Parliament was not in session, Helen also enjoyed travelling to other parts of the country. Her sessions of trout fishing at the Hiddendale farm in the Eastern Transvaal were particularly inspiring, and she "...thought up some of my best bons mots for speeches as I walked along the banks, only to find I'd forgotten them when I got back to the cottage. But those excursions kept me sane..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). She also recalled the splendour of her end-of-year visits to a game farm on the borders of the Kruger National Park: "How many people have had the pleasure of seeing seventeen giraffe,

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<sup>43</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *belief in a power beyond oneself*, (b) *spiritual practices*, and (c) *love, compassion and service to others*.

in a semicircle not fifty yards away, blinking their long eyelashes, as I did on one such visit?” (Suzman, 1993, p. 276).

The biographical findings indicated that Helen was faced with significant challenges regarding *moral and ethical values* during this historical period (see section 2.2.5). For example, as the group of progressives battled with deciding whether or not they should resign their MP seats, Helen felt strongly that they should resign and fight by-elections as they had signed the 1953 pledges (Eglin, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). When the majority vote, however, decided that they should retain their seats, a distressed Helen was faced with having to reconcile her convictions with the realities facing the new party, which she accomplished by weighing the decision against the values on which she had initially based her political involvement (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The importance Helen placed on ethical values is also reflected later during this era, when she became increasingly upset by the unethical behaviour of the ruling party (see section 2.2.5). One such an incident was the treatment of a young leader of a protest march who Helen claimed had been promised an interview with the Minister of Justice if he could persuade the crowd to return home. He complied, and the crowd agreed. However, when the student reported for his meeting with the Minister, he was arrested in what Helen called “a deplorable act of treachery” (Suzman, 1993, p. 51). This incident also reflects her sense of *compassion* towards others.

Findings from this historical period (see section 2.2.5) suggest that Helen’s experience of *meaning and purpose* was most likely linked to her sense of moral and ethical values. For example, Helen’s work ethic was demonstrated by her continued presence at the UP’s Bloemfontein congress when she stayed on for the next day’s session only “...because she felt she had an obligation to her constituents...” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 153). In addition, any moral reservations Helen might have harboured about the retention of their parliamentary seats were dispelled in the aftermath of the Sharpeville killings (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Evidence suggests that Helen experienced a renewed sense of purpose following these grim events - she wrote that the 1960 and 1961 sessions were truly rewarding for the Progressive MPs: “During that tragic period we Progs were able to show our worth as a true opposition” (Suzman, 1993, p. 52).

Findings suggest that Helen’s sense of *hope and optimism* strengthened during this time, perhaps related to the Progressive Party’s firm stance against racial discrimination and the support her ideas therefore received within this new party (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). For example, Helen was adamant about the value of involving the country’s

youth in the political debate and seemed somewhat optimistic about the possibility of a different future for the next generation of South Africans, as she dedicated a great deal of time to addressing university students (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). However, the end of this historical era was marked by a disappointing election result for the Progressive Party and Helen's sense of optimism proved difficult to sustain (see section 2.2.5). On election night, Helen's once elated mood turned dysphoric:

Helen broke down and wept into the glass of whisky she was holding. 'I was the only one who really wanted to get out,' she recalled later. 'Politics made me sick. I saw no hope for the future but thought I might as well go down with flags flying. And now – one tiny little flag fluttered on by some 500 votes – and it was *me!*' (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 198)

The following section focuses on Helen's spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.1.6 The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)***<sup>44</sup>

Evidence suggests that Helen's sense of *meaning and purpose* was a significant contributing factor to her wellness in the spiritual life task during this historical period (section 2.2.6). As sole MP for her party, Helen saw herself as an honorary representative for all South Africans who have been denied a vote (Shain, 2006; Suzman, 1993). In a letter to Frances in June of 1962, she described the mental and physical demands of the session, interjected with what can be considered a reflection of her sense of purpose (identified through the uniqueness saliency indicator):

Have had a perfectly fiendish week in Parliament... I thought I'd pass out at the end of the second day, as I couldn't even leave the House for one second and we were sitting mornings too. My old bladder must have suffered irreparable damage. A Nat gent said to me in the lobby, "God, Helen, we can think of ten Progs we would rather have here instead of you – why did they pick on you?" To which I replied: "For that very reason." Looking back over the past five months, I really don't know how I have kept up this cracking pace..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 90)

Helen's sense of purpose seemed to extend to broader tasks than her daily parliamentary work and included visits to political prisoners (see section 2.2.6). Her aim with the visits was twofold: "...to make the authorities aware that someone was keeping a

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<sup>44</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *belief in a power beyond oneself*, and (b) *spiritual practices*.

watchful eye on the prisons, and for the prisoners to know that somebody from outside was interested in their welfare” (Suzman, 1993, p. 135). Additionally, Helen received numerous requests for assistance from many outside the Houghton constituency she represented (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Helen commented in her memoirs:

The volume of letters that poured through my mailbox in Cape Town and in Johannesburg was immense. They came from home and abroad, from the rich and the famous, the poor and unknown and the merely curious. Most of all, though, they came from ordinary people – people who believed that I could solve anything; that my position made it possible for me to work miracles... (Suzman, 1993, pp. 114-115)

Such examples from the biographical data also support Helen’s wellness in the dimension of *love, compassion and service to others* as it discussed her service to the broader South African community, beyond her duties as MP for Houghton (see section 2.2.6). Helen’s sense of purpose could have been nurtured through the positive reaction of much of the Black community to her work, especially after successful election campaigns (see section 2.2.6), as described by Dr Nkomo after her 1970 victory: “the silent majority danced in the streets of the townships” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 236). However, the researcher infers from the available evidence that Helen’s sense of purpose was challenged during the latter part of this historical period (see section 2.2.6). Helen admitted that her battle against apartheid had not generated the numerous changes she and other liberals were hoping for (Rensberger, 1974; Suzman, 1993).

A sense of *hope and optimism*, as another dimension of the spiritual life task, proved difficult to maintain during the last few years of this historical period, according to the available data (see section 2.2.6). In particular, the Progressive Party’s failure to make electoral progress had contributed to a “certain overall weariness in her” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 257). Helen had always argued that optimism is a prerequisite for being progressive, adding that “optimists are happier than pessimists” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 231), but had become keenly aware of the challenges facing her sense of hopefulness. She admitted that her “sunny nature” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 257) had become somewhat warped by her lonely battle in an increasingly hostile House and she feared that she would again find herself alone after the elections (see section 2.2.6). Although she made an effort to appear as optimistic and confident as ever in public, she intended to resign in the event of another sole victory in the 1974 elections in order to rather devote her energy to extra-political work, like that performed by the Black Sash (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Evidence suggests that Helen’s sense of hope and optimism were restored after the 1974 elections when

it was confirmed that the PP had won another seat in addition to that of Houghton (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Evidence suggests that during her solo years in Parliament, Helen's determination, despite the challenges she faced, could be linked to her set of *moral and ethical values*, especially regarding her duties, which she performed cognisant of the "heavy responsibility" (Suzman, 1993, p. 113) of representing all Progressive Party supporters throughout the country (see section 2.2.6). She later reflected that during the 13 years alone, the "conscientious ethic fostered by Sister Columba and the stamina inherited from Sam Gavronsky stood me in good stead" (Suzman, 1993, p. 112). Colin Eglin remembered that it was during this time that Helen "...displayed remarkable courage, skill and commitment to principle in opposing the slide towards authoritarianism" (Eglin, 2007, p. 102). Evidence suggests that she displayed what Witmer and Sweeney (1992) refers to as "beliefs about human dignity, human rights, and reverence for life" (p. 141), as evidenced by the many motions she introduced and the arguments she raised against oppressive apartheid legislation (see section 2.2.6). Evidence further suggests that Helen was committed to translating her ethical beliefs and moral convictions into practice, and was disappointed when other members of the opposition did not do the same – on occasion describing how she was "...watching a shiver run along the ranks of the United Party, looking for a spine to run up" (Suzman, 1993, p. 89). Helen continued to make her convictions known in spite of the various insults and threats she received during this historical period (Browde, 2009; Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), or some strong disagreements between herself and Party leader Colin Eglin (Eglin, 2006; Suzman, 1993) that resulted from her "increasingly uncompromising stand on current matters of principle" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 240). The following section focuses on Helen's spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.1.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)***<sup>45</sup>

During this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen continued to experience a sense of *meaning and purpose*, which extended beyond her parliamentary duties (see section 2.2.7). For example, Helen's consultations with local leaders continued during the 1980s and

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<sup>45</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *belief in a power beyond oneself*, (b) *spiritual practices*, and (c) *transcendence*.

she visited several communities in the Transvaal, Natal and Ciskei who were threatened with forced removals, taking up several cases on behalf of the residents there (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She also became involved in attempts to prohibit similar treatment of the inhabitants of informal settlements in Cape Town by driving out to the settlements at dawn to try to curb police action (Suzman, 1993). Her concern with the people far outside the constituency she represented, also highlighted wellness in another dimension of spirituality, namely *love, compassion and service to others*.

Evidence suggests that Helen's sense of *hope and optimism* was maintained more consistently during this historical period than during the previous one, despite the continued challenges she faced. For example, Helen maintained a low profile during the debate surrounding the Progressive Party merger, despite "her fears as to the course the diluted Party might take and her own personal misgivings about Harry Schwarz" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 264). Conflict between herself and Schwarz escalated, but it seems as if Helen remained optimistic about the potential of the PFP to fight for liberal values (see section 2.2.7).

For this historical period, the available data highlights *moral and ethical values* as a dimension of Helen's wellness in the spiritual life task (see section 2.2.7). One example is from her two nominations for chancellorship of Wits University (Suzman, 1993). Helen was expected to compete for votes from the same section of liberal Wits alumni against Alan Paton and suggestions were made that one of them should withdraw. Helen stated that both decided to remain in the running, based on their shared belief in democratic principle, and subsequently were defeated (see section 2.2.7). She stood firm on principle again a few years later when she was nominated for chancellorship for a second time, with Mandela as one of her opponents. Helen was again asked to withdraw her name from the contest, and again she refused on democratic principle. Both Helen and Mandela were defeated in the election (Suzman, 1993). Helen's ethical framework came under scrutiny when she suffered "an attack from an unexpected quarter" (Suzman, 1993, p. 180). Andrew Young, a Black American Ambassador to the United Nations, was reported to have said that the only South African he could not get along with, was Helen Suzman, owing to her 'paternal liberalism'. Helen recalled: "...The last thing I could be accused of was 'paternal liberalism.'" I have always been just as nasty to Blacks as I am to Whites, and that can be very nasty indeed! Simple justice was ever my motivation...." (Suzman, 1993, p. 182). The following section focuses on Helen's spiritual wellness during the next historical period.

### 9.3.1.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)<sup>46</sup>

Evidence regarding *transcendence* suggests that Helen's sense of connectedness with her natural environment remained an important aspect of her spiritual wellness. In particular, her love of animals and her fondness of gardening pointed towards her sense of connectedness with nature. As Helen's age progressively prohibited her from engaging in certain outdoor activities, she maintained her sense of connectedness through gardening and taking care of her pets (Forde, 2009b; Kane-Bernman, 2009).

The researcher argues that Helen's continued participation in politics reflects the sense of *meaning and purpose* she derived from her work and which did not seem to diminish after her retirement (see section 2.2.8). She received various accolades and honours during her retirement (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), which would have undoubtedly facilitated a sense of meaning and purpose regarding her life's work. After her retirement, she continued to support the ideals enshrined in the new South African Constitution and fight to advance human rights and civil liberties, both in South Africa and abroad (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Kadalie, 2010; Rotberg, 2011; Taljaard, 2009).

Her dedication to these ideals also reflects that her *moral and ethical values* remained a prominent dimension of her spiritual life task for the remainder of her life (see section 2.2.8). For example, Helen favoured Irene Menell as her successor because she believed she would uphold the values Helen had kept alive over her Parliamentary career (Suzman, 1993). Her commitment to her political ideals was evidenced by her continued political involvement and service to organisations which upheld the same beliefs she had fought for (see section 2.2.8). Later during this period, Helen reflected on the personal value of her work in her memoirs, highlighting the close relationship between her set of values and the sense of purpose she experienced through her years as an MP:

I think it was a tremendous privilege to have been in Parliament, to have played a part in keeping values alive which most of us believe in, to have allowed nothing to go by default, to have had eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations with the government about all its offensive actions, and especially to have been able to intercede on behalf of victims of apartheid or of police action by virtue of being an M.P. (Suzman, 1993, p. 272)

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<sup>46</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *belief in a power beyond oneself*, and (b) *spiritual practices*,

After Helen's death, many of the comments made by friends and colleagues highlighted her ethical sense and set of values, such as her concern with the wellbeing of the underprivileged, as well as her integrity, courage and empathy (Eglin, 2010; Elliot, Malvern & Clayton, 2009; Joubert, 2009; Kadalie, 2010; Leon, 2009; Oppenheimer, 2009; Zille, 2009). Wellness in a related dimension, namely *love, compassion and service to others*, could also be inferred from the biographical data. In addition to remaining politically active, Helen also retained her hands-on approach to assisting the needy. An example of this is when Helen became aware of the plight of a friend's former housekeeper, Henrietta Mqokomiso, who was being forced to relocate from her house in Alexandra. Helen:

...then set about the tough, tedious, grinding task of fighting Henrietta's corner, joining battle with municipal authorities to try to restore my old housekeeper's humble heritage. You'd have thought that, well into her 80s, she might have left the matter alone, or asked some sprightlier friend to take up Henrietta's cause. But once she had heard what was going on, she could not let it go, any more than she could let go of the apartheid bone once she had got a good, hard bit of it between her teeth. (Carlin, 2009)

In her memoirs, Helen engaged in a process of reflection on her sense of *hope and optimism*. She wrote that she had always considered optimism as an essential quality for the maintenance of a progressive stance (Suzman, 1993). Evidence therefore suggests that Helen saw her sense of hopefulness as linked to dimensions of other life tasks (i.e., self-direction, and specifically realistic thinking) and as such, she seemed to have engaged in active reflection on the matter. For example, Helen weighed her words carefully when she was asked for her thoughts on the future of South Africa, and replied: "I am not optimistic, but I am hopeful" (Oakland, 2005, p.15). The following section focuses on the discussion of Helen's wellness in the life task of self-direction throughout her lifespan.

### **9.3.2 Life task II: Self-direction**

In the holistic wellness model, the life task of self-direction refers to the ability of individuals to coordinate and direct their behaviour in a goal-directed manner (Myers et al., 2000). The competencies, or personal characteristics, inherent to this task form the spokes of the wheel of wellness (see Figure 4.1). The 12 dimensions of this life task (see section 4.3.1.2) are: (a) sense of worth, (b) sense of control, (c) realistic beliefs, (d) emotional awareness and coping, (e) problem-solving and creativity, (f) sense of humour, (g) nutrition, (h) exercise, (i) self-care, (j) stress management, (k) gender identity, and (l) cultural identity.

### 9.3.2.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)<sup>47</sup>

The available data suggests that the young Helen could have possibly developed a *sense of worth* and healthy self-esteem based on her secure attachment with her father, the care she received from her aunt Hansa, as well as her achievements both academically and in various sports during her school years (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). As Helen played hockey, excelled at swimming and had access to a tennis court at home (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), a relatively high degree of wellness in *exercise* could have been possible during this period. The evidence from Helen's school years (see section 2.2.1) suggests that she most likely experienced a *sense of control*, which may also be associated with her participation in physical exercise (Myers et al., 2000).

Helen's participation in sports during her school years (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) could also indicate the possible positive impact of exercise on *stress management*. Together with *emotional awareness and coping*, these two aspects feature prominently during this historical period (see section 2.2.1). For example, young Helen demonstrated a notable "burgeoning self-reliance" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17), which seemed to have protected her when the other children in her home excluded her from their games. Such was young Helen's ability to cope and her sense of independence that this exclusion seemed to have made little impression on young Helen (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), young Helen's curiosity and "quick and lively mind" (p. 17) had contributed to the strong bond between her and her father. From her early childhood, Samuel seemed to have taken great care to nurture Helen's curiosity and intellect, and firmly believed in the importance of providing her and her sister with a good education (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), possibly facilitating the development of her capacity for *problem-solving and creativity*. Academically, she was viewed by her teachers as a well above average learner (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976) and her enthusiasm for reading (Suzman, 1993) demonstrated her intellectual curiosity. Her family's cultural heritage contrasted by her attendance of a catholic school could have influenced Helen's sense of *cultural identity*. The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

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<sup>47</sup> During this historical period, evidence on some dimensions of this life task was too limited to support any inferences or descriptions, including (a) *realistic beliefs*, (b) *sense of humour*, (c) *nutrition*, (d) *self-care*, and (e) *gender identity*.

### 9.3.2.2 *The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)*<sup>48</sup>

A *sense of control* is one of the few aspects for which sufficient biographical data was found, as presented in section 2.2.2. During her student years, evidence suggests that Helen had found it challenging to direct her behaviour in a goal-directed manner, as she found the social activities on campus pleasantly distracting (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She experienced her years at university as carefree and enjoyable and recalled: “I was a keen participant in innumerable faculty dances, which may have been one of the contributory factors to my failure in the exams at the end of the third year” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). Furthermore, she might have encountered challenges to sustaining a sense of control when her father refused that she complete her degree overseas: “So back I came to Wits, dropped out before I graduated, and got married” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). This example also contains one of Alexander’s (1988, 1990) indications of saliency, namely, the omission of affect. From this, the researcher postulates that Helen may have had some difficulty during this time regarding *emotional awareness and coping* as an aspect of self-direction. Another hypothesis from the holistic wellness framework regarding Helen’s academic failure, might be that her abilities regarding *stress management* was not yet sufficient to address the demands of tertiary education. The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

### 9.3.2.3 *Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)*<sup>49</sup>

During this period, Helen was eager to join the war effort, but her *sense of control* over the degree of her participation was challenged by her exclusion from military service shortly after giving birth (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen later wrote: “...if I couldn’t get into the army, I was at least going to complete my degree” (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). According to Witmer and Sweeney (1992), a sense of control involves an attitude of persistence and pro-active effort and the researcher proposes that her return to university might indicate an attempt at regaining a sense of control. Helen’s decision to

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<sup>48</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen’s degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *sense of worth*, (b) *realistic beliefs*, (c) *problem-solving and creativity*, (d) *sense of humour*, (e) *nutrition*, (f) *exercise*, (g) *self-care*, (h) *gender identity*, and (i) *cultural identity*.

<sup>49</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen’s degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *nutrition* and (b) *self-care*.

return to university could also be interpreted as an example of other competencies central to self-direction, such as *emotional awareness and coping, problem-solving and creativity, and realistic beliefs*. She returned to Wits in 1941, completed all her unfinished subjects in one year and after graduation, was accepted at the War Supplies Board, where she continued throughout the war (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Her success at university during this time suggests a greater developed capacity for self-direction than was evident during the previous historical period. Despite the additional demands of marriage and parenting, Helen was now able to achieve and surpass her academic goals by obtaining first class passes in both of her major subjects (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). This could have affirmed her confidence in her academic abilities and, coupled with her work for the War Supplies Board, could have contributed to her *sense of worth*.

The data gathered on this historical period also highlights Helen's *sense of humour*. For example, she later wrote in her memoirs: "Once I joked that I had married Mosie because he had a horse I coveted. A surprising number of people took this remark seriously" (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). Evidence suggests that Helen continued to partake in positive health practices as she remained physically active during this historical period through her many leisure activities such as horse-riding, golf and tennis (see section 2.2.3). Her enjoyment of these activities also highlights possible wellness in *physical exercise* and *stress management*.

Two additional aspects of the life task of self-direction, namely *gender identity* and *cultural identity*, featured more prominently in data on this historical period (see section 2.2.3). Helen's marriage and becoming a mother to two daughters (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993), might indicate some degree of satisfaction with her gender. Her frustration at being excluded from war service based on her status as the mother of an infant (Suzman, 1993), might have also initiate a process of self-definition of gender and gender role behaviours. The War also possibly brought about a more conscious awareness of cultural identity as Helen's eagerness to join the war effort (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) could have indicated a possible affiliation with the national and international Jewish community. This also occurred during a time when many South African Jews became aware that some Afrikaner Nationalists had become sympathetic to the cause of the Third Reich, and that anti-Semitic violence in Europe was being ignored by the Nationalist media (Mendelsohn & Shain, 2008). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

#### 9.3.2.4 Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)<sup>50</sup>

Evidence suggests that in meeting the challenges inherent to her work (see section 2.2.4), Helen had numerous opportunities to further develop a *sense of worth*. For example, she received recognition from the executive of the SAIRR and from the United Party, which culminated in Helen's nomination as candidate for Houghton and her election to Parliament (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). After her electoral success, her father was beaming with pride (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976), but Helen's sense of confidence was challenged (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She indicated her doubts to another friend some time later: "Now I've got to do something to justify the confidence people have placed in me: the burning question is, can I? ...Anyway I shall try" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 62). A sense of worth, also referred to as positive self-esteem, has been found to correlate with more effective coping with stress (Witmer et al., 1983). Data from this historical period revealed that, as Helen started to affiliate with like-minded MPs (and therefore employing the utilisation of social support as a *stress management* strategy), she also began considering her role in the party to be a necessary one, possibly reflecting an increased sense of worth at the time (see section 2.2.4). For example, in a letter she wrote to Mosie soon after moving to Cape Town, Helen reflected positively on her ability to cope with the stress inherent to her new career and her belief that she was playing a worthy role in her party (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen's new work environment also created opportunities for intellectual stimulation, leading to greater wellness regarding *problem solving and creativity*.

Prior to Helen's parliamentary career, her lectures on the irrationality of the economic structure of that era, as well as her arguments to the SAIRR for change (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), can be considered a reflection of Helen's capacity for *realistic beliefs*. Her students soon became aware of her "solid core of realistic thinking" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 36). Helen was also realistic about the challenges that the UP would face as an opposition party and had correctly assumed that the viewpoints of many of her parliamentary colleagues would be in direct conflict with her own (Suzman, 1993).

Research findings indicate that during this historical period, Helen's *sense of control* could have been challenged by the political climate in which she worked (see section 2.2.4).

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<sup>50</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *nutrition* and (b) *exercise*, and (c) *self-care*.

Examples from the data highlight a particular sequence of events in this regard: these event sequences begin with Helen's efforts at effecting change in line with her set of values, followed by disappointment or frustration, and ending with Helen's continued or redirected efforts at achieving her goals. One example of this pertains to her political involvement with the UP. Helen had established the Milner Park Branch in an attempt to encourage student political involvement. However, the branch had a high membership turnover and after the UP's 1948 defeat, Helen began feeling that it was a waste of time (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She then "bullied, nagged and cajoled" (Suzman, 1993, p. 47) her friends until they helped her establish the Hyde Park Mixed Branch. The researcher argues that such event sequences could be seen as demonstrative of Helen's striving to maintain a sense of control.

The research findings also shed light on Helen's *emotional awareness and coping* as well as *stress management* (see section 2.2.4). For example, Helen was keenly aware of her anxiety when she went to Cape Town to attend her fist session, "shaking in my boots" (Suzman, 1993, p. 23). She also mentioned the emotional effect that Verwoerd, who became Prime Minister in 1958, had had on her: "I have to admit Verwoerd was the only man who has ever scared me stiff..." (Suzman, 1993, pp. 65). When she found herself uprooted in Cape Town, she coped with the loneliness by writing home to Mosie (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993), mentioning to him some of her other coping strategies: using her limited free time enjoying a quiet drink in the late afternoon and watching the sea at sunset. Evidence suggests that Helen had felt able to cope with the separation and busy schedule and that she relied on social support, particularly from her family, as a stress management strategy during this historical period (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993, 2006 ).

