

The career development of Mamphela Ramphele: A psychobiographical approach



Authors:

Present R. Ramalepe¹ 
Claude-Hélène Mayer¹ 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding author:

Present Ramalepe,
presentramalepe@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 07 Jan. 2025

Accepted: 16 July 2025

Published: 29 Aug. 2025

How to cite this article:

Ramalepe, P.R., & Mayer, C.-H. (2025). The career development of Mamphela Ramphele: A psychobiographical approach. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, 51(0), a2283. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v51i0.2283>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Orientation: Dr Mamphela Ramphele is a prominent South African activist whose career development amid apartheid and post-apartheid struggles holds great significance from an industrial and organisational psychology perspective.

Research purpose: The purpose of the study was to examine the career development of Dr Mamphela Ramphele.

Motivation for the study: This study provides an example of the successful career development of an extraordinary black woman, which can be viewed as a role model for career-oriented women in South Africa today.

Research approach/design and method: This qualitative study uses a psychobiographical approach and applies the Greenhaus model of career development to understand Ramphele's career development throughout her life. The sampling followed a purposive sampling technique and used content analysis.

Main findings: The findings show that Ramphele's career development is influenced by factors such as the influence of apartheid laws, social, familial and cultural factors, personal loss, economic challenges, activism and academic pursuit, criticisms and resilience and independent thinking.

Practical/managerial implications: This psychobiographical study may guide industrial and organisational psychologists and career counsellors in understanding the challenges of black women developing their careers.

Contribution/value-add: The contribution of this study is to present an in depth understanding of the career development of an extraordinary black woman during apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa. Also, this study contributes to the body of literature on psychobiographies of black women activists in South Africa. It may help industrial and organisational psychologists in South Africa to understand the unique challenges faced by black women during apartheid, the transition into post-apartheid South Africa and beyond.

Keywords: Mamphela Ramphele; apartheid; post-apartheid; psychobiography; career development; industrial and organisational psychology; South Africa.

Introduction

In recent years, psychobiography has gained momentum within psychological research (Eds. Mayer & Kovary, 2019) and is becoming more important for industrial and organisational psychologists to provide new in-depth insights into career development (Van Niekerk, 2021). By exploring the biographical narratives of prominent figures through the lens of psychological theories, psychobiography provides a profound understanding of career development and the contextual influences that impact individual growth and career decision-making (Mayer et al., 2021, Eds. 2023).

Elms (1994) conceptualised psychobiography as the use of psychological theories and knowledge to understand biographies of prominent figures. Although the definition is clear, Ponterotto (2015) claimed that it lacked the developmental and socio-cultural views, which are essential features of psychobiography. Consequently, the author proceeded to define psychobiography as 'the intensive lifespan study of an individual of historic significance in socio-cultural context using psychological and historiographic research methods and interpreted from established theories of psychology' (see Ponterotto, 2015, p. 379). Because psychobiography involves an extended and in-depth engagement with individual biographies (Van Niekerk, 2021), it provides an ideal method for studying how historical experiences influence individual career development.

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

A career is typically defined as a sequence of linked jobs in a particular time (Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023), while career development refers to 'an ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes, and tasks' (Greenhaus et al., 2019, p. 13). Popular theorists such as Super (1980) viewed career development as an ongoing journey with predetermined stages, and each with unique developmental duties to accomplish. In addition, studies in the area of career development highlight that factors, including exposure to racial bias, gender discrimination, poverty, ethnicity and a lack of access to career-related services impede the career aspirations of marginalised individuals (Pillay, 2022; Shumba & Naong, 2013). It is therefore imperative to examine the experiences of remarkable individuals who have encountered comparable circumstances to gain insight into how they navigated their career progression (Harry, 2023).

Numerous scholars have conducted psychobiographical accounts of extraordinary figures from around the world using career development theories (Harry, 2023; Mayer, 2019; Van Niekerk et al., 2019; Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023). However, because black women have historically been underrepresented and marginalised, few studies take into consideration research concentrating on their developmental journey. According to Harry and Van Niekerk (2023), traditional and patriarchal norms have historically hampered the professional development of black women. Therefore, exploring their career development through psychobiography becomes imperative to reveal how they constructed a meaningful professional identity in spite of these socio-cultural barriers.

Ramphele, as an extraordinary woman activist in South Africa, is a crucial subject for a psychobiography, given her career development and its relevance to industrial and organisational psychology research. Her life narrative, which unfolds in apartheid South Africa and is marked by gender stereotypes, severe impoverishment and limited opportunities (Leib, 2015; Ramphele, 2013), offers an in-depth contextual basis for examining how various factors and challenges shape one's career development. Industrial psychologists in South Africa have argued previously that the analysis and interpretation of the life of extraordinary individuals, as role models, can impact the development of careers and professionals (Mayer et al., 2021; Van Niekerk, 2021; Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023). According to Harry (2023):

Studying the career development of historically significant subjects from non-WEIRD contexts allows us to understand better how we can use career development theories in career counselling sessions with people from disadvantaged backgrounds. (p. 2)

Brief history of South Africa

In the past, South Africa was profoundly interwoven with the widespread issue of racial exclusion (Mhlauli et al., 2015).

This marked the separation between black people and white people, enforcing segregation in the use of transport, public facilities, education and many more (Mhlauli et al., 2015). The National Party ensured that the black majority were denied access to opportunities such as better education, career guidance and counselling (Pillay, 2020). During this time, women faced dual forms of oppression, as they had to navigate both racial and gender discrimination (Ramphele, 1995, 2013). Most black women were subjected to economic exploitation, limited rights because of cultural and patriarchal systems and gender expectations (Ramphele, 1995; Sideris, 1998). Hence, this study sought to examine the career experiences of a previously marginalised black woman and explore how she navigated her career development despite facing racial struggles.

Purpose and aim of the study

The purpose of this psychobiographical study is to conduct an in-depth examination of Ramphele's career development across the lifespan (Van Niekerk et al., 2019). This is based on the fact that psychobiographies apply psychological theories to understand the life and development of extraordinary individuals (Mayer, 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023b, 2024; Mayer et al., 2023), thereby exploring career development across the lifespan. This is especially of interest in post-apartheid South Africa, where unemployment remains high, democratic values have only recently been established, and psychobiographies support the understanding of this highly complex process of career development in a highly challenging context (Van Niekerk et al., 2019), particularly for women.

