“Be the change that you want to see in the world”

Mahatma Gandhi

Mahatma Gandhi: A Psychobiographical Study

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ABSTRACT

The study is of a psychobiographical nature, employing a psychological theory as a paradigm within which to uncover the narrative of an individual’s life. There are relatively few studies of this nature, particularly with a South African focus. The study applied a qualitative psychobiographical research method which aimed to describe Mahatma Gandhi’s psychological development according to Erik Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory. Mohandas Karamchund Gandhi or Mahatma Gandhi as he was generally known was a major political and spiritual leader. Although much has been written on his life, a psychobiography has not yet been written. He was chosen as the research subject through purposive sampling on the basis of interest value, uniqueness and significance of his life. The data collection and analysis was conducted according to Yin’s (1994) ‘analytic generalization’ which incorporated Erikson’s theory of psychosocial stages. Alexander’s (1988) nine proposed guidelines assisted in the process of data analysis. The study concluded that Gandhi had attained the ego virtues of **hope**, **will**,** purpose**, **competence**, **fidelity love**, **care** and **wisdom** as proposed by Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory within the delineated age frame.

Key Concepts: Psychobiography, Mahatma Gandhi, Erik Erikson, case study, psychosocial development
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 Chapter Preview

This introductory chapter provides a general orientation to the research presented. The research problem is stated and the importance as well as aims of the study is described. An overview of the chapters in this study will conclude this chapter.

1.2 General Orientation to the Research Study

In this study the researcher explored and described the personality development of Mahatma Gandhi throughout his entire lifespan using Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory. The research conducted for this study is classified as a psychobiographical case study. This involved the systematic use of Erikson’s (1950) theory to distinguish, transform and reconstruct the life history of Mahatma Gandhi into a coherent and illuminating account that represents his psychological development through life. The researcher took a qualitative approach in collecting the life history material. These materials included books, a movie based on the life of Mahatma Gandhi as well as journal articles.

1.3 Problem Statement

Psychobiography as a research approach has been neglected in the past even though many psychological theories can be implemented, tested and further developed with this approach. This may be due to several factors, including not being exposed to psychobiographical research as a method at both graduate and undergraduate levels (Runyan, 1988a). However, this has
changed in the past few decades as this approach has gained popularity in the social sciences and in psychology in particular (McAdams, 2000; Runyan, 1982).

According to Elms (1994), psychobiography is not merely a way of doing biography but rather a way of doing psychology. He acknowledged that psychologists have much to learn from continually looking at one entire human being or one life at a time. Elms also affirmed that psychologists need to take responsibility with regard to making meaningful contributions towards psychobiography which will help in maintaining a high standard of work in the field. This, as well as the following, serves as possible motivating factors in adopting a psychobiographical approach:

- The researcher is able to accomplish a high level of consensual validation that is outside the possibilities of clinical case studies (Carlson, 1988).
- The researcher is able to trace human development in ways beyond the extent of the best longitudinal research (Carlson, 1988).
- By studying the life story of another individual, the researcher is given the opportunity to conduct extensive self exploration (Elms, 1994).
- Life history material allows for a detailed reflection of a variety of socio-historical contexts (Carlson, 1988). This is particularly relevant to the study of South African figures from the socio-historical context of the ‘apartheid’ period within the current ‘post-apartheid’ atmosphere of reconciliation.

Criticisms against psychobiographical research concern the lack of generalizability and subjective methodology (Roberts, 2002). Psychobiographies conduct individual accounts of life experiences within the contemporary cultural and structural settings, and have the important
merit of aiding the task of understanding major social shifts, by including how new experiences are interpreted by individuals within families, small groups and institutions (Roberts, 2002). It is for this reason, as well as for his courage, values and uniqueness, that the researcher has selected Mahatma Gandhi as a suitable psychobiographical case. Also, a literature search revealed that no previous psychobiography on Mahatma Gandhi, within Erikson’s framework of personality development, has been undertaken to date. Erikson found Gandhi’s life to be fascinating and took a psycho-historical approach when writing *Gandhi’s Truth*. In this book, he mentioned particular aspects of his theory but did not attempt to fully explain Gandhi’s personality development within his Psychosocial Developmental Theory.

Mahatma Gandhi is a monumental figure, not only in South Africa, but to the rest of the world. He was a major political and spiritual leader of India and the Indian independence movement (Nanda, 1987). Assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns for the alleviation of poverty, for the liberation of women, for brotherhood amongst different religious and ethnic groups, caste discrimination, and for the economic self-sufficiency of the nation, but above all for *Swaraj*—the independence of India from foreign domination (Gandhi, 1962). Gandhi was the pioneer of *Satyagraha* (a philosophy that is largely concerned with truth and non-violent resistance) which led India to independence and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world (Nanda, 1987).

The researcher will utilize Erik Erikson’s (1950) stages of psychosocial development in order to gain insight into Mahatma Gandhi’s personality development.

**1.4 Aims of the Study**

The research question underpinning this study entails exploring the life of Mahatma Gandhi in terms of a psycho-social framework. The researcher poses a question regarding Mahatma
Gandhi’s personality development; with special reference to the manner in which he was able develop within a psycho-social framework. Therefore the primary aim of this study is to explore and describe the personality development of Mahatma Gandhi in terms of Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Development Theory. The objective is to explore Mahatma Gandhi’s personality development, hence providing a better understanding of him as an individual. It was not the aim of this study to generalize findings to the larger population. Instead, this study has aimed to generalize the results of the research to Erikson’s (1950) theory, which is known as *analytical generalization* (Yin, 2003).

The nature of this study may be described as both *exploratory-descriptive* and *descriptive-dialogic* (Edwards, 1990). The exploratory-dialogic element integrates a methodical and precise description of human development over the lifespan of Mahatma Gandhi. The descriptive-dialogic component of this study allows the depiction and description of essential phenomena, as well as the clarification and testing of the constructs of specific theories, such as Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Development Theory.

### 1.5 Overview of the Study

This study consists of eight chapters. Chapter one contains an introduction and problem statement. Chapters two to four are literature review chapters. More specifically, chapter four provides a theoretical overview of the psychobiographical case study; chapter two presents an overview of Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Development Theory while chapter three provides a brief historical overview of Mahatma Gandhi. Chapters five and six are dedicated to a discussion on the preliminary methodological considerations, the research design and the methodology respectively. Chapter seven focused on the results and findings of the study and Chapter eight on the conclusions, limitations and recommendations.
CHAPTER 2
ERIKSON'S PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

2.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on Erik Erikson's 1950 psychosocial development stages across the human lifespan. In order to understand Erikson's theory, a brief account of his life is provided. This is followed by a discussion of Erikson's theory.

2.2 Significant life events contributing to the development of Erikson's 1950 theory

Erik Erikson's lifelong interest in the psychology of identity may be traced to his childhood. Erikson was born on the 15th of June 1902, from his mother’s extramarital relationship, and the circumstances of his birth were concealed from him in his childhood (Welchman, 2000). His mother, Karla Abrahamsen, came from a prominent Jewish family in Copenhagen. Her mother, Henrietta, died when Karla was only 13 years old (Friedman, 1999). Karla’s father, Josef, was a merchant in dried goods. Her older brothers Einar, Nicolai, and Axel were active in local Jewish charity and helped maintain a free soup kitchen for indigent Jewish immigrants from Russia.

Because Karla Abrahamsen was officially married to Jewish stockbroker Waldemar Isidor Salomonsen at the time, Erikson, who was born in Germany, was registered as Erik Salomonsen. There is little information available about his biological father, except that he was a Dane and his given name was probably Erik (Welchman, 2000). It is also suggested that he was married at the time that Erikson was conceived (Friedman, 1999).
Following her son's birth, Karla trained to be a nurse. She moved to Karlsruhe and in 1904 married a Jewish pediatrician, Theodor Homburger. In 1909 Erik Salomonsen became Erik Homburger and two years later he was officially adopted by his stepfather.