Helen similarly used her *sense of humour* during this historical period to assist her in the life task of self-direction. Humour helped her attract students to her classes, as she "could keep a class roaring with laughter" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 36) and later she kept herself entertained during her Parliamentary work by, for example, "comparing Malan to Humpty-Dumpty, whom in fact he physically resembled, as I listened to him..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 29). Helen also used humour in her arguments in Parliament, such as during the debate on the 1957 State-Aided Institutions Bill:

During our argument, Sannie drew herself up to her full height, which wasn't very high, and she flung out her bosom, which was very large, and said, "Well, I don't know about Mrs. Suzman, but when I go to a museum, I don't like it if some strange Black man rubs himself up against me." I asked quietly, "Don't you mind if some strange White man rubs himself up against

you?” There was a lot of laughter, and Sannie didn’t talk to me for the rest of that session. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 39-40)

Evidence suggests that Helen could have experienced wellness regarding *gender identity* and *cultural identity* during this, and subsequent, historical periods, despite the little support she experienced for her gender and culture (see sections 2.2.4 – 2.2.7). Helen’s later recollections regarding her gender and cultural identity in her memoirs and during interviews were not specific to any historical period in particular, but can rather be seen as characteristic of her sense of identity in these aspects throughout her adult life. Throughout her career, Helen remained in the cultural and gender minority in her work environment, in which derogatory comments towards her seemed to have been tolerated by the majority (see section 2.2.4 – 2.2.7). She gave her maiden speech in Parliament on the subject of gender discrimination and although Helen participated in every debate regarding women’s rights, she did not make gender discrimination a major priority during her career (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). She noted that, “because I was a woman engaged in what was pre-eminently a male occupation in chauvinistic South Africa” (Suzman, 1993, p. 25), she was often asked how she managed to combine motherhood with her political career and whether she experienced being a woman as a disadvantage in Parliament. In response to the first question, Helen wrote in her memoirs that she “...did not have the feelings of guilt that I am told often plague working mothers” (Suzman, 1993, p.26), despite her initial reluctance to run for Parliament because of her children (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, Suzman, 1993). She addressed the second question as follows:

Not at all. I concentrated on making well-prepared and factually accurate speeches, and gradually won the respect of the House, albeit on occasion with unsolicited effects. Once, after a speech on economics, I was accosted by an M.P. who had said to me in the lobby, “Helen, you’ve got a man’s brain!” His was not a brain I admired. (Suzman, 1993, p. 27)

Helen’s religious and cultural heritage became the focus of many attacks against her during this historical period (see section 2.2.4). According to Strangwayes-Booth (1976), Helen “drew the most concentrated fire from the Government benches” (p. 143), partly because of her gender and cultural background, but “more probably because they recognized that she had made a decision to take an uncompromising stand against apartheid...” (p. 143). Helen became a target for increasingly more frequent verbal assaults from more conservative MPs (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). During this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen became better at coping with such attacks and began

using humour strategically: “She was also learning that riposte and mimicry were far more effective weapons than the furious outbursts of temper which had marked her early political career” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; p. 88). Helen reflected on the effect of her gender and cultural background on the way in which she was viewed by her colleagues:

A number seemed to regard me with amazed fascination. Most of them had large, docile wives brought up in Calvinist fashion to be respectful to their parents and to their husbands. Here was this small, cheeky female with a sharp tongue which she used without regard to rank or gender. Some were shocked, but a few were amused and one or two actually liked me. (Suzman, 1993, p. 114)

Evidence suggests that Helen’s wellness regarding cultural and gender identity remained stable throughout the rest of her lifespan, even though comments on them did not feature as prominently in the data on other historical periods. In addition, during this historical period as well as those to follow, Helen associated her opposition to apartheid with the Jewish culture, based on the Jewish experience of persecution:

I sometimes had occasion socially... when people used to say proudly, ‘I support the National Party,’ to say: ‘You should be ashamed of yourself! How can you? You’re a Jew, and you know what Jews went through with persecution in Russia, with pogroms, unable to move freely, no mobility! How can you support a government which is doing exactly the same thing to the Black people?’ This was not a comparison with the Holocaust – I was comparing apartheid to the treatment of Jews in Russia. (Braude, 2009, p. 3)

The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.2.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)<sup>51</sup>***

During this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen derived a *sense of worth* from her parliamentary work as a member of the new Progressive Party (see section 2.2.5). As a result, Helen and her fellow party members were convinced of the legitimacy of their decision to break away from the UP following the tragic aftermath of the Sharpeville shootings (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Cognisant of the fact that newspapers retained the right to print all reports delivered in Parliament, Helen had jumped at the opportunity to visit detainees in prison, adamant to collect firsthand information and to report

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<sup>51</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen’s degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *nutrition* and (b) *exercise*, (c) *self-care*, (d) *gender identity*, and (e) *cultural identity*.

her findings to Parliament (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). During a time of significant political tension and the assumption of widespread powers by the ruling party, her strategy could therefore be seen as an attempt at maintaining some *sense of control* in her opposition to the apartheid government, as well as an indication of her abilities at *problem-solving and creativity*.

During this historical period, Helen's often uncompromising stand on matters of principle was juxtaposed with the need for *realistic thinking* (see section 2.2.5). One such an occasion occurred upon their resignations from the UP, when Helen and John Cope felt strongly that they should fight by-elections but the majority of the new Progressive Party, however, voted that they should retain their seats. Helen was distressed, but acknowledged that they did in fact need time to draft their policy and develop the structures necessary for success in the elections (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

With regard to *emotional awareness and coping*, this historical period was a time of significant emotional upheaval for Helen (see section 2.2.5). She had angrily stormed out of the second day of the Bloemfontein congress and during the meeting of the progressive group, her mood was one of "depression and disillusionment" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 158). During the drive back to Johannesburg, Helen repeatedly exclaimed to her companions, "Now I've done it! Now I've done it!" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 159). She also experienced conflicting emotions on the Progressive Party's first election night with her mood cycling between euphoria and despondency (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She demonstrated awareness of the emotional toll of this historical era, and described this time as both the happiest and the "tensest and most bitter", of her parliamentary career (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 189). In addition to coping with her emotions, wellness with regard to *stress management* was suggested by the biographical data on this historical period (section 2.2.5). Evidence suggests that one of Helen's stress management strategies included social support, as reflected by her recollection: "the bonhomie and team spirit more than compensated for the physical discomfort" (Suzman, 1993, p. 50). In addition to social support, Helen also seemed to rely on her *sense of humour*, which had again featured in the biographical data on this period, for example her comments following the assassination attempt on Verwoerd (see section 2.2.5). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

### 9.3.2.6 *The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)*<sup>52</sup>

Helen felt that she not only represented her own constituents during this historical period, but all citizens who have been denied a parliamentary representative (Lewsen, 1991; Shain, 2006; Suzman, 1993). Helen's career could therefore have promoted a *sense of worth*. It could be argued that this could also have been promoted by the positive feedback she received on the manner in which she performed her duties (see section 2.2.6). Numerous people approached Helen for assistance during this historical period with a variety of problems, ranging from invalid passbooks and confiscated passports, to financial, legal, personal, and employment problems. She commented in her memoirs: "There was nothing South Africans (and sometimes non-South Africans from neighbouring countries), Black and White, seemed to believe that the Member for Houghton could not put right. Sometimes I could. Often I couldn't" (Suzman, 1993, pp. 115). The biographical data suggested that Helen occasionally became frustrated with her lonely battle and, as she became keenly aware of the limitations to what she was able to achieve, she faced challenges to her sense of worth (see section 2.2.6). For example, asked by a reporter at the time what her career accomplishments were, Helen stated that her then 21-year battle against apartheid had not generated the numerous changes the liberals were hoping for. She cynically added: "It was probably my incessant nagging that resulted in policemen having to wear identity numbers... It is useful to know who is hitting you on the head with a rubber truncheon" (Rensberger, 1974, p. 3). Years later, in her memoirs, Helen reflected more positively on the impact she had had during this historical period: "My questions – and the answers to them – elicited a great deal of useful information. They provided a considerable volume of facts and figures which were used by researchers (and also, no doubt, by anti-apartheid organizations worldwide)" (Suzman, 1993, p. 113).

Evidence for Helen's *sense of control* during this historical period, focused mostly on aspects of her career (see section 2.2.6). For example, her prison visits continued during this historical period, and can again be seen as a proactive effort at gaining a sense of control. Helen was able to report her findings on prison conditions to Parliament and to exert increasing influence on prison authorities (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Lipton, 2007; Suzman, 1993). Helen had an equally practical approach to regaining a sense of

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<sup>52</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *nutrition* and (b) *exercise*, (c) *self-care*, (d) *gender identity*, and (e) *cultural identity*.

control when dealing with abusive telephone calls: “My method of dealing with these late-night callers was simple: I blew a loud blast down the phone with the shrill whistle I kept handy... I seldom heard the same voice again” (Suzman, 1993, p. 116). In a similar fashion during a parliamentary session, Helen moved for a physical division in the House: “So there was I, sitting alone in a sea of empty green benches, while the whole of the Official Opposition crossed the floor and packed themselves in among the Nationalist MPs. It was a dramatic sight” (Suzman, 1993, p. 93). Through this strategy, Helen succeeded in demonstrating the UP’s failure to oppose apartheid legislation (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) and possibly represented an attempt to maintain a sense of control under frustrating conditions.

The demands made by her environment and her overburdened schedule necessitated the development of coping strategies for *stress management*. Evidence suggests that Helen was able to identify stressors, which included the great demands made on her time, the expectations of the people she represented, as well as the public’s perception of her as the *de facto* leader of the PP (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Evidence suggests that Helen’s stress management strategies during this historical period included the utilisation of the social support available to her, such as her friends and family, other PP members, as well as her secretary and researcher (see section 2.2.6), and assertive communication, for example by confronting Botha directly after the threats he made following Verwoerd’s assassination, and communicating clearly any differences of opinion between herself and her party leader, Colin Eglin (Eglin, 2006; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Apart from the value of using her *sense of humour* to cope with the challenges she faced in her professional life, evidence suggests that Helen had also utilised her sense of humour in maintaining a good relationship with her father despite their political differences (Suzman, 1993).

Helen’s wellness with regard to *emotional awareness and coping* reflected the significant challenges she faced in her environment. She recalled how, when she first entered Parliament as her party’s only MP, she missed the support of friends such as Harry Lawrence. She wrote: “He would have helped me cope, for example, with one Nat MP who sat close by hissing “neo-communist, sickly humanist” every time I spoke in the House” (Suzman, 1993, pp. 113-114). In her personal life, Helen was faced with the process of grieving for her father, who passed away in 1965 (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen also had to cope with the emotional impact the numerous unsuccessful PP election campaigns had on her, stating on one occasion that she was “...more than a little bitter at the thought of another five years alone...” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 226). Evidence suggests that her

frustration grew as the solo years progressed (see section 2.2.6). In 1970, the PP again failed to defeat the any other UP candidates, and Helen cried out: “Here I go, for another five years, with that bloody mob” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 236). The unremitting nature of her work was taking its toll on Helen, who by the end of this historical period, experienced significant exhaustion and frustration (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). This decline in wellness in some of the aspects of the self-direction life task was overturned, as Helen’s mood improved dramatically on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1974. She referred to this as “the most exciting night of my life – politically, that is!” (Suzman, 1993, pp. 167-168). As the result that came in confirming that the PP had won another seat in addition to that of Houghton, Helen was elated: “Selma and I threw our arms around each other, cried “Hooray!” and waltzed up and down the schoolroom, to the horror of our opponents” (Suzman, 1993, p. 168).

Helen’s decision to resign if the PP failed to send an additional nominee to Parliament during the 1974 elections (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) is also indicative of Helen’s wellness with regard to *realistic beliefs*. Apart from the strain of being the party’s only parliamentary representative, Helen “...felt that the effort and financial cost of keeping a party functioning which could win only one seat after thirteen years of struggle, were excessive” (Suzman, 1993, p. 166). Furthermore, Helen had a rational manner of thinking about the sexist and anti-Semitic remarks from some of her colleagues. During a Report Back speech, she commented:

...After 11 years in Parliament one becomes hardened to this sort of sophistry. I pay as little attention to it as I do to anti-Semitic remarks from a few Nat bird-brains on back benches, or to Mr Greyling’s rumbles of neo-communist and sickly humanist, or to Mr Blaar Coetzee’s strident cry of ‘liar’. They are all in the same category – attempting to substitute argument by abuse...” (Lewsen, 1991, p. 49)

The final dimension of the self-direction life task during this historical period that featured prominently in the biographical data is that of *problem-solving and creativity*. Helen’s parliamentary duties, such as the questions she posed to the House, speeches she delivered and long list of motions she introduced, as well as her extra-parliamentary activities (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Shain, 2006; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993; Taljaard, 2009), most likely required a significant ability for problem-solving during this historical period. The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

### 9.3.2.7 *Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)*<sup>53</sup>

Helen's worth as an MP was recognised by various organisations and groups during this historical period (see section 2.2.7), possibly fostering her own *sense of worth*. For example, Helen received various honorary doctorate degrees and human rights awards, and was nominated for chancellorship of Wits University as well as for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Kadalie, 2010; Pimstone, 2005; Shain, 2006; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993; Taljaard, 2009). Her *sense of control* showed a positive correlation with her sense of worth during this historical period, as seen in examples such as the Soweto uprising. In the aftermath of the events, Helen asked for permission to visit the political detainees and felt that they appreciated those visits from her (Suzman, 1993). She also proudly recalled how she was able to intervene on behalf of protesters on different occasions and in so doing prevented their arrest and detention (Suzman, 1993). Evidence further suggests that Helen's sense of worth, as well as her sense of control, did not remain unchallenged during this historical period (see section 2.2.7). She found the youth leaders to be a resistant audience during her township meetings and she feared that "things had gone too far for White liberals to be able to play any role other than continuing to put pressure on the government..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 173). Helen's relationship with students at liberal English-medium universities also began to deteriorate during this time (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). She later wrote: "I felt this to be a sad reflection of what had been a close relationship between myself and the students in earlier years – a total rejection of shared liberal values, now replaced by radicalism" (Suzman, 1993, p. 178). When she visited Australia in 1975 against the backdrop of increasingly strained relations between South Africa and the international community, she felt like a "political football" (Suzman, 1993, p. 185). Helen raised the case of Robert Sobukwe in Parliament every year, "but to little avail" (Suzman, 1993, p. 215). She also discovered during this period that the government had been tampering with her mail. Helen asked for a parliamentary select committee to investigate what she considered to be a breach of parliamentary privilege, a request which was denied (Suzman, 1993).

Helen's duties and extra-parliamentary activities during this period continued to suggest that her work was intellectually stimulating (see section 2.2.7). Evidence suggests

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<sup>53</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *nutrition* and (b) *exercise*, (c) *self-care*, (d) *gender identity*, and (e) *cultural identity*.

that her environment, therefore, continued to require a degree of wellness regarding *problem-solving and creativity*. A related aspect of the self-direction life task, namely a capacity to formulate *realistic beliefs*, is also suggested by the data on this historical period (see section 2.2.7). For example, Helen was able to realistically predict the impact of her actions and opinions, such as her friendship with Winnie Mandela, her stance on sanctions, and the changes in the Progressive Party (Kadalie, 2010; Suzman, 1993; Suzman, September 2005).

Helen's *sense of humour* seems to have been a significant area of wellness in the life task of self-direction during this historical period (see section 2.2.7). Evidence suggests that humour also enabled Helen to cope with the demanding nature of election campaigns as she reflected on the lighter side of her election experiences: "Some were very hostile to the Progressive Party, especially those who said, "We staunch U.P., we nonpolitical," and slammed the door in one's face. (That lot never seemed to have any use for verbs or for us Progs.)" (Suzman, 1993, p. 61). Helen also jokingly recalled that when Colin Eglin, who she described as a "huge man with hands like hams" (Suzman, 1993, p. 169), joined her in the front bench during this historical period, she anxiously anticipated being struck unconscious at any moment as he delivered his speeches next to her. She remarked: "Nationalist Party M.P.s on the other side of the House would watch this scenario with fascination and hope" (p. 169). Helen's ability to use humour had a positive effect on some of her collegial relationships, such as with Minister Le Grange (see section 2.2.7). He, for example, sent her a pair of braces after her petticoat had slipped down during a parliamentary speech (Suzman, 1993). Although she and Le Grange had many hostile exchanges in Parliament, they were on better terms on a personal level than she had been with his predecessors (Suzman, 1993). Their mutual courteous attitude seems to have been marked by the use of humour:

On my one visit to the Soviet Union in June 1982, I could not resist sending a postcard to Le Grange. It read; "There is plenty of law and order here – I am coming home." It was addressed to "Dear Comrade Louis," and I signed it "Kind regards, Comrade Helen." (Suzman, 1993, p. 242)

Other dimensions of self-direction evident from the available data are *emotional awareness and coping*. Evidence suggests that Helen experienced a broad range of emotions during this historical period. For example, she reported feeling excited about being joined by more MPs, irritated and embarrassed by Harry Schwartz's outbursts and comments, fearful about the course of her party and deeply upset over the passing of resolutions which she felt threatened the values of the Progressive Party (see section 2.2.7).

Apart from coping with emotional experiences, Helen's life task of self-direction also required wellness with regard to *stress management*. Evidence suggests that her stress management strategies likely involved social support, as Helen enjoyed having friends with her in Parliament (Lewson, 1991), especially "to talk to, to laugh with, consult with, have a drink with, even to argue with..." and to receive their "hear hears" when she sat down after making a speech (Suzman, 1993, p. 170). Another second strategy involved assertive communication. Examples presented in section 2.2.7 included when Helen wrote to Buthelezi about his comments, visited Andrew Young to discuss his statement about her, and confronted Botha when he threatened her during an argument: "I'm not frightened of you. I have never been and I never will be. I think nothing of you... You have been trying to bully me for twenty-eight years and you have not yet succeeded" (Suzman, 1993, p. 199). Helen also took part in various activities which she experienced as relaxing. For example, Helen commented about her sessions of trout fishing, saying: "those excursions kept me sane..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of self-direction during the next historical period.

#### **9.3.2.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)<sup>54</sup>**

The first characteristic aspect of the life task of self-direction investigated for this historical period is *emotional awareness and coping*. The significant emotional experience of retirement (Suzman, 1993) illuminates Helen's wellness in this regard. Helen regarded her long career as personally rewarding and added: "Certainly there have been times of intense frustration, and there have been times of crashing boredom, but there have also been some very interesting times" (Suzman, 1993, p. 270). After her retirement, evidence suggests that Helen's decreasing mobility had a significant emotional impact on her (see section 2.2.8). For example, listening to *Bandstand* on Saturday nights made her feel "...very sad... I used to be a very good dancer. I mean, a real dancer" (Forde, 2009a, p. 15). Frances (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013) recalled that even though her father had recovered enough from the stroke to continue with his private practice for a while, "he was not his old self at all" and was eventually rendered virtually blind. She added that Helen had found this sad time difficult to deal with and busied herself with the writing of her memoirs and overseas visits. There is unfortunately no direct evidence from the biographical data on

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<sup>54</sup> During this historical period, biographical data on the following dimensions did not indicate any changes to Helen's degree of wellness in this life task: (a) *nutrition* and (b) *exercise*, (c) *self-care*, (d) *gender identity*, and (e) *cultural identity*.

Helen's emotional experiences following Mosie's death (see section 2.2.8). Given the close nature of their relationship (see sections 2.2.3 - 2.2.8), however, it can be assumed that she had to work through the emotional process of grief during this historical period. At her final Report Back meeting, Helen found it difficult to take leave of those who had supported her for so many years and described the meeting as "... a somewhat sad and emotional occasion" (Suzman, 1993, p. 272). Her appreciation for the humorous contribution of her friend, Pieter Dirk Uys, to the event (see section 2.2.8) highlights the important role of humour in coping with stress. Her own *sense of humour* was also noted by those around her (see section 2.2.8). For example, Colin Eglin fondly recalled their many dinner parties, stating that even though Helen wasn't much of a cook, she was a wonderful hostess and her ability to mimic people was unmatched (Joubert, 2009).

Helen's *sense of worth* was also evident from the data on this historical period (see section 2.2.8), including her reflection on her accomplishments during her career (Suzman, 1993). Helen's sense of worth could have also been facilitated by the numerous acknowledgements and honours she received throughout her retirement (see section 2.2.8), such as being appointed as the SAIRR president, an Honorary Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire and being awarded honorary doctorates, human rights awards and the South African National Order of Merit (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993). Helen's own recognition of the worth of her struggle for justice and human rights became evident during one particular tribute – when she was awarded the annual humanitarian award by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies in 2007. Suzman's response to what she regarded to be a belated honour was a blunt "it's about time" (Braude, 2009, p. 1). Despite her own sense of worth, Helen was aware that her contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle were not universally appreciated. For example, the contributions she had made during her political career were honoured during a small ceremony of acceptance of her portrait in Parliament. She later wrote: "Of course it is a moot point whether my portrait, or the others, will survive in the new South Africa. They may well be relegated to the cellar" (Suzman, 1993, p. 275).

Helen seemed to have had a similarly practical approach to her own mortality, which could be seen as indicative of her maintained propensity for *realistic beliefs*, another dimension needed for wellness in the life task of self-direction. Earlier during this historical period, when writing her memoirs, Helen's capacity for formulating realistic beliefs about her experiences was evident. For example, when she reflected on her childhood and the peculiar behaviour of her aunt Hansa, Helen demonstrated her empathic attitude by explaining that

Hansa was “probably deeply upset at her childlessness in a household containing other people’s children” (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). Another example of Helen’s realistic and pragmatic attitude, was how she agonised for months over finding good homes for her three dogs in the event of her death, a black Labrador named Benjie, and two Shih Tzus named Chang and Joey (Forde, 2009b; Thakali, 2009). Forde reported that Helen’s approach to receiving gifts was similarly practical. Helen had told her how she appreciated the flowers Mandela and his wife, Graca, had sent her on her birthday, stating: “They know not to buy me gifts. What would I do with a gift at my age, because I’m going to die soon?” Her response was similar when asked what she would like for Christmas: “No dear. Nothing, I’m shedding, not hoarding” (Forde, 2009b).

Helen’s aforementioned uncertainty regarding her political legacy in future could also be seen as an indication of an instance during this historical period where she experienced a diminished *sense of control*. However, Helen remained politically active, retaining her hands-on approach. One such an example from the data is when Helen became aware of the plight of a friend’s former housekeeper, Henrietta Mqokomiso, who was being forced to relocate from her house in Alexandra (Carlin, 2009). At times, especially towards the end of this historical period, Helen’s mobility diminished, and possibly also her sense of control. In the time before her death, family and close friends observed that she seemed intensely frustrated by her failing health and increasing dependence on the assistance of others (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Forde, 2009b; Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009).

Evidence suggests that Helen continued to use leisure activities and social support as strategies for *stress management*. For example, she enjoyed spending time in her garden, with her pets, watching sports and entertaining friends (Forde, 2009; Kane-Bernman, 2009; Suzman, 1993). Helen’s continued public and political presence during this time (see section 2.2.8), suggest that she continued to engage in intellectually stimulating activities. Apart from facilitating a sense of worth and control, therefore, this could have maintained her wellness regarding *problem-solving and creativity*. The following section focuses on the discussion of Helen’s wellness in the life task of work.

### **9.3.3 Life task III: Work and Leisure**

In line with Adler’s (1927/1992) view of work as including any action that benefits others, the definition of work in the holistic wellness model also included activities outside

formal employment, such as childrearing, homemaking, educational activities, volunteer work, and so forth (Adler, 1927/1992; Myers et al., 2000). Sweeney and Witmer (1991) further expanded the concept of work to also include childhood play and adult leisure activities (see section 4.3.1.3). For the purposes of this research, therefore, the available data was analysed according to the dimensions of (a) formal employment, (b) unpaid work, (c) educational activities, and (d) leisure activities.

### **9.3.3.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)**

During this historical period, Helen's wellness in the life task of work would mostly have entailed mastery of her schoolwork (*educational activities*). Her enthusiasm to learn was evident from her intense desire to read as soon as she was functionally literate – Helen recalled desperately rummaging around in search of reading material at home and enjoying the well-stocked library at the convent (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Secondly, her teachers viewed her as a well above average learner (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976) and her father adored her “quick and lively mind” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). Helen later attributed her good memory to the “teaching by rote” method used by the nuns (Suzman, 1993, p. 9) and credited Sister Columba with instilling in her certain values related to work, such as being punctual and conscientious: “To this day, when I shirk doing something I know I ought to do, the ghost of Sister Columba, the head nun, whispers in my ear, ‘do it, child,’ and I do” (p. 9). Years later, Judge O'Regan said during the 2011 Helen Suzman Memorial Lecture: “I imagine that Sr Columba was perhaps the first and last person that Helen ever obeyed automatically” (O'Regan, 2011, p. 2).