Theoretical lens: The career development model of Greenhaus et al.

In this study, the authors applied Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) career development model to examine Ramphele's career progression. The process of career development is inherently complex and can be explored and understood through theories of career development (Albien & Naidoo, 2018; Harry, 2023). These development theories provide a lens through which researchers can improve the understanding of progress and dynamics, individuals' career preferences, their career actions, contentment, decisions and motivations, alongside the environmental influences that affect career progress and choices (Mayer, 2019; Park-Taylor et al., 2021). Several important career development theories, such as Super's (1980) and Gottfredson's (1981, 1996) theory of circumscription and compromise, could have been applied; however, the researchers chose Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) model as it provides developmental stages and is frequently employed when examining individual career development over time.

Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) model allowed a systematic examination of the subject's career phases, transitions and contributing factors to her professional development. This model emphasises the integration of work, family and self-development dynamics (Greenhaus et al., 2019).

As individuals progress, external factors commonly influence and shape their career development paths (Harry, 2023; Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023). These include factors such as family background, gender, globalisation, demographics and business environment (Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023). The authors identified four key stages of career development: occupational and organisational choice (0–25 years), early career stage (25–40 years), middle career stage (40–55 years) and late career stage (55 years onwards) (Greenhaus et al., 2019).

Each stage is characterised by unique developmental tasks, which serve as significant milestones that individuals have to deal with at every career stage (Freedman & Van Niekerk, 2023; Mayer, 2019). Individuals must assess different occupations, develop an occupational choice, get the necessary education and obtain job offers during the first stage of career development (Greenhaus et al., 2019). Building on this, the early career stage involves individuals learning more about the job, rules and norms of the organisation, fitting in one's career choice, while increasing their skills and abilities (Greenhaus et al., 2019). During the middle career stage, studies assert that individuals reaffirm or modify their career aspirations (Greenhaus et al., 2019; Harry, 2023). The stage is characterised by the challenge of maintaining productivity levels, upgrading skills and coaching junior colleagues (Greenhaus et al., 2019; Mayer, 2019). Lastly, individuals in the late career stage tend to remain productive while preparing for effective retirement (Freedman & Van Niekerk, 2023; Greenhaus et al., 2019; Harry, 2023).

Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) stages are not strictly defined by age; instead, they represent general ranges and depend on the individual (Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023). Furthermore, the Greenhaus et al. (2019) model needs to be recognised as a Western model, which has been designed based on data from Western cultures and puts little emphasis on contextual influences. Despite this, Freedman and Van Niekerk (2023), Harry (2023), Mayer (2019), Van Niekerk and Freedman (2023) and Van Niekerk et al. (2019) have applied this model successfully from a psychobiographical point of view to study and reconstruct the lives of remarkable individuals.

Research design

Research approach and paradigm

Qualitative research addresses complex social phenomena, generating rich insights and human-centred understanding, connecting research to real-world issues and responding to rapid social change (Lim, 2024). For this psychobiographical study, an exploratory qualitative approach was selected to understand Ramphele's career development. Psychobiography adds to this approach by applying a selected psychological career development theory to enhance understanding of her life narrative across her lifespan (Mayer, 2019; Van Niekerk et al., 2019).

The research paradigm for this study was based on the interpretative hermeneutic research paradigm (Mayer, 2023a). Hermeneutics is described by Smith (2008, 2011) and Smith and Osborn (2008) as the theory and method of interpreting the meaning of texts. Interpretive hermeneutics considers reality as constructed through language and social interactions with others (McManus Holroyd, 2007). The suitability of this paradigm lies in its ability to enable the researchers to make sense of Ramphele's lived experiences and the social phenomena that influenced her developmental journey.

Setting roles and sampling

This psychobiographical study focused on a single case analysis (Fouché et al., 2023). The researchers made the first contact with Ramphele via email seeking her involvement, given that she is still alive and publicly engaged (M Ramphele, personal communication, 02 February 2024). Upon her consent, literature research and a semi-structured interview with the subject were conducted (M Ramphele, personal communication, 26 June 2024) to obtain a personal, in-depth insight into her career progress.

Considering her substantial contributions to the South African political arena, academia and society through development opportunities, Ramphele was purposefully selected as the focus of this study (Leib, 2015; Wolfe, 2023). Purposive sampling serves as a useful tool for researchers to include or exclude literature according to the specific requirements of the study (Snyder, 2019). Ramphele played a crucial role in various anti-apartheid movements alongside prominent figures, such as Steve Biko, in the *Black Consciousness Movement* in South Africa, advocating for the rights and empowerment of black South Africans (Ramphele, 1995, 1999). Her advocacy for equality, change, resolution of economic instability and participation in the liberation movement align with the principles of modern career development theories that place an emphasis on diversity and inclusion and overcoming institutional barriers, especially for women, in achieving career aspirations (Greenhaus et al., 2019). This connection made Ramphele an interesting subject.

Selecting a living subject allowed the researchers to access primary insights and clarify open questions through the interview and correspondence with the subject (M Ramphele, personal communication, 26 June 2024), which offers a real case example of an influential woman leader.

Data collection, processing, and analysis

Psychobiographers usually source the subject's biographical data from publicly available sources (Simonton, 2003). For this study, both primary and secondary sources were considered. The primary sources involved the subject's work, such as autobiographies (Ramphele, 1995, 1996, 2013), books (Ramphele, 1999) and a semi-structured interview with the subject (M Ramphele, personal communication,

26 June 2024). On the other hand, secondary data came from a biographical work by Leib (2015) called 'Mamphela Ramphela, a Biography' and an article by Wolfe (2023) called 'The Forgotten Women of South Africa: Mamphela Ramphela and her role in the anti-apartheid movement'. It is noteworthy that the majority of psychobiographies heavily rely on secondary data rather than interviews to examine the subject's life experiences. Consequently, the inclusion of an interview in this research represents a methodological breakthrough, offering primary insights and a more in-depth analysis of the subject's life and career trajectory. It facilitated a thorough examination of the subject's experiences, realities, opinions and a deeper understanding of factors not fully explored in her biographies and literature.