Erikson describes his mother as being “pervasively sad” (Erikson, 1975, p. 31). She appeared to be neither a fundamentalist nor a rebel but rather a woman with her own opinions which she kept to herself (Welchman, 2000). From the impression Erikson formed of his mother it would appear that she provided him with her consistent presence, sufficient strength, and dependability through his changing background. In later life, Erikson expressed fundamental hopefulness and trust in his environment to supply and respond to his needs, in spite of the distant relationship he had had with his mother. It should be noted, however, that doubt was prominent in his thoughts during his adolescence and early adulthood (Coles, 1970; Friedman, 1999). In addition, Erikson’s issues around autonomy may possibly have led to the development of a continuing element in his search for identity which re-emerged in adolescence and which formed the focus of his creative work in understanding human development.

During this early stage of development, it is imperative to take into account the impact Dr Homburger’s joining the family had on him. In Life History and the Historical Moment (Erikson, 1975), Erikson describes his bitterness surrounding Dr Homburger marrying his mother. He felt Dr Homburger intruded on the steady and consistent relationship he had had with his mother.

During his adolescent years, Erikson found it difficult to be comfortable with who he was and who he was expected to be (Claasen, 2007). At temple school, the children teased him for being Nordic; at grammar school, they teased him for being Jewish (Boeree, 2006). His conflicting identifications – as a German, a Jew and a Dane - made his quest for identity challenging. In addition, Erikson’s father hoped he would become a doctor, even though Erikson was passionate
about art and history. Erikson later affirmed in his theory that identity problems become apparent with that turn in puberty. In other words, when images of future roles become unavoidable (Erikson, 1975).

After graduating from high school, Erikson’s primary focus was on becoming an artist. When not taking art classes, he wandered around Europe where he would visit museums and sleep under bridges. Erikson was grateful for his parents’ attitude during this period in his life (Erikson, 1975). Although this time was untroubled and free from the obligations of the ‘real world’, he was aware that he would not be able to put off adulthood forever (Coles, 1970; Welchman, 2000). It was during this time of self-exploration that Erikson’s friend, Peter Blos - a fellow artist and, later, psychoanalyst - suggested he apply for a teaching position at an experimental school run by Dorothy Burlingham, a friend of Anna Freud. Besides teaching art, Erikson obtained a certificate in Montessori education and one from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society.

While teaching at the school, Erikson met Joan Serson, a Canadian dance teacher. They eventually married and had three children, one of whom became a sociologist (Coles, 1970; Welchman, 2000).

Erikson took the decision to leave Vienna when the Nazis came into power. He first moved to Copenhagen and then to Boston in the United States. Erikson was offered a position at the Harvard Medical School where he practiced child psychoanalysis privately. During this time, he befriended psychologists Henry Murray and Kurt Lewin, and anthropologists Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson. It can be argued that these friendships had as nearly as great effect on Erikson as Sigmund and Anna Freud (Boeree, 2006). Later, he held teaching positions at University of California at Berkeley, Yale, San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute,
The following section contains Erikson’s core ideas which form the foundation of his theory.

2.3 Development of personality: Erikson’s psychosocial perspective

Erikson’s theory of development affirms that psychosexual growth and psychosocial growth occurs simultaneously, and that at each life stage we are required to create a balance between ourselves and our social world (Corey, 2005). Erikson realized that the psychological mind, cultural influences and the genetic biological programming of the human body also played an important role in the contribution towards the course of human development (Erikson, 1965). Erikson (1965; 1985) described development of an individual in terms of an entire lifespan. The lifespan of the individual is divided by specific crises that need to be resolved. Erikson saw these crises as a crossroads in the individual’s life, where they had the potential to progress or regress. These crossroads can either allow the individual to find resolution to their conflicts or fail to master the developmental task (Corey, 2005). Erikson was careful not to use the word 'achieve' in the context of successful outcomes, because it implied gaining something specific and permanent (Chapman, 2009). Psychosocial development is not specific and is not irreversible. It is possible for a previous crisis to return to an individual, but in another form, with successful or unsuccessful results.

2.4 Foundation of Erikson’s theory

The fundamental theme of Erikson’s theory is that of balance. That is, the individual seeks to find a balance within every stage between the respective and opposite characteristics. Erikson believed in harmony which he considered to be the experience of both sides of the psychosocial continuum. The following section describes epigenesis, which is human development according to a genetic code.
2.4.1 The Epigenetic Principle

This principle states that we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in eight stages. Our progress through each stage is in part determined by our success, or failure, in all the previous stages (Welchman, 2000). Each stage involves certain psychosocial developmental tasks, which are referred to by two terms. For example, the infant's task is called ‘trust-mistrust’. At first, according to Boeree (2006) it might seem obvious that the infant must learn trust and not mistrust. However, Erikson emphasized the importance of learning balance in our life: Individuals need to learn trust; but also need to learn a little mistrust, which will help one from becoming easy too fool (Friedman, 1999). Each psychosocial stage has a certain optimal time. Boeree (2006) affirms that children should not be rushed into adulthood, as is so common among people who are obsessed with success.

Welchman (2000) affirms the importance of managing each task well, stating that if this is done properly, a person will carry away a certain virtue or psychosocial strength which will help them through the rest of the stages of their lives. Conversely, if they do not manage the task appropriately, they may develop maladaptations and malignancies, as well as jeopardizing their future development (Boeree, 2006; Welchman, 2000). A malignancy is seen as being the worse of the two, and involves too little of the positive and too much of the negative aspect of the task. For example, a person who cannot trust others. A maladaptation is seen as not as bad and involves too much of the positive and too little of the negative. For example, a person who trusts too much (Boeree, 2006).

The following section provides Erikson’s alternative avenues of thought from the traditional
Freudian thought.

2.4.2 Alternative avenues of thought

Although much of Erikson’s theory draws on the traditional psychoanalytic view, there are three particular ways in which Erikson’s views diverge from it.

The first was Erikson’s view of the autonomy of the ego; this he credited to his work with children. Erikson (1985) observed the manner in which children exceeded all adult expectations in their directedness and communicative expression. He found that the children he taught expressed a resourceful and inventive striving for experience and synthesis in spite of the intense conflicts they had (Erikson, 1985; Welchman, 2000). Erikson attributed his understanding of ego autonomy in the development of ego psychology to the influence of Heinz Hartmann, a top analyst and one of his teachers in Vienna (Welchman, 2000). The concept of ego is discussed in greater detail in section 2.4.3.

The second deviation of thought is that of the clinical and theoretical basis of psychoanalysis. The mechanistic and physicalistic phrasing of psychoanalytic theory confused Erikson throughout his early training (Erikson, 1985). Welchman (2000) noted that this distinction was apparent in clinical seminars which had a new movement toward social and inner problems and through his work with children. Erikson viewed clinical and theoretical language as having different attitudes toward human motivation (Erikson, 1985).

The third deviation from the traditional psychoanalytical view is what Erikson described as the configurational attention to the rich interplay of form and meaning (Erikson, 1985). He saw this as being linked to the training as an artist in more visual than verbal communication (Welchman, 2000). In an early psychoanalytic paper, based on children’s picture books, Erikson
related a configurational method of thinking to Freud’s therapeutic approach of equal attention and suspension of judgment. He believed that Freud’s (1900) *The Interpretation of Dreams* was the model for this approach.

Welchman (2000) noted that it was Freud’s characteristically instinctive and artistic style of writing as well as his inquisitiveness of human nature and his pleasure of inquiry that appealed to Erikson the most. Erikson (1985) also found that the configurational approach could easily be applied to the observation of children.