*Leisure activities* are also important for the experience of wellness in this life task (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991). As a young child, Helen was always excluded from the “games and secrets” of the other children in her house (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17), and therefore possibly had to engage in solitary play activities. At school, however, evidence suggests that Helen was popular with her peers and participated in various extramural activities (see section 2.2.1). The available data suggests that Helen would have experienced a sense of mastery on the sports field, as she performed well in many of these activities, especially swimming (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen later attributed her determination to the head nun's expectations: “We also learned to be bad losers, because unless we won at games, we would be severely chastised by Sister Columba. And that probably was very good training for me in politics” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9).

The findings indicate that Helen demonstrated a degree of wellness in the life task of work and leisure during this historical period, despite the fact that her degree of wellness declined over the last year or two of this period (see section 2.2.1). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.3.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)***

With regard to *educational activities*, Helen was enrolled as a student at the university of the Witwatersrand during this historical period (see section 2.2.2). Student life also provided her with numerous opportunities to engage in *leisure activities*, such as faculty dances and student tours (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Evidence suggests that the balance between work and leisure became difficult for Helen, as she was unable to maintain her high level of academic achievement at university (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She took part in many social activities on campus, such as faculty dances, participated in various overseas tours and found her years at university “carefree and wholly enjoyable” (Suzman, 1993, p. 9). It is, therefore, suggested by the findings that Helen's participation in leisure activities during her university years was high and that she had at times struggled to maintain an appropriate balance between work and leisure (see section 2.2.2). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.3.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)***

During this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen had diverse experiences relating to the task of work (see section 2.2.3). Apart from *formal employment*, the findings indicate that Helen was involved in *unpaid work*, which included activities such as childrearing, homemaking and volunteer work, as well as *educational activities*. The newlyweds first lived in a large Parktown house with relatives and soon moved into their own newly built house in Northcliff. Helen later reflected on the first few years of this historical period: “I led the life of a privileged young White South African housewife during that period – the only time I ever reverted to type” (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). The Suzmans enjoyed *leisure activities* such as dancing, horse-riding, golf and tennis (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

When WWII broke out, Helen demonstrated a keen desire to join the war effort, but was excluded when her economic history lecturer, who was in charge of the SA Women's Auxiliary Force, enquired after her newborn baby and said: 'Well, go home and look after it' (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). Although angry and disappointed at her exclusion from the army, Helen was eager to contribute to the war effort and decided to work at the Governor-General's War Fund. She soon found the clerical work monotonous and returned to university to complete her degree (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Following her graduation, she was accepted at the War Supplies Board, where she continued to work for the duration of the war, a job she referred to as "boring but essential" (Suzman, 1993, p. 13). After the war, Helen entered into formal employment with the University of the Witwatersrand as an economic history tutor and was later appointed as a temporary lecturer (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Helen later reflected on her experiences in teaching economic history as "enormously useful to me when I became an M.P., for they provided a solid background on which to base my speeches, and developed my skills in researching source material" (Suzman, 1993, p. 14). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.3.4 Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)***

This historical period begins with Helen's *formal employment* as a lecturer at the University of the Witwatersrand (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Evidence suggests that Helen's work exposed her to debates about local political issues, especially relating to South Africa's racially discriminatory laws, and enabled her to further raise awareness of these political issues during her lectures (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen found her work enjoyable and found the decision to leave the university very difficult when she entered her political career (Suzman, 1993). Her enjoyment of her work was one of the factors which persuaded the Suzmans not to emigrate when Helen became uneasy about the National Party's rise to power and her statement in this regard also sheds light on other aspects of the life task of work, in particularly *unpaid work*, such as childrearing and homemaking:

(Mosie) was very attached to his family in South Africa and was well established in his profession. I had other reservations about leaving: I enjoyed my job at Wits, and we had two young children who were settled at school. Also, I had excellent domestic help, who attended to all the chores I hated. And I couldn't cook. I envisaged a chaotic household and a starving

family... And within a short time after the election, politics had ensnared me; I was firmly committed to remain, despite all my misgivings and some occasional second thoughts over the years. (Suzman, 1993, p. 18)

Helen's subsequent appointment as a member of the Executive Council of the SAIRR entailed five months of research and preparation of evidence for the Fagan Commission (Suzman, 1993). Even though she was frustrated by the outcome of the Commission (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976), she had found the experience to be valuable in shaping her career. This was, firstly, because of the knowledge she acquired – she “learned a great deal from others who had been working in the field for several years” (Suzman, 1993, p. 15). Secondly, it stimulated her interest in local politics: “Thus I was a late starter in the field of race relations, but once I got going, I became utterly preoccupied with it” (p. 15).

Helen became more involved in work activities apart from her formal employment (see section 2.2.4). For example, she engaged in *volunteer work* and formed the Milner Park branch, became known as a speaker at the monthly meetings of the UP Witwatersrand Women's Council and was named honorary Information Officer (Suzman, 1993). After the 1948 elections, Helen helped to establish the Hyde Park Mixed Branch in Johannesburg North and became increasingly involved in activities such as fund-raising and canvassing (Suzman, 1993). Helen had no aspirations to formalise these activities in a career path, but after encouragement from her family, she ran for Parliament and was named MP for Houghton (Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

With regard to her occupational satisfaction during this historical period, themes relating to a sense of purpose and shared values feature prominently in the biographical data (see section 2.2.4). For example, soon after Helen's parliamentary career began, she felt that she was fulfilling a necessary function: “I find that someone has to help organize opposition to the section that appears bent on ‘negotiations’ at the time when the UP was really coming out well on the constitutional crisis, the idiots!” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 70). She remarked how she withstood criticism during this stage, commenting: “I couldn't care less because I know I am on solid ground and that there is a very good element in the caucus that thinks the way I do” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 70). She also found an occupational role model in Margaret Ballinger (Suzman, 1993).

Helen's satisfaction with her work also faced significant challenges (see section 2.2.4). Helen became increasingly unhappy in the UP and harboured doubts about whether she should stand again in the 1958 elections (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). In addition to the renewed criticism from conservative party members, the UP's new leader: “proved a

grave disappointment to us liberals. In no time at all, he had thrown in his lot with the conservative majority in caucus... Now we had to combat this new and popular leader” (Suzman, 1993, p. 40). In her first Report Back speech, she described her experiences of the nature of her work as an MP. Strangwayes-Booth (1976) reported Helen saying to her constituents: “I was surprised at the completely absorbing nature of the work. There is also a tendency which I am determined to guard against – of becoming cloistered in the atmosphere of the House, of forgetting the outside world” (p. 80). Helen’s work placed significant demands on her family life, as she had to spend a considerable amount of her time in Cape Town and trying to fly home at least every second weekend (Suzman, 1993).

The available data illuminates Helen’s involvement in *leisure activities* during this historical period (see section 2.2.4). Soon after her parliamentary career began, she wrote home to Mosie that she enjoyed a quiet drink in the late afternoon, watching the sea at sunset whenever she had time to do so. Helen also gave him an indication of her busy new schedule in the letter, stating that she now had very little time to herself: “So not much time to answer mail, prepare speeches, study Bills, let alone get into mischief” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 71). It could, therefore, be assumed that the frequency with which Helen could partake in her usual hobbies had declined following the start of her parliamentary career, but that she continued to make efforts at relaxation.

During this and the three historical periods to follow, Helen’s involvement in leisure activities could have been disrupted to some extent due to the extensive periods of time she had to spend in Cape Town. She, however, displayed a determined effort at enjoying her leisure time (see sections 2.2.4 – 2.2.7). In her memoirs, Helen reflected on the hobbies and leisure activities she had enjoyed during the 36 years she worked in Parliament (Suzman, 1993). There is no evidence that these activities were restricted to any one of the historical periods during her time as an MP, and may, therefore, apply to all historical periods during her parliamentary career. These activities included playing golf and bridge as well as going to the beach where she swam and walked for miles along the shoreline, trout fishing and visits to game farms (Suzman, 1993). Helen remarked that “...Cape Town’s natural beauty – superb beaches, magnificent Table Mountain and lovely inland wine country – offers a great deal of enjoyment in leisure time” (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

### 9.3.3.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)

The most prominent aspect of the life task of work and leisure during this historical period was related to Helen's *formal employment*, as her career underwent a significant transition (see section 2.2.5). Her unhappiness in the UP had reached its peak with the Bloemfontein congress, where the contributions by progressive members were met by increasingly offensive taunts and insults (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Disappointed in party leadership and policy, Helen stormed out of the congress a few minutes before the rest of the party members. Helen was one of the first of the group of progressives to commit to their decision to resign, signing at the bottom of the blank page on which the group agreed to write their statement (Eglin, 2007). Her recollection of this event highlights the values underlying Helen's career:

When the congress ended, I went to my car with Kathleen Mitchell...my great chum in politics... 'Well, Katie,' I said 'this is it. I'm going home and I'm resigning. I'm not staying in a party with this disgusting attitude, with this totally expedient attitude to Blacks.' 'I'm with you,' she replied... (Suzman, 1993, p. 46)

Helen's work environment had changed after her resignation (see section 2.2.5). The progressive group had to endure the remaining UP members' outrage when Parliament reassembled in the beginning of 1960 and were demoted to basement offices beneath the Senate block, but Helen felt that "the bonhomie and team spirit more than compensated for the physical discomfort" (Suzman, 1993, p.50). She described this time as the happiest of her parliamentary career, possibly due to the fact that she and the other Progs held similar beliefs and, therefore, intraparty conflict was no longer a constant feature (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

Helen also remarked that these years were the "tensest and most bitter" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 189) of her career. Following the grim events in the country (see section 2.2.5), Helen and her fellow Progs were convinced of the legitimacy of their decision to break away from the UP, and any moral reservations they may have harboured about the retention of their parliamentary seats, were dispelled (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen later recalled that they "were able to show our worth" (Suzman, 1993, p. 52) and commented on how well the party members cooperated: "We worked well together as a dedicated group. There was never any difference of opinion in our caucus as to how we should handle these issues" (Suzman, 1993, p. 52).

Helen's political career, however, was in jeopardy during this historical period. The Progs did not have "the benefit of the expected period of grace to build up support for the Progressive Party before the next general election" (Suzman, 1993, p. 50), which was held two years ahead of schedule, a decision precipitated by the 1960 referendum and the traumatic Sharpeville incident, various protests and police raids (Suzman, 1993). Helen's work during this historical era, therefore, also involved her first election campaign as a member of the Progressive Party. She ascribed her victory in Houghton to the support she received from the *Rand Daily Mail* and her campaign manager (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993).

There is little evidence regarding Helen's *leisure activities* specific to this historical period. There could have been continued disruption in this aspect of the life task of work and leisure, because of the extensive periods of time Helen had to spend in Cape Town, as well as her high work load as a member of a newly formed political party. However, as discussed in section 9.3.3.4, Helen had made an effort to engage in leisure activities throughout her parliamentary career, which later reflections (Suzman, 1993) indicate made meaningful contributions to her holistic wellness. The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

#### **9.3.3.6 *The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)***

This historical period is for the most part characterised by the significant challenges Helen faced in her occupational role (see section 2.2.6). Helen later reflected in her memoirs that during these 13 years, the "conscientious ethic fostered by Sister Columba and the stamina inherited from Sam Gavronsky stood me in good stead" (Suzman, 1993, p. 112). She experienced each parliamentary session as a "...long dark tunnel through which somehow she had to make her way" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 199). Yet, she demonstrated significant productivity (see section 2.2.6). For example, during the first solo session Helen made 66 speeches, moved 27 amendments and posed 137 questions in little over 100 days (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). In a letter to Frances in June of 1962, Helen described the mental and physical demands placed on her:

Have had a perfectly fiendish week in Parliament... I thought I'd pass out at the end of the second day, as I couldn't even leave the House for one second and we were sitting mornings too... Looking back over the past five months, I really don't know how I have kept up this cracking pace..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 90)

Evidence suggests that a protective factor for the maintenance of wellness in the life task of work, could have been the support, however limited, Helen received in the execution of her duties (see section 2.2.6). Helen prepared for her first postelection session with one secretary and one researcher at her disposal (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). Progressive Party members who lived in Cape Town had also offered to form an unofficial caucus, but the weekly meetings soon dwindled and eventually ceased, as it was difficult to find meeting times suitable for everybody (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen did, however, have the opportunity to consult with some of them on specific subjects (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen attempted to utilise all her available resources by sending proposed legislation to various experts around the country in order to obtain their opinions, even though she did not always succeed in procuring them (Suzman, 1993).

Evidence suggests that Helen's duties were not only numerous, but diverse (see section 2.2.6). Her reflections indicate that she was involved in various activities, such as dictating speeches "not only for the debating chamber, but also for the scores of meetings I addressed outside Parliament – protest meetings, university meetings, party public meetings. During election years all these demands intensified to a horrific degree" (Suzman, 1993, p. 118). In addition, she introduced a series of motions aimed at revising apartheid legislation, posed numerous questions to the House and addressed her constituents at Report Back meetings. Helen also had to meet with numerous visitors to South Africa: "I was also on the itinerary of every visiting fireman, journalist or overseas politician... at times I felt like a surrogate Kruger Game Park..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 118).

Helen's duties increased as she began to see herself as an honorary ombudsman for those who did not have an MP representing them (Shain, 2006; Suzman, 1993). Her frequent visits to political prisoners would later earn her the title *Our Lady of the Prisoners*, and she replied to the numerous letters she received from people in need of assistance (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen commented in her memoirs that "... (N)o letter went unanswered. So conditioned was I, that on occasions I found myself answering anonymous letters (Suzman, 1993, p. 115).

Evidence suggests that Helen's work could have had a significant impact on her holistic wellness as it exposed her to hostility and attempts at intimidation (see section 2.2.6). She had evoked strong opposition in the House during this time, but noted that she had become "hardened to this sort of sophistry" (Lewsen, 1991, p. 49). Later during this historical period, however, coping with the hostility became more difficult: "I found it distinctly unnerving to turn around and find several sets of beady eyes fixed on me with

unremitting hostility, not to mention all the uncomplimentary interjections I could overhear when I was making a speech” (Suzman, 1993, p. 63).

Apart from the insults and name-calling she endured during sessions, Helen also became a target outside of Parliament (see section 2.2.6). In her memoirs, she described the abusive, threatening and anti-Semitic letters she received during her career, letterbomb scares and abusive telephone calls (Suzman, 1993). Despite these calls, Helen had never delisted her home number (Browde, 2009). One of her friends had confronted Helen and asked her if she had thought about letterbombs, to which she replied “Of course I have, I’m no fool.” When asked what she was going to do to protect herself, her response was simple: “Nothing” (Rensberger, 1974, p.2).

The unremitting nature of her work was beginning to take its toll on Helen. She experienced moments of exhaustion and frustration, which she disclosed to those close to her (Suzman, 1993). She admitted that her “sunny nature” had become somewhat warped by her lonely battle in an increasingly hostile House (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 257). She reported that she no longer derived any amusement during Parliamentary sittings (Suzman, 1993) and stated that her 21-year battle against apartheid had not generated the changes the liberals were hoping for (Rensberger, 1974). Despite her fatigue, Helen remained remarkably productive and was hailed for her performance during the 1973 session (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). However, her party’s failure to make electoral progress had contributed to a “certain overall weariness in her” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 257). Helen intended to resign in the event of another sole victory in the 1974 elections in order to devote herself to extra-political work, as she doubted the feasibility of a party “...which could win only one seat after thirteen years of struggle” (Suzman, 1993, p. 166). Publicly, Helen made an effort to appear as optimistic and confident as ever (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

There is little evidence for *leisure activities* specific to this historical period, although evidence suggests that Helen engaged in leisure activities which she found meaningful, as discussed in section 9.3.3.4. It can also be deducted that Helen may have had limited leisure time at her disposal during the years alone in Parliament. In a letter to her daughter, Frances, she wrote: “I long for the end of this parliamentary life so I can just laze around and read and read and do what I damn well please all day long” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 231). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.3.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)***

Helen's *work* environment differed from that of the previous historical period in one significant way: she was no longer the sole MP for her party (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). She later reflected: "It was rather touching to see those big chaps, all about six feet tall and more, looking like a lot of kids on their first day at school... We were back in business" (Suzman, 1993, p.170). Helen, who now enjoyed both a lighter workload and valuable camaraderie, "took a back seat in the 1975 parliamentary session, with her new colleagues sharing "the burden she had become used to carrying alone" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 264). In addition, Helen received various awards, nominations and other accolades during this historical period for her work as Member of Parliament (see section 2.2.7).

The Progressive Party also underwent changes that impacted negatively on Helen's work satisfaction, such as merging with Harry Schwarz's Reformed Party (see section 2.2.7). A significant number of Progressives opposed the merger and looked to Helen for leadership, which was not forthcoming (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She did not hold any aspirations for party leadership, and maintained a low profile in the debate on the merger, demonstrating that she "was not prepared to allow her fears as to the course the diluted Party might take and her own personal misgivings about Harry Schwarz to jeopardize her loyalty to her party, as personified by Colin Eglin" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 264). Despite her loyalty to the party, Helen struggled to adjust to these changes, and particularly to Schwarz's presence: "I had some difficulty finding myself in the same caucus as Schwarz...We continued to confront each other with hostility, although we were now in the same party (Suzman, 1993, p. 176)".

In the execution of her parliamentary duties, Helen continued to fight for the rights of the majority of South Africans who had been denied the vote (see section 2.2.7). She visited political detainees, highlighted the inequities that occurred as a result of force, consulted with local Black political leaders, maintained her involvement with students and attempted to assist with the numerous plights for assistance she received from the parents of schoolchildren who went missing after the Soweto uprising (Suzman, 1993). Helen addressed numerous audiences abroad and liaised with international political leaders against the backdrop of increasingly strained relations between South Africa and the international community. However, she became aware of the Black youth's growing intransigence and her relationship with students at liberal English-medium universities began to deteriorate during this time (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). Helen also continued to face hostility within the

House (see section 2.2.7). For example, she learnt that the government had been tampering with her mail and asked for a parliamentary select committee to investigate what she considered to be a breach of parliamentary privilege. Botha denied her request and called Helen a “vicious little cat”, to which Helen replied that he was a coward – a remark that had her sent out of the debating chamber (Suzman, 1993, p. 194).

As discussed in section 9.3.3.4, Helen had made an effort to engage in *leisure activities* during her Parliamentary career. Evidence suggests that her enjoyment of hobbies and leisure activities continued during this historical period and possibly occurred with a greater frequency as compared to previous historical periods due to Helen’s lighter workload (see section 2.2.7). However, as Helen neared retirement, she engaged less in certain hobbies such as golf. She later wrote that she stopped playing because her performance on the golf course had “deteriorated to a frustrating extent. The winning ethic drummed into me by Sister Columba so many years ago persisted; I hated losing” (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of work during the next historical period.

#### **9.3.3.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)**

Helen was almost seventy-two years of age when she decided to retire from her parliamentary career, stating that she “always believed that it was a good idea to leave while people still thought I should stay, rather than waiting until they wondered how to get rid of me” (Suzman, 1993, p.267). She harboured concerns about the formation of the new Democratic Party based on the merger of the Progressive Federal Party with two smaller groups (Suzman, 1993). It appears that conflict about leadership and the image of the new party had influenced Suzman’s decision to retire (see section 2.2.8).

During her final Report Back meeting, Helen reported that she found it difficult to take leave of those who had supported her for so many years and later described the meeting as “... a somewhat sad and emotional occasion” (Suzman, 1993, p. 272). Earlier, on May 18, 1989, Helen delivered her parliamentary farewell speech, and reflected on her long career which she stated had been personally very rewarding (Suzman, 1993). Thanking her staff, colleagues, press and constituents, Helen said: “I have had the unique experience of having had a ringside seat from which to watch, and indeed to participate in, the making of over three and a half decades of South African history...” (Suzman, 1993, p. 270).

Evidence suggests that even during Helen's retirement, her career remained an important focus of her inner life (see section 2.2.8). For example, it was the focus of her memoirs (Suzman, 1993), which she completed a few years after her last parliamentary session. Later during this historical period, Helen, who frequently granted interviews from her home study, swept her arm along the two rows of Hansard volumes which lined her study walls and told a reporter: "That's my life in there" ("Suzman: Mbeki anti-white," 2004). She continued to receive numerous awards honouring her work during her long career (see section 2.2.8).

Helen remained an active public figure during the last historical period of her life (see section 2.2.8). In July of 1990, Helen's career was brought full circle: She was appointed as the president of the SAIRR, "more than forty-five years after preparing evidence for the Fagan Commission on behalf of the institute – the project that first launched me into politics" (Suzman, 1993, p. 276). She was also a member of the Independent Electoral Commission in the 1994 elections, where she played an important part in facilitating cooperation between the parties, establishing trust in the communities, and worked as the IEC Commissioner for Soweto on election day (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011). Helen also served on the South African Human Rights Commission from 1995 to 1998 (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993). On 10 December 1996, she was invited to accompany Nelson Mandela to the signing of the country's new Constitution (Godsell, 2011). Helen also continued, throughout her retirement, to comment on local and international current affairs (see section 2.2.8). According to reporter and friend, Fiona Forde, at age 90, Helen still lived and breathed politics (Forde, 2009a). In her memoirs, Helen wrote:

Retirement has not relegated me to the rocking chair. Maybe now that I am no longer an M.P. people think I need occupational therapy, for certainly the number of requests to address organizations, prize-givings, or to attend conferences are as numerous as ever. (Suzman, 1993, p. 276)

Evidence suggests that Helen's *leisure activities* during this historical period had changed to accommodate her advancing age and her health status, as she remained as active as her health would allow (Forde, 2009a). She wrote in 2005: "By and large, I'm still living the life of the privileged few, with my Labrador and two Shitzus, enjoy relatively good health, albeit not as mobile as before. I read a lot, play bridge, and write nasty letters to the press complaining about disappointing aspects of governance" (Suzman, September 2005). She also wrote that she is no longer able to indulge in long distance travel, and fears that she has lost contact with old friends (Suzman, October 2005). In an interview shortly before her

90<sup>th</sup> birthday, she reported that she had no complaints and only a single regret: never becoming a better golfer. Helen described her recreational activities at that stage: bridge twice a week, the occasional visits to the theatre or cinema, listening to *Bandstand* every Saturday evening on the radio and watching sports (Forde, 2009a; Kane-Bernman, 2009). The following section focuses on the discussion of Helen's wellness in the life task of friendship.

### **9.3.4 Life task IV: Friendship**

This life task involves those social relationships that do not entail marital, sexual or familial commitment (Myers et al., 2000). In the holistic wellness model, this life task requires individuals to acquire the necessary social skills to feel comfortable in social settings, make use of social support when needed, as well as provide others with such support; ultimately, leading to a sense of connectedness and the sense that one is not alone in facing life events (Myers et al., 2000). The life task of friendship therefore entails the individual's sense of social interest, as well as the availability of social support (see section 4.1.3.4). The available data was therefore analysed with regard to Helen's social interest and the social support she received in order to formulate a description of her wellness related to the life task of friendship during this historical period.

#### **9.3.4.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)**

During the early years of this historical period, Helen experienced some degree of social isolation within her immediate environment, as she was often excluded from play activities by her sister and cousins (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). At school, however, evidence suggests that Helen enjoyed ample opportunities for social interaction and the establishment of friendships, and was popular with her peers (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). From the available data, it would seem that whilst Helen's early childhood was marked by self-reliance and independent play, her wellness in the life task of friendship developed significantly during her school years (see section 2.2.1). One of Helen's fellow learners, Sister Maria Bindon, remembered the young Helen as: "...highly attractive, with blue blue eyes and wildly curling hair, she exercised a charismatic effect on all of us" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 23). This recollection reflects positively on Helen's ability to relate to her peers. Sister Bindon, furthermore, hints at Helen's sense of social interest, by describing her

attitude towards others: “She had an instinctive ability to command respect, not only because she was so good-looking and intelligent but because she had the gift of appearing to be interested in the least of us” (p. 23). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of friendship during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.4.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)***

As discussed above, the data on Helen’s childhood reflects positively on her ability to relate to her peers. Likewise, at university, evidence suggests that Helen continued to establish friendships with her peers and partake in social activities, such as student trips overseas and dance parties (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). As presented in section 2.2.2, the biographical data demonstrated that she maintained her active social involvement, despite being at least a year or two younger than most of the other students (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

#### ***9.3.4.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)***

Helen’s involvement in the war effort (Godsell, 2011; Rotberg, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) could be seen as indicative of her sense of social interest. Her work during the war and her knowledge of the atrocities committed against the Jewish people during that time could have further influenced Helen’s sense of connectedness to a larger community during this historical period (see section 2.2.3).