Alexander's (1988, 1990) strategies were employed for data categorisation, characterised by the approach of 'allowing the data to uncover itself' and 'questioning the data'. In doing so, we aimed to let themes and patterns emerge or uncover themselves naturally. Furthermore, we employed the theoretical model of Greenhaus et al. (2019) to direct the extraction and categorisation of data. For Ramphela's study, content analysis was then used to analyse data collected from both primary and secondary sources. This approach allowed us to systematically examine Ramphela's books, documented interviews and other relevant sources, facilitating a diverse and unbiased interpretation of her experiences. It involved following these steps: *familiarisation and immersion, theme construction, coding, elaboration and interpretation* (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Findings are reported as described by Schultz (2005) in a narrative way guided by selected theories.

Quality criteria

Ensuring the quality of a psychobiographical research endeavour lies in guaranteeing that the literature included accurately reflects the subject's genuine and true experiences (Bulut & Usman, 2021; Ponterotto, 2010). To ensure the study's trustworthiness, Guba's (1981) criteria of trustworthiness were employed. The criteria involved conforming to the four main principles: *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability*. To do so, we consulted diverse and reliable sources about Ramphela, such as her autobiographies (Ramphela, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2013) and documented secondary sources (Leib, 2015; Wolfe, 2023). We also incorporated clear report-writing strategies, ensuring a comprehensive account of the research procedure while upholding transparency (Ahmed, 2024; Creswell et al., 2016). These pillars served as important tools for the study, ensuring its confidence and validity.

Ethical considerations in researching a living subject

Ethical and legal considerations in psychobiography are deemed critical and have recently become more significant (Mayer, 2019; Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017, 2019). Ponterotto (2010) cautions that in the pursuit of qualitative research, it remains critical to consider the ethical dilemmas that can

arise because of the researcher's subjective bias and prolonged involvement with research subjects in their personal context. For this psychobiography, ethical considerations were carefully considered.

Firstly, the respectful treatment of information and the principle of non-maleficence, particularly because the subject of research is still living (Elms, 1994). Secondly, we requested and obtained consent from Dr Ramphela for participation in the study. Thirdly, only information accessible in the public domain and the interview were used for analysis (Leib, 2015; M Ramphela, personal communication, 26 June 2024; Ramphela, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2013; Wolfe, 2023). Fourthly, we handled the data with care, empathy and caution (Van Niekerk et al., 2019). Fifthly, a transparent interpretation of the data was adopted, enhancing the integrity and authenticity of the study (Van Niekerk et al., 2019). This was performed to further ensure the credibility and reproducibility of the study, while also acknowledging accountability (Guba, 1981). Finally, before the research study commenced, ethics clearance was acquired from the University of Johannesburg Research Ethics Committee, ensuring integrity and responsibility in scholarly ventures.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Johannesburg Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management Research Ethics Committee (No. IPPM-2024-857[M]).

Results

Ramphela's life experiences are structured chronologically according to the phases of career development (Greenhaus et al., 2019), which include *occupational and organisational choice, early career stage, middle career and late career*. This is to facilitate a logical flow and show how the subject's early experiences influenced her future development. Key experiences and events that played a role in her career advancements are highlighted and discussed.

Occupational and organisational choice (1947–1972)

Born on 28 December 1947, in the Northern Transvaal, Ramphela was raised by Pitsi Eliphaz Ramphela and Rangoato Rahab, who were primary school teachers (Ramphela, 1995, 1996). Ramphela was fortunate to be born into a family where both her parents were employed as teachers, resulting in a better level of privilege compared to many others (Ramphela, 2013). When Ramphela was 1 year old, the National Party won the elections and implemented its racist policies and ideologies (see Leib, 2015). Ramphela grew up during apartheid, and her career exploration was influenced by a variety of experiences and events, including living in rural areas, experiencing high levels of poverty and unemployment, gender discrimination, patriarchal systems and a lack of opportunities for the black community

(Leib, 2015; Wolfe, 2023). Apartheid was a time of racial segregation characterised by significant social and economic discrimination against non-white communities (Mhlauli et al., 2015; Pillay, 2020). Apartheid ideologies impacted Ramphele's environment as she was growing up, which also affected the types of occupations that were seen as suitable or accessible for black women (Ramphele, 1996, 2013). The economic constraints that Greenhaus et al. (2019) identify as significant factors likely influenced her occupational image and career pathway. Her life, therefore, was influenced by socioeconomic and socio-cultural factors, her characteristics and her strong resilience (Ramphele, 1995).

Having the privilege of being raised in a household that placed a strong emphasis on education, Ramphele was inspired to excel in her studies (Ramphele, 1995, 2013). While she was growing up, her father held a strong belief that education was essential to a child's growth and a means of escaping poverty (Ramphele, 1996). The presence of her father at home, along with his leadership roles as a school principal and church figure (Leib, 2015), reinforced the values of accountability and the importance of education, which were significant traits in her later career behaviour. Ramphele (1996) noted that she inherited her parents' intelligence and hard work ethic. Greenhaus et al. (2019) point out that environmental influences such as family and early role models significantly shape one's occupational image. As such, Ramphele's parents laid a solid foundation by emphasising academic achievement and instilling in her a belief that education is essential for both personal success and societal transformation. Ramphele's mother was a major influence on the direction of her life and profession and was someone she was close to throughout her youth (Leib, 2015; Ramphele, 1995, 2013). Ramphele (1995, 1996, 2013) states that her mother taught her to defy social standards and instilled in her the principles of independence. Ramphele learned from her mother, who 'resisted the authoritarian edicts of her father-in-law and demanded respect from her brothers-in-law' (Leib, 2015, p. 3). These encounters with her mother likely established a foundation for her strong later demonstration of courage, assertiveness, resistance to oppression and the agency to seek transformation, aligning with Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) proposal that early socialisations shape an individual's career progression.