### 2.4.3 Erikson’s “ego”

Erikson (1965) considered the ego to be the internal guide to individual development in relation to society. It is the conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction. Identity is seen as the product of the work of the ego. According to Erikson, our ego identity is constantly altering due to new experience and information we obtain in our daily interactions with others (Van Wagner, 2005). In addition to ego identity, Erikson believed that a sense of competence also motivates behaviours and actions. As a result, Erikson believed that a strong ego is the unwavering foundation which is “firm and flexible enough to reconcile the necessary contradictions in any human organization” (Erikson, 1965, p. 179). He also considered a strong ego to have the ability to integrate individual differences and more importantly, to have developed a sense of identity and integrity.

Erikson highlighted three fundamental elements which provide a basic sense of ego-identity in the infant, namely, continuity, consistency and sameness of experience. These elements continue to be essential to an established sense of self and it was for this reason that Erikson viewed stability as a crucial factor for a child to become familiar with the actions of the parent in various settings (Erikson, 1965).
2.5 The eight psychosocial stages

Erikson proposed the concept of human life following a cycle of eight ages, from infancy to old age. Essentially, the theory states that each person experiences eight psychosocial crises (internal conflicts linked to life's key stages) which help to define an individual’s growth and personality (Chapman, 2009). People experience these psychosocial crisis stages in a fixed sequence, but timings vary according to people and circumstances. For example, there are no chronological age indicators in adulthood (Redfern & Ross, 1999).

2.5.1 Trust versus mistrust (birth to about 18 months)

Erikson (1965; 1968) proposed that in this first stage, the first task of the ego is to establish stable patterns for the solution of the conflict of basic trust versus basic mistrust. Morris (1996) states that an infant is torn between trusting and not trusting his/her parents. Meyer et al. (2003) suggested that the extent to which infants learn to trust their environment depends mainly on the quality of the mother-child relationship. Trust can be seen as a state of being and responding (Welchman, 2000). Erikson believed that in order to trust oneself and the capacity of one’s own organs to cope with urges, we need to trust in the likeness and stability of our “outer providers” (Erikson, 165, p. 239).

If an infant’s basic physical and emotional needs are provided for by a caregiver but not over-indulged or over-protected, the infant will develop a sense of trust (Corey, 2005). According to Santrock (2006), physical comfort and a minimal amount of fear and apprehension about the future ensures a sense of trust. Infants who grow up to trust are more able to hope and have faith that 'things will generally be okay' (Chapman, 2009). The virtues of hope and drive
result from a successful resolution of this stage (Erikson, 1978b). On the other hand, abuse/neglect/ or cruelty will destroy trust and promote mistrust and increase an individual’s resistance to risk and exploration (Welchman, 2000). Chapman (2009) uses the analogy ‘Once bitten twice shy’ to describe this. If an infant's world is inconsistent, painful and stressful, he/she will learn to expect more of the same and come to believe life is unpredictable and untrustworthy (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002). In addition, the infant will have an attitude of mistrust toward interpersonal relationships (Corey, 2005).

The maladaption of this stage is ‘sensory distortion’ and later ‘sensory maladjustment’ which manifests as unrealistic, spoilt and deluded cognitions/behaviour. The malignancy of this stage is ‘withdrawal’ which manifests as neurotic, depressive and fearful cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009).

2.5.2 Autonomy versus shame and doubt (18 months to about three years)

This stage occurs in late infancy and toddlerhood, when a child’s growing physical development allows them increasing autonomy and greater contact with their environment (Morris, 1996). The central struggle of this stage is between a sense of self-reliance and a sense of self doubt (Corey, 2005). During this stage the balance between loving goodwill and hateful self-insistence is paramount (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Autonomy means self-reliance, that is, independence of thought and the confidence to think and act for oneself. The terms shame and doubt is self-explanatory, it hinders self-expression and developing one's own ideas, opinions and sense of self (Chapman, 2009).

After gaining trust in their caregivers, infants begin to discover that their behaviour is their own (Santrock, 2006). Children need to explore the world around them and experiment in it, to make mistakes and to test limits (Corey, 2005). When they begin to succeed in doing things for
themselves, they gain a sense of self confidence and self-control. The virtues of willpower and self control result from a successful resolution of this stage (Erikson, 1978b). According to Craig and Baucum (2002), if they continually fail and are punished as messy, sloppy, inadequate, or bad, they learn to feel shame and self doubt. In addition, if parents encourage dependency, a child’s autonomy is inhibited and their ability to deal with the world effectively is hindered (Corey, 2005).

According to Chapman (2009) toilet and potty training is an important part of this crisis, where feedback from parents, encouragement and patience play a vital role in determining the child’s experience and successful progression through this period. Chapman further notes that the ‘terrible twos’ and ‘toddler tantrums’ are obvious analogies which represent these internal struggles and parental battles.

The parental balancing act is a challenging one, especially since parents themselves have to deal with their own particular psychosocial crisis, and of course deal with the influence of their own emotional triggers which were conditioned when they themselves passed through earlier formative crisis stages (Chapman, 2009).

The maladaptive tendency of this stage is ‘impulsiveness’, which is described by Boeree (2006) as a shameless willfulness that guides the individual in later childhood and early adulthood, to jump into things without proper consideration of their abilities. The malignancy of this stage is ‘compulsiveness’ which sees the compulsive person striving for perfection in everything they do.

2.5.3 Initiative versus guilt (about three years to about five years)

The basic task of this stage is to achieve a sense of competence and initiative (Corey, 2005). According to Chapman (2009) initiative is the ability to plan actions or projects confidently even
with a risk of failure or making mistakes. Guilt in this context is the feeling that it is wrong or improper to instigate something of one's own design. Chapman (2009) further explains guilt as being the result of believing that something is wrong or likely to draw disapproval, whereas initiative grows when adventure is encouraged.

According to Santrock (2006), as preschool children encounter a widening social world, they are challenged more than when they were infants; therefore, active, purposeful behaviour is needed to cope with these challenges. Children are asked to assume responsibility for their bodies, their behaviour, their toys, and their pets. They also become increasingly active due to their increasing mastery of locomotor and language skills (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Developing a sense of responsibility increases initiative (Santrock, 2006). Parents, caregivers and older siblings are faced with a challenging task of finding the correct balance between giving young children adequate space and encouragement in order to foster a sense of purpose and self-belief, but also to shield against danger and enable a sensible exposure to trial and error (Chapman, 2009). If a child is allowed the liberty to personally select meaningful activities, their view of themselves will increase positively and they are more likely to accomplish the task they set out to do (Corey, 2005). The virtues of purpose and direction result from a successful resolution of this stage (Erikson, 1978b). However, according to Corey (2005) if they are not permitted to make their own decisions, they tend to develop guilt over taking initiative. Consequently, they then avoid taking an active stance and rather permit others to decide for them. Also, if a child is severely criticised or punished, they learn to feel guilty for many of their own actions (Boeree, 2006). Furthermore, a child’s guilt may also come from wanting to contend with the parent of the same gender for ‘ownership’ of the other parent, at the same time as experiencing anxiety for anticipated punishment (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).
The maladaptation of this stage is ‘ruthlessness’ which manifests in exploitative, uncaring and dispassionate cognitions/behaviour. The most extreme form of ruthlessness is antisocial behaviour (Boeree, 2006). The malignancy of this stage is ‘inhibition’ which manifests as risk-savers and unadventurous cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009). The inhibited person will not try things because they believe that ‘nothing ventured, nothing lost’ (Boeree, 2006).

2.5.4 Industry versus inferiority (about five years to about 13 years)

Erikson described this stage as a kind of ‘entrance to life’ (1965). This stage is characterized by the child’s need to develop a sense of industry by taking pride in their production, an outcome of goals achieved through their newly acquired skills (Morris, 1996; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Children develop numerous skills and competencies in school, at home and in the outside world. A sense of self is enriched by the realistic development of such competencies and comparison with peers is increasingly significant (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002).