Evidence suggests that at the beginning of this historical period, Helen was an active participant in many social activities, as she and her husband enjoyed dinner parties, dancing and horse-riding as well as games of golf and tennis (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). There was, therefore, ample opportunity in their social lives for the development and maintenance of friendships and support systems outside her family structures. After the War, findings also suggest that proximity to their social network was an important consideration for Helen and her husband (see section 2.2.3). For example, Helen and her husband chose the location of their house in order to be closer to the children’s schools, the hospitals where Mosie practiced and the neighbourhoods in which their friends lived (Suzman, 1993). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of friendship during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.4.4 Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)***

After WWII, Helen's sense of social interest can be inferred from her involvement in political activities aimed at opposing oppressive governmental policies (see section 2.2.4). This involvement, which developed from her new awareness of the societal injustices in South Africa, was initiated by her work for the SAIRR (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Evidence suggests that Helen's belief in certain ethical and moral values with regard to race relations, had urged her to seek out a community of like-minded individuals with whom she could feel a sense of connectedness (see section 2.2.4).

As a result, many of Helen's friends shared her political interests and therefore served as a support system for her political endeavours (see section 2.2.4). One example from the data is when Helen decided that the Milner Park Branch was a waste of her time because of its high membership turnover (Strangways-Booth, 1976) and she consequently "bullied, nagged and cajoled" (Suzman, 1993, p. 47) her friends to help establish the Hyde Park Mixed Branch. The findings therefore indicate that, especially where her political activities were concerned, Helen was able to draw on the practical and tangible support of her social network.

Helen's friendships provided her with the opportunity for disclosure and therefore also emotional support (see section 2.2.4). An example from the data relates to her reaction after she had won the party nomination, resulting in the commencement of her parliamentary career. Helen said to friend Ellen Hellmann: "My God. I've got a safe seat in my hot little hands and I don't really want it" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 62). Helen also disclosed her doubts to another friend some time later:

I'm not at all sure I've done the right thing. Mosie said, 'Give it a go', and I did and the darned thing came off! Now I've got to do something to justify the confidence people have placed in me: the burning question is, can I? Even if I have the principles and try to uphold them, there is the all-powerful caucus to keep the new girl quiet. Anyway I shall try. (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 62)

Helen's wellness in the life task of friendship was, however, also challenged during the first few months of her parliamentary career (see section 2.2.4). Initially, Helen did not have many close friendships in Cape Town as evident from the loneliness she experienced after Mosie's return to Johannesburg (Suzman, 1993). Helen and the other new back-benchers were "only on nodding terms" (Strangways-Booth, 1976, p. 70). Furthermore, most of the UP MPs weren't friendly towards Helen due to her liberal views and as a result,

she started to affiliate with like-minded MPs to help her feel more supported in her work environment (see section 2.2.4). Building collegial friendships, together with aspects of her life task of spirituality (see section 9.3.1.4), had significantly influenced Helen's decisions during this historical period. For example, her decision to remain in the UP after the party leader failed to address the restoration of the Coloured people to the Common Voter's Roll was influenced by consideration for her friends (Strangways-Booth, 1976). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of friendship during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.4.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)***

Helen's sense of social interest continued to be reflected by the focus of her political career, namely, fighting against the human rights abuses inherent to the apartheid system (see section 2.2.5). One example of this relates to Helen's commitment to visit political detainees (Suzman, 1993). Her prison visits also illustrated the emotional support Helen received during the course of activities related to her social interest. In her memoirs, she recalled her first prison visit, accompanied by her close friend: "I flew to Johannesburg, collected my friend Kathleen Mitchell and we drove to Pretoria to see the detainees at the Central Prison. I said to her, "Katie, if I don't come out within an hour, start screaming" (Suzman, 1993, pp. 52-53). Helen also mentioned receiving support from Kathleen on other occasions, such as during the Bloemfontein congress (see section 2.2.5). Helen also referred to other friends during this historical period. For example, Helen recalled Verwoerd's first speech back in Parliament after the attempt on his life:

(Verwoerd) proceeded to give one of his customary lengthy speeches, minus notes. A friend who was sitting in the visitor's gallery during this tour de force said to me afterwards, "Good God, didn't that bullet do anything to Verwoerd?" "Sure," I replied. "It cleared his sinuses." (Suzman, 1993, p. 68)

During this historical period, evidence suggests that Helen's friendships with her colleagues contributed significantly to her overall wellness (see section 2.2.5). There are indications from the available data that certain events could have forged close bonds between Helen and the other members of the newly-formed Progressive Party. This includes their shared experience at the UP congress where their contributions were met by taunts and insults and their suggestions disregarded, as well as their shared sense that they no longer had a

future within the UP. They all questioned the morality of the UP's motion with regard to land distribution and were faced with deciding about their next step (Eglin, 2007; Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen was eager to join her friends in their decision:

As we were about to drive off, I noticed in the rearview mirror that three of my colleagues and close friends, Zach de Beer, Colin Eglin and Ray Swart, were in earnest conversation on the steps of the City Hall. 'Hang on a minute,' I said to Katie. 'Something's happening.' We jumped out of the car and joined them. 'Come on chaps, what's going on?' I asked. One of them replied, 'We're going to resign from the United Party.' 'Oh, great,' I said, 'that's fine. We can all do it together.' (Suzman, 1993, p. 46)

When they unanimously decided to leave the UP, they agreed to draft a statement of intent, which they planned to hand over to Graaff (Eglin, 2007; Strangways-Booth, 1976). Because Helen was anxious to leave for Johannesburg, she signed at the bottom of the blank page on which they were to write their statement (Eglin, 2007), suggesting that Helen trusted this group of progressives. Another shared experience which could have strengthened their relationship was the hostility the group had to endure from the remaining UP MPs when Parliament reassembled in the beginning of 1960 (Suzman, 1993)

Helen's experience of the 1960 and 1961 sessions as truly rewarding for the Progressive MPs, could have been influenced by her sense of friendship with her new colleagues (see section 2.2.5). She later wrote that, even though they were demoted to basement offices beneath the Senate block, "the bonhomie and team spirit more than compensated for the physical discomfort" (Suzman, 1993, p.50). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of friendship during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.4.6 The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)***

Helen's sense of social interest continued to be reflected by her work opposing the apartheid system (see section 2.2.6). Helen's comments during her Report Back speech to her Houghton constituents in 1962, highlighted her sense of connectedness to a broad South African community. She remarked that she had, for the first time, not only represented her Houghton voters, but also all of the Progressive Party supporters, as well as the Black South Africans who have been denied a voice in Parliament (Lewsen, 1991; Suzman, 1993). Apart from her Parliamentary work, Helen also had to reply to the numerous letters she received, many from people in need of assistance (Suzman, 1993). She also had to meet with

numerous visitors to South Africa whose presence was necessary for the fight against apartheid: “I was also on the itinerary of every visiting fireman, journalist or overseas politician... at times I felt like a surrogate Kruger Game Park...” (Suzman, 1993, p 118). Her keen sense of social interest during this time is reflected in her memoirs:

The volume of letters that poured through my mailbox in Cape Town and in Johannesburg was immense. They came from home and abroad, from the rich and the famous, the poor and unknown and the merely curious. Most of all, though, they came from ordinary people – people who believed that I could solve anything; that my position made it possible for me to work miracles... there was nothing South Africans (and sometimes non-South Africans from neighbouring countries), Black and White, seemed to believe that the Member for Houghton could not put right. Sometimes I could. Often I couldn't. But no letter went unanswered. So conditioned was I, that on occasions I found myself answering anonymous letters. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 114-115)

Helen's broad social interest could be seen as exercising a positive influence on the breadth of her support network (see section 2.2.6). For example, during elections Helen would receive messages of support and encouragement, such as Dr Nkomo's statement that “the silent majority danced in the streets of the townships” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 236) when they heard of Helen's victory. Even influential figures from her childhood made their support known:

One day in 1966, more than thirty years after I had left school, I received a phone call. A soft Irish voice said, “May I speak to Helen, please?” I replied, “Hello, Sister Columba,” and she exclaimed, “Lord love us, child – you recognised my voice!” She told me all the nuns were praying for me since the next election was about to take place. (Suzman, 1993, p. 9)

Despite being aware of the support of the broader liberal community, evidence suggests that on an interpersonal level, Helen could have found this historical period to be particularly challenging (see section 2.2.6). Helen recalled: “Those turbulent years were very lonely... I especially missed the camaraderie of drinking with my chums in the members' pub after the House adjourned, and all those lively postmortems on the day's events with fellow Progs” (Suzman, 1993, p. 112). The loneliness of her parliamentary career seemed to have weighed heavily on her (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). After the 1966 elections, she was faced with a much larger number of NP MPs than before, and she had to do so alone. She wrote: “I found it distinctly unnerving to turn around and find several sets of beady eyes fixed on me with unremitting hostility, not to mention all the uncomplimentary interjections I could overhear when I was making a speech” (Suzman,

1993, p. 63). She later reflected on her parliamentary colleagues' reactions to her, indicating that some of them "were shocked, but a few were amused and one or two actually liked me" (p. 114).

Helen did, however, receive significant support from Colin Eglin (see section 2.2.6). He later reflected on how their political relationship and personal friendship developed during this time: "I combined the roles of consultant, advisor, friend-in-need, and broad shoulder-to-lean-upon when Helen felt she needed my opinion, advice or assistance. Of course, she could have managed quite well on her own" (Eglin, 2007, pp. 97-98). Eglin also reflected on their relationship and his experience of Helen (Eglin, 2006, p. 7):

Many times I have looked up to her as a role model. At times, I have had the not always easy task of being her leader... I have come to know Helen's keen intellect, to enjoy her gracious hospitality, to try to avoid her whiplash tongue and to appreciate her sense of fairness... Most of the time we have enjoyed each other's company, and at times when this was not the case, at least we endured each other with good grace...

Helen's friends expressed their concern about her safety during this historical period, as she had become the target of abusive phone calls and intimidating telegrams and letters (see section 2.2.6). One of them told a reporter that he had confronted Helen and asked her if she had thought about letterbombs, to which she replied "Of course I have, I'm no fool." When asked what she was going to do to protect herself, her response was simple: "Nothing" (Rensberger, 1974, p.2).

During Helen's parliamentary career, her work had a significant influence on her social activities, as she had to also attend frequent diplomatic functions (Suzman, 1993). She described these as "...some enjoyable, others boring and many simply an extension of the day's work..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 275). These activities had influenced her wellness in the life task of friendship, as her frequent encounters with the ever-changing occupants of the various embassies had resulted in lasting friendships with some of the ambassadors (see section 2.2.6). On her overseas visits, Helen always took care to renew her links with the former ambassadors and their staff with whom she had built a close relationship during their tours of duty in South Africa (Suzman, 1993). From the available data, it is evident that these relationships are relevant to not only this historical period, but also for the remainder of Helen's career and life cycle (see sections 2.2.6 – 2.2.8). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of friendship during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.4.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)***

Helen's sense of social interest continued to be reflected in her fight against the human rights abuses inherent to the apartheid system (see section 2.2.7). Examples of this include Helen's continued commitment to visiting political detainees as well as her dedicated efforts to assist parents in locating their missing children in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising (Suzman, 1993).

Helen had access to more social support in her immediate working environment during this historical period than she had had during the solo years (see section 2.2.7). During her first Report Back meeting of this period, she stated that she found it impossible to describe the pleasure of having friends with her in Parliament "to talk to, to laugh with, consult with, have a drink with, even to argue with..." and to receive their "hear hears" when she sat down after making a speech (Suzman, 1993, p. 170). When Helen later wrote about this historical period, she mentioned some of the friendships she had found meaningful. Among these were her "long-distance friendship" with Alan Paton and Winnie Mandela (Suzman, 1993, p. 184). Within the Party, Helen eventually forged a relationship of "mutual respect" (p. 177) with Harry Schwartz with whom she previously had a strained relationship. Evidence suggests that Helen's set of moral and ethical values had significantly influenced her choices in friendships, which is evident in the difficulty she experienced in restoring her relationship with Van Zyl Slabbert after his resignation as Party leader (see section 2.2.7). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of friendship during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.4.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)***

Helen stated that she considered it a tremendous privilege to have been in Parliament, "especially to have been able to intercede on behalf of victims of apartheid or of police action by virtue of being an MP" (Suzman, 1993, p. 272). After her retirement, evidence suggests that Helen's sense of social interest continued, as reflected by her continued involvement in promoting human rights (see section 2.2.8). For example, Helen continued to serve as president of the SAIRR and was a member of the South African Human Rights Commission from 1995 to 1998 (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993). Helen also served on the Independent Electoral Commission in these 1994 elections (Eglin, 2007), where she facilitated cooperation between the parties and establishing trust in the communities (Godsell, 2011). In

addition to remaining politically active, Helen also retained her hands-on approach: “As for me, I’m still busy with odd cases that come to me in the forlorn hope that I might be able to get title deeds for Black residents in the townships, or relatives out of jail” (Suzman, September 2005).

At the time of her retirement, Helen reflected on the friendships she was able to form during her long career: “There have been many opportunities to meet people I would otherwise never have met, both at home and abroad, and thereby to make friendships which I shall always cherish” (Suzman, 1993, p. 270). Evidence also suggests that Helen shared her experiences with her friends, such as her difficulties in writing her memoirs which she referred to as a “tough and lonely job” (Suzman, June 1991). For example, she wrote to Bob Bernstein: “my book is progressing in a series of short, sharp rushes and I am not at all sure that I am going to be happy with the final results. However I suppose I must give it a try” (Suzman, July 1991). Almost two years later, she again wrote to him: “I am so glad the book is finally finished, though not without much pain and suffering, I might add...” (Suzman, June 1993). Evidence suggests that apart from maintaining longstanding friendships, Helen also continued to form new ones. For example, she soon became friends with the reporter that approached Helen for an interview before her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday:

Every few weeks she would call, and the message rarely changed. “Darling, would you like to come over for a drink?” she would ask. And when I arrived, the silver tray would be on a small table by the glass patio doors that lead to the back garden of which she was so proud... We would have one, maybe two drinks at most, as we nattered. And the conversation would always turn to politics... (Forde, 2009b)

In the time before her death, Helen had contact with many of her friends, who observed that she seemed to become intensely frustrated by her failing health and increasing dependence on the assistance of others (see section 2.2.8). Her mobility was restricted to the use of a Zimmer frame, and she would say “Look at me, what a nuisance I’ve become” (Forde, 2009b). F.W. de Klerk and his wife had met Helen for drinks several months before her death, during which she disclosed that she did not feel as if she had much left to live for, and the end was near (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009). Frederick Van Zyl Slabbert and Colin Eglin spent time with her in the days before her death (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009). After her passing, many people reflected on their friendship with Helen (see section 2.2.8). Colin Eglin, for example, said that he had lost a soul mate with whom he had spent 50 years working, fighting campaigns and having fun. He fondly recalled their dinner parties, stating that even though Helen wasn’t much of a cook, she was a wonderful hostess. He

commented that life was never dull with Helen around and that she had enriched his life through her caring attitude towards people (Joubert, 2009), highlighting an aspect of the friendship life task, namely social interest.

The following section focuses on the discussion of Helen's wellness in the life task of love.

### **9.3.5 Life task V: Love**

According to Sweeney (2009), the life tasks of friendship and love demand more from the individual with regard to cooperation, reciprocity and respect than the other life tasks. The fifth life task, love, refers to the individual's ability to maintain long-term commitments (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) that are trusting, compassionate, cooperative and self-disclosing. These relationships involve that another is interested in your growth and wellbeing (Myers et al., 2000). Relationships which facilitate wellness in the life task of love possess qualities such as intimacy, the experience and expression of non-possessive caring which respects the uniqueness of the other, companionship, stability, long-term commitment, and can also entail romance, passion and the fulfilment of one's need for physical closeness or satisfaction with one's sexual life (Witmer & Sweeney, 1992; Myers et al., 2000) (see section 4.1.3.5).

#### ***9.3.5.1 Childhood (1917 - 1936)***

During her childhood, the limited available data suggests that Helen's experience of loving relationships occurred within her nuclear and extended family (see section 2.2.1). It seems that young Helen and her father had a close relationship, and according to the observations by Strangwayes-Booth (1976), Samuel's appreciation of Helen's intellect had contributed to the strong bond between them: Samuel adored Helen "not only because she was pretty – she had inherited her mother's face – but because her quick and lively mind matched his own" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 17). His concerns over the quality of Helen's education (Suzman, 1993) could have been an example of his continuous interest in her growth and well-being.

Following the death of Helen's mother, aunt Hansa can also be considered an important attachment figure during Helen's early childhood (see section 2.2.1). Gertrude had described Hansa as a cold and distant person (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). However, Helen's experience might have been different to that of her sister, because "the two-week old Helen

brought out Hansa's repressed maternal instincts" (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 16). It is therefore possible that Helen might have developed an attachment to Hansa and received from her nurturing which was similar to maternal care and affection. Strangwayes-Booth (1976) described the family in which Helen was raised for the first decade of her life as a close-knit, secure, and self-enclosed unit, even though Helen was often excluded from the older children's play. Evidence, therefore, suggests that Helen's relationship with both her father and Hansa could have involved dimensions such as commitment, trust, companionship and cooperation.

From Suzman's recollections, it would seem that the atmosphere at home after Samuel's remarriage was often tense, as there was continuous conflict between Gertrude and their stepmother, with Samuel "himself no model of equanimity" (Suzman, 1993, p. 8). Biographical data regarding Helen's relationship with her sister, or with her stepmother, is limited. There is no evidence to suggest that any domestic tensions that existed had negatively affected Helen's life task of love during this stage in her development (see section 2.2.1). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.5.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)***

Regarding the life task of love, Helen's father continued to demonstrate his interest in her growth and well-being (see section 2.2.2). Helen also became romantically involved with her future husband, Mosie, whom she had met at a Johannesburg riding school (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Their relationship is the first and last mention of romantic involvement available from data on Helen's lifespan as presented in Chapter 2. The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.5.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)***

In 1937, the 19-year old Helen married 33-year old Mosie Suzman (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Rotberg, 2011). The couple honeymooned in Europe, after which they returned to the Parktown house in which they lived with four of Mosie's relatives (Suzman, 1993). Helen emphasised their mutual enjoyment of numerous activities, and reflected on this period of their lives: "Mosie and I had a wonderful time, both being fond of dancing and

horse-riding. Once I joked that I had married Mosie because he had a horse I coveted. A surprising number of people took this remark seriously” (Suzman, 1993, p. 12). For the first two years of their marriage, their life consisted of dinner parties, horse-riding and games of golf and tennis (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). The Suzmans soon moved into a newly built house in Northcliff, a wedding gift from Helen’s father (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). Their first child, Frances, was born a few weeks after the start of World War II. Mosie joined the South African Medical Corps and as a result, the couple had to endure separation during the periods of his deployment (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). For example, when their second child, Patricia, was born on January 1, 1943, Mosie was stationed in Egypt (Suzman, 1993). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.5.4 Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)***

Findings indicate that during this historical period, Helen experienced different kinds of loving relationships, such as marriage, motherhood, and affectionate bonds with her extended family (see section 2.2.4). Evidence suggests that family bonds were of significant importance to Helen during this historical period. For example, close family relationships were one of the reasons the Suzmans decided not to emigrate during this period (Suzman, 1993). Helen’s experience of stability within and commitment to her family also contributed to her initial hesitation when requested to stand for Parliament in Houghton (see section 2.2.4). Mosie, however, persuaded her and his encouragement and support continued when she attended her first Opening of Parliament. Helen, as one of only four female MPs at the time, remembered looking at Mosie who was watching the proceedings from the Wives’ Gallery, and described him as “a lonely little baldhead among all those nodding plumes” (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976, p. 69). Decades later Helen thanked her “late husband Mosie and the girls, who took the brunt of it and without whose support and encouragement I could never have embarked on a political career” (Suzman, 2006, p. 17). Mosie continued to attend all of Helen’s annual Report Back meetings (Suzman, 2006).

Helen later acknowledged the support she received from her stepmother in the years when she would annually spend almost six months in Cape Town: “The concern of my late stepmother Debbie, about the wellbeing of my young daughters was a source of great reassurance to me...” (Suzman, 2006, p. 3). From Helen’s and her daughter, Frances’s, later recollections, it can be inferred that closeness, stability, commitment and cooperation were

qualities of her familial relationships (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Suzman, 1993). Helen recalled: “I tried to fly home at least every second weekend to be with the family... Mosie was a resident doctor, so to speak, and my father and stepmother were attentive and loving grandparents” (Suzman, 1993, p. 26). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.5.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)***

During this historical period, evidence suggests that family bonds remained of significant importance to Helen (see section 2.2.5). Her daughters, now students, were also more involved in her political activities. For example, during the time when Helen dedicated significant attention to campaigning at universities, Patty was present when Helen addressed a lecture hall packed with interested students, a few of whom were Black:

At question time one of them asked, “What would Mrs. Suzman say if I asked her if I could marry her daughter?” My younger daughter, Patty, then a medical student, was in the audience and she said loudly, “Why don’t you ask me – I *am* her daughter?” Much laughter and an end to that old South African bogey. (Suzman, 1993, p. 48)

Helen’s other daughter, Frances, had interrupted her studies in London to assist in the election campaign (Suzman, 1993). Helen later recalled that when poll results came in and it became clear that Helen would be returning to Parliament alone, Frances “turned to me and said in a despairing voice, “Ma, what are you going to do?” “I don’t know,” was my quavering reply” (Suzman, 1993, p. 60). The following section focuses on Helen’s wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

#### ***9.3.5.6 The Solo Years***

Close family ties remained important for Helen during this historical period, as suggested by the available evidence, despite the limited amount of time she had to spend at home (see section 2.2.6). She would spend a significant portion of the year working in Cape Town, during which time she visited her family in Johannesburg over weekends when possible (Suzman, 1993). During Parliamentary recesses, Helen often had little time at home before the next session, due to many overseas obligations and visits (see section 2.2.6). In Cape Town, Helen had regular visits with Frances’s in-laws, Emily and Jack Jowell, at

Muizenberg beach in False Bay (Suzman, 1993). Helen's relationship with her daughters seemed to have been especially important to her, and one way in which she may have attempted to maintain their relationship was through writing letters (see section 2.2.6). For example, in June 1962, Helen wrote to Frances, telling her about some of the harassing and threatening mail she has received, and describing the mental and physical demands of the 1962 session:

Have had a perfectly fiendish week in Parliament... I thought I'd pass out at the end of the second day, as I couldn't even leave the House for one second and we were sitting mornings too. My old bladder must have suffered irreparable damage... Looking back over the past five months, I really don't know how I have kept up this cracking pace..." (Suzman, 1993, p. 90)

Helen's father suffered a fatal heart attack in 1965 (Suzman, 1993). She wrote affectionately about him in her memoirs, emphasising that she had inherited "his stamina, his love of animals and his enjoyment of a scotch and soda in the evening - that is, apart from the generous bequests in his will" (Suzman, 1993, p.12). She fondly recalled that his most endearing characteristic was probably his love of animals:

He used to set off for work each morning, sitting on the front seat of the car next to his Black driver, and on the backseat were his two dogs, who spent the day with him at his office. When he returned home, he lavished affection on his cats. (Suzman, 1993, pp. 11 – 12)

Data suggest that Helen and her father's relationship was characterised by respect for the uniqueness of the other, companionship, and self-disclosure (see section 2.2.6). For example, she recalled that she had, "in moments of despair" (Suzman, 1993, p. 11), asked her father why he had not chosen America when he left Lithuania. Furthermore, even though he regarded all South African politicians with disdain, he never tried to dissuade her from her political activities, and had even encouraged her to stand for re-election (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen also recalled how he had once attended, on Debbie's insistence, one of her public meetings where a resolution to work for the end of racial discrimination was put to the vote, apparently with his support. She wrote: "...old Sam Gavronsky said that was only because he was too tired to lift his arm to vote against it!" (Suzman, 1993, p. 11). She later admitted that she had often wondered if he voted for the Progressive Party, "or simply spoiled his ballots" (p. 11). Helen and her father had had many arguments about politics, but she remarked that, because he possessed a wonderful sense of humour, the battle was won if she could make him laugh (Suzman, 1993). Helen agreed with her stepmother that the public gesture of support for the National Party he made may have been in an effort to protect her,

rather than a rejection of her political ideals (see section 2.2.6). This incident suggests Samuel's continued interest in Helen's wellbeing.