Ramphele found herself immersed in the realm of politics at a young age (Ramphele, 1999). Her political interest was influenced by various factors, including the expulsion from school of her sister, Mashadi, for battling the country's transition to a republic in 1961, her parents' conversation about her uncle's arrest, and observing a critical altercation involving the prejudiced 'Dutch Reform Church Pastor' and the inhabitants of Kranspoort in 1955, all of which contributed significantly to her political awakening (Leib, 2015; Ramphele, 1999). Psychologically, these experiences influenced her self-concept and inspired her to embark on a career in activism and social transformation (Greenhaus et al., 2019). Her readiness to speak up about these difficulties revealed an

early awareness of their importance and the character attributes that most likely shaped her activism career (Ramphele, 1995, 2013). Her strong critique further helped her to develop a clear sense of career goals in politics.

By the age of 14, Ramphele embarked on her educational journey at Bethesda, an esteemed boarding institution known for its academic rigour and nurturing environment (Leib, 2015). She describes the institution as mediocre, designed to undermine African children's abilities and promote black inferiority (Ramphele, 2013). The challenges she faced included *huiswerk*, a practice where non-white students performed domestic tasks for white staff, inadequate food quality and pervasive segregation (Leib, 2015). Ramphele also recalled the 'us and them' behaviour of white educators, highlighting the extent of racial division (Leib, 2015). Because of her quest to challenge the status quo, Ramphele (1996) brought attention to inadequate meals and unpleasant social encounters using a school letter assignment.

The experiences Ramphele faced at Bethesda during her formative years had a profound impact on her career pathway and choices (Leib, 2015). The living circumstances served as a reminder of the difficulties marginalised black communities endure, ultimately developing a career identity grounded in social justice. These challenges influenced her aspirations for a better educational environment and transformation (Leib, 2015). As per Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) prediction, the struggles likely channelled, nurtured and developed her desired early career pathway of challenging the status quo and fighting for equality. Ramphele's navigation of the discriminatory environments brought awareness of her future career path and who she was meant to be (Ramphele, 1996, 2013). Being obligated to perform activities that dehumanised her likely inspired her later commitment to activism, empowerment and pursuing more knowledge to break free from societal inequality.

For her senior year in 1964, she attended Setotlwane Secondary School, where she was one of only two female class members (Ramphele, 1996). Arguably, her determination to defy gender stereotypes was likely reinforced by attending a male-dominated school, ultimately enhancing her childhood identity to fight against societal expectations (Leib, 2015; Ramphele, 1995, 1996, 2013). On finishing her secondary education in 1966, Ramphele decided to commence pre-medical studies the following year at the University of the North (Wolfe, 2023). Ramphele mentions how she encountered numerous obstacles along her journey towards a medical career (Leib, 2015). Regrettably, a few months after she registered for her pre-medical studies in 1967, Ramphele lost her father, who had been ill since 1963 (Ramphele, 1996). Her father's loss might have had a significant effect on her career development, possibly escalating her sense of economic vulnerability and emotional drive for success. As an economically disadvantaged black woman lacking access to resources for tertiary education (Leib, 2015), Ramphele did not meet the required due date to submit her admission form

for the medical college, now known as the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Ramphela, 1995, 1999). In Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) view, such encounters were essential in shaping an occupational image.

Financial constraints posed another significant hurdle in her path (M Ramphela, personal communication, 26 June 2024). However, leveraging her academic aptitude and unwavering commitment, she managed to conquer these challenges (Ramphela, 1999). Wolfe (2023) reports that in 1968, 1 year later, she gained admission to study medicine at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, which, at that time, stood as the sole medical school that allowed 'non-white' pupils to enter without preceding official government consent. Her acceptance into an unfamiliar programme for black people, particularly women, because of patriarchal systems, emphasises the severe restrictions imposed on the 'non-whites' career development and her remarkable academic progression instilled by her father (Leib, 2015; Ramphela, 1995, 2013). The motivation for studying medicine stemmed from her belief that it could provide her with the utmost freedom (Leib, 2015). As Ramphela herself stated:

It was not the desire to serve which influenced my career choice, but the passion for freedom to be my own mistress in a society in which being Black, and a woman defined the boundaries within which one could legitimately operate. (Leib, 2015, p. 2)

According to the principles of Greenhaus et al. (2019), Ramphela decided to study medicine driven by her desire for freedom. This stage is characterised by individuals making crucial decisions regarding their education and career pathways (Greenhaus et al., 2019). Arguably, Ramphela's decision to study medicine was influenced by her deep-seated curiosity to challenge existing gender stereotypes and address issues of inequality (Leib, 2015). Her choice to pursue medicine emphasised her capacity for self-determination and independence by choosing a path that defied traditional expectations (Greenhaus et al., 2019). It reflects her strategic decision to pursue a profession that could empower and offer her a degree of autonomy in a highly restrictive society (Ramphela, 1995). Her decision to study medicine was further challenged by various factors such as financial constraints, a lack of relevant information and resources and gender-related issues (Leib, 2015).

Contrary to societal expectations, Ramphela's decision to study medicine was hardly accepted by other people, her father included (Ramphela, 1996). He suggested a different career path to generate money quickly and assist her mother and siblings (Ramphela, 1995, 1996). Similarly, Dominee Van der Merwe, a Dutch Reform Church Pastor, warned that a disadvantaged black woman could not pursue such a career trajectory (Leib, 2015; Ramphela, 1996), highlighting entrenched racial and gender biases prevailing in society. However, despite adversity, her career discovery continued (Greenhaus et al., 2019). Her organisational entry became most visible and dominant during her medical studies as she engaged deeply in activism (Greenhaus et al., 2019).

