



## Levinsonian Seasons in the Life of Steve Jobs: A Psychobiographical Case Study

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### Abstract

*Steve Jobs (1955-2011) was not only a businessman renowned for his legacy of technological innovation and entrepreneurship. His life history indicates eras or seasons as prankster, hippie, family man, and cancer fighter. This psychobiographical case study entailed a psychosocial-historical analysis of Jobs's development interpreted through Levinson's theory of the human life cycle, and was undertaken against the background of Merleau-Ponty's ontological philosophy that elucidates a human science phenomenology where the individual cannot be separated from his/her social world. The primary objective of this study was to uncover the eras and transitions within Jobs's life cycle. The secondary objective was to illustrate and test the relevance of Levinsonian theory as applied to Jobs's life. Jobs's life cycle was uncovered through an analysis of published and publically available materials, which included both primary and secondary data sources. Alexander's psychobiographical model was employed to extract salient evidence for analysis. A conceptual psychosocial-historical matrix guided the analysis. Key findings indicate that the central components of Jobs's life and social world (e.g., his occupation, family, friendships and terminal illness) had a significant influence on his psychosocial development. In conclusion, Jobs's development generally conformed to Levinsonian theory as well as to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology and illustrated the relevance of these conceptual models for understanding the individual's connectedness to his/her social world.*

### Introduction and Rationale

This paper constitutes a psychobiography of the late businessman and entrepreneur, Steve Jobs (1955-2011). Isaacson (2011) and the editors of TIME (2011) agreed that Jobs belongs in the pantheon of America's great innovators, alongside Thomas Edison, Henry Ford and Walter Disney. Jobs was a remarkable individual with a distinctive personality, whose inspiration and tenacity radically transformed not only technology (Hoerr, 2012), but, due to the impact of this, the social world. The study illustrates that Jobs developed through an on-going process of individuation, a key theme in the life cycle proposed by Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), which guided his development as a man,

entrepreneur, businessman, creator, innovator, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), husband and father. The study employed a single case psychobiographical design, which utilised Levinson's (1996) theory of the human life cycle in a systematic fashion in order to illuminate Jobs's ongoing development over his lifespan. Levinson et al. (1978) described the life cycle as a whole by examining the engagement of the individual in society, considering both the individual and the world, as well as the relationships between them.

Many scholars have emphasised the value of studying individual lives by means of psychobiography and case study (Alexander, 1988; Carlson, 1988; Elms, 1994; Fouché, 1999; McAdams, 1990/2006; Roberts, 2002;

Runyan, 1982; Schultz, 2005). As Elms (1994) asserted, psychobiography has proven to be an invaluable method to investigate aspects of individual development in a holistic way. Ponterotto, Reynolds, Morel, and Cheung (2015) have found it surprising that psychobiography does not draw more attention as a research method, as this approach has made significant contributions to psychological theory and our understanding of human development. Psychobiography as a specialised field of practice has witnessed prolific growth (Du Plessis, 2017) and is experiencing an upswing internationally, such that it is anticipated that a growing number of students and scholars will engage in this process (Ponterotto, 2015a). This study contributes to the current knowledge base of psychobiographies, especially the growing field of academic psychobiography in South Africa. More specifically, the researchers are of the opinion that this study contributes to a psychosocial and historical understanding of Jobs's development as framed by Levinsonian theory against the background of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology.

### Synoptic Chronicle of the Life of Steve Jobs

Steven Paul Jobs was born on 24 February 1955 in San Francisco (Isaacson, 2011; TIME, 2011). Paul and Clara Jobs were his adoptive parents (Isaacson, 2011; Pollack & Belviso, 2012). As a consequence of having suffered an ectopic pregnancy, Clara was unable to bear children. After nine years of marriage, the couple decided to adopt a child and, in due course, assumed parenthood of Jobs shortly after his birth (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Isaacson, 2011; Lakin, 2015). From an early age, Jobs's adoptive parents were very open about his adoption and emphasized that he was special and talented (Blumenthal, 2012; Lakin, 2015). Jobs became the co-founder of Apple Inc., an American multinational corporation that designs and sells consumer electronics, computer software and personal computers, which was founded in his parents' garage during 1976 (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). He was also the founder of Pixar and NeXT (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Eventually appointed as CEO of Apple, Jobs contributed to transforming Apple into a prosperous company (Isaacson, 2011). In the process, he played a role in radically transforming seven industries: (a) personal computing, (b) animated motion pictures, (c) music, (d) mobile phones, (e) tablet computing, (f) retail stores, and (g) digital publishing (Isaacson, 2011; TIME, 2011). Jobs's personality was integral to his way of doing business (Isaacson, 2011). It was characterised by passion, intensity, vision and perfectionism (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). As such, he was an inspirational business leader and innovator (Trusko, 2011). Jobs's life course was characterized by eras of being a prankster, hippie, family man, entrepreneur and cancer fighter. He passed away at his home on 5 October 2011 at the age of 56 (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Hunt & O'Connor, 2011).

A more detailed biographical analysis of the life of Jobs will be provided in the findings and discussion section of this paper in order to avoid unnecessary repetition of biographical and historical information illustrating the applicability of Levinsonian theory against the background of human science phenomenology (Dahlberg, 2006).

### Levinsonian Theory: A Snapshot against the Background of the Ontological Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty

Levinson's (1986, 1996) theory of the human life cycle was used to uncover and reconstruct Jobs's development over the course of his lifespan. Levinson's theory is a comprehensive psychosocial approach to development that considers the evolving nature of the person within society. Levinson et al. (1978) described the life cycle as representing the engagement of the individual in society, and hence the interaction between the individual and the world. In this regard, Levinson's theory serves the purpose for understanding human existence as structured such that the individual cannot be separated from his or her social world. As such, Levinsonian theory synchronises well with Merleau-Ponty's (1964/1968) ontological philosophy, which originated in Husserlian phenomenology (Husserl, 1952/2000) and serves as a foundation for understanding human existence as encompassing the interconnectedness between the individual in the world and the world in the individual. Given Merleau-Ponty's demonstration that there is "no ontological gulf between the individual and the social world" (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 1), Dahlberg thus advocated the possibility of a human science phenomenology that emphasizes this interconnectedness between the individual and the social. Levinson's theory was selected for this psychobiographical case study due to (a) its focus on the individual's entire lifespan, (b) its amalgamation of other theories, including Jung's analytical psychology and Erikson's psychosocial theory, which emphasise individuation and environmental mastery as core dimensions of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2008), and (c) its groundedness within the ontological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty. Levinson used the construct "seasons" as a metaphor to describe the qualitatively different stages or eras of an individual's life (Levinson, 1986; Levinson, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978). This metaphor infers that the cycle of the seasons of the year is reflected in the human lifespan, with each season having an equivalent in the individual's life course. In essence, therefore, this image suggests that the human life course evolves through a sequence of definable seasons or eras (Stroud, 2004).