Industry within this context refers to purposeful or meaningful activity, the development of ability and skills, and a confidence to use a 'method' (Chapman, 2009). According to Corey (2005) children should continue to develop appropriate gender-role identity, broaden their understanding of the world and learn the essential skills necessary for school achievement. Children who experience the satisfaction of achievement will be able to successfully move on from this stage, with the virtues of competence and method (Erikson, 1978b). On the other hand, if a child experiences failure at school tasks and work, he/she is more likely to feel inferior and useless (Chapman, 2009). Also, if children are allowed few accomplishments, because of harsh teachers or rejecting peers, they will develop a sense of inferiority or incompetence (Boeree, 2006). Erikson also mentions other sources of inferiority are racism, sexism, and various forms of discrimination (Erikson, 1965). A negative evaluation of self as inferior compared to others
is especially disruptive at this stage. Connecting with others and using tools or technology are also important aspects of this stage. Chapman (2009) describes this stage as a rehearsal for being productive and being valued at work in later life.

The \textit{maladaptive tenden}cy of this stage is ‘narrow virtuosity’ and manifests as workaholic and obsessive specialist cognitions/behaviour. This includes children who are not allowed to be children but are rather pushed into one area of competence, without allowing the development of broader interests, for example, child actors, child athletes, child musicians (Boeree, 2006). The \textit{malignant} tendency of this stage is ‘inertia’ which manifests as lazy, apathetic and purposeless cognitions/behaviour. This includes those people who suffer from the inferiority complexes (Boeree, 2006).

\textbf{2.5.5 Identity versus role confusion (about 13 years to about 21 years)}

During this stage, described by Corey (2005, p. 63) as “a time of transition between childhood and adulthood”, individuals are finding out who they are and where they are going in life. Puberty’s social and physiological transformation fuel the changing adolescent to become concerned with the question of identity (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). According to Chapman (2009) adolescents struggle to fit in, be accepted and affirmed, and also to become individuals. This transition period is also a time for testing limits, becoming independent and for establishing a new identity (Corey, 2005).

The manner in which a person sees themselves in relation to their world is an identity, that is, a sense of individualism in the context of life and what the future holds (Chapman, 2009). Role confusion or the absence of identity is seen as the negative perspective. This means that the person is unable to clearly perceive who they are and how they can relate positively to their environment (Chapman, 2009). The most important conflicts within this stage are concerned
with the clarification of self-identity, life goals and life’s meaning. Failure to attain a sense of identity result in role confusion (Corey, 2005). The virtues of fidelity and devotion results from a successful resolution of this stage (Erikson, 1978b). According to Davis and Clifton (1995), individuals seek basic values and attitudes that cut across their various roles. If they fail to form a central identity or cannot resolve a major conflict between two major roles with opposing value systems, the result is what Erikson called ego diffusion.

The maladaptation of this stage is ‘fanaticism’ characterized by self-important and extremist cognitions/behaviour. A fanatic believes that his/her way is the only way and usually only see things in black-and-white (Boeree, 2006). The malignancy of this stage is ‘repudiation’ characterized by socially disconnected and cut-off cognitions/behaviour. These individuals will reject their need for an identity and is more likely to join a group that is eager to provide the individual details for their identity, for example, religious cults, militaristic organizations (Boeree, 2006).

2.5.6 Intimacy versus isolation (about 21 years to about 40 years)

At this time, individuals face the developmental task of forming intimate relationships with others. The identity which was established in the previous stage is now attempted to be shared with another person (Corey, 2005; Erikson, 1978b). Santrock (2006) suggested that if the young adult forms healthy friendships and an intimate relationship with another individual, intimacy will be achieved; if not, isolation will result. The virtues of love and affiliation result from a successful resolution of this stage (Erikson, 1978b).

Erikson (1950) described intimacy as finding oneself yet losing oneself in another. He further explained intimacy in terms of sexual mutuality with a strong reciprocal feature, that is, the giving and receiving of physical and emotional connection and other elements that we would
usually associate with healthy, adult relationships. Chapman (2009) described intimacy as the process of attaining relationships with family and marital/mating partner(s). Conversely, isolation means being and feeling excluded from the typical life experiences of dating/mating/mutually loving relationships. Understandably, this is characterised by feelings of loneliness, alienation, social withdrawal or non-participation (Chapman, 2009).

The *maladaptive* tendency of this stage is ‘promiscuity’ which is characterized by sexually needy and vulnerable cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009). These individuals tend to become intimate easily, without restraint and without any depth to their intimacy (Boeree, 2006). The *malignant* tendency of this stage is ‘exclusivity’ characterized by reclusive, cold and self-contained cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009).

### 2.5.7 Generativity versus stagnation (about 40 years to about 60 years)

In this stage there is a strong need to go beyond self and family and be concerned with helping the next generation; it is a time to decipher the difference between one’s dream and one’s actual accomplishments (Corey, 2005).

The establishment and guidance of the next generation is known as generativity (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Generativity originates from the word generation, that is, parents and children, but more specifically, the unconditional giving that represent parental love and care for their children (Chapman, 2009). According to Santrock (2006), a chief concern is to assist the younger generation in developing and leading useful lives. This supervision of the next generation does not only refer to the next of kin, but to humanity in general (Meyer et al., 2003). Having children of you own is not a requirement for generativity, in the same way that being a parent is not a guarantee that generativity will be realized (Chapman, 2009). Erikson (1965) acknowledged that this stage also extends to other productive activities, e.g., work. Positive outcomes of this crisis
stage depend on contributing positively and unconditionally, resulting in the virtues of care and production (Chapman, 2009; Erikson, 1978b). Conversely, the feeling of having done nothing to help the next generation is stagnation (Erikson, 1965; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). According to Chapman (2009) stagnation is the internal, expansion of intimacy in the form of self-centeredness and vanity.

The maladaption of this stage is ‘overextension’ which manifests as busy-body and meddling behaviour. These individuals usually ‘bite off more than they can chew’ which results in them no longer have time for themselves (Boeree, 2006). The malignancy of this stage is ‘rejectivity’ which manifests as disinterested and cynical cognitions/behaviour. This is the stage where a ‘midlife crisis’ may occur, whereby the individual question their experiences and accomplishments and attempt to recapture their youth (Boeree, 2006).

2.5.8 Integrity versus despair (about 60 years to death)

This stage can be seen as a powerful lens through which to view one's life, even before old age is reached (Chapman, 2009). Typically, this is the stage where individuals look back over their lives and judge themselves. Chapman (2009) described integrity as having no regrets or blame but rather a feeling of peace with oneself and the world. Erikson (1963b; 1965; 1978b) believed integrity was the product of seven stages resulting in the virtues of wisdom and renunciation if effectively resolved. Despair within this context is seen as feelings of wasted prospects and regrets (Chapman, 2009).

Boeree (2006) stated that if, when looking back, people find that they are satisfied that their lives had meaning and involvement, the result is a sense of integrity. However, if life seems to have consisted of a series of misdirected efforts and lost chances, the outcome is a sense of despair, hopelessness, guilt, resentment and self rejection (Corey, 2005). The maladaption of this
stage is ‘presumption’ which is characteristic of conceited, pompous and arrogant cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009). The malignancy of this stage is ‘disdain’ (by which Erikson means contempt of life, one's own or anyone's) which is characteristic of miserable, unfulfilled and blaming cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009).