During a conversation with Ramphela, she mentioned how the societal expectations and the limitations black people had during apartheid influenced her career trajectories (M Ramphela, personal communication, 26 June 2024). Ramphela stated:

If I hadn't grown up during apartheid in South Africa where Black people, generally, were not able to access certain careers, my preferred career would have been to be a chemist, because I did physical science and I love chemistry so much. I said to my teacher, I want to study chemistry, you know, all the way to a PhD. He said I'm afraid to tell you that as a black person, there are no career prospects for you in this country, in chemistry. So, he's the one who advised me that you better do medicine because that way you can be able to get indirectly to science. (M Ramphela, personal communication, 26 June 2024)

Ramphela's career pathway was influenced by the apartheid regime, which imposed severe restrictions on what she could and could not study. Ramphela initially aspired to be a chemist, but because of inequality, the black majority was unable to pursue such careers (M. Ramphela, personal communication, 26 June 2024). This systematic exclusion had a tremendous impact on her career aspirations, indicating how socio-political forces influenced her career paths.

Early career stage (1972–1987)

Ramphela (1996) reveals that through her engagement with activism, she became increasingly confident and eventually began to understand the culture of public speaking. Her capacity to suggest innovative ideas during meetings further developed her career in activism (Ramphela, 1995, 2013). These characteristics align with the ideas of Greenhaus et al. (2019), who posit that individuals during this stage of development are likely to increase their competence. Furthermore, Ramphela's ability to use rules and procedures (Ramphela, 1995, 2013) also supports Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) contention that individuals, by this time, learn organisational rules and norms, allowing them to navigate their career journey. In other words, this implies that Ramphela not only prioritised establishing herself within her activist career, but also grounded the engagements with communities and colleagues during political meetings by the values and expectations of being a leader (Ramphela, 1995, 1999, 2013).

During her late twenties, Ramphela was fitting into her chosen careers in medicine and activism, as she was advancing in her professional training as a medical doctor and at the same time committing to societal emancipation (Ramphela, 1995, 1996, 2013). Greenhaus et al. (2019) state that individuals at this stage often embark on the journey of pursuing their dreams. Similar can be observed with Ramphela's life, given her passion for challenging the status quo and her continued commitment to serving a meaningful purpose despite adversity (Ramphela, 1995). Despite facing restrictions and banning orders in the Naphuno district of Tzaneen in Limpopo, Ramphela

remained firm in pursuing her activism work while improving the economy of Lenyenye (Leib, 2015). Ramphele demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm, growth and goal-oriented behaviour even while being detained in Tzaneen, indicating the pursuit of her dreams (Leib, 2013; Ramphele, 2013; Wolfe, 2023).

Ramphele encountered several setbacks in her career journey. She was deeply affected by the loss of her loved one, Steve Biko, who faced banning orders and detention, while she had to relocate to an unfamiliar place in Tzaneen (Ramphele, 1996). Biko's death, according to Ramphele, became an emotional turmoil, ultimately influencing her to continue with their total liberation mission despite facing difficulties (M Ramphele, personal communication, 26 June 2024). These challenges significantly tested her resilience and adaptability in her chosen career as an activist (Leib, 2015; Ramphele, 2013), aligning with Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) assertion that individuals have to navigate uncertainties that exist in their profession and business environment. Ramphele achieved the principle of 'making it' as suggested by Greenhaus et al. (2019), given her continued progression in serving the marginalised black community (for example, in establishing a clinic) and her consistency despite detention and restrictions (Ramphele, 1996).

Ramphele (1999) discusses how she sought solace in her developmental journey amid personal emotional turmoil. Living under the banning order for 7 years, she spearheaded the creation of the Ithuseng Community Health Centre while pursuing additional educational opportunities (Ramphele, 1999). Ramphele managed to discover and pursue other avenues within her career development. Despite challenges, she successfully attained a Bachelor of Commerce degree, alongside diplomas in tropical hygiene and public health (Leib, 2015). In the community of Lenyenye, Ramphele also took on the roles of establishing a daycare centre, implementing a literacy programme and initiating a communal vegetable garden (Ramphele, 2013). Ramphele (2013) tested new career pathways by branching into academia. Not only did she explore new career opportunities, but she also reinforced her commitment to social justice and equity in her newly discovered career trajectory as an academic (Leib, 2015). In doing so, she addressed the issues of patriarchy and gender stereotype and advocated for an inclusive environment within the field of academia, reflecting her deep-rooted abilities for equality and activism (Leib, 2015; Ramphele, 1995, 2013).

Middle career stage (1987–2002)

Ramphele modified her career by stopping practising as a medical doctor in 1988 to invest more time in higher education (Ramphele, 1995, 2013). However, she did not stop practising her activism and pursuit of equality in her daily life and activities, whether in her academic space or during international visits (Ramphele, 1996). Her continued activism underscored a lifelong commitment and symbolised important values in her professional life

(Ramphele, 1995). Greenhaus et al. (2019) describe this commitment and consistency as reappraising the life structure that guided one's early career exploration. It is a way of emphasising the importance of a career trajectory and reminding the public that this dream matters. She adjusted her career to maintain career satisfaction, productivity and personal fulfilment, while also aligning her career pathway with evolving aspirations and societal demands (Greenhaus et al., 2019).

Ramphele's career in medicine was not intended to serve others, but rather stood as a strategic pathway to achieving freedom. Her decision to study medicine was a means to an end, which can be seen as a pragmatic choice to equip herself with the necessary skills and credentials to navigate the apartheid regime and strive for total liberation. The statement, 'It was not the desire to serve which influenced my career choice, but the passion for freedom to be my own mistress' (Leib, 2015, p. 2), represents the idea that a larger purpose or goal was driving her career pathway. In essence, her medical and social activism career was motivated by her passion to achieve freedom. However, a significant question remains unanswered, and this is whether Ramphele finally stopped her career in medicine because her initial professional goals had been accomplished.

In 1991, Ramphele embarked on a new path as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and later became Vice-Chancellor in 1996, marking the first time that a black woman had assumed this role (IREXdc, 2018; Ramphele, 1996). According to Ramphele (as cited in Leib, 2015), her focus as one of the Deputy VCs was to foster equality. Her commitment to equity included not only black people and white people; it went beyond class and gender (Leib, 2015). She was to remain productive in this academic career trajectory, ensuring an environment where inclusivity is maintained (Greenhaus et al., 2019). Throughout her academic career, she accomplished significant milestones such as establishing an inclusive academic environment and moving her career to greater heights (Leib, 2015).