Another important attachment figure passed away during this historical period, when aunt Hansa died in 1972 (Suzman, 1993). The then fifty-five-year-old Helen made a significant discovery whilst sorting through Hansa's belongings: "I came across a photograph of my father as a young man seated on a chair: next to him, with her hand on his shoulder, was a young woman – my mother" (Suzman, 1993, p. 7). This was the first time she had seen a photograph of her (Suzman, 1993). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.5.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)***

Evidence suggests that close family relationships remained important for Helen during this historical period (see section 2.2.7). Data points out that Helen continued to write letters to her family members, especially her daughters (the late delivery of which had alerted her to the possibility of mail tampering by the Government). She also maintained contact with her extended family through visits during her sessions in Cape Town (Suzman, 1993). According to Helen's later recollections, her husband had remained supportive through actions such as continuing to attend her Report Back speeches after her return from parliamentary sessions in Cape Town (Suzman 1993, 2006). Mosie's support, as discussed in section 9.3.5.4, continued during this historical period, for example by continuing to attend all of Helen's Report Back meetings (Suzman, 2006). The following section focuses on Helen's wellness in the life task of love during the next historical period.

### ***9.3.5.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)***

Helen and Mosie, who had always shared her passion for a just society, had witnessed the beginning of the change Helen had so long advocated (see section 2.2.8). However, she would be alone in watching South Africa's progress in democracy, as Mosie passed away on 11 July 1994, at age 90 (Forde, 2009a; Gibson, 1994; Du Toit, 2006). The couple had been married for over 50 years. She commented at the opening of the *Helen Suzman: Fighter for Human Rights* exhibition: "Had Mosie been here today, he would be sitting in the front row, eyes tightly closed – very disconcerting, until I realised that he had his tape recorder on his knee" (Suzman, 2006, p. 17).

Helen's relationship with Mosie throughout her life seems to have been characterised by caring, commitment, and shared values (see sections 2.2.3 – 2.2.8). During this historical period, Helen wrote to their overseas friends that when she was working on her memoirs, Mosie went into his consulting rooms in the afternoon after sleeping in during the mornings. She shared her concerns over his wellbeing, and wrote:

He is becoming an avid watcher of lousy T.V. films, but I suppose he should be grateful that he is still mobile and thank God, out of the house for half the day. Amazingly enough two or three patients seem to arrive every afternoon at his rooms and although the practice is totally uneconomic, I think it's worth keeping going if only for occupational therapy. (Suzman, June 1991)

Early in 1993, Helen wrote to Sir Robin Renwick about the problems she experienced with Mosie's "unpredictable behaviour", mentioning that he seems to be alright when he's talking medicine with colleagues, but at other times seems to be in a state of total somnolence (Suzman, January 1993). A few months later (a day before Mosie's 89<sup>th</sup> birthday), she affectionately wrote: "he still has not accepted that he is no longer in practice and is in a state of pretty permanent depression, poor old boy. I keep telling him to count his blessings, but of course that falls on deaf ears" (Suzman, March 1993).

Helen's daughters, who had both initially studied in Johannesburg, were settled in Britain and America respectively. Helen had always valued regular contact and correspondence since they left home, insisting on weekly letters (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013; Suzman, 1993). They had also visited whenever possible, meeting up with her in South Africa or abroad (F. Jowell, personal communication, June 13, 2013). Helen recalled that she and her daughters "have remained closely in touch by mail, telephone, and, more recently, fax. We have been fortunate in being able to spend regular family holidays together, both in South Africa and abroad" (Suzman, 1993, p. 26). After her retirement, Helen's overseas visits to her family were often facilitated by various invitations abroad: "In recent years, a bonus of my receiving honorary doctorates and giving overseas lectures has been the opportunity to drop into London or Boston to be with them" (Suzman, 1993, p. 26). Helen's daughters had also been present to support Helen when she needed assistance (see section 2.2.8). For example, when she fell at age 88 and broke her femur, she recovered with the help of Patricia, who flew in from Boston to be with her during that time (Du Toit, 2006). Helen and Patricia visited also her seaside apartment in Plettenberg Bay late in November, 2008 (Forde, 2009b). Frances flew in to support her when she underwent a cataract operation and was still with her mother when Helen was admitted for a few hours to

Milpark Hospital, in order to receive a blood transfusion. The following morning, Helen died peacefully in her Johannesburg home, with Frances at her side (Maughan, Serrao & Smillie, 2009).

The following section contains the discussion on the possible impact the life forces and global events could have had upon the development and status of Suzman's holistic wellness throughout her lifespan.

#### 9.4 Life Forces and Global events throughout Helen Suzman's Lifespan

The individual's mastery of the five life tasks is influenced by what Sweeney and Witmer (1991) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) referred to as life forces. These are defined as the "major societal institutions that impinge on the health and well-being of each individual" (Witmer and Sweeney, 1992, p. 537) and are: (a) family, (b) religion, (c) education, (d) community, (e) media, (f) government, and (g) business or industry. In the Wheel of Wellness, global events are positioned on the outer edges of the life forces band (see Figure 4.1). Global events and issues, such as war, disease, poverty, pollution, overpopulation, and economic exploitation, exert an influence on the lives of all individuals, affecting their everyday functioning and quality of life because of the manner in which they "influence the dynamics of our existential world" (Sweeney & Witmer, 1991, p. 538). The following sections describe the life forces and global events relevant to the historical periods of Helen Suzman's life.

##### 9.4.1 Childhood (1917 - 1933)<sup>55</sup>

Helen's *family* could have had a positive influence on her sense of hope, worth and life task of love, through the secure attachments they shared (see section 2.2.1). It is suggested by the data that her family could also have been influential in the life task of work as mastery of her schoolwork and intellectual curiosity seemed to have been encouraged (Strangways-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Exposure to the morals and values inherent to the Jewish faith could have promoted her spiritual wellness. Considering that strict observance of *religious* traditions and rites were not demanded of her by her family (Suzman, 1993), she could have placed greater focus on spiritual rather than religious aspects from an

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<sup>55</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of *business or industry*.

early age. During this historical period, the *educational* system had contributed the internalisation of certain values (Suzman, 1993). It also provided young Helen with the support needed to develop her intellectual abilities through tasks appropriate to her developmental stage (Suzman, 1993), thereby impacting upon her wellness regarding self-direction and work. These two life tasks were also positively influenced by the extramural activities provided by the educational system. Helen seemed to have enjoyed the opportunity to participate in and excel at sports (Jowell, 2007; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), leading to better wellness with regard to physical activity and leisure. In addition, the educational system also provided her with the opportunity to build and maintain friendships with peers (see section 2.2.1). The beliefs, customs and practices inherent to the Anglo-Jewish *community* in which Helen was raised and educated, as well as the information she was exposed to through the *media* through publications such as the *Zionist Record*, might have influenced her spiritual wellness. *Governmental* policy at the time promoted social isolation from other racial groups and placed young Helen in a position of privilege and authority over the Black staff with whom she had contact (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), possibly delaying the development of certain aspects which would later characterise Helen's spirituality.

The *global events* during this historical period which have been highlighted in the data as impacting upon Helen's holistic wellness, include events related to Jewish persecution in Russia and elsewhere in Europe, which had led to her family's decision to immigrate to South Africa and continued to shape their experiences of persecution and oppression (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). During this and the following historical periods, these events likely influenced Helen's sense of cultural identity. Furthermore, by Helen's own account, her knowledge of this had heightened her awareness of the "evils of race discrimination" (Suzman, 1993, p. 10). The full impact of these events on Helen's spiritual wellness is likely to have occurred during subsequent historical periods, due to the protective factors of age and her sheltered upbringing during this historical period.

#### **9.4.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)<sup>56</sup>**

Helen's *family* had cultivated certain values in her, especially with regard to the pursuit of further education. They, furthermore, provided her with the experience of loving

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<sup>56</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, (b) *media*, and (c) *business or industry*, as well as significant global events.

relationships (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Her father's refusal of her request to study abroad could have impacted on her sense of optimism, as described earlier in this section. The *educational* system provided Helen with intellectual stimulation and exposed Helen to specific significant opportunities through the international tours to destinations such as "London, Paris, Zermatt, Rome and Venice – bliss for a young South African who had never before left her native shores" (Suzman, 1993, p. 9), thereby impacting upon her wellness in self-direction, work and leisure. Furthermore, Helen seemed to have utilised the numerous opportunities for socialisation on campus, which could have had a positive effect on her ability to establish friendships (see section 2.2.2). As during the previous historical period, the beliefs, customs and practices inherent to the Anglo-Jewish *community* in which Helen was educated, might have continued to influence her spiritual wellness. Helen's community also facilitated the opportunity for her to become romantically involved with Mosie through her participation in numerous social activities (Godsell, 2011; Suzman, 1993). *Governmental* policy at the time promoted social isolation from other racial groups and isolation from ideology which conflicted with current political policies (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

#### 9.4.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)<sup>57</sup>

Evidence suggests that Helen's *family* of origin as well as her new extended family held values similar to Helen's. Helen's husband, who was also involved in the war effort (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993), could have shared Helen's dedication to the war effort. Changes to her family life could have facilitated her wellness in the life task of self-direction and, coupled with her desire to be active in the war effort (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), could have facilitated a process of gender role definition. Furthermore, her expanding household (Godsell, 2011; Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993) could have brought about increased domestic responsibilities regarding childrearing, influencing the life task of work. Helen and her new husband shared numerous leisure activities and seemed to have enjoyed ample opportunity for forming mutual friendships (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Her family system was also the most significant source of loving relationships for Helen. Her romantic relationship with Mosie was formalised through marriage at the onset of this historical period, and the couple formed a

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<sup>57</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, and (b) *business or industry*.

new family system. There is no evidence to suggest that Helen's family of origin, and in particular her father, discontinued their caring concern for her well-being.

Regarding *education*, biographical data suggest that Helen's experience within the educational system was linked to her sense of purpose relating to the war effort, after which her sense of purpose could have also been maintained by the same system through her appointment as lecturer (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). Helen's decision to return to university had also ensured that her curiosity and intellect were stimulated by the educational system, which further enabled Helen to obtain a position with the allied forces and after the war provided her with formal employment (Godsell, 2011; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

Even though Helen did not affiliate strongly with the local Jewish *community* (Suzman, 1993), evidence suggests some sense of community among Jewish South Africans who participated in the war effort, as well as an increased awareness of a global Jewish community. On a community level, World War II could have facilitated a possible affiliation with the national and international Jewish community, which would have impacted upon Helen's sense of her cultural identity.

Helen, furthermore, became aware of the biases of the Nationalist *media* regarding their coverage of global events at the time, and the nature of Afrikaner Nationalism, which had stimulated her interest in the ethical issues involved in local politics (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Furthermore, *governmental* policy continued to create an atmosphere which maintained social isolation from other racial groups and placed Helen and her family in a position of privilege (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976).

The *global events* during this historical period which have been highlighted in the data as carrying particular prominence for Helen's wellness in the life task of spirituality include the rise of extremist forces and Jewish persecution in Europe, World War II and South Africa's participation as a member of the Allied forces (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The rise of Nazism, World War II and the Holocaust were all important global events which had further sensitised Helen to the effects of discrimination and persecution (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993), and had, therefore, sparked her sense of purpose. The war possibly also facilitated a sense of a broader community joined together by a common purpose influencing her sense of connectedness to others. Helen's involvement in the war effort can also be linked to her sense of control, and could have influenced her wellness with regard to her cultural identity and gender identity (see section 2.2.3). The

outbreak of WWII further seemed to have been a catalyst for various experiences related to the life task of work for Helen.

#### 9.4.4 Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)<sup>58</sup>

Helen's sense of purpose in the political arena was fostered by her *family* (and in particular her husband), who shared her values regarding human equality (Suzman, 1993). Her family also proved to be an invaluable source of support (Suzman, 1993), which would have facilitated her abilities in problem solving and stress management. Family also served as an important life force during this, and subsequent, historical periods with regard to the life task of work. For example, Helen later thanked her "late husband Mosie and the girls, who took the brunt of it and without whose support and encouragement I could never have embarked on a political career" (Suzman, 2006, p. 17). Evidence suggests that her family was a significant life force in this life task as Helen (a) received continuous encouragement, as well as emotional and tangible support from them during her political career, and (b) enjoyed many of her leisure activities in the company of her nuclear and extended family (Suzman, 1993). Her family's support in her career (see sections 2.2.4 – 2.2.7) also demonstrated appreciation of her efforts and abilities, which would have had a positive impact on the life task of love. Helen's father, for example, conveyed his pride at her electoral success (Suzman 1993, 2006), despite the fact that he did not agree with her political agenda.

Her work within the *educational* system had ensured contact with Black students and an improved awareness of local political issues (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). This seems to have helped shape Helen's ethical framework as she became more aware of the challenges to human rights during this time. Her sense of purpose could also have been influenced by the life force of education, as Helen was able to use her position as a lecturer to raise issues regarding racial segregation in her classes (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976). She also received opportunity for intellectual stimulation through the educational system (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) which could have developed her capacity for formulating realistic beliefs. The educational system also provided Helen with formal employment as a lecturer and stimulated her critical thinking regarding local discriminatory political practices (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). During the

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<sup>58</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, (b) *media*, and (c) *business or industry*.

course of her academic career, Helen also worked for the SAIRR, where she analysed aspects of *governmental* policy. She later reflected on this as “the project that first launched me into politics” (Suzman, 1993, p. 276). Other governmental factors which served as life forces include the rise of a ruling party whose policies Helen directly opposed, as well as the opportunity offered to her by parliamentary processes to voice her political beliefs (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Governmental policy and procedure at the time could have acted as life forces which had influenced Helen’s sense of control, contributed to her sense of worth and impacted upon her gender and cultural identity (see section 2.2.4). Friendship was also affected by this life force, as Helen had focused her social interest on opposing oppressive governmental policies. Many of her friends also shared her political interest and provided her with support for her efforts to improve the opposition to racially divisive policies (see section 2.2.4).

The campus *community*, as well as the broader Johannesburg community also seemed to have been supportive of political involvement (Suzman, 1993). Despite the fact that Helen did not experience a sense of belonging within the Johannesburg Jewish community (Suzman, 1993), a degree of wellness regarding her Jewish cultural identity was a prominent feature of this historical period, as well as those to follow, and the influence of the broader Jewish community in this regard could not be ignored.

The magnitude and significance of the previous *global event* of WWII was seen by its lingering effects on the South African government. WWII had played a role in changing the local political landscape in the years before the 1948 general election, as the NP emerged as an opposition party by criticising the UP government for its link with Britain and South Africa’s subsequent involvement in the two world wars (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993).

#### **9.4.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)<sup>59</sup>**

Helen’s *family*, including her extended family, continued to play an important role in her life, sharing her values as well as activities which contributed to her sense of connectedness with her environment. They were also an integral part of her support system during the periods when her sense of optimism was challenged (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) and could have positively impacted upon her wellness with regard to stress

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<sup>59</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, (b) *educational system*, and (c) *business or industry*.

management. Helen's family served as an important life force during her parliamentary career with regard to the life task of work, as Helen (a) received continuous emotional and tangible support during her political career, and (b) enjoyed many of her leisure activities in the company of her nuclear and extended family. Data from later historical periods suggest that Helen's husband was an important supportive figure for her during her entire career, including this historical period.

Support from colleagues and the liberal *community* could have positively impacted upon her wellness with regard to stress management during this historical period. The *media's* reports on the impact of apartheid policies and Helen's ability to provide them with information (Eglin, 2007; Suzman 1993) facilitated the relationship between her and the liberal press, contributing to her wellness in the life task of self-direction (see section 2.2.5).

*Governmental* forces during this historical period included the propositions which had contributed to the dissent within the United Party and the eventual split during this historical period. The South African political climate, the government's continued implementation of apartheid policy and the transformation of the Union of South Africa into a Republic, also contributed to the events which have influenced Helen's spiritual wellness during this historical period. Governmental policy directly opposed Helen's liberal values, but parliamentary processes enabled her party to openly oppose the apartheid government, possibly facilitating her sense of purpose and meaning through her work (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Her role as a Progressive Party member enabled her to experience a sense of worth in her work opposing the apartheid government (see section 2.2.5). Helen also enjoyed friendship and camaraderie based on shared values in this new party.

*Global events* during this historical period which have been highlighted in the data as carrying particular prominence for Helen's wellness in the life task of spirituality, may be the decolonisation of many African nations, including South Africa (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Helen's ethical values related to liberty, equality and autonomy could therefore have been reinforced by such international trends.

#### 9.4.6 The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)<sup>60</sup>

Helen's *family*, by sharing her values as well as activities which contributed to her sense of connectedness with her environment, continued to play an important role in her spiritual life. They were also an integral part of her support system during the periods when her sense of optimism was challenged (see section 2.2.6). Helen's family and her *community* continued to provide her with support (Suzman, 1993, 2006) and thus promoted her effective management of stress. Her father in particular was mentioned as promoting her use of humour (Suzman, 1993). Helen's family served as an important life force during her parliamentary career with regard to the life task of work, as Helen (a) received continuous emotional and tangible support for the pursuit of her political career, and (b) enjoyed many of her leisure activities in the company of family members (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). Lastly, family was an influential life force during this historical period (see section 2.2.6), as it was the source of Helen's intimate relationships.

The *media* highlighted the importance of Helen's continued struggle against apartheid for the Black South African community, which could have had a positive impact upon Helen's sense of purpose (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993). The media continued to play a role in Helen's wellness in self-direction, by facilitating her sense of control and sense of worth (see section 2.2.6). The media became a significant life force by providing Helen with a platform to distribute information about the effect of apartheid laws (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993), thus, enabling her to better meet her occupational goal of opposing the apartheid government and providing her with the support and publicity needed for continued electoral success. The liberal media's support (Suzman, 1993) could have impacted upon her sense of connectedness with the larger South African community.

With regard to the *government*, aspects of apartheid legislation had again reminded Helen of the events of Nazi Germany (Suzman, 1993), perhaps highlighting the importance of her work and reinforcing her sense of purpose. Governmental policy continued to oppose Helen's liberal values, but the parliamentary process gave her the platform from which to oppose the apartheid government and experience a sense of purpose and meaning in her work (Suzman, 1993). Governmental processes and policies impacted directly on Helen's career, as it influenced her workload and the resources available to her to perform her duties while the apartheid system challenged Helen's continued efforts to effect change in governmental

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<sup>60</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, (b) *educational system*, and (c) *business or industry*.

policy (see section 2.2.6). Furthermore, Helen's opposition to government policy (Pimstone, 2005; Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993) had been a significant focus of her social interest.

*Global events* during this historical period which have been highlighted in the data as carrying particular prominence for Helen's wellness in the life task of spirituality could have been the emerging international trend regarding the abolition of the death penalty (Pimstone, 2005; Suzman, 1993). This could have affirmed Helen's stance on what could be regarded to be an ethical issue. The continued decolonisation of many African nations during this historical period (Suzman, 1993) could have, furthermore, influenced Helen's thinking about the oppression of Africans, reinforcing her ethical framework regarding inalienable human rights, autonomy and equality.

#### **9.4.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)<sup>61</sup>**

As during the previous historical period, Helen's *family* continued to play an important role in her spiritual life, by sharing her values as well as activities which contributed to her sense of connectedness with her environment (see sections 2.2.6 and 2.2.7). They continued to provide her with support (Suzman, 1993) and thus promoted her effective management of stress. Helen's family served as an important life force during her parliamentary career with regard to the life task of work, as Helen (a) received continuous emotional and tangible support to pursue her political career, and (b) enjoyed many of her leisure activities in the company of her nuclear and extended family (Suzman, 1993). Lastly, her family members continued to provide Helen with the opportunity for loving relationships.

The *educational* system not only affirmed Helen's work through her nomination for chancellorship of the University of the Witwatersrand, but also provided Helen with a platform for demonstrating her dedication to democratic principle (Suzman, 1993). Helen's *community* continued to provide her with support (Suzman, 1993) and thus promoted her effective management of stress.

The liberal *media* continued to play a role in Helen's spiritual well-being by supporting her liberal values during this time and possibly facilitating a sense of connectedness with other like-minded individuals (Suzman, 1993). The media continued to

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<sup>61</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, and (b) *business or industry*, as well as significant global events.

play a role in Helen's wellness in self-direction, by facilitating her sense of control and sense of worth and governmental policies and the ensuing sociopolitical climate of the time continued to impact upon her sense of control (see section 2.2.7). It also continued to assist Helen in her occupational goal of opposing the apartheid government, and the liberal press provided Helen and the other PP candidates with the support and publicity needed for successful election campaigns (Strangwayes-Booth, 1976; Suzman, 1993). The liberal media's ongoing support (Eglin, 2007; Suzman, 1993) could have continued to promote her sense of connectedness with the larger South African community.

*Governmental* policy continued to oppose Helen's liberal values, but the parliamentary process gave her the platform from which to oppose the apartheid government, possibly facilitating her sense of purpose and meaning in her work (Suzman, 1993). Helen's opposition to apartheid policy continued to be a significant focus of her social interest and the expansion of the PP had provided her much more social support in her immediate work environment (see section 2.2.7).

#### **9.4.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)<sup>62</sup>**

Helen's *family* continued to contribute to her spiritual wellness by sharing her values and some of the activities which contributed to her sense of connectedness with her environment (Suzman, 1993). The social support she continued to receive from her family and friends could have maintained her effective stress management strategies. Helen's family remained important participants in many of the leisure activities she enjoyed (Suzman, 1993). Data continued to highlight the life force of family as significant during this historical period to Helen's wellness in the life task of love (see section 2.2.8).

Evidence suggests that Helen's *community* had provided her with the opportunity to maintain and build supportive friendships, as well as express her social interest (see section 2.2.8). The social support she received from the friends in her community could have assisted with her effective stress management strategies. The recognition of her achievements by members of her own and other communities (Burns & Cowell, 2009; Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011; Rotberg, 2011), as well as the continued relationship between herself and the media, could have facilitated the maintenance of Helen's sense of worth.

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<sup>62</sup> The biographical data proved insufficient for inferences regarding the life forces of (a) *religion*, (b) *education*, and (c) *business or industry*, as well as significant global events.

The post-apartheid *media* continued to focus on Helen after her retirement and would on occasion publish her opinions and comments on current events, which could have contributed to a continued sense of meaning and purpose (Suzman, 1993). The media's continued presence in her life provided Helen with the opportunity to reflect on her career, and to remain an important part of the country's political landscape after her retirement (see section 2.2.8) and could have continued to promote her sense of connectedness with the larger South African community (see section 2.2.8).

With regard to *government* as a life force, during this historical period, South Africa held its first democratic election, giving Helen the opportunity to experience a sense of meaning and purpose whilst serving as a member of the Independent Electoral Commission in these 1994 elections, where she played an important part in facilitating cooperation between the parties and establishing trust in the communities (Eglin, 2007; Godsell, 2011). The changes in South African government and the adoption of the new Constitution could have been significant to Helen's spiritual wellness, particularly with regard to dimensions such as meaning, purpose, and ethical values. Changes in South Africa's government and the abolition of the apartheid system would have had a significant positive effect on Helen's wellness in general, and self-direction in particular with regard to her sense of worth (see section 2.2.8).

In the following section, brief summaries of the main findings with regard to the five life tasks as well as the life forces and global events of the holistic wellness model are provided, along with concluding remarks regarding the holistic wellness of Helen Suzman throughout her lifespan.

## **9.5 Conclusion: Holistic Wellness of Helen Suzman**

The researcher concludes that, overall, Helen Suzman displayed a relatively high degree of holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. In this section, the findings from the five life tasks will, firstly, be summarized, followed by a brief integrated discussion of the findings.

Table 9.1 summarises the various dimensions of spiritual wellness as proposed by Myers et al. (2000) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) (see section 4.3.1.1). According to the findings of this study, certain dimensions of spiritual wellness featured more prominently in the data on Helen Suzman's life. These dimensions include (a) meaning and purpose, (b) moral and ethical values, (c) hope and optimism, (d) love, compassion and service to others,

as well as (e) transcendence. Dimensions that featured consistently less prominently in the data were (a) a belief in a power beyond oneself, and (b) spiritual practices (worship, prayer, meditation, self-reflection, contemplation).