### 2.6 Features of the life cycle

The effect of Erikson’s psychosocial theory does not only lie in the detail of every stage, but also in what characterizes it. Erikson noted that it is the overall thought and reflection which allows features of methodology and terminology for further study. The following are principles of the design of Erikson’s theory, as highlighted by Welchman (2000):

1. A complete life cycle is encompassed and viewed within a sequence of generations.
2. Human development is formulated by consistently applying a procedure that links biological, psychological and social processes.
3. The epigenetic principle presents a unique contribution to the nature versus nurture dilemma in human development.
4. The psychosocial stages are illustrated in terms of a nuclear conflict between divergent outlooks. Erikson viewed each crisis as a turning point which must be resolved in a balance between positive and negative. The negative is seen as important as the positive because one needs a certain amount of displeasure for optimal psychosocial development.
5. The stages are interrelated. The resolution of a stage is never complete and is prefigured in and affected by earlier stages.
6. The design is focused on typical rather than pathological development.
7. The design is aimed at showing a pattern of healthy development.
8. Erikson provides the relation between particular stages and institutions of society.
9. Erikson provides the relation of certain ego qualities derived from the nuclear conflict at a particular stage.

2.7 Critique of Erikson’s work

There are four main criticisms to be considered. The first is Erikson’s idealism whereby he evades negative aspects of life and seems unable to determine what is, with what he would like or thinks should happen. The second criticism is associated with the social and political implications of his work, whereby his work seems to bash traditional culture and values as well as support and justify an unfair status quo. The third critique is that his work is distorted by his own assumptions. The fourth criticism concerns his method, that is, his rigid thinking and style which is described as being vague.

2.7.1 Erikson the idealist?

Roazen (1976) claimed that Erikson’s work is distorted by his idealism. He views Erikson’s theory as only focusing on the optimistic view of nature and evading the negative view. In addition, Kovel (1988) noted that Erikson confused values with analysis, stating that Erikson would rather project what he wants to see onto a situation rather than what he really sees. Erikson (1978b) understood material reality at a particular historical time to depend as much on what was hoped to be true as on what was certain to be true. Erikson’s idealism also seems to be detached from the basic conflicts in society. Also, his ethics were ideal but impractical in nature and did not involve an argument with differing goals (Roazen, 1976).

In Erikson’s defense, Welchman (2000) argued that Erikson’s theory used a dialectical approach which involved a crisis of conflict and struggle. He also noted that Erikson did not reject the role of conflict from his idea of wider identities, but highlighted the hazardous consequences these identities may incite.
2.7.2 Social and political implications

Kovel (1988) disapproved of Erikson’s lack of commitment to political change and political clarification of human affliction, saying that Erikson decided to remain fixed and not make reference to political and societal change in his theory. Welchman (2000), however, is of the view that Erikson was not conservative in opposing change as he evidently supported change and growth through conflict in the individual and society.

2.7.3 The developmental stages

According to Welchman (2000) there are three categories of criticisms for the developmental stages of Erikson’s stages. The first regards the details of the stages, that is, the particular description of each stage, the attribution of a certain crisis to a certain stage, the order which the stages occur and the need for sub-stages and for overlap between stages. The second concerns the extremely different developmental concepts as proposed by other theorists. The third category of criticisms pertains to the fact that there are individuals who dispute the validity of any developmental scheme as a sufficient manner in which to make sense of human behaviour. Wrightsman (1994) considered Erikson to be a leading stage theorist and recognized a dialectical influence in Erikson’s theory in that there is evidence of the modification of themes from earlier stages throughout life.

2.7.4 Gender assumptions in Erikson’s work

Welchman (2000) noted that Erikson’s use of the male pronoun emphasizes a male bias in his descriptions of experience as well as the fact that he used only male subjects for his psychohistories. Erikson was criticized by Roazen (1976) as receiving traditional male-female
stereotypes too willingly. Furthermore, Evans (1964) wrote that Erikson had acknowledged his suggestion that females may yet contribute something specifically feminine to thus far masculine fields, which could have been seen as discriminatory.

2.8 Erikson’s Impact

Stevens (2008) describes Erikson as being important not only for his considerable influence he had in disseminating psychoanalytic ideas, but also because his work exemplifies key developments in psychoanalytic thought since Freud. Erikson’s work in the field of psychology and particularly areas of identity development, psychohistory and psychosocial development, were revolutionary and continue to have significance in the study of human psychological development. (Kincheloe & Horn, 2007).

The following section discusses the two main areas of Erikson’s influence, namely, developmental psychology and interdisciplinary studies.

2.8.1 Developmental psychology

Erikson’s developmental theory is generally viewed as one of the most influential in the 20th century (Kincheloe & Horn, 2007; Van Wagner, 2005; Welchman, 2000). Particularly influential was Erikson’s stages of youth with its concepts of identity, role confusion and crisis (Bernard, 1975). By utilizing the knowledge he gained of cultural, environmental, and social influences, he further developed his psychoanalytic theory (Van Wagner, 2005). Erikson took into account both subjective and objective phenomena in individual and social development (Welchman, 2000). Most empirical research into Erikson's theories has focused on his views regarding the establishment of identity during adolescence. James Marcia has studied Erikson’s theory extensively and supports it, particularly regarding adolescence. Marcia expanded Erikson’s theory by differentiating different forms of identity. Marcia’s findings provide evidence for the
correlation between coherent self concept in adolescence and the ability to make intimate attachments in early adulthood. These findings support Erikson's theory, in that it suggests that the individuals best equipped to resolve the crisis of early adulthood are those who have most successfully resolved the crisis of adolescence (Marcia, 1966).

Erikson's psychosocial stage theory was the groundwork for personality development in adulthood (Wrightsman, 1994). Havinghurst (1972), Gould (1978) and Levinsons' (1978) adult development theories were influenced by Erikson and can be seen as elaborations of Erikson's ideas.

In addition, Erikson's lifecycle has contributed considerably to the study of the aged. Erikson and wife, Joan, assisted in a study of elderly participants which began 50 years earlier. The findings validated this period of life as one with its own tasks and crises and also confirmed how earlier themes are taken up yet again in this final stage of life (Erikson, Erikson & Kivnick, 1989).

2.8.2 Interdisciplinary influence

In Erikson’s obituary in the New York Times, he is described as “a thinker, whose ideas had effects far beyond psychoanalysis, shaping the emerging fields of child development and life-span studies and reaching into the humanities” (Author unknown, 1994).

A discussion of Erikson’s influence in the fields of psychohistory, sociology and social psychology as well as politics and psychology will follow.

2.8.2.1 Psychohistory

Belzen (2001) praised Erikson for his insightful studies on Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi, stating that Erikson is considered the originator of psychohistory and psychobiographical studies. Kovel (1988), being an ardent critic of Erikson, recognized Erikson's
significant contribution in establishing the field of psychohistory, which he described as challenging but promising. Belzen (2001) believed criticisms of Erikson’s psychohistorical work was methodological in that he “wove a fascinating tapestry of details of life history, interpretations and elements of psychoanalytic theory, and made it difficult to discern what was fact and what was fiction, what verifiable historical detail and what speculation, what psychic ability and what analytic interpretation (Belzen, 2001, p. 35). In addition, Thompson (1996) affirmed that although Erikson's theory endured constant criticism, it was well received by others, who found in his psychosocial stages an effective paradigm in the application of psychoanalytic theory.

A good feature of Erikson's approach to psychohistory is that it is comprehensive and life-span orientated (Claasen, 2001). Erikson (1968) also stresses the importance of an awareness of the life context of all observers including that of the writer.

2.8.2.2 Sociology and social psychology

Erikson’s term ‘psychosocial development’ illustrates how the fields of sociology and social psychology overlap with the subject matter of psychology (Welchman, 2000). Erikson viewed sociology as a ‘nomothetic’ discipline, with regards to the development of abstract theories and empirical generalizations to explain current events in modern-day society (Boyd, 1999). In Experiencing Identity, Craib (1998) claimed that sociology appeared to have a great deal to say about identity, stating the following:

Social identities can come and go but my identity goes on as something which unites all the social identities I had, have or will have. My identity always overflows, adds to, transforms the social identities that are attached to me (Craib, 1998, p. 4).
Over the past few years, the discipline’s concerns shifted from class identity towards gender and ethnic identity. Hall (1996) noted that in recent years there has been an upsurge of interest and discussion surrounding the concept of identity. At the same time, many sociologists have tried to diminish the importance of identity, defining it as the function of social forces or reject it altogether. However, according to Hall (1996) the concept of identity cannot simply be discarded as it is usually the centre of the most difficult and challenging human dilemmas. Sociologists on the other hand, are concerned about how subjective experience may influence sociological observations (Welchman, 2000).