Levinson et al. (1978) suggested that the individual's life cycle moves through a basic succession of eras, each lasting about 25 years, and that their sequence constitutes the macro-structure of the life cycle. Each era has its own distinctive psychosocial character (Levinson,

1986; Levinson et al., 1978). These eras also require that the individual make major changes and adjustments to his/her life (Levinson, 1996). The following four eras were identified by Levinson et al. (1978): (1) era of pre-adulthood (age 0-22), (2) era of early adulthood (age 17-45), (3) era of middle adulthood (age 40-65), and (4) era of late adulthood (age 60 onwards). These eras partially overlap, with transitional periods terminating the current era and creating the possibility of a new one. Termed the cross-era transition (Levinson, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978), Levinson (1996) identified three of these: (1) early adult transition (age 17-22), (2) mid-life transition (age 40-45), and (3) late adult transition (age 60-65). The eras and cross-era transitions constitute the life structure of the life cycle (Levinson et al., 1978). Life structure refers to “the underlying pattern or design of a person’s life at a given time” (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 41) and as such can be utilised as a blueprint for analysing “the fabric of one’s life” (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 42).

An individual’s life contains many components (e.g., relationships, occupation, and the individual’s roles in various social contexts). The individual’s personality influences these social components, which, in turn, influence the individual’s personality (Levinson et al., 1978). This corresponds with Merleau-Ponty’s (1964/1968) phenomenological view of the individual in the world and the world in the individual. In representing a structure of existence where the individual is inseparable from his/her world context, it places the emphasis on the way in which individuals are in a dynamic relationship to the world and the objects or components they interact with (Dahlberg, 2006; Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2003). It is therefore within Merleau-Ponty’s (1964/1968) phenomenological ontology that Jobs’s Levinsonian development was contextualised. This was undertaken by reconstructing Jobs’s Levinsonian development, with its various life components, in terms of the dynamic interaction between him as subject and the world he lived in, and the reciprocal impact on both himself and his world. Of significance is also Jobs’s demonstration of his interconnectedness and interaction with objects in the digital environment (e.g., social media), which would later create a generation of “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) – the so-called Generation Y being the first generation to have spent most of their lives interacting with the world through digital and social media (Bolton, Parasuraman, Hoefnagels, Migchels, Kabadayi, Gruber, Komarova Loureiro, & Solnet, 2013), with Generation Z born into this mode complete with a digital footprint.

### Research Aims

The primary aim of this study was to explore and describe (i.e., uncover and reconstruct) the lifespan development of Jobs according to Levinson’s life cycle theory (Levinson, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978). The secondary aim was to illustrate and test the relevance

of the applied Levinsonian theory to the life of Jobs against the background of the ontological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty.

### Method

#### Research Design

This study implements a longitudinal life history case study design and can be classified as a single case psychobiography. Ponterotto (2015a) provided a cogent argument for the role of psychobiography in psychology. Ponterotto et al. (2015) defined psychobiography as “the intensive life-span study of an individual of historic significance in socio-cultural context using psychological or historiographic research methods and interpreted from established theories in psychology” (p. 3). Psychobiography entails a way of undertaking psychological research by making extensive use of biographical data to examine original thinking, creativity and productivity in unusual individuals (Howe, 1997). The nature of a case study, such as psychobiography, is both exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogic (Edwards, 1998). Its exploratory-descriptive dimension relates to the description of a single case, with the purpose of providing an in-depth understanding of the individual (Edwards, 1998; Neuman, 1991/2003). The descriptive-dialogic dimension deals with the trustworthy portrayal of a phenomenon (e.g., the life of the subject), as well as the testing of specific theories (Edwards, 1998; McLeod, 1994). In the present study, a dialogue or comparison was established between the biographical or sociohistorical findings on the life of Jobs and the applied life cycle theory of Levinson by means of analytical generalisation, where the applied theory is tested for relevance to the case findings and *vice versa* (Cavaye, 1996; Yin, 1984/2009). According to Carlson (1988), life history materials, such as psychobiographies, are ideal for testing the relevance of various theories of development.

#### The Psychobiographical Case Subject and Sampling Procedure

The psychobiographical subject is selected by means of a non-probability sampling procedure, termed purposive sampling or theoretical sampling (Kóváry, 2011). This type of sampling is appropriate in cases where the subject is especially unique or significant, or where the objective of the study is not to generalise to the larger population (i.e., statistical generalization) but to gain a rich understanding of a particular individual (Neuman, 1991/2003; Yin 1984/2009). Psychobiographical sampling is chiefly based on the individual’s significance in relation to the researcher’s own particular interests (Howe, 1997; Kóváry, 2011). The psychobiographical literature indicates the need for psychological studies of great, significant and exemplary lives (Elms, 1994; Howe, 1997; Runyan, 1984; Schultz, 2005; Simonton, 1994). Jobs was sampled on the basis of interest value, his exceptional achievements, his complex personality,

and his historical legacy in respect of the transformation of technology. A thorough literature search for existing psychobiographies on Jobs was conducted by means of NEXUS, PsycLIT and EBSCOhost. Only one existing life history study on Jobs was found. This academic dissertation, by Ndoró (2014), was undertaken in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at a South African university business school, and its focus was primarily on Jobs's entrepreneurship.

#### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data sources related to the life of Jobs consisted of biographical and historical materials, including audio-visual media, collected by means of a comprehensive search on the World Wide Web, the EBSCOhost database, the information-system services at the researchers' university library, and various bookstores. The collected material included both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included audio-visual material by Jobs, his public speeches, and existing interviews with him (e.g., Jobs, 1984, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011). Secondary sources included various published books, biographies, newspaper and magazine articles, audio-visual media, existing interviews with Jobs's friends and colleagues, as well as the website [www.allaboutstevejobs.com](http://www.allaboutstevejobs.com).