Table 9.1

*Wellness in the Spirituality Life Task throughout Helen's Lifespan*

Historical Period	Wellness in the Life Task of Spirituality	
	Prominent Dimensions	Less Prominent Dimensions
Childhood	Moral and ethical values Hope and optimism Transcendence Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices Love, compassion and service to others	Meaning and purpose
The Early Student Years	Hope and optimism * Meaning and purpose *	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices Transcendence Moral and ethical values Love, compassion and service to others
Marriage, motherhood and World War II	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices Meaning and purpose Moral and ethical values Hope and optimism Love, compassion and service to others Transcendence	
Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament	Moral and ethical values Meaning and purpose Hope and optimism * Love, compassion and service to others Transcendence	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices
Formation of the Progressive Party	Moral and ethical values Meaning and purpose Hope and optimism Transcendence	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices Love, compassion and service to others
The solo years	Meaning and purpose Moral and ethical values Hope and optimism * Love, compassion and service to others	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices Transcendence
Continued apartheid opposition	Meaning and purpose Moral and ethical values Hope and optimism Love, compassion and service to others	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices Transcendence
Retirement and death	Meaning and purpose Moral and ethical values Hope and optimism Love, compassion and service to others Transcendence	Belief in a power beyond oneself Spiritual practices

\* The degree of wellness in this dimension was variable during the associated historical period.

During interpretations regarding Helen's degree of wellness in the different dimensions characteristic of the life task of spirituality, only those dimensions which featured with satisfactory prominence during the historical period were considered for analysis. However, the limited evidence on the dimensions that featured less prominently may suggest that Helen experienced a lower level of wellness in these dimensions of spirituality. The researcher argues that, based on the relatively high degree of wellness in other dimensions of this life task, Helen's overall experience of spiritual wellness was not significantly affected by the less prominent involvement of the more religious aspects of the spiritual life task. The researcher argues that spiritual practices could have taken on a more spiritual (as opposed to religious) tone for Helen, and would have, therefore, been associated more closely with other dimensions of spirituality (such as morality and ethical values, a sense of meaning and purpose, transcendence, etc.) than a belief in a higher power.

Overall, the dimensions which featured prominently were all found to be indicative of a relatively high degree of wellness. However, some dimensions of spiritual wellness demonstrated a variable degree of wellness, as reflected in Table 9.1 by asterisks. As discussed in sections 9.3.1.2, 9.3.1.4 and 9.3.1.6, Helen's sense of hope and optimism was often challenged by certain life forces and global events. During three historical periods (as indicated by the asterisks in Table 9.1), Helen's wellness with regard to hope and optimism showed some variation. Her sense of meaning and purpose also seemed to have been challenged in the second historical period. The researcher argues, however, that these variations were not sufficient to indicate a low level of wellness in these dimensions, but highlight the importance of considering the impact of life forces on wellness, as proposed by the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000).

With regard to the second life task, the researcher concludes that Helen Suzman displayed a relatively high degree of overall wellness in the life task of self-direction during her lifespan. Table 9.2 summarises the various dimensions of wellness in this life task as proposed by Myers et al. (2000) and Witmer and Sweeney (1992) (see section 4.3.1.2). According to the findings of this study, certain dimensions of self-direction consistently featured prominently in the data on Helen Suzman's life. These dimensions include (a) sense of worth, (b) sense of control, (c) realistic beliefs, (d) emotional awareness and coping, (e) problem-solving and creativity, (f) sense of humour, (g) stress management, (h) gender identity, and (i) cultural identity. Dimensions that featured consistently less prominently in the data were (a) nutrition, (b) exercise, and (c) self-care. The researcher would like to highlight, however, that even though little direct information is available regarding these

three dimensions, Helen's active lifestyle, her enjoyment of various activities and her longevity serve to indicate that she experienced a satisfactory degree of wellness in these dimensions.

Table 9.2

*Wellness in the Self-Direction Life Task throughout Helen's Lifespan*

Historical Period	Wellness in the Life Task Self-Direction		
	Prominent Dimensions		Less Prominent Dimensions
Childhood	sense of worth sense of control emotional coping problem-solving	exercise stress management cultural identity	realistic beliefs sense of humour nutrition self-care gender identity
The Early Student Years	sense of control* emotional coping* stress management*		sense of worth realistic beliefs problem-solving sense of humour nutrition exercise self-care gender identity cultural identity
Marriage, motherhood and World War II	sense of worth sense of control realistic beliefs emotional coping problem-solving	sense of humour exercise stress management gender identity cultural identity	nutrition self-care
Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament	sense of worth sense of control realistic beliefs emotional coping problem-solving	sense of humour stress management gender identity cultural identity	nutrition exercise self-care
Formation of the Progressive Party	sense of worth sense of control realistic beliefs emotional coping problem-solving	sense of humour stress management gender identity cultural identity	nutrition exercise self-care
The solo years	sense of worth sense of control* realistic beliefs emotional coping* problem-solving	sense of humour stress management gender identity cultural identity	nutrition exercise self-care
Continued apartheid opposition	sense of worth* sense of control* realistic beliefs emotional coping problem-solving	sense of humour stress management gender identity cultural identity	nutrition exercise self-care
Retirement and death	sense of worth sense of control* realistic beliefs emotional coping problem-solving	sense of humour stress management gender identity cultural identity	nutrition exercise self-care

\* The degree of wellness in this dimension was variable during the associated historical period.

Only those dimensions which featured with satisfactory prominence during the historical period will be considered for interpretations regarding Helen's degree of wellness in the different characteristics of the life task of self-direction. Table 9.2 reflects the researcher's interpretation of the degree to which Helen experienced wellness in these dimensions, and shows that the dimensions which featured prominently during historical periods, were all associated with a degree of wellness. However, as indicated by the asterisks in Table 9.2, certain dimensions demonstrated variable degrees of wellness during some of the historical periods, as they were influenced considerably by the sociopolitical milieu in which she worked. The researcher argues, however, that these variations and fluctuations did not significantly impact upon Helen's wellness in these dimensions in particular or in self-direction in general. Rather these findings serve to highlight the importance of considering the impact of life forces on wellness, as proposed by the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000).

The findings regarding Helen's wellness in the third life task reflects that she displayed a relatively high degree of overall wellness in the life task of work and leisure during her lifespan. Table 9.3 summarises the findings related to this life task, by highlighting relevant aspects of work and leisure for all seven historical periods. Ample data was available from every historical period in Helen Suzman's life, as her occupation was a prominent focus of her autobiographical material (including her memoirs and letters). Table 9.3 reflects that a description of her wellness with regard to the life task of work and leisure could be formulated for all seven historical periods, and indicates the degree to which wellness was judged to be present.

The researcher argues that Helen Suzman consistently displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of work and leisure. Table 9.3 shows that the available data indicated some variation in her degree of wellness with regard to work and leisure during the historical periods of *The Early Student Years* and the *Solo Years*. These findings illustrate the effect of the individual's context on their wellness in certain life tasks. The researcher argues, however, that the challenges to Helen's wellness during these times did not significantly detract from her overall wellness in the life task of work and leisure during these historical periods.

Table 9.3

*Wellness in the Life Task of Work and Leisure throughout Helen's Lifespan*

Historical Period	Wellness in the Life Task of Work and Leisure
Childhood	<p><b>Work:</b> Helen's academic performance indicates a relatively high degree of wellness with regard to educational activities.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A relatively high degree of wellness was suggested by the data, as evident by her childhood play and involvement in extracurricular activities.</p>
The Early Student Years	<p><b>Work:</b> Helen's academic performance indicates an initial relatively high degree of wellness with regard to educational activities which showed a significant decline by the end of this historical period.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A relatively high degree of wellness was suggested by the data, as evident by her high involvement in sport and campus activities.</p>
Marriage, motherhood and World War II	<p><b>Work:</b> Helen's dedicated participation in the War effort and meeting demands regarding childrearing, homemaking, and educational activities, as well as her formal employment as a lecturer, all indicate a relatively high degree of wellness in this task.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A high degree of wellness was suggested by the data, as evident by her enjoyment of various leisure time activities.</p>
Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament	<p><b>Work:</b> Data indicates a relatively high degree of wellness in this life task, as evidenced by her employment as a lecturer, her work on behalf of the SAIRR, her volunteer work for the United Party, as well as activities regarding homemaking and childrearing. She also had a successful parliamentary election campaign.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A relatively high degree of wellness was suggested by the data. Findings suggest that her wellness with regard to leisure decreased temporarily at the onset of her parliamentary career, after which she was able to maintain involvement in leisure activities as evident by attempts at relaxation, hobbies as well as regular leisure activities in nature.</p>
Formation of the Progressive Party	<p><b>Work:</b> Helen's continued duty as an MP and the role she played in the formation of a new opposition party indicate a relatively high degree of wellness in this life task.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A relatively high degree of wellness was suggested by the data. Findings suggest that she was able to maintain involvement in leisure activities as evident by attempts at relaxation, hobbies and regular leisure activities in nature.</p>
The solo years	<p><b>Work:</b> Her extraordinary productivity under challenging circumstances as the sole MP of the Progressive Party indicates a relatively high degree of wellness in this life task.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A variable degree of wellness was suggested by the data. Findings suggest that she was able to maintain some involvement in leisure activities as evident by attempts at relaxation, hobbies and regular leisure activities in nature. However, towards the end of this 13-year period, Helen's work load could have impacted negatively upon her participation in leisure activities.</p>
Continued apartheid opposition	<p><b>Work:</b> Data indicates a relatively high degree of wellness in this life task, as evidenced by Helen's continuation of her duties as an MP until the age of 71.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A relatively high degree of wellness was suggested by the data. Findings suggest that she was able to maintain involvement in leisure activities as evident by attempts at relaxation, hobbies, as well as regular leisure activities in nature. She stopped her participation in one of her favourite leisure activities (golf) towards the end of this historical era due to her advancing age.</p>
Retirement and death	<p><b>Work:</b> Helen's continued involvement in political and public life throughout most of this historical period indicates a relatively high degree of wellness in this life task.</p> <p><b>Leisure:</b> A relatively high degree of wellness was suggested by the data. Findings suggest that she was able to maintain some involvement in leisure activities as she needed to adjust to her advancing age and decreasing mobility.</p>

The findings regarding Helen's wellness in the fourth life task reflects that she displayed a relatively high degree of overall wellness in the life task of friendship during her

lifespan. Table 9.4 summarises the available data regarding this life task in terms of Helen's social interest, as well as the supportive friendships she was able to form and maintain. The findings as presented in Table 9.4 highlight the effect of the individual's context on their unique expression of wellness. The researcher proposes that Helen's occasional experience of isolation and loneliness was exclusively bound to difficulties in her occupational context and therefore do not significantly detract from her overall wellness in the life task of friendship.

Table 9.4

*Wellness in the Life Task of Friendship throughout Helen's Lifespan*

Historical Period	Wellness in the Life Task of Friendship
Childhood	The development of her <b>social interest</b> is evident by her respectful attitude towards others. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by her popularity with her peers and her enjoyment of social activities at school.
The Early Student Years	Her continued ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by her enjoyment of numerous social activities at university.
Marriage, motherhood and World War II	Helen's <b>social interest</b> was evident by her involvement in the war effort. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by her and Mosie's active participation in many social activities and their efforts to maintain close proximity to their friends.
Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament	Helen's <b>social interest</b> was evident by her involvement in political activities aimed at opposing oppressive governmental policies. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by the willingness of her friends to provide her with tangible and emotional support. After entering Parliament, Helen's wellness in this life task was briefly challenged as evident by her initial sense of loneliness and isolation.
Formation of the Progressive Party	Helen's <b>social interest</b> was evident by her continued fight against the human rights abuses inherent to the apartheid system. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by the continued availability and willingness of her friends to provide her with support, as well as the close emotional bonds she was able to forge with her colleagues.
The solo years	Helen's <b>social interest</b> was evident by her continued opposition to apartheid and her sense of connectedness to the broad South African community. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by the breadth of her support network and the continued availability and willingness of her friends to provide her with support. In her occupational environment, Helen's wellness in this life task was challenged to an extent as evident by her frequent sense of loneliness and isolation within Parliament.
Continued apartheid opposition	Helen's <b>social interest</b> was evident by the focus of her political career, namely fighting against the human rights abuses inherent to the apartheid system. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by her increased social support in her immediate working environment and the meaningful friendships she later reflected on.
Retirement and death	Helen's <b>social interest</b> was evident by her continued involvement in promoting human rights. Her ability to form and maintain <b>supportive friendships</b> is reflected by her continued contact with and disclosure to her friends, as well as the formation of new friendships.

With regard to the final life task, the researcher argues that Helen Suzman consistently displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of love. Table 9.5 summarises the relevant findings by highlighting aspects related to the life task of love, as described by Witmer and Sweeney (1992) and Myers et al. (2000), for all eight historical periods.

Table 9.5

*Wellness in the Life Task of Love throughout Helen's Lifespan*

<b>Historical Period</b>	<b>Wellness in the Life Task of Love</b>
Childhood	Helen's relationship with her father seems to have been characterised by commitment, trust, caring, mutual affection, companionship and cooperation. He demonstrated continuous interest in her growth and well-being. Her aunt, Hansa, can also be considered an important attachment figure during Helen's early childhood, and she received nurturing from her that resembled maternal care and affection.
The Early Student Years	Helen's father continued to demonstrate his interest in Helen's growth and well-being. Helen also became romantically involved with her future husband, Mosie.
Marriage, motherhood and World War II	Helen married Mosie in 1937, and the couple had two daughters during this historical period. Data suggests that Helen and Mosie's relationship seems to have been characterised by commitment, romance, shared interests, intimacy, spending time together, and mutual affection.
Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament	Data on Mosie's support during this historical period suggests continuous interest in Helen's well-being. Helen and Mosie's relationship seems to have been characterised by commitment, shared interests and values, cooperation, communication, problem-solving, companionship, and mutual appreciation. Helen's father and stepmother also provided her with support and encouragement, demonstrating continued interest in her well-being.
Formation of the Progressive Party	Helen's family remained an important source of loving relationships, and her daughters had by this stage become more involved in Helen's campaigns and public appearances, indicating commitment, shared interests and values, cooperation, communication, companionship and mutual appreciation. Data on Mosie's and her father's support suggests their continuous interest in Helen's well-being.
The solo years	Helen's family relationships remained indicative of caring, support, commitment, shared interests and values, and communication. Her husband, daughters and in-laws are suggested to have been important sources of support during this period. Helen's relationship with her father seems to have been characterised by respect for the uniqueness of the other, companionship, and self-disclosure. He died in 1965.
Continued apartheid opposition	Helen's family relationships remained indicative of caring, support, commitment, shared interests and values, and communication. Her husband, daughters and in-laws are suggested to have been important sources of support during this period.
Retirement and death	Helen's relationship with Mosie during this stage seems to have been characterised by caring, affection, commitment, and shared values. Helen's relationship with her daughters seems to have been characterised by commitment, companionship, affection and shared interests. Data suggests they provided her with considerable support during this historical period, especially after Mosie's death.

The researcher concludes that Helen Suzman consistently displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of love, which could have contributed towards her overall wellness. For example, Helen and Mosie were married for six of the eight historical periods in Helen's lifespan. Their marriage seemed to have promoted Helen's wellness both in the life task of love, as well as her holistic wellness. As pointed out by Myers et al (2000), loving relationships may promote physical and mental health, quality of life as well as longevity. Furthermore, the life force of family not only provided Helen with a source of

loving relationships from which to attain wellness in the life task of love, but also served as a life force important to many of her other life tasks (see sections 9.3.1 to 9.3.3).

The findings presented in this chapter also highlighted another aspect of the holistic wellness model, namely the interrelatedness of life tasks. Spirituality as a life task showed several instances of interrelatedness with other tasks. One dimension of spirituality, namely moral and ethical values, was found to impact upon the life task of love as Helen's intimate relationships were characterised by, amongst other features, the presence of shared values (see sections 9.3.1 and 9.3.5). Spirituality also seemed to have been closely related during some of the historical periods in Helen's life to the life task of friendship for this same reason. For example, during the *Formation of the Progressive Party*, evidence suggests that her association with others who shared her sense of purpose and her moral and ethical values (which relates to her life task of spirituality) became a prominent aspect of Helen's experience of wellness in the life task of friendship.

The interrelatedness between spirituality and self-direction also became apparent. For example, during the period *Marriage, Motherhood and World War II*, Helen's wellness in the life task of self-regulation (through her renewed dedication to complete her degree) seemed to have been influenced by the life task of spirituality (gaining a sense of meaning and purpose from the war effort) (see sections 9.3.1.3 and 9.3.2.3). This confirms the assertion by Witmer and Sweeney (1992) of the importance of purpose and meaningfulness in coping with stress and enhancing overall well-being.

During the historical period *Formation of the Progressive Party*, Helen's reaction to the grim events of the early 1960s (see sections 9.3.1.5, 9.3.2.5 and 9.3.3.5) highlighted the relationship between three of the life tasks, namely work, spirituality (in particular a sense of purpose) and self-direction (i.e., sense of control and sense of worth). During this period Helen's set of values found expression in her work and occupational goals, leading to a sense of meaning and purpose. When she felt that she and her fellow Progs were fulfilling their purpose of opposing the apartheid government, Helen's wellness in self-direction (through her sense of worth), was also positively affected. Similarly, during the *Solo Years*, evidence suggests that Helen's approach to her life task of work was influenced by both her moral and ethical values and her sense of purpose (from the life task of spirituality), as well as her sense of worth (as a dimension of the life task of self-direction) as discussed in sections 9.3.1.6 and 9.3.2.6 respectively. In addition, some of Helen's leisure activities during this and other historical periods (e.g., playing golf, fishing, visiting game reserves, walking in nature) also

highlight the important relationship between leisure and transcendence as an aspect of spirituality.

In Table 9.6, the significant life forces and global events throughout Helen Suzman's life are summarized. These forces and events were highlighted by the biographical data as potentially influential in Helen's experience of holistic wellness. The life forces and events were described in greater detail in section 9.4.

Table 9.6

*Life Forces and Global Event throughout Helen's Lifespan*

<b>Historical Period</b>	<b>Life Forces</b>	<b>Global Events</b>
Childhood	family religion education community media government	Jewish persecution in Russia and elsewhere in Europe had led to her family's decision to immigrate to South Africa and continued to shape their experiences of persecution and oppression
The Early Student Years	family education community government	None identified.
Marriage, motherhood and World War II	family education community media government	The rise of Nazism, WWII and the Holocaust had further sensitised Helen to the effects of discrimination. Her involvement in the war effort can also be linked to her sense of control, and could have influenced her wellness with regard to her cultural identity and gender identity
Introduction to politics and entry into Parliament	family education community government	The magnitude and significance of the previous global event of WWII was seen by its lingering effects on the South African government.
Formation of the Progressive Party	family community media government	Helen's ethical values related to liberty, equality and autonomy could therefore have been reinforced by the decolonisation of many African nations, including South Africa
The solo years	family community media government	The emerging international trend regarding the abolition of the death penalty and the continued decolonisation of many African nations could have furthermore reinforced her ethical framework regarding inalienable human rights, autonomy and equality.
Continued apartheid opposition	family education community media government	None identified.
Retirement and death	family community media government	None identified.

## **9.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented the findings and discussion of the holistic wellness of Helen Suzman throughout her lifespan, in terms of the five life tasks of the holistic wellness model. Life forces and global events relevant to Helen's wellness were highlighted. The following chapter provides the reader with a comparative conclusion of the psychosocial development and holistic wellness of Suzman over her lifespan. In the following chapter the value of this study, its limitations and the recommendations for future research are discussed and the researcher offers her final thoughts and remarks on the research process and findings.

## CHAPTER 10

### INTEGRATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 10.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter provides an integration and discussion of Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and holistic wellness. Firstly, the two theoretical frameworks used in this study are compared by highlighting their points of similarity and divergence. Thereafter, comparative conclusions are presented by presenting a comparative summary of the biographical findings of Helen Suzman's life history within the frameworks provided by the psychosocial development theory and the holistic wellness model.

#### 10.2 Conceptual Outline to the Integration of Findings

As stated in section 1.2, two types of psychological frameworks were used in this study: (a) a stage-based theory of psychosocial development, and (b) a model of holistic wellness. The presentation and discussion of the findings related to Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and holistic wellness in this chapter are aimed at integrating the sets of findings presented in chapters 8 and 9. The researcher, firstly, presents the similarities and differences between the two theoretical frameworks relevant to their use in this psychobiographical study. Thereafter, comparative conclusions of the findings are discussed for all eight historical periods of Helen Suzman's life. The main summative points of the findings of each approach are tabled and contrasted in order to explore the degree to which the theoretical frameworks complemented each other when applied to a particular historical period.

#### 10.3 Similarities and Differences of the Theoretical Frameworks

The two theoretical frameworks used in this study, namely Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1963) and the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992), show some common features as well as some striking differences. Before the findings related to the biographical data on the

life of Helen Suzman can be meaningfully integrated, these points of similarity and departure need to be considered.

The theory of psychosocial development and the holistic wellness model have demonstrated the following similarities:

1. *Eugraphic focus*

In psychosocial development, the stages are characterised by (a) the ego's task of integrating certain oppositional forces, and (b) the specific resulting ego strength or quality which is gained should such integration take place successfully (Erikson, 1997). Erikson refers to these ego strengths as virtues which develop if the ego is able to create a working balance between the opposing forces during a developmental stage (Gross, 1987; Roazen, 1976). In describing the ego strengths as they develop throughout the life span, the theory of psychosocial development therefore focuses on optimal development of the human ego and personality. It emphasises processes of adapting to external demands, coping with internal conflict and developing strengths. Similarly, the holistic wellness model is by its very nature eugraphic. Wellness theorists have argued that wellness should not be defined only as the absence of illness, but as the movement on a continuum towards optimal functioning, dependent upon an individual's self-responsibility and motivation (Roscoe, 2009). For example, Myers et al. (2000, p. 252) defined wellness as "a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being, in which body, mind and spirit are integrated by the individual to live life more fully within the human and natural community".

2. *Integrative approach*

One of Erikson's fundamental assumptions was that human development continuously depends on three complimentary processes of organisation, namely, the *soma* (i.e., the biological, hierarchical organisation of organ systems), the *psyche* (i.e., the psychic organisation of individual experience through the process of ego synthesis) and the *ethos* (i.e., the social milieu) (Erikson, 1997; Stevens, 2008). Erikson's approach is, therefore, an integrative one, taking into account the different aspects that may interact to produce human behaviour and experience. He proposed that social, cultural and environmental factors are embedded in the core of the human personality (Schachter, 2005). Similarly, the holistic wellness model was developed to conceptualise wellness as a multidimensional, synergistic construct (Myers et al.,

2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992). The holistic wellness model is a multidimensional and dynamic model which examines the life tasks of the individual as they interact with external forces including family, community, media, education, religion, business or industry and government, and are influenced by global events (Hattie et al., 2004; Myers et al., 2000; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992).

The following differences were observed by the researcher between the theory of psychosocial development and the holistic wellness model:

1. *Developmental orientation*

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development is conceptualised as a series of dichotomous forces in a progression of eight stages, which he termed the *eight ages of man* and which cover the entire human life cycle (Erikson, 1963, 1997). The stages in the Erikson's theory focus on different aspects of psychosocial development and are designed according to an epigenetic viewpoint (Erikson, 1997). The holistic wellness model does not have a stage-based or developmental perspective, but rather gives a holistic view of all wellness related factors without associating these factors with a specific age or developmental stage. There is, therefore, no proposed progression through the life tasks.

2. *Dynamic focus*

The epigenetic viewpoint incorporated in Erikson's stage-based approach also proposes that the different growing parts are interrelated: "each part exists in some form before 'its' decisive and critical time normally arrives and remains systematically related to all others so that the whole ensemble depends on the proper development in the proper sequence of each item" (Erikson, 1997, p.29). This gives the theory of psychosocial development a dynamic quality which allows for the explanation of developmental processes throughout the lifespan. The holistic wellness model was based on a neo-Adlerian approach and therefore has its roots in dynamic Adlerian concepts such as *social interest* and *lifestyle*. It, therefore, implicitly reflects the innate desire to serve the community and develop a characteristic approach to life (Adler, 1927/1992). Adler's notion that the individual's lifestyle is representative of his or her response to early life experiences,

which then in turn influences his or her perceptions about the self and the world (Adler, 1927/1992), may be reflected to some degree by the interrelatedness of the life tasks, life forces and global events contained within the holistic wellness model. However, it is not within the scope of the holistic wellness model to provide a dynamic theory of how the individual's emotions, motives, goals, actions and experiences shape development over time. The holistic wellness model, therefore, does not in itself contain any theoretical or dynamic explanation of the development of certain aspects of wellness or the processes through which an individual achieves wellness in the life tasks.