An additional area of sociological exploration influenced by Erikson is on material possessions. Dittmar (1992) applied Erikson's model of identity and the life cycle to explain changes in favourite possessions as indicators of age, sex and culture. Furthermore, Dittmar (1992) noted how Erikson's three adult identity phases mirrored how adults described their attachment to possessions. For example, the manner in which men and women prefer different possessions and relate to their possessions differently (i.e., a man’s motorbike is seen as powerful and allowing him to be differentiated from others as a biker whereas a woman’s motorbike is more likely to be named and seen as more important to her if it were given to her by someone as it symbolizes a relationship).

2.8.2.3 Politics and psychology

Erikson (1978a) attempted to link childhood play and political imagination by aiming to relate the inner life of an individual to the crises of social institutions. In Toys and Reasons Erikson wrote “the psychoanalytical assessment of political reality can help us to recognize that a combination of inner defenses and communal deals which is inherent in the distribution of power” (Erikson, 1978a, p. 174). Erikson (1978a) emphasized that modern day life, with its
political and technological imperatives, was interfering excessively with ‘playful experimentation within limits’.

Erikson’s believed that there was an interdependence of the psychological issues of the leader and the led. This view resulted in a number of studies such as *The Leader and the led: dyadic relationship* (Moses, 1990a) as well as one which linked the psychological issues of Presidents and the electorate in the USA (Offerman-Zuckerberg, 1991). In his autobiography, *Search of Identity* (1993), President Sadat of Egypt illustrates Erikson's view of how a politician both experiences and manipulates an idealized identification with 'his' people.

Erikson's influence is also shown in the practical application of political conflict resolution. This was noted by Volkan (1988) in his work titled *The Need to Have Enemies and Lies*, in which he described a series of US-Soviet relations seminars in the 1980's which, he says derived much of their vitality from the presence of the pre-eminent psychoanalysts, Erik Erikson and his wife Joan (Volkan, 1988).

Furthermore, Erikson's notion and assertion on the possibility (despite impending risk and restriction) of an inclusive human identity influenced writers such as Oliner (1991). Oliner's work - which was based on the study of altruism among individuals who assisted the persecuted in Nazi Germany – found that a vital factor was an ability to identify with a common humanity instead of an identity which is defined by what it hates as much as by what it loves.

2.9 Conclusion

Erikson is viewed by many as one of the leading figures in the field of human development. His theory of psychosocial development helped create interest and research on human development through the lifespan. It was also valuable in that it illuminated why individuals who had been thwarted in the healthy resolution of early phases (e.g., learning healthy levels of trust
and autonomy in toddler-hood) had difficulty with the crises which arouse in adulthood. 
Erikson's theory appears to be an apt theory for psychobiographical study as indicated by similar 
studies previously executed utilizing his theory, and which contributed to the present researcher's 
motivation. The following chapter provides a detailed account of the life of Mahatma Gandhi, 
from his early years to his late adulthood.
CHAPTER 3
THE LIFE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

3.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter provides a historical overview of the life of Mahatma Gandhi. His life history is presented over a 78 year historical period, from Gandhi's birth in 1869 to his assassination in 1948. Refer to appendix B for the Rationale for using variations of Gandhi’s name.

3.2 The life of Mahatma Gandhi

A chronology of Mahatma Gandhi's lifespan was compiled based on a literature review of his historical life. The chronology depicts the interrelationship between significant events and the pertinent systematic influences over the lifespan of Mahatma Gandhi. These significant periods include (a) his childhood years (1869 - 1887), (b) on the threshold of manhood (1888 - 1892), (c) emergence of Mahatma (1893 - 1914), (d) great soul in beggar’s garb (1915 - 1931) and, (e) Freedom and Martyrdom (1933 - 1948). The systematic influences that impacted Gandhi’s childhood and early adult years combined with his religious orientation, and based on significant socio-historical and cultural events of the time, will be identified and described in the sections that follow.

3.2.1 The childhood years of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1887)

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2, 1869, at Porbandar, a small town on the western coast of India, which was then one of the many tiny states in Kathiawar (Nanda, 1987). He was born into a middle class family of Bania (Vashiya or trading) caste. His
grandfather became Prime Minister of Porbandar and was succeeded by his son Karamchand or Kaba as he was known, Mohandas' father (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987).

Kaba was married four times in a row, having lost his wives by death each time (Gandhi, 1949). He had two daughters by his first and second marriages. His last wife, Putlibai, bore him a daughter and three sons, of which Mohandas was the youngest. Mahatma described his father as “lover of his clan, truthful, brave and generous, but short-tempered...incorruptible and impartial” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 3). He further described his father as not having any want to gather riches, stating that his father had left his family very little property after his passing (Rolland, 1924).

Putlibai, Mohandas’ mother, was staunch in the Vaishnava faith, the foundation of which lies in non-injury to any life (Rolland, 1924). She was described as a saintly character, gentle and devout, and left a deep impress on her son's mind (Gandhi, 1949; Nanda, 1987). Mahatma reminisced about his mother saying “…she was deeply religious...she would take the hardest vows and keep them without flinching” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 4). Putlibai, unlike the oppressed woman of her time, was well knowledgeable about all matters of the state, and the ladies of the court thought highly of her intelligence (Gandhi, 1949).

3.2.1.1 Moniya

Mohandas (or Moniya as he was called by his mother) went to an elementary school in Porbandar, where he found it difficult to master the multiplication tables. "My intellect must have been sluggish and my memory raw", he recalled many years later (Gandhi, 1949, p. 5). At the age of seven, his family moved to Rajkot, another state in Kathiawar, where his father became prime minister. There he attended a primary school and later joined a high school. Though conscientious he was a "mediocre student" (Gandhi, 1949, p. 5) and was excessively shy and timid (Nanda, 1987). “My books and lessons were my sole companions. To be at school at
the stroke of the hour and to run back home as soon as school closed – that was my daily habit” remembered Mahatma (Gandhi, 1949, p. 5).

Mohandas’ school record did not provide any indication of his future greatness, although one particular incident was significant (Nanda, 1987). A British school inspector came to examine the boys and set a spelling exercise. Mohandas made a mistake which the class teacher noticed and motioned him to copy the correct spelling from his neighbour's paper. Mohandas refused to take the hint as he thought that the teacher's duty was to supervise against copying. He was later criticized by his teacher and fellow classmates for his ‘stupidity’ (Nanda, 1987). Yet the incident did not diminish his respect for his teacher, saying that he “was by nature blind to the faults of elders” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 6). In his autobiography, Mahatma recalls two other incidents during this period in his life that gripped him. The first was his interest in a play, Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka, which he had found in a book owned by his father. The play was based on a Shravana's (the son) devotion to his parents. Mahatma remembers one particular picture from the book, showing Shravana carrying his blind parents on a pilgrimage by means of slings fitted to his shoulders. “The book and the picture left an indelible impression on my mind. ‘Here is an example for you to copy’, I said to myself” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 6). The second incident concerned another play, Harishchandra. The play, which was about a man facing many ordeals on his journey to follow truth, captured Gandhi's heart: “To follow truth and to go through the ordeals Harishchandra went through was the one ideal that inspired me. The thought of it all often made me weep” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 6). Gandhi further noted that both Shravana and Harishchandra were still living realities to him in his later life, saying that he was sure that he would be moved as before if he were to read these plays again.