#### **Data Extraction and Analysis**

A psychobiographer is faced with a vast amount of data that contains both fact and opinion, and it is the psychobiographer's task to demarcate clearly which themes or units will be psychologically significant (Alexander, 1990; Schultz, 2005). A systematic approach is required for extracting and examining the themes or units from which evidence can be drawn (Morrow, 2005; Yin, 1984/2009). Yin (1984/2009) proposed two methods for this purpose, namely: (a) data analysis that is guided by the theoretical approach and the study's objectives, and (b) a case description. The first method refers to the manner in which case study researchers navigate themselves by their applied theoretical approach and the objectives of the study, so as to focus on salient evidence (Yin, 1984/2009). This requires formulating questions that provide insight into both the applied theory and the study's objectives. Applying Alexander's (1988, 1990) model of (a) questioning the data and (b) letting the data reveal itself assisted in the extraction of core identifying units from the biographical and socio-historical data. In respect of the strategy of letting the data reveal itself, Alexander provided nine indicators of salience which facilitated the systematic sifting of relevant material from the vast amount of collected data. These indicators of thematic significance comprise the following: (a) primacy, (b) frequency, (c) uniqueness, (d) negation, (e) emphasis, (f) omission, (g) error or distortion, (h) isolation and (i) incompleteness. The reader is referred to Alexander (1988, 1990) for an elaborate

description of these indicators.

The collected materials on Jobs were approached with two questions in mind: (a) "Which themes or units of the data could contribute to uncovering and reconstructing the Levinsonian development of Jobs?" In addressing this question, Jobs's life was conceptualized in terms of Levinson's life cycle theory, against the background of Merleau-Ponty's postulation that no ontological gulf exists between the individual and the social world. Biographical and sociohistorical data applicable to the eras, transitions and overall life structure of Levinson's theory were thus selected for extraction. The second question – (b) "How will a dialogue be established between the extracted sociohistorical and biographical data and the applied Levinsonian theory?" – was addressed by means of critically comparing the biographical and socio-historical evidence extracted with Levinson's theory and *vice versa*. In this way, dialogic interaction was achieved between not only the descriptive data and the theoretical framework, but between what Edwards (1998) identified as the exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogic dimensions of a case study.

#### **A Psychosocial-Historical Matrix**

An additional strategy entailed the construction of a conceptual framework to organise and integrate case evidence. This took the form of a psychosocial-historical matrix that facilitated data categorisation and analysis, as is indicated in Table 1 (see next page).

By means of cross-tabulation, this matrix integrates the life cycle theory of Levinson with the significant socio-historical periods over Jobs's lifespan, as such ensuring adherence to Merleau-Ponty's ontological elucidation of the individual's interconnectedness to a social world. A literature review of Jobs's life revealed six distinct, yet interrelated, periods of significant sociohistorical development. These periods comprised: (a) childhood and school years: *the prankster* (1955-1972), (b) enlightenment period: *the hippie* (1972-1977), (c) fame and fortune: *the entrepreneur* (1977-1988), (d) new beginnings: *the family man and saviour* (1988-2000), (e) changing the face of technology: *the CEO* (2000-2005) and (f) fighting cancer: *the legacy* (2005-2011).

In Table 1, which provides a framed-outline of coverage, the vertical columns represent the eras and transitions proposed by Levinson's theory, whereas the horizontal rows denote Jobs's sociohistorical context or the periods of sociohistorical significance. Utilizing this matrix provided the researchers with a both chronological and longitudinal perspective to guide their uncovering and reconstructing of Jobs's Levinsonian development. This aided in the systematic categorisation and analysis of the biographical and sociohistorical data, which was cross-tabulated for comparison with the applied Levinsonian theory.

**Table 1: The Psychosocial-Historical Matrix of Levinsonian Development across the Historical Lifespan of Steve Jobs**

Levinson's Psychosocial Developmental Theory														
Jobs's Socio-Historical Context	ERA OF PRE-ADULTHOOD				ERA OF EARLY-ADULTHOOD				ERA OF MIDDLE-ADULTHOOD			ERA OF LATE ADULTHOOD		
	Infancy (0 - 2)	Early Childhood (2 - 6)	Middle Childhood (6 - 12)	Adolescence (12-17)	Early Adult Transition (17 -22)	Entry Life Structure (22 - 28)	Age 30 Transition (28- 33)	Settling Down (33- 40)	Midlife Transition (40-45)	Entry Life Structure (45-50)	Age 50 Transition (50 -55)	Culminating Life Structure (55 - 60)	Late Adult Transition (60-65)	Late Adulthood (65 - ?)
Childhood and school years: The prankster (1955-1972)														
Enlightenment period: The hippie (1972 - 1977)														
Fame and fortune: The entrepreneur (1977 - 1988)														
New beginnings: The family man and saviour (1988 - 2000)														
Changing the face of technology: The CEO (2000-2005)														
Fighting cancer: The legacy (2005 - 2011)												2011 Death age 56		

### ***Ensuring Rigour and Trustworthiness***

The following strategies were utilized to enhance the rigour and trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of this psychobiographical case study: (a) biographical data on Jobs were investigated in an extensive and in-depth manner and consideration was given to sociohistorical events within each period; (b) reflexivity and the bracketing (Ponterotto, 2014) of the researchers' subjective stance were used to avoid distortion in the interpretations; (c) the identification of well-defined and explicit theoretical concepts (i.e., theoretical anchoring) and operational measures (i.e., specification), as proposed by Ponterotto (2014), were followed; (d) use was made of Alexander's (1988, 1990) guidelines for thematic saliency, as well as of a psychosocial-historical matrix to ensure a systematic process of data collection and analysis; and, lastly, (e) data triangulation and investigator triangulation (Yin, 1984/2009) were applied.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Along with pointing to best practices (Ponterotto, 2014), Ponterotto (2013a, 2013b) highlighted various ethical considerations to be taken into account in undertaking a psychobiographical study. In accordance with these, a research proposal was submitted to the institutional review board for approval, which was granted. The ethical issues regarding the choice of a living subject (APA, 1976) were overcome by selecting a deceased individual, namely Jobs, and as such ensuring that the subject would not personally be negatively affected (e.g., embarrassed) by the study's findings (Elms, 1994). However, Jobs being what would be classified as very recently deceased (in 2011), the ethical issue regarding the potentially adverse impact of possibly unsavoury findings on his surviving relatives and colleagues needed to be addressed. This was done by making use solely of existing data sources that were publically accessible. No private data sources were accessed so as not to violate either what Ponterotto (2015b) referred to as "postmortem privacy rights" or next-of-kin rights. In light of the latter, details regarding Jobs's biological parents, even though available, have been omitted from this psychobiographical study out of respect for their right not to have their privacy invaded without their consent.