However, there was criticism of her decision to join UCT, highlighting that her decision to join the institution was going too far (Ramphele, 2013). Considering UCT's history of being predominantly occupied by white individuals and being characterised by racism and discrimination, it was assumed that Ramphele was allowing herself to be used by white liberals (eNCA, 2019; SABC News, 2018). These perceptions troubled her at times; however, she remained convinced in her decision to join the organisation, despite the negative talks (Ramphele, 2013). This highlights her independent decision to shape her career path. Ramphele knew that her decision to join the organisation was crucial for promoting equality and ensuring that the black majority had access to education (Ramphele, 2013).

A few years later, Ramphele developed intentions to leave the institution as the Vice-Chancellor (VC) (Ramphele, 2013).

However, when she discussed her decision to resign with Mandela, he suggested that she should become the VC at the university (Ramphele, 1995, 2013). She aimed at developing models of transformation for UCT while battling with the fact that she had never been obligated or instructed to do something before (Ramphele, 2013). Ramphele decided to remain in the position, based on Mandela's suggestion (Ramphele, 2013).

Late career stage (2002 onwards)

Ramphele (2013, p. 238) writes: 'My professional life has been marked by real enjoyment. I have never had the misfortune, after my internship period, of not enjoying my work'. This highlights a career trajectory marked by contentment and deeply aligns with her values and interests, reflecting a greater sense of fulfilment in her career development. The statement describes her career and emphasises the roles and opportunities she has taken, which resonate with her personal preferences. Greenhaus et al. (2007) anticipate that individuals who find contentment in their work are less likely to retire, as Ramphele. In 2004, Ramphele achieved the prestigious position of being graded 55th among the Top 100 Great South Africans, a testament to her enduring impact and career. Her ongoing participation in senior leadership roles corresponds with the traits that Greenhaus et al. (2019) outline for this phase of career development beyond retirement age.

After spending time abroad, Ramphele decided to return to South Africa in 2004 to fulfil another dream: to read, write and travel (Ramphele, 2013). At that time, Ramphele felt she had served her purpose and was ready to retire. Greenhaus et al. (2007) assert that individuals during this stage often retire, although some consider embarking on new career avenues. Similarly, just as she was planning to retire, Ramphele began to receive many invitations to sit on various boards in South Africa, such as Medi Clinic Holdings, Eduloan and others (Ramphele, 2013). For Ramphele, retirement did not signal stepping away from professional activities and development; instead, it marked the beginning of new endeavours and the refinement of existing trajectories (Greenhaus et al., 2019), such as activism. This can be linked to Greenhaus et al.'s (2007, p. 238) statement that 'employees who hold high-status jobs are less inclined to retire', particularly as she was portrayed as an extraordinary individual with high status. Ramphele assumed high positions and contributed further to the development of the country.

She was invited to lead the board of the Technology Innovation Agency in 2008 and embarked on this role to solve existing problems (Ramphele, 2013). This transition demonstrates the benefits of career adaptability, which is the capacity to alter one's career trajectory in response to changing external conditions, the ability to cope with current or future challenges and increased expectations. The need to adjust to shifting social context, self-confidence and curiosity are a few of the reasons why individuals

thrive in changing careers, according to practitioners (Rasyidi et al., 2021).

Greenhaus et al. (2019) described how older people often encounter societal biases and challenges as they age. In 2014, Ramphele was criticised by her party members, who assumed that she had betrayed them by initiating the formation of a political party while being part of the Democratic Alliance (DA) (BusinessLive, 2014; News24, 2014; Ramphele, 2013). Again, the public accused her of allowing herself to be controlled by white liberals (M Ramphele, personal communication, 26 June 2024; Ramphele, 2013). However, she moved ahead and prepared for a future that prioritises the interests of the community (News24, 2014). In 2014, Ramphele refused to stand as the DA presidential candidate; instead, she continued with her political party, Agang SA, which translates to 'let's build South Africa' (SABC News, 2021). The party aimed to serve several objectives for the country, including establishing a corruption-free government, achieving excellence in education, healthcare and policing, restoring trust between citizens and their leaders, and making the country a better place that benefits everyone (Ramphele, 2013).

Initially, Ramphele intended to hand the party over to the younger generation, believing that her time to revisit political activism had passed (Ramphele, 2013). However, her son Hlumelo emphasised her continued importance in leadership, mentioning that the new generation was not battle-ready (Ramphele, 2013). Ramphele then heeded her son's advice and decided to revisit her early life career choice (Ramphele, 2013). In this way, Hlumelo influenced his mother's career trajectory, shifting her from a potential political withdrawal to a renewed dedication. He enhanced and reaffirmed Ramphele's long-lasting career in activism, aligning with Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) claim that initial occupational choices can reappear in one's lifetime. Despite adversity and ageing, Ramphele continues to flourish and remain productive in her career trajectory. Currently, she serves on various boards and foundations, such as being the co-founder and global ambassador of ReimagineSA, chair of the Desmond Tutu IP Trust and more (IREXdc, 2018). Table 1 highlights Ramphele's career development timeline over the lifespan.

TABLE 1: Ramphele's career development timeline.

Activity or event	Year(s)
Born in Kranspoort	1947
Political awakening	1955
Bethesda Normal College	1961
Medical career	1968
Activism career	1970s
Establishing community health centres (Zinyoka and Lenyeny)	1975–1977
Advanced education (further qualifications)	1982–1991
Academic career (UCT Deputy VC)	1991
UCT Vice-Chancellor	1996
World Bank career	2000
Political career (DA and AgangSA)	2013–2014
Board member or recent careers	1990s–present

UCT, University of Cape Town; VC, Vice-Chancellor; DA, Democratic Alliance; SA, South Africa.