3.2.1.2 Playing the husband
While Mohandas was still in school, at the age of thirteen, he was married to Kasturbai who was also of the same age (Hardiman, 2003). At the time, he saw no wrong in getting married at this age as it was Hindu custom. He said the following about his wedding day: “Everything on that day seemed to me right and proper and pleasing” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 9). For a boy of that age marriage meant only a round of feasts, new clothes to wear and a strange and docile companion to play with (Nanda, 1987). But he soon felt the impact of sex which he has described with commendable honesty. Years later, Mahatma severely criticized his father’s decision to marry him at this early age, saying in his autobiography that he could “....see no moral argument in support of such a preposterously early marriage (Gandhi, 1949, p. 7). According to Nanda (1987) the infinite tenderness and respect which were so marked a characteristic of his attitude in later life to Indian women may have owed something to his personal experience of the ‘cruel custom of child marriage’, as he called it.

At the time of his marriage, pamphlets were issued in which conjugal love, thrift, child marriages and other issues were discussed (Gandhi, 1949). Mahatma recalls reading them thoroughly, although only carrying out practices he liked and ignoring those he did not. One of the practices he idealized was that of lifelong faithfulness to the wife. Furthermore, Mohandas had a passion for truth, describing it as innate thus making deceiving her unthinkable. Mohandas expected his unwavering faithfulness towards his wife to be reciprocated. He confesses that this thought made him a jealous husband and he forced Kastubai, his wife, to acquire his permission to go anywhere (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003). Kasturbai, on the other hand, refused to be controlled in this way. As a result, Mohandas and his wife argued daily and often refused to talk to one another (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003). However, Mahatma believed his actions were based on love and his need to make Kasturbai an ideal wife. In other words, to live in purity,
learn what he had learnt and identify her life and thought with his (Gandhi, 1949).

Kasturbai was by nature “...simple, independent, persevering...” (Gandhi, 1949, p.11). She was also illiterate and Mohandas took it upon himself to teach her although he confesses his lust did not allow him time to do it. “I am sure that, had my love for her been absolutely untainted with lust, she would be a learned lady today; for I could then have conquered her dislike of studies. I know nothing is impossible for pure love” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 11).

3.2.1.3 A tragedy

While still in high school, Mohandas befriended Sheikh Mehtab, originally a friend of his eldest brother. “My mother, my eldest brother and wife warned me that I was in bad company” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 16), but Mohandas, knowing Mehtab's bad attributes, took it upon himself to reform him. Mohandas' love for reformation was shown further in his actions in later years (Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987). Mehtab convinced Mohandas that the British could rule India because they lived on meat which gave them the necessary strength (Nanda, 1987). Mohandas, who came from an orthodox vegetarian family, took to eating meat secretly, for patriotic reasons. But Mohandas could not continue with his meat eating behaviour for long. Besides being an inherent vegetarian which after he had once swallowed a piece, made him feel as if "a live goat were bleating inside me" (Gandhi, 1949, p. 19), he had to grapple with the thought that his decision to eat meat had to be hidden from his parents. This entailed dishonesty on his part. And so after a year of experimenting with meat he gave up the idea, reassuring himself with the reflection: "When they are no more and I have found my freedom, I will eat meat openly" (Gandhi, 1949, p. 20).

Mehtab interfered in Mohandas’ marriage as well: “I was both a devoted and jealous husband, and this friend fanned the flame of suspicions about my wife” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 21). At the time,
Mohandas did not doubt his friend’s information about his wife. However, years later, Mahatma spoke about his inability to forgive himself for causing his wife unnecessary pain by acting on Mehtab’s misleading stories. Mahatma discovered the roots of his suspicions only when he understood ahimsa (non-injury to living beings) and all its bearings. Mehtab also convinced Mohandas to be unfaithful to his wife by taking him to a brothel. But Mohandas was not able to follow through with his intentions, becoming tongue-tied as he sat on the prostitute's bed. “I went into the jaws of sin but God in his infinite mercy protected me from myself” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 20).

3.2.1.4 Stealing and Atonement

During Mohandas’ meat-eating period, he and a relative began smoking, finding it a pleasure and a sign of independence, for which they yearned (Gandhi, 1949). Since they had no money, they resorted to smoking the stumps of cigarettes they found on the ground, and later, stole money from a servant in order to buy cigarettes. Soon they realized that smoking provided no sign of independence for them, as they were still not able to smoke in the presence of elders. “It was unbearable that we should be unable to do anything without the elder’s permission. At last, in sheer disgust, we decided to commit suicide!” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 22). They planned to swallow poisonous seeds during one evening as evening was seen as an auspicious time. However, their courage failed them and they aborted their plan.

In his autobiography Mahatma speaks of another incident of theft, one which he describes as being more serious than the one mentioned above. At the age of fifteen he stole a a piece of gold from his brother. He could not bare his guilt and decided to confess it to his father, believing that he would not be cleansed of it unless he confessed to it. He decided to write his
confession in a letter as he was afraid of his father's reaction. “Not that I was afraid of my father beating me. I was afraid of the pain I might cause him” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 23). His father read the letter through, and tear drops rolled down his cheek. He then took a moment, closed his eyes in thought, and tore up the letter. “Those pearl-drops of love cleansed my heart, and washed my sin away. This was, for me, an object-lesson in ahimsa...I know that my confession made my father feel absolutely safe about me, and increased his affection for me beyond measure” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 25).

3.2.1.5 Double Shame

When Mohandas was sixteen, his father developed a medical condition called a fistula which made him bed-ridden. Mohandas was given the duty of nurse and all his time was divided between school and attending to his father. Mohandas loved this opportunity to be of service to his father. At the same time, Mohandas’ wife was expecting their first baby. Although Mohandas was attending to his father, his mind was on his wife whom he continued to have sexual intercourse with. In retrospect, Mahatma saw this as a ‘double shame’ as firstly, he was forcing himself on a pregnant woman, and secondly, he was doing it as his father lay gravely ill in bed (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003). On the evening his father passed away, he chose to be intimate with his wife instead of spending time attending to his father. “I felt deeply ashamed and miserable...I saw that, if animal passion had not blinded me I should have been spared the torture of separation from my father during his last moments” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 26). Mohandas and Kasturbai's first baby only survived a few days. Mahatma believed this to be punishment for his actions, some sort of divine intervention for his ‘lust’ (Hardiman, 2003) suggesting that a wife and child should expect punishment by God for the faults of a
husband or father (Gandhi, 1949). In later years, Mahatma implemented this will by continuing
to punish and reprimand Kasturbai (Hardiman, 2003).

3.2.1.6 Glimpses of Religion

At the age of sixteen, Mohandas passed through a severe religious crisis (Holland, 1924). He
was born a Hindu and respected all aspects of it, but was shocked at the idolatrous form it
sometimes assumed. Consequently, he became, or imagined he became, an atheist to prove that
religion meant nothing to him (Holland, 1924). But he soon realized that he could not live a life
without religion. He then took to studying various branches of Hinduism, developing an early
toleration and understanding for all of them (Gandhi, 1949; Holland, 1924). Mohandas realized
one common thread in all the branches of Hinduism he studied. “...the conviction that morality
is the basis of all things, and that truth is the substance of all morality” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 29).
Truth became his sole objective, growing in magnitude and definition everyday.

3.2.1.7 Preparation for England

In 1887, Mohandas matriculated from high school and his elders urged him to join the
Samaldas College in Bhavnagar (Gandhi, 1949). He found the studies difficult and the
atmosphere unpleasant (Nanda, 1987).