### **Findings and Discussion**

An accepted modus operandi for reporting results in psychobiographies is for psychobiographical findings to be discussed by means of a biographical account of the subject's life within the context of the psychological theory selected and applied (Schultz, 2005). The findings of this psychobiographical study are accordingly both presented and discussed in an integrated fashion, with the biographical data considered in relation to the theory applied. In this section, the findings are thus presented

and simultaneously discussed chronologically according to the eras and transitions proposed by Levinson. Due to the fact that Jobs died at the age of 56, the first three eras proposed by Levinson (1996) and Levinson et al. (1978) are illustrated across each of the six historical periods throughout Jobs's life (see Table 1). Presenting a brief theoretical overview of the Levinsonian era and transition prior to its illustration facilitated comparison of the biographical and sociohistorical findings with the Levinsonian theory.

Despite the contextually appropriate emphasis in this paper on the masculinity of the subject, Jobs being of the male gender, and hence the use throughout of the masculine pronouns "he" and "him", no theoretical gender-bias is inferred. The reader is reminded that Levinson also completed the draft of a prospective book on women's development. Published posthumously in 1996, *The Seasons of a Women's Life* amplified the theoretical implications of his earlier findings that most women he interviewed had passed through the same sequence of age-linked developmental eras as did men (Kittrell, 1998). While the significance of gender identity and gender hierarchy is acknowledged, along with the relationship between language and the perpetuation of "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), the gender inclusivity of the psychological theory applied is to be assumed in the context of this paper.

#### ***The Era of Pre-Adulthood (age 0-22)***

This era includes early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, and the early adult transition (Levinson et al., 1978). The era is characterised by rapid biopsychosocial growth and individuation from infant dependence towards progressively more adult independence (Stroud, 2004). Individuation refers to "the changes in a person's relationship to himself and to the external world" (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 195). The first step in the process of individuation is the transition from birth to early childhood. This occurs during the first two to three years of life, when the infant learns to distinguish the "me" from the "not-me" (Levinson et al., 1978, p. 20). As the boundary between the self and the other becomes more clearly defined, the individual forms an enhanced sense of self-identity (Stroud, 2004). The process of individuation continues throughout the life cycle and is prominent during key transition periods. The transition from early to middle childhood occurs at the age of five or six when children expand their social world from the immediate family to a larger sphere, such as the school and peer groups. The transition from middle childhood to adolescence usually occurs around the age of 12 or 13, and is marked by the onset of puberty. Adolescence can be regarded as the conclusion of the era of pre-adulthood (Levinson et al., 1978).

#### ***Illustration: Childhood and School Years – The Prankster (1955-1972)***

The Jobs couple adopted Steve shortly after his birth

and he lived with them throughout his childhood and school years (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson et al. (1978) stated that the family mostly provides protection and support during the pre-adult years. Jobs grew up in a loving and supportive family and enjoyed a healthy relationship with both parents, who had been open about his adoption since early childhood. However, Jobs's adoption represented the first developmental crisis he experienced. Despite his feelings of abandonment due to his adoption, Jobs came to believe in his adoptive parents' affirmation of his specialness and talents, as was reflected in his personality throughout his life (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Jobs's relationship with his adoptive father, Paul, played a significant role in his development. Paul taught him the lessons of good craftsmanship. This lesson became an integral part of Jobs's personality and contributed to his obsession with perfection regarding all the products he later developed (Isaacson, 2011). Jobs's parents realised that he was highly intelligent, which further reinforced the sense that he was special. Due to his exceptional intelligence, he became bored at school and took on the role of prankster (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015), occupying his time with playing pranks (Hunt & O'Connor, 2011; Lakin, 2015). According to Levinson (1996), children expand their social world from the immediate family to a larger sphere with the transition from early childhood to middle childhood. Jobs became acquainted with friends and began his separation from his immediate family. However, he was not disposed to accept authority easily and would frequently get into trouble. His parents did not punish him, but rather treated him as special and talented and expected the school to do the same (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). The school recommended that he skip grades due to his intellectual capacity (Isaacson, 2011; Young, 1988; Ziller, 2011). Sigelman and Rider (2006) note that it is challenging for a child to be placed in a class with older children. Jobs's transition to sixth grade was difficult and he became a loner (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). The school was in a violent neighbourhood and he was often bullied (Isaacson, 2011). Since peer relationships are an important part of adolescent development (Sigelman & Rider, 2006), this period could be regarded as potentially being a developmental crisis for Jobs. However, Jobs had, since childhood, exhibited strong willpower – which, as stipulated by Ryff and Singer (2008), is a necessity for mastering the environment – and demonstrated this characteristic in his seventh grade, giving his parents an ultimatum that they should put him in a different school or he would drop out altogether (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Isaacson, 2011). His parents relocated to a more congenial district with better schools (Lakin, 2015; Young & Simon, 2005). Jobs also exercised his strong willpower in regard to church attendance. His parents wanted to give him a religious upbringing, but he did not agree with some of the church's teachings and so decided that he would no longer attend church (Isaacson,

2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Jobs's decision in this regard is noteworthy, indicating that, in the process of forming his identity, he did not want the church to be a part of it (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). In 1968, Jobs started ninth grade at Homestead High, where he made friends with seniors who demonstrated greater intellectual capacity and shared his interests. While Jobs flourished intellectually during his high school years, he continued to play pranks and also started smoking marijuana (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Levinson et al. (1978) pointed to the significance of the surrounding socio-cultural world in influencing individual development. The counterculture of the late 1960s (i.e., the hippie era) may thus have precipitated Jobs's marijuana use (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). The only real conflict ever between Jobs and his father concerned his smoking of marijuana (Isaacson, 2011). Jobs thrived when he started working during his high school years (Ziller, 2011). During this period, he formed significant friendships with people outside of his immediate family. He spent time with Larry Lang, a neighbour and engineer, who greatly influenced his interest in and aptitude for electronics. Jobs also befriended Steve Wozniak, who shared his passion for electronics. Jobs would later co-found Apple with Wozniak (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). He was clearly now able to form important relationships, which Levinson et al. (1978) described as a significant task during adolescence. Jobs's willpower, his eagerness to work, his participation in the counterculture of the day, and his engagement in social relationships illustrated that he was in the process of developing independence, which corresponds with the central components of this era as identified by Levinson et al. (1978).