Conclusion

Recommendations

This study explored Ramphela's career trajectory across her lifetime, using Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) model of career development. Although not fully, Ramphela progressed through the stages proposed by Greenhaus et al. (2019). The findings show that her career development was influenced by a number of factors. Such factors involve the influence of apartheid laws, social, familial and cultural factors, personal loss, economic challenges, activism and academic pursuit, criticisms and resilience and independent thinking. The present study contributes to theory building in industrial and organisational psychology through incorporating culturally nuanced perspectives into a Western career development model. It informs psychology practitioners to improve career models to cater to previously marginalised individuals, particularly women, thereby enabling industrial and organisational psychologists to better serve the career development needs and expectations of employees from different ethnicities. For future research, the authors recommend using other career development models (e.g., Super 1980) to study the life histories of prominent figures. Further research is required to understand how prominent figures navigate their often-unusual careers.

Limitations

Psychobiographies frequently fall short because of the narrow emphasis on individual single case studies. Van Niekerk et al. (2019) explained that this limits the generalisability of the research findings. However, the authors thus focus on the in-depth exploration of a single life, not on the generalisability of the findings. In addition, applying the Greenhaus et al.'s (2019) model alone might not fully account for the nuances and complexities of Ramphela's career trajectory, which could result in a limitation of the study. Finally, a potential limitation could be the authors' biases (Van Niekerk et al., 2019).

Acknowledgements

We thank Dr. Mamphela Ramphela for agreeing on the study and for the interview with her.

Further, we would like to thank the University of Johannesburg for supporting us in covering the journal's publishing fee.

This article is partially based on research originally conducted as part of P.R.R.'s master's study entitled, 'Dr Mamphela Ramphela: A Psychobiographical Exploration of a Woman Leader in South Africa', submitted to the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management (IPPM), University of Johannesburg in 2024. The dissertation was supervised by Professor Claude-Hélène Mayer and focused on researching the life of the subject. This article places specific focus on the career development of the subject.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

P.R.R. did the research formulation, subject selection, writing up of the article and analysis. C.-H.M. reviewed and edited the work, supervised, contributed to the methodology, covered the financial costs, validated and revised the article to fit publication.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, P.R.R., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Ahmed, S.K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, 100051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gmedi.2024.100051>
- Albien, A.J., & Naidoo, A.V. (2018). Barriers and enablers for career development among marginalised South African youth. In V. Cohen-Scali, J. Rossier, & L. Nota (Eds.), *New perspectives on career counselling and guidance in Europe* (pp. 147–164). Springer.
- Alexander, I.E. (1988). Personality, psychological assessment, and psychobiography. *Journal of Personality*, 56(1), 265–294. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1988.tb00469.x>
- Alexander, I.E. (1990). *Personology: Method and content in personality assessment and psychobiography*. Duke University Press.
- Bulut, S., & Usman, A.C. (2021). Psychobiography: Understanding concepts, steps, and procedures in the study of lives. *Problems of Psychology in the 21st Century*, 15(1), 7–17. <https://doi.org/10.33225/ppc/21.15.07>
- BusinessLive. (2014). *Agang SA members willing to give Ramphela 'chance' to explain*. YouTube. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/_sBc02elcXU
- Creswell, J.W., Ebersöhn, L., Eloff, I., Ferreira, R., Ivankova, N.V., Jansen, J.D., Nieuwenhuis, J., Pietersen, J., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2016). *First steps in research* (2nd ed.). Van Schaik.
- Elms, A. (1994). *Uncovering lives: The uneasy alliance of biography and psychology*. Oxford University Press.
- eNCA. (2019). *Racism entrenched at UCT according to report*. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/YEXST2sZXX4>
- Fouché, P.J., Labuscagne, W., & Naidoo, P. (2023). Zenzile Miriam Makeba: A psychobiography of 'Mama Africa' from an integrated African psychology perspective. In C.H. Mayer, R. Van Niekerk, J.P. Fouché, & J.G. Ponterotto (Eds.), *Beyond WEIRD: Psychobiography in times of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 51–65). Springer.
- Freedman, G., & Van Niekerk, R. (2023). Defying the odds: A psychobiographical study of Nonkululeko Gobodo's career development. In C.H. Mayer, R. Van Niekerk, J.P. Fouché, & J.G. Ponterotto (Eds.), *Beyond WEIRD: Psychobiography in times of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 15–31). Springer.
- Gottfredson, L.S. (1981). Circumscription and compromise: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 28(6), 545–579. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.28.6.545>