#### **10.4 Comparative Conclusions**

In the following sections, the main findings from both psychological frameworks are presented in table format for all of the historical periods of Helen Suzman's life. The two sets of findings are then compared to highlight where the frameworks could be seen to offer complementary, or contrasting, findings.

##### **10.4.1 Childhood (1917 – 1933)**

Summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period, ranging from Helen's birth until the end of her high school career at age 16, are presented in Table 10.1. During this historical period, Helen's psychosocial development progressed through the stages as proposed by Erikson (1963) and she achieved a relatively high degree of wellness in all the life tasks of the holistic wellness model.

From Table 10.1, certain similarities can be observed between the descriptions offered by the two psychological frameworks. Both perspectives emphasised a hopeful and optimistic attitude towards life and both recognised the impact of the immediate social environment (particularly the nuclear family) on its development. Whilst Erikson's (1963) theory suggested that Helen could have achieved the successful resolution of the conflict between trust and mistrust during her first two years of development, applying the holistic wellness model highlighted Helen's apparent experience of hope and optimism at differing times throughout this historical period.

Table 10.1

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the First Historical Period*

<b>Psychosocial Development</b>	<b>Holistic Wellness</b>
<p><i>Trust versus Mistrust:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The potentially harmful effects of the early loss of her mother could have been mitigated by an environment in which Helen received the care and affection equivalent to what Erikson had considered to be conducive for the successful navigation through this conflict.</li> <li>2. Helen appeared to have developed the ego quality of hope.</li> </ol> <p><i>Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The conditions could have been favourable for the development of autonomy, as young Helen's environment seemed neither restrictive nor permissive. She seemed to explore her immediate environment autonomously and independently.</li> <li>2. Helen's development seemed to have cultivated in her an autonomous ability to exercise free will.</li> </ol> <p><i>Initiative versus Guilt:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen demonstrated initiative through her resilience and active efforts at learning and she had the opportunity at school to engage in the play activities from which she had been excluded at home.</li> <li>2. Helen appeared to have developed the ego quality of a sense of purpose.</li> </ol> <p><i>Industry versus Inferiority:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen demonstrated a sense of industry through her curiosity, above-average academic ability and participation in extracurricular activities. She developed values related to a sense of industry, such as being punctual and conscientious.</li> <li>2. Helen's development seemed to have enabled her to experience a sense of competence.</li> </ol> <p><i>Identity versus Role Confusion:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen entered this stage without any apparent delays in psychosocial development. She demonstrated development regarding both an individual identity (e.g., career choice) and a social identity (e.g., establishing healthy peer group relations).</li> <li>2. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Moral and ethical values, hope and optimism, as well as transcendence were prominent aspects of the <i>spirituality</i> life task and showed a relatively high degree of wellness.</li> <li>2. A sense of worth, sense of control, emotional awareness and coping, problem-solving and creativity, exercise and stress management were prominent aspects of the <i>self-direction</i> life task and showed a relatively high degree of wellness.</li> <li>3. With regard to <i>work and leisure</i>, Helen's academic performance indicates a relatively high degree of wellness regarding educational activities and her involvement in extracurricular activities reflects a relatively high degree of wellness in leisure activities.</li> <li>4. The development of Helen's social interest is evident by her respectful attitude towards others. Her popularity with her peers reflects an ability to form peer relationships therefore indicates a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>friendship</i>.</li> <li>5. Regarding the life task of <i>love</i>, Helen enjoyed significant loving relationships. For example, both her father and aunt Hansa demonstrated continuous interest in her growth and well-being and served as important attachment figures during Helen's early childhood.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Religion, Education, Community, Media and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> Jewish persecution in Russia and elsewhere in Europe had led to her family's decision to immigrate to South Africa and continued to shape their experiences of persecution and oppression</p>

Another similarity also exists between the fifth psychosocial stage of development (identity versus role confusion) and some of the life tasks of holistic wellness. Helen's identity formation also reflected aspects of the life tasks of spirituality (in particular the development of her set of moral and ethical values), self-direction (her experience of her

cultural identity), work and leisure (where her individual identity could have incorporated her strengths and accomplishments in this regard), and friendship, (which may have facilitated her social identity).

When comparing findings from the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000) to Erikson's (1963) proposed ego virtues of will, purpose and competence, points of both overlap and digression can be observed. Helen's autonomous exploration of her environment, her developing sense of initiative and pro-active effort, as well as her sense of industry and competence may show some resemblance to aspects of the life task of self-direction, such as a sense of control, as well as emotional awareness and coping. However, within a developmental context, Erikson's (1963) notion of purpose differs significantly from the sense of purpose contained within the spirituality life task of the holistic wellness model (Myers et al., 2000) (see section 3.3.3 and section 4.3.1.1). Therefore, as can be seen from Table 10.1, whilst Helen developed the ego quality of a sense of purpose, meaning and purpose was not included in the summary of her spiritual wellness, as the theoretical frameworks differ in their conceptualisation of this construct.

#### **10.4.2 The Early Student Years (1934 – 1936)**

Table 10.2 provides the summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period. Table 10.2 indicates that during this historical period, Helen's stage of psychosocial development continued from the previous historical period. Findings indicate that Helen displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life tasks of friendship and love, whilst experiencing a variable degree of wellness in the other 3 life tasks.

From Table 10.2, important points of comparison can be made. Both perspectives highlighted the changes and disruptions that marked this historical period. From the perspective of psychosocial development, Helen entered into a moratorium period during which previously established goals and values were abandoned in favour of experimentation with different roles. Through the lens of the holistic wellness model, Helen's wellness decreased considerably during this period with regard to three life tasks, namely spirituality (i.e., maintaining a set of morals and values, experiencing a sense of meaning and purpose, as well as hope and optimism), self-direction (i.e., maintaining a sense of control, as well as coping with emotions and managing stress) and work. Therefore, whilst the holistic wellness model offered a description of the challenges she faced during this time, the theory of psychosocial development offered a dynamic explanation for the apparent decline in Helen's

functioning by offering the proposal that Helen's behaviour could be normalised within the context of the crisis of identity versus role confusion.

Table 10.2

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Second Historical Period*

Psychosocial Development	Holistic Wellness
<p><i>Identity versus Role Confusion:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen seemed to experience a period of psychosocial moratorium as suggested by the discrepancy between past and present academic performance and her rebellion against the wishes of her father.</li> <li>2. Early during this historical period, Helen seemed to have the beginnings of a sense of fidelity in relation to an occupational identity.</li> <li>3. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The more prominent aspects of <i>spirituality</i> (meaning and purpose as well as hope and optimism) showed variation during this historical period</li> <li>2. A sense of control, emotional awareness and coping and stress management were prominent aspects of <i>self-direction</i> and showed a variable degree of wellness.</li> <li>3. With regard to <i>work and leisure</i>, Helen's initial wellness in her educational activities was followed by a significant decline. She showed a relatively high degree of participation in leisure activities.</li> <li>4. Helen demonstrated continued abilities regarding peer interactions as she enjoyed numerous social activities; indicative of a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>friendship</i>.</li> <li>5. Regarding the life task of <i>love</i>, Helen's father continued to demonstrate his interest in her growth and well-being. Helen also became romantically involved with her future husband, Mosie.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Education, Community and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> None identified</p>

### 10.4.3 Marriage, Motherhood and World War II (1937 – 1945)

Summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period, ranging from Helen's marriage at age 19 until the end of the Second World War, are presented in Table 10.3. During this historical period, Helen's psychosocial development included the successful completion of the identity versus role confusion stage and the beginning of the next stage, namely intimacy versus isolation (as presented in Chapter 8). Helen achieved a relatively high degree of wellness in all the life tasks of the holistic wellness model (as presented in Chapter 9).

Table 10.3

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Third Historical Period*

<b>Psychosocial Development</b>	<b>Holistic Wellness</b>
<p><i>Identity versus Role Confusion:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen seemed to have experimented with various roles associated with the psychosocial conflict between identity and role confusion which now also included the role of wife and new life styles, such as being a housewife.</li> <li>2. She demonstrated commitment to her implicit way of life and her marriage to Mosie – indications of a sense of fidelity.</li> </ol> <p><i>Intimacy versus Isolation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen developed the capacity for intimacy in numerous situations, such as her marriage, family life and motherhood, as well as in her social involvement and participation in the war effort.</li> <li>2. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A sense of meaning and purpose, moral and ethical values, hope and optimism, love, compassion and service to others as well as transcendence were prominent aspects of the <i>spirituality</i> life task and showed a relatively high degree of wellness.</li> <li>2. Regarding the life task of <i>self-direction</i>, all aspects except exercise and nutrition featured prominently and demonstrated a relatively high degree of wellness.</li> <li>3. Regarding the life task of <i>work and leisure</i>, a relatively high degree of wellness was observed through her participation in the War effort as well as in other tasks such as childrearing, homemaking, studying. She also secured formal employment and enjoyed numerous leisure activities.</li> <li>4. Helen displayed social interest through her involvement in the war effort and demonstrated her continuing ability to form supportive friendships, indicative of a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>friendship</i>.</li> <li>5. Helen displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>love</i>, as she got married to Mosie and had two daughters during this historical period.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Education, Community, Media, and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> The rise of Nazism, WWII and the Holocaust had further sensitised Helen to the effects of discrimination. Her involvement in the war effort can also be linked to her sense of control, and could have influenced her wellness with regard to her cultural identity and gender identity</p>

From Table 10.3, three notable similarities between the theory of psychosocial development on the one hand and the holistic wellness model on the other can be observed. Firstly, both theoretical frameworks highlighted the importance placed on interpersonal relationships during this historical period. Helen's capacity for intimacy as described by Erikson's theory (working towards the interest of her community, establishing friendships and enjoying loving relationships) was also reflected in the findings from the holistic wellness model, where her close relationships, family roles and community involvement were

seen as important for her wellness in the life tasks of spirituality, work, friendship and love. Secondly, Helen's resolution of the crisis of identity versus role confusion seems to be related to the improvements in her degree of wellness in the life tasks of spirituality, self-direction and work, when compared to the findings on the previous historical period. Finally, both approaches emphasised the effect of events that occurred in the individual's greater context.

#### **10.4.4 Introduction to Politics and Entry into Parliament (1945 – 1959)**

Table 10.4 provides the summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period. As can be seen from Table 10.4, Helen's psychosocial development during this historical period included the successful resolution of the crisis between intimacy and isolation, and also included the first few years of the next stage, namely, generativity versus stagnation. Findings indicate that Helen, overall, displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in all five life tasks proposed by the holistic wellness model. The only aspects for which temporary variations were found, was for: (a) hope and optimism shortly after the UP's electoral defeat, (b) Helen's participation in leisure activities, and (c) friendship as reflected by her initial social isolation when she first began working in Cape Town.

Both perspectives highlighted the significance of Helen's intimate relationships during this historical period. According to Erikson's theory, the evolving capacity to selectively establish intimacy, would have culminated in the development of the ego quality of love. These concepts are mirrored in the life tasks of friendship and love. The acquisition of the ego quality of love also enabled Helen to progress to the next psychosocial stage, where generative concern became central to her psychosocial development. In Helen Suzman's life, parallels can also be drawn between the concept of generativity and the dimensions of the holistic wellness model's spirituality life task. The complementary propositions of the two theoretical frameworks in this regard are discussed in section 10.4.7, where the resolution of the stage generativity versus stagnation, is presented.

Table 10.4

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Fourth Historical Period*

<b>Psychosocial Development</b>	<b>Holistic Wellness</b>
<p><i>Intimacy versus Isolation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen's private life and close family bonds continued to reflect her experience of intimacy. She also seemed able to be selectively intimate and form relationships with larger communities and explore new ideologies through her exposure to other situations that require a degree of self-abandon, such as lecturing and local politics.</li> <li>2. Helen seemed to have been able to gain the ego quality of love based on her seemingly successful navigation of this developmental stage.</li> </ol> <p><i>Generativity versus Stagnation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen's expansion of ego interests could have been facilitated by her role as mother, and lecturer, as well as through her increased political involvement.</li> <li>2. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aspects of the life task of <i>spirituality</i> that indicated a relatively high degree of wellness were values, a sense of meaning and purpose, love, compassion and service to others, as well as transcendence. Her sense of hope and optimism showed variation during this period.</li> <li>2. All aspects of <i>self-direction</i> except exercise, nutrition and self-care, featured prominently and demonstrated a relatively high degree of wellness.</li> <li>3. A relatively high degree of wellness was observed in the life task of <i>work and leisure</i>, as evidenced by her work at Wits and for the SAIRR and UP, as well as homemaking and childrearing. After she was appointed as a Member of Parliament, Helen's participation in leisure activities decreased temporarily.</li> <li>4. Regarding the life task of <i>friendship</i>, Helen demonstrated her social interest through political involvement. Her friendships provided her with tangible and emotional support. After entering Parliament, Helen initially experienced loneliness and isolation.</li> <li>5. Helen's wellness in the life task of <i>love</i> was facilitated by her loving relationships with Mosie, her father and stepmother, who provided her with support and encouragement, demonstrating continued interest in her well-being.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Education, Community, and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> The magnitude and significance of the previous global event of WWII was seen by its lingering effects on the South African government.</p>

**10.4.5 Formation of the Progressive Party (1959 – 1962)**

Summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period are presented in Table 10.5. Table 10.5 indicates that during this historical period, Helen's psychosocial development progressed as proposed by Erikson (1963) and she achieved a relatively high degree of wellness in all the life tasks of the holistic wellness model.

Table 10.5

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Fifth Historical Period*

<b>Psychosocial Development</b>	<b>Holistic Wellness</b>
<p><i>Generativity versus Stagnation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen's expansion of ego interests could have been facilitated by her role as mother and parliamentary representative. Her desire to distance herself from the UP's policies and play a role in establishing a new party could also be seen as a generative impulse.</li> <li>2. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aspects of the life task of <i>spirituality</i> that indicated a relatively high degree of wellness included moral and ethical values, a sense of meaning and purpose, and transcendence.</li> <li>2. Regarding the life task of <i>self-direction</i>, all aspects except exercise, nutrition and self-care featured prominently and demonstrated a relatively high degree of wellness.</li> <li>3. A relatively high degree of wellness was observed in the life task of <i>work and leisure</i>, as evidenced by her continued duty as an MP and the role she played in the formation of a new opposition party. Helen was able to maintain involvement in leisure activities as evident by attempts at relaxation, hobbies and regular leisure activities in nature.</li> <li>4. With regard to <i>friendship</i>, Helen's social interest was evident by her continued fight against the human rights abuses. A continued availability and willingness of her friends to provide her with support was observed. She also forged close emotional bonds with some of her colleagues.</li> <li>5. Helen's family remained important to her wellness in the life task of <i>love</i>. Her daughters had by this stage become more involved in Helen's campaigns and public appearances. Data on Mosie's and her father's support suggests their continuous interest in Helen's well-being.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Community, Media, and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> Helen's ethical values related to liberty, equality and autonomy could therefore have been reinforced by the decolonisation of many African nations, including South Africa</p>

According to Erikson's theory, two of the avenues available to Helen during this time for the expression of generativity, could have been motherhood and her parliamentary career. Helen's dedication to the development and improvement of the institution of Parliament, based on her fierce opposition to the practices of racial segregation and economic inequality, could be seen as an expression of her generative concern. Similarly, involving her daughters in her campaigns and public appearances during this time could be seen as an opportunity for Helen to instil certain values in them. Two of the life tasks of the holistic wellness model, namely, work and love (including aspects such as commitment, shared interests and values,

cooperation, communication, companionship and mutual appreciation), can therefore be seen as reflecting such aspects of the development of generativity during this historical period.

#### **10.4.6 The Solo Years (1962 – 1974)**

Table 10.6 summarises the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period. It indicates that Helen's psychosocial development progressed as proposed by Erikson (1963) although a limited degree of stagnation towards the end of this historical period could be observed. Table 10.6 also indicates that Helen's degree of wellness showed variation for all the life tasks of the holistic wellness model except for love, in which she seemed to experience a continued relatively high degree of wellness.

As can be seen from Table 10.6, both sets of findings reflect the challenges Helen faced during her years as sole parliamentary representative for the Progressive Party, thereby highlighting the significant role of the social environment on the individual's development and wellness. From the point of view of psychosocial development, her sense of generativity might have been frustrated by her party's repeated electoral defeats. The findings from the holistic wellness model indicate that with four of the five life tasks, Helen showed variation in terms of her degree of wellness. All these variations seemed closely related to the pressure she faced in the occupational sphere, therefore, highlighting once again the importance of the individual's context for both their psychosocial development and holistic wellness. As noted by J. M. Erikson (1997): "syntonic qualities sustain us as we are challenged by the more dystonic elements with which life confronts us all. We should recognize the fact that circumstances may place the dystonic in a more dominant position" (p. 106). The findings from the application of the theory of psychosocial development, therefore, imply significant resilience based on Helen's previously acquired ego strengths and her ability to refrain from the dominant development of the dystonic pole (i.e., stagnation) during this historical period. The holistic wellness model adds breadth to such inferences by describing aspects of her resilience in a much more detailed manner in terms of the day-to-day implications of her life tasks.

Table 10.6

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Sixth Historical Period*

<b>Psychosocial Development</b>	<b>Holistic Wellness</b>
<p><i>Generativity versus Stagnation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen's opposition to apartheid laws may reflect a desire to contribute towards the development of future generations through the safeguarding of human rights. Helen extended her sense of responsibility to all South Africans without parliamentary representation. She sustained her involvement with student politics and demonstrated care and concern for political prisoners. The widespread acknowledgement of her efforts may have reinforced her sense of generativity.</li> <li>2. Towards the end of this historical period, Helen may have experienced some degree of a sense of stagnation which manifested in her sense of frustration and disillusionment. However, stagnation did not become the dominant experience for Helen whose ego interests remained expanded to the community at large.</li> <li>3. A balance between the expansion of ego interests and a capacity for self-absorption could be identified.</li> <li>4. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aspects of the life task of <i>spirituality</i> that indicated a relatively high degree of wellness included moral and ethical values, a sense of meaning and purpose, love, compassion and service to others, and transcendence. Helen's wellness regarding hope and optimism showed significant variation.</li> <li>2. Regarding the life task of <i>self-direction</i>, all aspects except exercise, nutrition and self-care featured prominently. She demonstrated a relatively high degree of wellness, but variations were noted in her experience of a sense of control, as well as her emotional awareness and coping.</li> <li>3. With regard to <i>work and leisure</i>, Helen demonstrated extraordinary productivity under challenging circumstances. She maintained some involvement in leisure activities as evident by attempts at relaxation, hobbies and regular leisure activities in nature. However, towards the end of this period, Helen's workload could have impeded her leisure time.</li> <li>4. Helen displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>friendship</i>, as her social interest and sense of connectedness to the broad South African community continued to be expressed. She also managed to form and maintain supportive friendships. Within Parliament, Helen's wellness in this life task was challenged as she experienced loneliness and isolation.</li> <li>5. Helen showed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>love</i>. Family bonds remained indicative of caring, support, commitment, shared interests and values, and communication. Prior to his death, Helen's relationship with her father seems to have been characterised by respect for the uniqueness of the other, companionship, and self-disclosure.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Community, Media, and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> The emerging international trend regarding the abolition of the death penalty and the continued decolonisation of many African nations could have reinforced her ethical framework regarding inalienable human rights, autonomy and equality.</p>

### 10.4.7 Continued Apartheid Opposition (1974 – 1989)

Summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period are presented in Table 10.7. During this historical period, Helen's psychosocial development progressed as proposed by Erikson (1963) and she achieved a relatively high degree of wellness in all the life tasks of the holistic wellness model, with variations in her degree of wellness only observed for two aspects of self-direction, namely a sense of worth and a sense of control.

Table 10.7

#### *Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Seventh Historical Period*

Psychosocial Development	Holistic Wellness
<p><i>Generativity versus Stagnation:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen displayed an enjoyment of her productivity as she retired only in her early 70s. Her work continued to be characterised by commitment, involvement and concern for the community at large.</li> <li>2. Helen seemed to have been able to develop the ego quality of care based on her seemingly successful navigation of this developmental stage and the ones preceding it.</li> </ol> <p><i>Integrity versus Despair:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The public recognition of Helen's efforts through various awards served as acknowledgement of the importance of her life's work. Helen also seemed to have had people in her life who served as guides for the progression through this stage. Helen also initiated a process of reflecting upon her choice of occupation.</li> <li>2. This developmental stage continued into the next historical period.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aspects of the life task of <i>spirituality</i> that indicated a relatively high degree of wellness included moral and ethical values, a sense of meaning and purpose, hope and optimism, love, compassion and service to others, as well as transcendence.</li> <li>2. Regarding the life task of <i>self-direction</i>, all aspects except exercise, nutrition and self-care featured prominently and demonstrated a relatively high degree of wellness. Variations were noted in the degree to which Helen experienced a sense of worth and control.</li> <li>3. A relatively high degree of wellness was observed in the life task of <i>work and leisure</i>, as indicated by her continuation of her duties as an MP until the age of 71. She maintained involvement in various leisure activities as much as her advancing age would allow.</li> <li>4. Regarding the life task of <i>friendship</i>, Helen displayed a relatively high degree of wellness. Her social interest remained unchanged and she demonstrated the ability to form and maintain supportive friendships.</li> <li>5. Helen displayed a relatively high degree of wellness in the life task of <i>love</i>. Her family relationships remained indicative of caring, support, commitment, shared interests and values, and communication.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Education, Community, Media, and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> None identified</p>

As mentioned in section 10.4.4, parallels could be drawn throughout Helen Suzman's parliamentary career between the concept of generativity and the dimensions of the holistic wellness model's spirituality life tasks, namely values, a sense of meaning and purpose, and love, compassion and service to others. These parallels could also be seen in Tables 10.4, 10.5, 10.6 and 10.7. Helen's dedication to improving governmental systems, a possible expression of generativity for her, closely reflect her set of moral and ethical values which included values such as equality. She also seemed to derive a sense of meaning and purpose from her work and the ways in which she could express her generative concern for the next generation of South Africans by taking a stand against oppression and demonstrating love, compassion and service to those she felt she represented in Parliament.

When Helen's sense of generativity was challenged during the previous historical period, however, the only aspect of the spiritual life task which was seemingly affected was that of hope and optimism. Helen's psychosocial development soon continued on a positive trajectory once her environment became more supportive of her generative efforts (after she was joined by PP parliamentary colleagues). Her resilience in this regard, possibly supported by the accrual of the previous ego qualities, could have been reflected by the fact that she maintained a relatively high degree of wellness with regard to certain aspects of spirituality (namely values, a sense of meaning and purpose, and love, compassion and service to others).

#### **10.4.8 Retirement and Death (1989 – 2009)**

Summaries of the findings from the two psychological frameworks for this historical period, which ranges from Helen's retirement to her death at age 91, are presented in Table 10.8. Firstly, Table 10.8 indicates that during this historical period, Helen's psychosocial development progressed through the stages as proposed by Erikson (1963) and she achieved a relatively high degree of wellness in all the life tasks of the holistic wellness model.

Table 10.8

*Psychosocial Development and Holistic Wellness in the Eighth Historical Period*

<b>Psychosocial Development</b>	<b>Holistic Wellness</b>
<p><i>Integrity versus Despair:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helen continued with the process of reflecting upon her choice of occupation. She demonstrated the ability to integrate her past experiences into a coherent narrative and an acceptance of the life lived. Helen was also able to acknowledge legitimate feelings of despair without developing a fear of death.</li> <li>2. Helen's development seemed to have enabled her to develop the ego quality of wisdom.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Life Tasks:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Aspects of the life task of <i>spirituality</i> that indicated a relatively high degree of wellness included moral and ethical values, a sense of meaning and purpose, love, hope and optimism, compassion and service to others, as well as transcendence.</li> <li>2. Regarding the life task of <i>self-direction</i>, all aspects except exercise, nutrition and self-care featured prominently and demonstrated a relatively high degree of wellness. Variations were noted in the degree to which Helen experienced a sense of control.</li> <li>3. A relatively high degree of wellness was observed in the life task of <i>work and leisure</i>. Helen maintained her involvement in political and public life throughout most of this historical period and maintained as much involvement as possible in leisure activities due to her advancing age and decreasing mobility.</li> <li>4. Regarding <i>friendship</i> as a life task, Helen's social interest was evident by her continued involvement in promoting human rights. She also maintained contact with and disclosure to her friends, as well as the formation of new friendships.</li> <li>5. A relatively high degree of wellness was observed in the life task of <i>love</i>. Helen's relationship with Mosie during this stage was characterised by caring, affection, commitment, and shared values. Her relationship with her daughters also possessed qualities such as commitment, companionship, affection, shared interests.</li> </ol> <p><i>Life Forces:</i> Family, Community, Media, and Government</p> <p><i>Global Events:</i> None identified</p>

From Table 10.8, comparative points regarding the two sets of biographical findings are highlighted. For example, Helen's relatively high degree of wellness in the life tasks of spirituality and self-direction (especially regarding the dimensions of meaning and purpose, and a sense of worth), could have reflected her ability to achieve the psychosocial ego quality of wisdom. Furthermore, what Erikson's theory could conceptualise as legitimate feelings of despair inherent to old age, the holistic wellness model reflects in the life task of self-direction, which in Helen's case showed variation regarding the degree to which Helen experienced a sense of control. Again, as was the case in the second historical period (see

section 10.4.2), an apparent decrease in holistic wellness could be attributed to and normalised by developmental factors at play in the individual's life.