#### ***Early Adult Transition (age 17-22)***

The transition to early adulthood takes place from the age of 17 to 22. Each transitional period has three main developmental tasks: (a) the ending or termination of the existing life structure, (b) individuation, and (c) the initiation of a new structure (Levinson et al., 1978; Stroud, 2004). In the early adult transition, the individual needs to terminate the adolescent life structure and take a preliminary step into the adult world. During this transitional period, the individual creates an initial base for adult life (Levinson et al., 1978).

#### ***Illustration: Enlightenment Period – The Hippie (1972-1977)***

At the age of 17, Jobs started a relationship with his first girlfriend, Chrisann Brennan. After his graduation, he moved into a cabin with Brennan, even though his parents did not approve (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Levinson et al. (1978) described the detachment from the parental home as an important component in leaving the pre-adult world. The process of exploring the possibility of marriage and a family also emerges during the early adult transition, with the first

developmental task in this regard being for the individual to form the capacity to engage in intimate adult relationships (Levinson, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978). Even though Jobs did not marry Brennan or start a family with her (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015), his relationship with Brennan illustrated the start of this exploration. When Jobs's parents adopted him, they promised his biological parents that they would send him to college (Isaacson, 2011). Jobs once again exercised his strong willpower when it came to the decision regarding an appropriate college (Jobs, 2005; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). His parents gave in to his demands, even though they could not afford it. When they took him to Reed College, he did not bid them goodbye (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson et al. (1978) posited that an internal separation from one's family involves an increasing differentiation between self and parents. The fact that Jobs did not say farewell to his parents could thus be an indication of internal separation, and hence increased psychological distance, from them.

According to Levinson et al. (1978), a person's socio-cultural world has certain meanings and consequences for the individual. During Jobs's college years, there was a shift in American campus life, with students starting to look at pathways that could lead to personal fulfillment (Isaacson, 2011). The hippie era influenced Jobs, who read books on spirituality and enlightenment as well as exploring vegetarianism. He became obsessed with Zen Buddhism (Isaacson, 2011; TIME, 2011). Jobs embraced the enlightenment-seeking campus subculture; it became part of his personality, insofar as he would remain passionate about both Zen Buddhism and diet throughout most of his life. Jobs would also walk barefoot and refuse to use deodorant during this period (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). The counterculture of the time clearly played a marked role in Jobs's individuation. He decided to drop out of college because he could not attend the classes he wanted to and was of the opinion that his parents were wasting their money (Jobs, 2005). However, he managed to stay at Reed for a few more months after dropping out and continued to attend only the classes that interested him, such as a calligraphy class. He loved this art and would later use calligraphy principles in his development of different fonts for the Macintosh computer (Jobs, 2005; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). During the early adult transition, individuals have to question their world and their place in it (Levinson et al., 1978). This process entails the modification of existing relationships with persons and institutions (Levinson et al., 1978). Jobs modified his relationship with college in the manner described. This can be regarded as part of his further individuation. Jobs made two significant friends during his time at Reed. The first was Daniel Kottke, who shared Jobs's love for Zen and Bob Dylan's music (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Greene, 2011), and the second was Robert Friedland. Jobs adopted many of Friedland's charismatic traits (Isaacson, 2011). Jobs's

charisma was evident later in his product presentations and his ability to influence people (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). After finally leaving Reed, Jobs moved back to live with his parents and sought employment (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Isaacson, 2011).

A person may continue living in the parental home and still be able to work on the developmental tasks of this period by becoming internally more differentiated from parents and externally more self-sufficient (Levinson et al., 1978). Jobs began working at Atari, a video game manufacturer, until he had saved enough money to go to India, in search of spiritual enlightenment (Hunt & O'Connor, 2011; Ziller, 2011). After his return, he also underwent primal scream therapy (Isaacson, 2011). Jobs believed that the therapy and diets would help to cleanse him and allow him to obtain deeper insight into the emotions he experienced regarding his adoption (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). This is congruent with the view of Levinson et al. (1978), who indicated that unresolved childhood issues might make this period challenging. The individual should also explore possibilities and make preliminary choices for adult living during this transition (Levinson et al., 1978). It appears that Jobs did so during this period. He considered various possibilities as career options. After returning from India, he went to work for Atari again (All about Steve Jobs, 2015). After he had observed Wozniak's attempt to create a personal computer, Jobs initiated the idea that they should sell these. He also persuaded Wozniak to establish a computer company with him (Blumenthal, 2012; Isaacson, 2011). Levinson et al. (1978) posited that a man makes an initial serious choice regarding his career during this period and that such a choice represents a preliminary definition of his interests and values. Jobs's initial career choice reflected his deep interest in engineering and computers, as such supporting Levinson's theory. At the age of 22, the new corporation, Apple Computer, had been created and he moved the company out of the family's garage and into real offices (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). This once again illustrated a separation process, as explained by Levinson et al. (1978). Wozniak and Jobs also designed the Apple II. Jobs's interest in Zen and minimalism influenced the way in which he approached the product and the packaging (Hunt & O'Connor, 2011; Lakin, 2015). Levinson et al. (1978) stated that a man would make firmer choices and gain a higher measure of self-definition as the transition comes to an end. Jobs seemed able to do so during this era. As part of a plan to acquire more capital, Jobs appointed Mike Markkula, who became a mentor to Jobs (Isaacson, 2011; Stern & Hume, 2013). Levinson et al. (1978) pointed to a mentor relationship as one of the most important relationships an individual can have in early adulthood. Markkula taught Jobs how to understand the desires of customers and the importance of marketing. Markkula moreover supported Jobs's dream of starting a computer company focused on innovation and creativity (Isaacson, 2011; Stern & Hume,



2013). The pivotal components during Jobs's early adult transition were thus his search for enlightenment and his occupation, which received the largest amount of his time and energy (Isaacson, 2011). He succeeded in completing the tasks of the early adult transition, which were to (a) terminate the adolescent life structure and leave the era of pre-adulthood and (b) take a preliminary step into the adult world. This was illustrated in the separation from his family and the modification of some of his relationships with persons and institutions (e.g., Reed College), as well as in his career exploration.

#### ***The Era of Early Adulthood (age 17-45)***

This era consists of three developmental periods, all allowing the individual to realise life goals (Levinson, 1996, Levinson, 1986). These periods comprise: (a) the entry life structure for early adulthood (i.e., entering the adult world), (b) the age 30 transition, and (c) the culminating life structure for early adulthood (i.e., settling down) (Levinson, 1996). Levinson et al. (1978) posited that this era is characterised by both energy and external pressure. The individual needs to make pivotal decisions regarding marriage, occupation, residence and lifestyle in order to define his/her place in the adult world (Levinson, 1996). Jobs's life during this era is illustrated below in accordance with the aforementioned three developmental periods.