- Gottfredson, L.S. (1996). Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise. In D. Brown, L. Brooks, & Associates (Eds.), *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary approaches to practice* (3rd ed., pp. 179–232). Jossey-Bass.
- Greenhaus, J.H., Callanan, G.A., & Godschalk, V.M. (2007). *Career management* (3rd ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Greenhaus, J.H., Callanan, G.A., & Godschalk, V.M. (2019). *Career management for life* (5th ed.). Routledge.
- Guba, E.G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal*, 29, 75–91. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02766777>
- Harry, T.T. (2023). Morgan Richard Tsvangirai's career development from a psychobiographical approach. *African Journal of Career Development*, 5(1), 11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v5i1.101>
- Harry, T.T., & Van Niekerk, R. (2023). Searching for meaning in the life of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf: A call to meaningful responses to tragedies. *Journal for Person-Oriented Research*, 9(2), 93–103. <https://doi.org/10.17505/jpor.2023.25815>
- IREXdc. (2018). *In conversation with Dr. Mamphele Ramphele*. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/SXEA3E9AbQI>
- Leib, B. (2015). *Mamphele Ramphele, a biography*. Women in World History Curriculum.
- Lim, W.M. (2024). What is qualitative research? An overview and guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2), 199–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Mayer, C.H. (2019). An early calling, a late career: Psychobiographic investigations into Paulo Coelho's career development. In C.H. Mayer, & Z. Kovary (Eds.), *New trends in psychobiography* (pp. 245–264). Springer.
- Mayer, C.H. (2022). Sheik Zayed in psychobiography: A transformational intercultural competent leader. In J. Margues, & S. Dhiman (Eds.), *Leading with diversity, equity, and inclusion: Approaches, practices and cases for integral leadership strategy* (pp. 413–429). Springer International Publishing. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/bookseries/16360>
- Mayer, C.H. (2023a). Angela Merkel and Graça Machel: The comparative heroine's journeys of two women leaders beyond WEIRD. In C.H. Mayer, R. Van Niekerk, P.J.P. Fouché, & J.G. Ponterotto (Eds.), *Beyond WEIRD: Psychobiography in times of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 265–286). Springer International.
- Mayer, C.H. (2023b). Graça Simbine Machel: A psychobiography of an ultra-committed change-maker and global activist. In C.H. Mayer, R. Van Niekerk, P.J.P. Fouché, & J.G. Ponterotto (Eds.), *Beyond WEIRD: Psychobiography in times of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 117–135). Springer International.
- Mayer, C.H. (2024). The life and political leadership of Graça Machel. *Psychobiography and Qualitative Psychology*, 13, 126–154.
- Mayer, C.H., & Kovary, Z. (Eds.). (2019). *New trends in psychobiography*. Springer.
- Mayer, C. H., Van Niekerk, R., Fouché, P.J., & Ponterotto, J. (Eds.). (2023). *Beyond WEIRD: Psychobiography in times of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives*. Springer.
- Mayer, C.H., Van Niekerk, R., & Wannenburg, N. (2021). Ferdinand Karl Piëch: A psychobiography of a ruthless manager and ingenious engineer. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 671243. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.671243>
- McManus Holroyd, A.E. (2007). Interpretive hermeneutic phenomenology: Clarifying understanding. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 7(2), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20797222.2007.11433946>
- Mhlauli, M.B., Salani, E., & Mokotedi, R. (2015). Understanding apartheid in South Africa through the racial contract. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 5(4), 203–219. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.1/2015.5.4/1.4.203.209>
- News24. (2014). *Mamphele Ramphele on the future of Agang SA*. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/MQtq1AYNOPO>
- Park-Taylor, J., Reynolds (Taewon Choi), J.D., Jackson, M.A., & Ponterotto, J.G. (2021). Careerography in career counseling practice, research, and training. *Journal of Career Development*, 48(1), 33–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845319867423>
- Pillay, A.L. (2020). Prioritising career guidance and development services in post-apartheid South Africa. *African Journal of Career Development*, 2(1), a9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v2i1.9>
- Pillay, I. (2022). Race and gender in the evolution of career decision-making: A psycho-anthropological review. *African Journal of Career Development*, 4(1), 53. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v4i1.53>
- Ponterotto, J.G. (2010). Qualitative research in multicultural psychology: Philosophical underpinnings, popular approaches, and ethical considerations. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 16(4), 581–589. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012051>
- Ponterotto, J.G. (2015). Psychobiography in psychology: Past, present, and future. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 25(5), 379–389. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2015.1101267>
- Ponterotto J.G., & Reynolds J.D. (2017). Ethical and legal considerations in psychobiography. *American Psychologist*, 72(5), 446–458. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000047>
- Ponterotto, J.G., & Reynolds, J.D. (2019). An ethics guide to psychobiography: A best practice model. In C.H. Mayer, & Z. Kovary (Eds.), *New trends in psychobiography* (pp. 55–78). Springer.
- Ramphele, M. (1995). *Mamphele Ramphele: A life* (1st ed.). David Philip Publishers.
- Ramphele, M. (1996). *Mamphele Ramphele: A life* (2nd ed.). David Philip Publishers.
- Ramphele, M. (1999). *Across boundaries: The journey of a South African woman leader*. Feminist Press at CUNY.
- Ramphele, M. (2013). *A passion for freedom*. Tafelberg.
- Rasyidi, S.N.A., Akhmad, S.N., Sudrajat, D., & Nadhirah, N.A. (2021). The career adaptability among young adulthood: A systematic literature review. *ProGCounts: Journal of Professionals in Guidance and Counseling*, 2(1), 14–19. <https://doi.org/10.21831/progcounts.v2i1.39472>
- SABC News. (2018). *UCT's BAC staged a picket against alleged racism*. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/Eymi-oQGEV0>
- SABC News. (2021). Political party: Agang SA. *Sabc News*. Retrieved from <https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/political-party-agang-sa/>
- Schultz, W.T. (2005). Introducing psychobiography. In W.T. Schultz (Ed.), *Handbook of psychobiography* (pp. 3–18). Oxford University Press.
- Shumba, A., & Naong, M. (2013). The influence of family income on students' career choice at universities of technology. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 27(4), 1021–1037. <https://doi.org/10.20853/27-4-277>
- Sideris, T. (1998). Women and apartheid: Collective trauma and social reconstruction. *The Way*, 80–92.
- Simonton, D.K. (2003). Qualitative and quantitative analyses of historical data. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 54, 617–640. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.54.101601.145034>
- Smith, J.A. (2008). *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. Sage.
- Smith, J.A. (2011). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology Review*, 5(1), 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17437199.2010.510659>
- Smith, J.A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to methods* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 104(1), 333–339. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>
- Super, D.E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 16(3), 282–298. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(80\)90056-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(80)90056-1)
- Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Kelly, K. (2006). First steps in qualitative data analysis. In M. Terre Blanche, K. Durrheim, & D. Painter (Eds.), *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences* (pp. 321–344). University of Cape Town Press.
- Van Niekerk, R. (2021). *Psychobiographical perspectives on the development and manifestation of extraordinary human achievements*. Inaugural Lecture. Nelson Mandela University.
- Van Niekerk, R., & Freedman, G. (2023). The career development of Albertina Sisulu. In C.H. Mayer, R. Van Niekerk, P.J. Fouché, & J.G. Ponterotto (Eds.), *Beyond WEIRD: Psychobiography in times of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives* (pp. 33–49). Springer.
- Van Niekerk, R., Prenter, T., & Fouché, J. P. (2019). Doing psychobiography: The case of Christiaan Barnard. In S. Laher, A. Fynn, & S. Kramer (Eds.), *Transforming research methods in the social sciences: Case studies from South Africa* (pp. 168–185). Wits University Press.
- Wolfe, E. (2023). *The forgotten women of South Africa: Mamphele Ramphele and her role in the anti-apartheid movement*. Retrieved from <https://scarab.bates.edu/honortheses/422>