## **10.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an integration and discussion of findings regarding Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and holistic wellness. Prominent points of similarity and divergence of the theoretical frameworks were highlighted, followed by a comparative summary of the biographical findings of Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and holistic wellness. In the following, and final, chapter, the conclusions and limitations of the study, as well as recommendations for future research, are presented.

## CHAPTER 11

### CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 11.1 Chapter Preview

In this final chapter, the researcher presents the concluding comments regarding this research project by, firstly, revisiting the research aim and providing a brief summary of the findings. Thereafter, the points of value of this study are highlighted and the study's limitations are explored. Recommendations for future research are proposed. Finally, the researcher presents her final thoughts and remarks regarding her personal passage as an exploration of the process of reflexivity.

#### 11.2 The Research Aim Revisited

The researcher aimed to provide a psychologically driven exploration and description of a single life within its sociohistorical context through the application of psychological frameworks to biographical data. The primary aim of this study was to explore and describe Helen Suzman's psychosocial development and her holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. This objective falls within an inductive research approach, and reflects the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study. The researcher, accordingly, conceptualised the subject's life in terms of specific psychological perspectives by applying two psychological frameworks to the historical and biographical information available on Helen Suzman. The descriptive-dialogic nature of case study research within the deductive approach also provided the opportunity to *informally test* aspects and facets of the content of the theory of psychosocial development and the holistic wellness model through the process.

#### 11.3 Summary of Findings

Helen Suzman's life was, firstly, explored and described from the perspective of the psychosocial development theory. When the biographical data on her life were examined and selected for interpretation, it became apparent that Helen's psychosocial development closely followed the 'blueprint' as proposed by Erikson (1963) and that she accrued all eight proposed ego qualities over her lifespan.

Secondly, Helen Suzman's life was explored and described through applying the framework of the holistic wellness model. The biographical data indicated that the life tasks and life forces (Myers et al., 2000; Sweeney & Witmer, 1991; Witmer & Sweeney, 1992) were represented in her life and that, overall, Helen attained a relatively high degree of holistic wellness throughout her lifespan. In the following section, the researcher outlines the points of value of this study. Where applicable, recommendations are proposed for future research.

#### **11.4 The Value of the Study**

The main value of this study lies in the psychological exploration and description it provided on a significant figure in recent South African history. None of the existing works on Helen Suzman provided a formal psychological perspective on her life and this study fills that void in the current body of knowledge on her. A renewed focus on anti-apartheid activists could be of great value in the current South African context and the process of constructing a narrative of the nation's troubled past. The illumination of aspects of Suzman's life was therefore warranted by, and relevant to, our current society.

As an individual who led a long and extraordinarily productive life, Suzman proved a suitable example for the study of optimal development and holistic wellness. This study, therefore, contributed to the existing body of knowledge in these two areas. In addition, demographic and contextual variables unique to her life created a real-world scenario for the testing of the psychological frameworks used in this study, even though this was not an explicit aim of this research project. As Elms (1994) noted, apart from the quantitative tests that can be conducted to examine the validity of psychological hypotheses, psychologists need to test the personal significance of hypotheses by applying it to a single life at a time. Exploring Helen Suzman's life through these lenses also created a platform for the informal testing of these theoretical frameworks by assessing the applicability and relevance of psychosocial development and holistic wellness, respectively, on a single life.

The psychological frameworks utilised in this study also proved to be of value. This study utilised two psychological frameworks in the interpretation of aspects of the subject's life, which enabled the researcher to consider a broader range of biographical information than would have been possible had only one psychological theory been used. Furthermore, the use of multiple psychological frameworks highlighted some of the complexities of the single life and as such guarded against the oversimplification of the subject's life story.

The value of using Erikson's theory of psychosocial development in this psychobiographical study was that it highlighted the complex process of adaptation and growth, and placed periods in the subject's life into a developmental context. The value of utilising the holistic wellness model was that it allowed a broad and detailed description of numerous aspects of wellness and provided a framework for the categorisation of biographical data as it related to life tasks and life forces. The combination of these two psychological frameworks also proved valuable. Firstly, their shared eugraphic focus (see section 10.3) enabled the researcher to dynamically describe human development and ensured that the aspects of holistic wellness present in the subject's life could be explored. The combination of these frameworks therefore allowed the researcher to describe some of the subject's positive attributes as well as gain insight into the origins of some of these strengths. Secondly, the integrative nature of these two psychological frameworks enabled a detailed and broad exploration and description of various constructs and dimensions. The interrelatedness of these constructs and dimensions were illuminated by both psychological frameworks chosen for this study. This also ensured that the subject was not considered in isolation, but rather seen within her sociohistorical context as both frameworks emphasise the influence of the broader environment on the individual. Lastly, the differences between the two frameworks in terms of a developmental focus, highlighted the value in considering alternative explanations regarding aspects of a subject's life. For example, for two historical periods (i.e., *The Early Student Years* and *Retirement and Death*), the holistic wellness model provided descriptions of various aspects of wellness, and the challenges to these. However, the psychosocial developmental theory provided a differing perspective on these two historical periods by proposing a normalising developmental context (see sections 10.4.2 and 10.4.8).

In addition to contributing to the body of knowledge on Helen Suzman as well as the frameworks of psychosocial development and holistic wellness, this study also contributed to the current body of knowledge in the field of psychobiography. The use of specific methodological strategies in this study proved useful in the extraction and analysis of data. Firstly, Alexander's model (1988, 1990) was used to organise, extract, prioritise and analyse the data. This methodological approach was discussed in section 7.5.1. The indicators of salience helped ensure that significant pieces of biographical data were carefully considered for analysis. Posing specific questions to the data enabled the researcher to extract units of analysis relevant to the objectives of the study. Secondly, the use of a conceptual framework and matrix as proposed by Yin (2009) and applied to psychobiographical research by Fouché

(1999), enabled the researcher to aim for the systematic and consistent analysis of the biographical data collected on the life of Suzman. The study's findings could therefore be presented as a longitudinal exploration and descriptions of the stages of psychosocial development and the components of holistic wellness, respectively.

### **11.5 The Limitations of the Study**

Criticisms of the psychosocial development theory significant to its application in this psychobiography, are the possible gender and cultural biases inherent to the theory. The possible impact of this on the findings was discussed in section 8.4. Future research may therefore focus on alternative explanations and descriptions of Helen Suzman's lifespan development which might be more sensitive to issues of gender and culture. Furthermore, the use of specific age ranges (Hamachek, 1990), whilst useful for the operationalisation of the theory, led to the more rigid application of the stages than what was intended by Erikson. As Joan Erikson wrote: "...Apart from the infant's arrival date such variety exists in the timing of human development that no age specifications could be validated for each stage independent of social criteria and pressures" (Erikson, J.M., 1997, p. 105).

The holistic wellness model can be criticised as it does not provide a description of how aspects of wellness develop over the subject's lifespan and does not offer information on how certain aspects of wellness would relate to certain developmental stages (Fouché, 1999). Furthermore, applying the holistic wellness model to the historical periods of a single life can result in a broad description of various aspects of wellness which might be lacking in depth. The model also does not place much emphasis on the impact of ecological or environmental factors upon an individual's holistic wellness (Fouché, 1999). A final point of criticism is that information on some aspects of wellness, such as nutritional habits, exercise and self-care, appears less often in published documents about a subject's life. These and other life style aspects of the holistic wellness model were, furthermore, not as widely advocated during much of Suzman's life as they have been during the past few decades. Based on these limitations, future research may benefit from exploring alternative explanations and descriptions of holistic wellness in the life of Helen Suzman in order to further complement the current findings.

The possible limitations regarding the choice of subject for this study were discussed in Chapter 6. Such criticisms involve the possible elitist nature of the psychobiographical approach as well as the potential impact of cross-cultural differences between the researcher

and the absent subject. Similarly, possible limitations of this study inherent to the psychobiographical approach were discussed in Chapter 6, where the researcher's attempts at mitigating the impact of such limitations on this study were also presented. As the major limitations have, therefore, been highlighted elsewhere, the researcher concludes the shortcomings of this study by revisiting Anderson's (1981) recommendations (see section 6.2). Firstly, the researcher recognises that the psychological interpretations offered in this study cannot replace other (including historical, political and economic) explanations, but rather only add to them. Secondly, all explanations are considered as merely speculative (Anderson, 1981). The findings of this study, therefore, by no means represent a definitive answer to the psychosocial development or holistic wellness of Helen Suzman, and cannot replace any exploration of her life from another discipline.

Apart from those recommendations for future research identified through this discussion of the study's limitations, specific recommendations are discussed in the following section.

## **11.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

The researcher concludes from this research project that the examination of the lives of great figures who promoted values of equality and liberty, especially within the South African context, remain an important endeavour for future researchers. The researcher maintains that future research may find the psychobiographical approach, and in particular the methodological strategies as used in this study, useful in addressing the abovementioned research aim. Furthermore, the application of alternative theories to examine the life of Helen Suzman, could provide valuable descriptions and explanations which were beyond the scope of this study, and is therefore recommended for future research.

The psychosocial development theory has been found to be well suited for psychobiographical studies and its future use is therefore recommended. In addition to the recommendation that other psychological theories be employed to limit the possible biases of Erikson's theory with regard to gender and culture, two specific recommendations can be made regarding the psychosocial theory. Firstly, the application of rigid age ranges poses certain difficulties within the psychobiographical context as these opposed Erikson's intentional vagueness regarding the delineation of psychosocial stages. Age ranges as used in this study were, however, useful in organising biographical data and establishing a framework for data analysis. The researcher, therefore, recommends cognisance of the

potential limitations of such operationalisations. Secondly, utilising the ninth stage of the psychosocial theory of development as described by J. M. Erikson (1997) could provide future psychobiographers with valuable additional information.

The holistic wellness model proved to be well suited for psychobiographical work and it is recommended that future psychobiographical studies also consider it as a psychological approach. The researcher recommends, however, controlling for its limitations to lifespan or longitudinal application. Based on the findings as presented in sections 10.4.2 and 10.4.8, the applicability of greater emphasis on considerations regarding the individual's temporal or developmental context to the holistic wellness model could be explored in future research. The researcher proposes that developmental transitions, therefore, be investigated as a possible additional life force within the model.

### **11.7 Final Thoughts and Remarks on the Researcher's Personal Passage**

As noted in section 11.4, the researcher's interest in South Africa's recent history played a significant role in her motivation to conduct this study. The researcher was a 12-year-old primary school learner at the time of South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994 and, as such, was relatively sheltered as a child from the harsh realities faced by many during apartheid's final decade. An interest in the nation's past and the stories of the people who witnessed the country's transition to democracy had been cultivated in the researcher since her adolescent years. The researcher, therefore, grasped at the opportunity to study the life of one of the most prominent figures of the South African political landscape during the apartheid years.

However, significant differences between the researcher and the subject, including home language, religion and cultural group, needed to be addressed. The subject lived in a significantly different historical period compared to that in which this study was conducted. In order to be sensitive to the cultural and historical considerations inherent to the study of the life of Helen Suzman, the researcher conducted an extensive and thorough literature study regarding the cultural and historical milieu in which Suzman had lived. The researcher also visited apartheid exhibitions, museums and memorials to further improve her understanding of the context in which the subject lived and worked. This study, therefore, also involved the sobering, and often upsetting, confrontation with material on the darkest times of our country's past and the atrocities committed against its people.

The researcher found great value in discussing her reactions to the subject and historical information with promoters and colleagues. Apart from the effort inherent to undertaking a postgraduate study of this nature, the researcher found it enjoyable to engage with the subject's writings, owing to Helen Suzman's sense of humour and resilience. The researcher, furthermore, found this study, as a eugraphic exploration of an individual's life, to be a refreshing endeavour which stands in contrast to the researcher's work as clinical psychologist in a psychiatric hospital.

## **11.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter concluded this psychobiographical study of the life of Helen Suzman. The research aim was revisited in this chapter and the study's value and limitations were discussed. The researcher offered suggestions for future research and provided the reader with her concluding thoughts and remarks regarding her personal passage. The researcher proposes that much remains to be discovered from the life of Helen Suzman and therefore concludes with the words of Raenette Taljaard, previous director of the Helen Suzman Foundation:

Some countries have the rare gift of the lives of spectacular individuals at different epochs of history and their national narratives. These individuals offer them examples, give the necessary voice to key issues confronting societies and, very often, sacrifice much en route to the changes that they inevitably seek. Most fundamentally rare individuals give examples that are relevant inter-generationally and that often break the barriers of space and time to inspire thousands across borders – both physical borders and the borders that may exist within countries or within the spirit of an artificially divided nation. This is one of the most powerful transcendent messages of the life of Helen Suzman. (Taljaard, 2007b, p.1)

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**APPENDIX A**  
Dimensions of the Life Tasks of the Holistic Wellness Model

LIFE TASK	DIMENSIONS
<b>Spirituality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Belief in a power beyond oneself</li> <li>(b) Hope and optimism</li> <li>(c) Meaning and purpose</li> <li>(d) Worship, prayer, meditation, self-reflection</li> <li>(e) Love, compassion and service to others</li> <li>(f) Moral and ethical values to guide daily living</li> <li>(g) Transcendence</li> </ul>
<b>Self- direction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Sense of Worth: <i>Acceptance of imperfections; feelings of adequacy and recognition of positive qualities</i></li> <li>(b) Sense of Control: <i>Feelings of mastery and competence; belief that desired outcomes are possible; assertiveness</i></li> <li>(c) Realistic Beliefs: <i>Recognising realistic goals and ideals; minimising irrational beliefs; revising self-defeating thoughts</i></li> <li>(d) Emotional Awareness and Coping: <i>Experience and express a full range of emotions; recognise emotions in others; enjoy positive and manage negative emotions</i></li> <li>(e) Problem Solving and Creativity: <i>Open-mindedness and curiosity; problem-solving and conflict management skills; desire and willingness to express creative urges</i></li> <li>(f) Sense of Humour: <i>Laughing appropriately at oneself; seeing humour in the contradictions and predicaments in life; using humour to cope with difficulties or mistakes</i></li> <li>(g) Nutrition: <i>Regular meals with various healthful foods; a balanced diet; maintaining weight within the acceptable range</i></li> <li>(h) Exercise: <i>Lifestyle which is active rather than sedentary; regular physical activities that develop endurance, flexibility and strength; seeking opportunities to be physically active</i></li> <li>(i) Self-Care: <i>Good health habits; safety habits; not using or abusing harmful substances</i></li> <li>(j) Stress Management: <i>Awareness and monitoring of stressors; belief that life is manageable and meaningful; mental, emotional, physical and behavioural coping methods</i></li> <li>(k) Gender Identity: <i>Satisfaction with gender orientation; feeling supported in one's gender; valuing relationships with both genders</i></li> <li>(l) Cultural Identity: <i>Satisfaction with one's cultural background; feeling supported in one's culture; valuing relationships with people of different cultures</i></li> </ul>

<b>LIFE TASK</b>	<b>DIMENSIONS</b>
<b>Work and Leisure</b>	(a) Work <i>Perception of adequate financial reward; satisfactory challenges, co-worker relations and working conditions; satisfying relationship between work goals and the rewards and opportunities in the work setting</i> (b) Leisure <i>Self-determined activities and experiences engaged in because of discretionary time and money; positive feelings associated with the chosen physical, social, intellectual; creative or volunteer activities; being absorbed by activities so that consciousness of time and self are lost</i>
<b>Friendship</b>	(a) Having social support when needed or desired (b) Providing others with support (c) Basic social skills (d) A sense of connectedness
<b>Love</b>	(a) A reciprocal relationship with trust, intimacy, caring and companionship (b) Romance, passion and sexual relations may be part of the relationship (c) Having somebody who has an interest in one's growth and well-being (d) Commitment, shared interests and values, time together, mutual appreciation and affection, good communication, as well as problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills

Note. Adapted from "The Wheel of Wellness Counselling for Wellness: A Holistic Model for Treatment Planning," by J. E. Myers, T. J. Sweeney, and J. M. Witmer, 2000, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 78(3), pp. 251-266.

## APPENDIX B

### Correspondence with Helen Suzman

1. Request sent to the Helen Suzman Foundation (21 May, 2008):

**PROPOSED RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE LIFE OF HELEN SUZMAN**

I propose to undertake a doctorate study, entitled: **The life of Helen Suzman: A psychobiographical study**, in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Free State.

The focus area in this psychobiographical research is on the longitudinal and historical study of a great or enigmatic figure with exceptional qualities. This study intends to describe Helen Suzman's development across her life in terms of a prominent psychological theory and will focus on the aspects of wellness which may have contributed to her numerous achievements.

The research will be conducted under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Paul Fouché and Prof. Roelf van Niekerk. They have been involved in various psychobiographical studies at both Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and Rhodes University respectively. They have been involved with psychobiographical studies on South African personalities such as Jan Smuts, Chris Barnard, Athol Fugard and Helen Martins.

It would be of great assistance if the Foundation could provide me with a means of contacting Helen Suzman, in order for me to request her permission regarding the proposed research.

Your feedback and comments in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards

Carla Nel

2. Reply from the Helen Suzman Foundation (22 May, 2008):

Dear Carla

I will forward your e-mail to Mrs Suzman's personal secretary for a response.

Regards

Myrna Segal

3. Response from Helen Suzman (29 May, 2008):

Dear Ms Nel

The HS Foundation has passed on to me your request to embark on a research project on my life. I find it difficult to reply to your proposed research project because I do not know how much personal involvement this will entail. I am really unable, at this advanced age, to commit myself to prolonged interviews, etc. However, if this project will not involve any extensive input from me, I do not have any objection in principle. Indeed I am honoured to be invited to join the list of the personalities previously researched.

Kind regards,

***Helen Suzman***

52 2nd Avenue

Illovo

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## APPENDIX C

Excerpts from the notes received from Dr Frances Jowell

### A few comments re Carla Nel's study (data collection).

The Northcliffe house was a wedding gift from Helen's father, and they moved in in 1939 – in time for my birth Sept 30. I have v. happy photos from the first few years. But Helen, on her own accord, sold the house at some stage when Mosie was 'up north' during the war. We moved to a flat near her parents, but then rented a house in Saxonwold, which was where Patty was born 1 Jan 1943. I'm not sure when the plot in Hyde Park was bought, but the house was built immediately after the war. [This is only relevant in that it shows Helen's decisive independence !]

(wrongly reported in the press)

Patty was indeed with her on a last trip to Plettenberg Bay in November.

And I came out at the beginning of December for the cataract operation – Her sight had been failing and this was a last hope of improving her one 'good' eye (the other one was severely impaired by an earlier haemorrhage. Patty returned to the States immediately after the operation, and I returned to the UK shortly before Christmas. But then she deteriorated suddenly and I returned on Dec 28/9 and to my surprise was told she had agreed to a blood transfusion -- that took place on Dec 31 [and you know the rest]

( I should say that she was generally very stoical. Only furious when she was really dependent on zimmer frame, carers etc.)

Mandela and his wife came to the house and spent a couple of hours with us. They were unable to attend the funeral, but they came in the day after.

We were NOT offered an official/state funeral. That was a rumour that spread through the media, although no one admitted responsibility for it. It was suggested that it was an irresponsible article in the press... Someone from Motlanthe's office certainly phoned to say they would fly the flags half mast, and requested that he attend the funeral. Of course we agreed to that. We had initially thought that a private funeral would be best, followed by a public memorial. We assumed that being the new year and 0 many people were away etc. that it would be too short notice for a public funeral...The reason for this was that she wanted to be buried by Jewish rites, and next to Mosie. (Jewish custom requires burial as soon as possible after death.) However, it became clear that a private funeral was out of the question, and as you rightly say, it was attended by scores of public political figures – de Klerk, Motlanthe, Mantashe, Lekota, Mamphela Ramphele, Winnie Mandela ... to mention only a few. Some flew in from CT or elsewhere. ( Buthelezi was very upset as he did not fly in, believing it to be a private funeral.)

Memorial service on February 8? I was puzzled until I realised you were referring to the memorial organised by the Jewish Board of Deputies in Cape town – where Colin Eglin and Rhoda Kadalie were the speakers. Motlanthe did not speak at that event.

However, on 27 January 2009 the National Assembly 'agreed to a motion noting with profound sadness the death of Helen Suzman'. Members of all parties spoke – very movingly and very eloquently. (You could look that up in Hansard). I do have a note that Motlanthe

paid tribute to Helen - as 'a truly distinguished South African, who represented the values of our new Parliament in the chambers of the old.'

[But I am not sure whether it was on that day or at the opening of Parliament when various other people who had died during the year were mentioned..]

The Memorial Service at Wits.. [Would you like to view a DVD of it? The music was also wonderful!] The main speaker was Tutu – but there were wonderful tributes by others such as Ann Bernstein, Dikgang Moseneke, Colin Eglin, Buthulezi, Helen Zille etc.. It was all published in an issue of FOCUS (which you've probably seen) – together with other tributes (eg George Bizos)

The tombstone: It should read JUSTICE, JUSTICE SHALT THOU PURSUE' (For some mysterious reason it was published incorrectly in the Godsell book).. It is taken from Deuteronomy XVI.20

I can't comment on the theoretical analyses – but you've certainly got me thinking more about her relationship with her father.

It was fairly turbulent at times, but I noticed a softening in her views about him when she was older – and after his death. He was a pater familias, I suppose, and he was dedicated to creating a secure life for his children and grandchildren – which indeed he did. He was fiercely affectionate to children and grandchildren! As was his second wife, Debby.

And as for Helen's relationship with Mosie – that too was fairly complicated and changed over time. He certainly supported her views, and was very proud of her, and certainly attended (and recorded!) her Report Back meetings. But he was not active politically. He was far too busy with his own profession to which he was utterly dedicated.

The letters you quote on p.299 only make sense if you note that in 1989 Mosie had a stroke. He eventually recovered enough to continue seeing patients, but he was not his old self at all. When he eventually did retire, he more or less took to his bed – but it should be noted that macular degeneration had rendered him virtually blind. It was a very sad time, and Helen found it difficult to deal with this. She retired about that time herself, and busied herself with her memoirs... and frequent trips abroad etc..

Both parents were deeply involved in their work (which took them both, at various times) away from the home. But there was, strangely enough, family closeness.. Grandparents and a few close cousins of the extended family provided a secure and loving environment – and were always 'on call', as it were. In any case, we were always encouraged to be 'independent' .. I had a continuous correspondence with both parents after leaving home (before easy long distance calls, fax, email etc!) and we met up whenever possible – either in SA or abroad. And they wrote to the family or each other when travelling

Helen had several very close lifelong friendships – but you obviously can't know about, or explore those. By the very end of her life many of them had died, but she was very effective about fostering new friendships – often with younger people. She was a very loyal and constant friend..

I can't remember whether you mention it, but she was super conscientious about things like thanking people (for gifts, good wishes etc) and for answering correspondence, remembering birthdays etc.

And for me, when I left home at just 20, she was an amazing correspondent. She insisted we keep in touch by weekly letter - I have hundreds of letters – many handwritten from Parliament (very legible handwriting!) . And you will be interested to know that I am in the process of editing them and hope eventually to publish them – with an appendix consisting of her parliamentary speeches. (private and public, as it were!).

So that is about all I can do today – I hope this is helpful.

Best wishes  
Frances Jowell.

(PS p.206 – You have dealt correctly with the Maclean claims.. I was going to pursue this, but thought it would give more publicity and so left it. Totally ridiculous)