#### ***The Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood – Entering the Adult World (age 22-28)***

The individual has two tasks during the period of entry into adulthood (Levinson et al., 1978). The first is to explore the possibilities of adult life by maximising alternatives and avoiding strong commitments. The second task is, in contrast, to create a stable life structure and become more responsible. According to Levinson et al. (1978), individuals need to find a balance between exploring the adult world while simultaneously building a stable life.

#### ***Illustration: Fame and Fortune – The Entrepreneur (1977-1988)***

Jobs and his girlfriend Brennan continued a sporadic relationship (Isaacson, 2011). They were not officially committed when Brennan fell pregnant in 1977. Jobs distanced himself from Brennan and the pregnancy (Brennan, 2013; Stern & Hume, 2013). This can be interpreted as part of the exploration imperative of this period, and the individual's concurrent avoidance of strong commitments (Levinson et al., 1978). When he was 23, Jobs's daughter, Lisa, was born. At the time, he denied paternity and refused to pay child support. After Brennan had successfully sued for child support, Jobs acceded to paying this, but nevertheless remained uninvolved with both Brennan and Lisa (Brennan, 2013; Isaacson, 2011). The second task of this period involves the taking on of adult responsibilities (Levinson et al., 1978). Jobs did not take responsibility as a father and he did not marry Brennan (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson (1996)

asserts that an individual finds it stressful if external expectations are in contradiction to personal needs. While the external expectation that he be an involved father to Lisa posed a challenge to Jobs, he preferred to focus on his career. According to Levinson et al. (1978), contradiction-related stress might cause future crises. However, after the court case, Jobs matured in certain ways. He spent less time at Zen retreats, where he often obsessed about life and his adoption, engaged in better grooming habits, and even bought a house (Isaacson, 2011; Ziller, 2011). This relates to the second task identified by Levinson et al. (1978), which entails taking on adult responsibilities to create a stable life structure. Jobs was still busy with the task of exploration, as is evident in the fact that he did not furnish his house because he could not commit to furniture that he liked (Isaacson, 2011).

Levinson et al. (1978) postulated that the central components during this period in a man's life involve: occupation, relational intimacy, and family. The most central component in Jobs's life was his occupation, which is congruent with Levinson's theory. He was focused on the launch of the Apple II and became wealthy after Apple's first IPO (Isaacson, 2011; TIME, 2011). Jobs also visited Xerox PARC and, at the age of 26, took over the Macintosh division at Apple. He became famous, making his first appearance on the cover of a magazine (Isaacson, 2011). His intense and perfectionist personality, along with his dislike of any form of authority over him, was especially prominent during this period. For instance, he would become highly irritable whenever he did not get his way (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). His sense of special entitlement and perfectionism, both of which became characteristic of his personality at an early age, remained conducive to this type of behaviour. Levinson et al. (1978) stated that a man's difficulties during this period could be accentuated by his situation and by his own emotional issues. Jobs found it easy to separate from his parents. However, he found it difficult to separate from the special way his parents treated him and he expected the same special treatment from everyone. Jobs was 28 years of age when Apple needed a new CEO. Even though he wanted to accept, he knew he was still too young to run the company. He therefore convinced John Sculley to become Apple's new CEO (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Initially, Jobs and Sculley were very close, but the relationship was short-lived. Sculley functioned as a mentor to Jobs because he supported the realisation of Jobs's dream (Isaacson, 2011). A possible reason that the relationship between Jobs and Sculley was short-lived could be that Sculley embodied more of a parenting role than that of a mix of parent and peer. Jobs had always disdained authority figures, and this may have affected this relationship. Jobs also still felt abandoned by his previous mentor, Markkula, who was claimed to have assisted in the removal of Jobs from a prior project (Isaacson, 2011).

Marriage and family are also central components during this period (Levinson et al., 1978). Jobs began exploring relationships with different women and expressed his desire to marry and have children (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson et al. (1978) held that, as this period comes to an end, it becomes more distressing for an individual if he/she does not have an intimate companion and a home of his/her own. It was clear that new developmental tasks were pushing to the fore in Jobs's life. During this period, Jobs tried to engage in both major tasks. While the central component or task during this era remained his occupation, he also actively explored relationships with various women. Jobs seems to have struggled to find a balance between exploring and taking responsibility. The need for the revision of his existing life structure was thus imminent.

### ***The Age 30 Transition (age 28-33)***

The age 30 transition provides an opportunity for the individual to work on the flaws of the first adult life structure and to create the basis for a more satisfactory one. The individual continues to individuate and explore new possibilities (Levinson et al., 1978). The transition may be smooth, or a developmental crisis may occur if the individual comes to find his/her current life structure unsatisfactory (Levinson, 1996).

### ***Illustration of the Transition: Fame and Fortune – The Entrepreneur (1977-1988) (continued)***

At the age of 28, Jobs launched the 1984 Macintosh advertisement and also the original Macintosh computer (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015; TIME, 2011). The 1984 Macintosh was an improved mouse-window-desktop computer (Williams, 1984). The launch illustrated the charismatic side of Jobs's personality and made him even more of a celebrity (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). He bought an apartment and a Spanish mansion (Isaacson, 2011). However, at the age of 30, Jobs experienced a developmental crisis. After Sculley was claimed to have played a role in Jobs's removal from the Macintosh division (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015), the board sided with Sculley, and Jobs was stripped of all executive duties (Hunt & O'Connor, 2011; Stern & Hume, 2013). Jobs felt abandoned, given that two of the board members (i.e., Sculley and Markkula) had once been mentor figures to him. However, he realised that he was still young and so determined to begin something new (Isaacson, 2011). He resigned, sold all but one of his Apple shares, and set about establishing a new company (Beahm, 2011; Isaacson, 2011). Transitional periods serve to terminate one life structure and initiate another (Levinson et al., 1978). When an individual's relationship with an object has great meaning (as did Jobs's relationship with Apple), the termination is only partial (Levinson et al., 1978). This is evident in Jobs's initiative in keeping one Apple share so as to continue attending shareholder meetings (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Levinson et al. (1978) suggested that the lost object becomes more fully internalised within the self.

This would be true of Jobs, who always had a love for Apple. Jobs would also return to Apple later in his life, thus confirming that the termination of the relationship had been only partial. In 1985, Jobs started NeXT (All about Steve Jobs, 2015). His extravagant approach in everything that NeXT did ultimately caused financial difficulties (Blumenthal, 2012; Deutschman, 2000; Lakin, 2015). In 1986, Jobs also invested in the Lucas film computer division and changed the company's name to Pixar. The company was in financial trouble by 1988 (Isaacson, 2011; Price, 2009). Since Jobs's two new companies were both experiencing severe financial difficulties, his crisis continued. He also experienced a significant loss during this transitional period when his mother, Clara, passed away, which exacerbated his crisis (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson et al. (1978) posited that a person who has experienced profound loss must find a way to come to terms with painful feelings. After the death of Clara, Jobs traced his biological mother, and met both her and his only sibling, his biological sister, with whom he developed a very close relationship (Isaacson, 2011; Rumsey, 2010). He also started visiting his daughter, Lisa, on a regular basis (Brennan, 2013; Isaacson, 2011). This indicates that Jobs made changes to his previous, unsatisfactory life structure and tried to establish a new one. Levinson et al. (1978) characterised the age 30 transition as providing a "second chance" (p. 85) to create a more satisfactory life structure.

### ***The Culminating Life Structure for Early Adulthood – Settling Down (age 33-40)***

The individual has two major tasks during this period. The first is to establish a niche in society by developing competence in a chosen craft, while the second is to work at building an improved lifestyle and to find affirmation from others (Levinson et al., 1978). The individual eventually becomes a fully-fledged adult and a senior member of his own world (Levinson, 1996).

### ***Illustration: New Beginnings – The Family Man and Saviour (1988-2000)***

During the settling down period, an individual has a sense of urgency to become more serious and to decide what is truly important (Levinson et al., 1978). Jobs started focusing more on marriage and family during this period. At the age of 34, he met and fell in love with Laurene Powell. A year later he proposed to her and they married. She fell pregnant during that same year (Isaacson, 2011). Their son, Reed, was born in 1991, and their first daughter, Erin, followed in 1995 (Blumenthal, 2012; Isaacson, 2011). Lisa, Jobs's first daughter, also moved in with them (Isaacson, 2011). Marriage and family commitments and responsibilities now constituted a central component in Jobs's life. He also addressed the first task of the period as proposed by Levinson et al. (1978), becoming more responsible and focusing on what was important to him. After having decided to focus less on NeXT, Jobs started concentrating on Pixar (Deutschman, 2000; Schlender

& Tetzeli, 2015), which became a successful company (TIME, 2011; Ziller, 2011). Jobs therefore established a niche in society, and became a valued member of it, by developing competence in his chosen craft. Jobs's work at Pixar illustrated that he was working toward advancement and building a better life. During this era, Jobs thus addressed both tasks proposed by Levinson et al. (1978).

#### ***The Mid-life Transition (age 40-45)***

This transition serves as a bridge from early to middle adulthood. It is a time of moderate or severe crisis, depending on the individual. The neglected parts of the self seek expression, which stimulates the modification of the existing life structure (Levinson et al., 1978). The most important task during this period is to take a new step in the process of individuation (Levinson, 1986).

*The illustration of this Transition: New Beginnings – The Family Man and Saviour (1988-2000) (continued)*  
Jobs's youngest daughter, Eve, was born in 1998 (Isaacson, 2011). Nevertheless, Jobs's focus on family declined during this period. In 1996, Apple bought NeXT and asked Jobs to return (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Jobs concentrated on saving the company he had founded. He wanted to prove that he not only had vision, but that he could also successfully manage a company (Isaacson, 2011; TIME, 2011). Jobs eventually took the title of interim CEO, saved Apple and, in doing so, was able to prove what he needed to (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Jobs was according more attention to the neglected parts of his vision and creativity by taking on a more senior role in society. In the process, he was able to reappraise his life, modify his dream and work towards entering middle adulthood, which concurs with Levinson's (1996) theory. By doing this, Jobs was able to take a new step in the process of individuation – which Levinson (1996) identifies as the most important task of this period. In 1998, Apple launched the iMac: a symbol of Jobs's vision and creativity (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson et al. (1978) stated that an individual also has a strong desire to become more creative during this period. Jobs became involved in the creation of the iMac, which product not only saved Apple, but also transformed the face of personal computers (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015).

#### ***The Era of Middle Adulthood (age 40-65)***

According to Levinson (1996), the era of middle adulthood begins with the mid-life transition and ends with the late adult transition. During this era, the individual becomes a senior member of society (Levinson et al., 1978). This process had already begun during Jobs's mid-life transition. While the biological capacities of the individual may be less than in early adulthood, they are still sufficient for a personally satisfying life (Levinson, 1986). The individual also develops a greater capacity for intimacy, which may improve the quality of loving relationships (Levinson et al., 1978).

#### ***The Entry Life Structure for Middle Adulthood (age 45-50)***

The main challenge of this stage is to create a new life structure from which middle adulthood can unfold (Stroud, 2004). This stage may be similar to the previous one, but there are noteworthy differences in the central relationships, as the person establishes a new season of life (Levinson, 1996).

#### ***The Illustration: Changing the Face of Technology – The CEO (2000-2005)***

In 2000, Jobs became the main CEO of Apple (All about Steve Jobs, 2015). With this new role Jobs was able to continue the process of individuation. Levinson (1996) observed that increased productivity could be anticipated during this period. In 2000, Jobs launched the new Macintosh operating system (OSX) and started developing the digital hub strategy. In 2001, he launched iTunes, the first iPod, and the first Apple Store. In 2003, he launched the iTunes Store (All about Steve Jobs, 2015). From 2003, he was also involved in negotiations between Disney and Pixar. Disney eventually purchased Pixar in 2005, making Jobs the largest shareholder of Disney (Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015; TIME, 2011). Jobs clearly experienced one of the busiest work periods of his life, making occupation the central component of it. However, Jobs's health became troublesome during this period. In 2003, a tumour was found in his pancreas. Exercising his strong-willed personality, Jobs initially refused surgery and opted for alternative, less invasive approaches. However, in 2004, Jobs took medical leave and underwent surgery (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). Jobs's bodily decline is consistent with Levinson's (1996) observation that the individual may experience physical decline during this era. Despite his illness, Jobs still approached his work with energy and found his life valuable (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). The course of Jobs's life was congruent with Levinson's (1996) claim that individuals receive senior status in their professions during this period.

#### ***The Age 50 Transition (age 50-55)***

This transitional period can be regarded as one in which to modify the life structure formed in the mid-forties and to explore the concept of the self and the world, in order to further or consolidate the process of individuation (Levinson, 1996). However, it could serve as a time of crisis for individuals who have not changed sufficiently during their mid-life transition (Levinson et al., 1978).

#### ***The Illustration of this Transition: Fighting Cancer – The Legacy (2005-2011)***

During middle adulthood, the individual becomes a senior member of his/her own particular world, which enables him/her to take responsibility for encouraging the development of young adults (Levinson et al., 1978). In 2005, Jobs was invited to give the inspirational Stanford Commencement Address to young graduates,

which was widely covered by the media. He was in a reflective mood after his health scare and on turning 50. Jobs's health condition motivated him to continue working on the development of innovative products. In 2005, he commenced developing the iPhone, which was successfully launched in 2007. Jobs also launched the iPhone 3G in 2008, but by this time his health was visibly declining. In 2008, Jobs's cancer had spread and he was losing a great deal of weight (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). In 2009, Jobs received a liver transplant, as a result of his cancer, and took six months of medical leave (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Isaacson, 2011). He occasionally became melancholic during this period due to his health condition (Isaacson, 2011), which constituted a developmental crisis for Jobs, who wanted to work and be actively involved in Apple. In 2009, he returned to work and launched the iPod Nanos. During 2010, Jobs threw himself back fully into his work, launching the iPad (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Isaacson, 2011).

Levinson et al. (1978) suggested that one also develops a greater capacity for intimacy during middle adulthood, with the potential thus to improve the quality of loving relationships. In 2010, Jobs was able to attend his son's high school graduation, describing it as one of the happiest days of his life (Isaacson, 2011). His thankfulness to be alive could be interpreted as a successful modification of his existing life structure and a first step in initiating a new structure. Jobs also undertook a trip to Kyoto with his daughter, Erin (All about Steve Jobs, 2015; Isaacson, 2011). That Jobs spent more time with his children could be attributed to his at this stage having a greater capacity for intimacy, as proposed by Levinson et al. (1978). Towards the end of 2010, Jobs experienced inner turmoil because his cancer had returned and recovery was unlikely. He experienced emotional distress about the imminence of his death and the fact that he would not be able to celebrate any of his children's birthdays with them again (Isaacson, 2011).

#### ***The Culminating Life Structure for Middle Adulthood (age 55-60)***

The end stage of middle adulthood is a relatively stable period that is devoted to building a second middle adult structure, thus enabling individuals to rejuvenate and enrich their lives (Levinson et al., 1978). This could be a period of great fulfilment, as the individual evaluates all aspirations and goals nurtured or developed, with this period therefore similar to that of settling down in early adulthood (Levinson, 1996).

#### ***The Illustration: Fighting Cancer – The Legacy (2005-2011) (continued)***

Due to Jobs's illness, this was a difficult period for him and he was not able to engage fully in the developmental task of this stage. Levinson et al. (1978) proposed that the second structure allows an individual to rejuvenate

his/her life. Jobs's impending death made this a difficult task. However, Jobs experienced a sense of fulfilment during this period, given that he was able to celebrate his 20th wedding anniversary with his wife (Isaacson, 2011). Along with reflecting on his own shortcomings as a father and his successes in life, he was also able to settle unfinished business by repairing relationships with a few people, like Lisa Brennan and Larry Page (Google's co-founder) (Isaacson, 2011; Schlender & Tetzeli, 2015). According to Levinson (1996), making peace with all the enemies of the self is important for restoring the integrity of one's life, which Jobs tried to do. Jobs eventually made peace with his imminent death and resigned as CEO in August 2011 (Isaacson, 2011). Levinson (1996) posited that development at the end of the life cycle meant coming to terms with the process of dying and preparing for one's own death. Steve Jobs passed away on 5 October 2011 at the age of 56.

#### **Conclusion and Limitations**

Levinson's (1996) theory enabled the researchers to chronologically explore, analyse and reconstruct Jobs's development within a structured conceptual framework. The findings of the study support the relevance of Levinsonian theory as a means to gain a life cycle understanding of Jobs's existence and influence. Evidence related to Jobs's life generally confirmed the eras and transitional periods proposed by Levinson's theory. The findings also support Levinson's theory that the central components of an individual's life (e.g., occupation, interpersonal relationships, and health) have a significant impact on life structure development and the process of individuation. The findings also affirm the value of Merleau-Ponty's ontology for understanding human existence in the context of a social structure where the individual is inseparable from his/her social world and the components and objects that define it. In Jobs's case, his social world was largely shaped by electronic and digital objects and media, which needs to be seen as a significant factor in his development, and particularly his career challenges and successes. The interconnectedness Jobs demonstrated with objects in the digital environment affirms Merleau-Ponty's perspective on the individual's lifeworld and intentionality as characterized by their open horizons and interconnectedness with objects in their world context (Dahlberg, 2006). While family was an important component of Jobs's life, his career was the most central component throughout his life. Although his life reflects conflicts and personal developmental crises, he was able to achieve much career success. Initially, he found it difficult to maintain long-term relationships. He was, however, later able to maintain such a relationship with his wife, to whom he was married for 20 years. He also remained occupationally productive until his death. Jobs developed through the on-going process of individuation, as proposed by Levinsonian theory, and this guided his development not only from prankster and

hippie to family man and cancer fighter, but, especially, as an exceptional innovator and entrepreneur.

Future Levinsonian psychobiographers could consider studying exceptional female subjects in order not only to illustrate the course of their life cycles, but to assess the applicability of the Levinsonian theory of development to this, and to identify gender similarities and differences in this regard. Such a comparison has been undertaken by Kittrell (1998) in respect of the evolution of men's and women's life dreams in Levinson's theory.

While the findings of the present study are restricted to Levinson's theory and Jobs's life, the researchers acknowledge that there are various other theories, such

as Bowlby's and Ainsworth's respective attachment theories, that would have applied in this case, given Jobs's adoption and abandonment issues, and that could more generally be useful to uncover development of this type. A further limitation of the study is the extensive focus on Jobs's normal development and a lesser degree of focus on less palatable aspects of his character and life. A more pathogenic psychobiographical description of Jobs's personality and functioning may have provided for a more balanced reconstruction of his life. While the findings of this study therefore do not give rise to any inflated claims, their faithfulness to the data drawn from ethically delimited sources may nevertheless usefully serve to aid alternative explanations of Jobs's psychosocial development and his exceptional legacy.

### Referencing Format

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