An elder advisor and family friend suggested that if Mohandas wished to take his father's
place in the state service, he would be required to become a barrister (lawyer) which he could do
in England within three years (Gandhi, 1949; Nanda, 1987). Mohandas loved the idea: “Nothing
could have been more welcome to me. I was fighting shy of my difficult studies” (Gandhi, 1949,
p. 31). As a result, at the end of the first term, Mohandas dropped out of college as he had his
eyes set on a new goal, i.e., England. However, Mohanda’s mother was in two minds regarding
sending her young son off to a foreign land, one with many temptations. She decided to consult
another family adviser, a swami turned monk, who made Mohandas take three vows: not to
touch wine, women and meat (Nanda, 1987). Mohandas’ mother then gave him permission to
proceed to England, which he did, leaving behind his wife and new-born son (Gandhi, 1949).

3.2.1.8 Outcaste

In order to travel to England, Mohandas had to go to Mumbai (then Bombay) where he would
be able to find a passenger ship to England (Gandhi, 1949). But as a result of bad weather, his
voyage was postponed indefinitely. During this time, Mohandas’ caste people came to hear about
his intentions to study in England. They believed living in England would corrupt him and
threatened to excommunicate him if he persisted in going abroad. They held a formal meeting of
the caste and provided Mohandas with their reasoning. But Mohandas was adamant and was
officially excommunicated by his caste (Nanda, 1987). Undeterred by their decision, Mohandas
set sail in September 1888, for Southampton (Gandhi, 1949).

3.2.2 On the threshold of Manhood (1888–1890)

3.2.2.1 London at Last

Mohandas was miserable during his first few days in London (Nanda, 1987):

I would continually think of my home and country. My mother’s love haunted me. At
night tears would stream down my cheeks, and home memories of all sorts made sleep
out of the question…Everything was strange – the people, their ways and even their
dwellings (Gandhi, 1949, p. 38).

He initially stayed in a hotel but then moved in with a friend for a month which served as an
apprenticeship to life in England. This friend treated him kindly, initiated him into English ways and manners and accustomed him to the language (Gandhi, 1949). When the month was up, he moved in with an Anglo-Indian widow and her two daughters. By this time, he was finding his feet but had still not been able to solve his food dilemma which began on his journey to England. Mohandas’ vow had made it difficult for him to eat well and he had to settle for insipid vegetarian meals. It was not until he wondered into a vegetarian restaurant by chance, that his dilemma was solved: “The sight of it filled me with the same joy that a child feels on getting a thing after its own heart” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 41). This was the first fulfilling meal he had had in England since his arrival. While at the restaurant, he purchased Salt's Plea for Vegetarianism which he read cover to cover as he ate his meal. It was at this time, that Mohandas had an epiphany:

From the date of reading this book, I may claim to have become a vegetarian by choice. I had all along abstained from meat in the interests of truth and of the vow I had taken, but had wished at the same time that every Indian should be a meat eater, and had looked forward to being one myself freely and openly some day, and to enlisting others in the cause. The choice was now made in favour of vegetarianism, the spread of which henceforth became my mission (Gandhi, 1949, p. 41).

3.2.2.2 Playing the English gentleman

During the early period of his stay in England Mohandas went through a phase which he described as aping the English gentleman (Nanda, 1987). He tried to fit into modern English society whilst trying to keep the vow he made to his mother (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949). He had new clothes made, purchased a silk hat and "wasted ten pounds on an evening dress
suit made in Bond Street” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 43). He took lessons in French, elocution and ball-room dancing. But he soon realized that if he could not become a gentleman by virtue of his character, the ambition was not worth relishing. This provides a clear indication of Mohandas’ mindset and provides a prediction of the future Mahatma.

3.2.2.3 Changes

Mohandas decided to complete his London Matriculation as his weak English was a great concern for him. It was during this time that Mohandas began strictly monitoring his daily life and reassessed his spending. In an attempt to live simpler, he moved into a one room suite, started cooking his own meals and walked to his classes instead of using public transport. As a result, Mohandas cut his spending in half and became physically fit from his daily walks. This simple living also saved Mohandas plenty of time and he passed his examination: “Let the reader not think that this living made my life by any means a dreary affair. On the contrary the change harmonized my inward and outward life. It was also more in keeping with the means of my family. My life was certainly more truthful and my soul knew no bounds of joy” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 47).

3.2.2.4 Shyness the Shield

While in England, Mohandas established a vegetarian club which became the Vegetarian Society of which he was elected to its executive committee. Mohandas, having been shy all his life, found it difficult to express his opinions in the committee meetings. In his autobiography, he also talks about two occasions at which he was meant to give a speech but was unable to. However, Mahatma did not see his shyness as a disadvantage:
My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure. Its greatest benefit has been that it has taught me the economy of words...And I can now give myself certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes my tongue or pen...Experience has taught me that silence is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth...My shyness has been my reality and my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth (Gandhi, 1949, p. 53).

3.2.2.5 Acquaintance with religions

At the end of his second year in London, Mohandas became acquainted with two theosophist brothers who introduced him to an English verse of the Gita- The Song Celestial-by Sir Edwin Arnold (Gandhi, 1949; Nanda, 1987; Parel, 2006). He was deeply impressed by it, saying "the book struck me as one of priceless worth. This opinion of the Gita has ever since been growing on me, with the result that I regard it today as the supreme book for knowledge of Truth. It has afforded me invaluable help in my moments of gloom” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 57).

At approximately the same time, Mohandas was introduced to the Bible by a Christian friend whom he had met in a vegetarian boarding house (Gandhi, 1949). He found reading through the Old Testament very tedious, but he fell in love with the New Testament, especially with the Sermon on the Mount. Mohandas also read Sir Edwin Arnold's interpretation of Buddha's life - *The light of Asia* - as well as the chapter on the *Prophet of Islam in Carlyle's Heroes and Hero Worship* (Nanda, 1987). Thus, the attitude of respect for all religions and the aspiration to understand the best aspects in each one were embedded in his mind early in life.
3.2.3 Emergence of Mahatma (1891–1914)

3.2.3.1 How life began

Mohandas passed his examinations and was called to the Bar in June 1891 (Nanda, 1987). He sailed for India two days later arriving to the news that his mother had died: “My grief was even greater than over my father's death...But I remember that I did not give myself up to any wild expression of grief” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 73). Shortly afterward he began practicing law at the Supreme Court of Bombay (Rolland, 1924). But this was short lived and Mohandas decided to set up his own practice in Rajkot as a legal draftsman. It was at this time, that Mohandas was approached by a South African law firm and propositioned to instruct their counsel on a big case. He agreed to take the case, knowing that the separation from his family would not be difficult as his mother was now deceased and he had become familiar with traveling abroad and living overseas. However, he found it difficult to leave his wife and children in India, “This time I only felt the pang of parting with my wife. Another baby had been born to us since my return from England” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 85).

3.2.3.2 Arrival in South Africa

At the age of 23, Mohandas departed for South Africa, arriving in British-governed Natal in May 1893 (Gandhi, 1949; Rossenberg, 1997). It was here in South Africa that Mohandas transformed from a quiet and shy man to a resilient and potent leader against discrimination. The beginning of this transformation occurred during a business trip taken shortly after his
arrival in South Africa.

Mohandas was required to travel for several days via train from Natal to the capital of the Dutch-governed Transvaal province of South Africa for his case. Mohandas boarded the first train of his journey at the Pietermartizburg station with a first class ticket. However, railroad officials told him that he had to transfer to the third-class passenger car. When Mohandas refused to move, a policeman was called and threw him off the train. Mohandas endured more injustices on his trip, all the while remaining unyielding but passive in his reaction towards them (Erikson, 1969; Gandhi, 1949).

While on his trip, Mohandas talked to other Indians (derogatorily called "coolies") and found that his experiences were not isolated incidents but rather common occurrences. Mohandas contemplated whether he should go back home to India or to fight the discrimination. After careful deliberation, he decided that he could not allow these injustices to continue and that he was going to fight to change these discriminatory practices.

During the first three years in South Africa, Mohandas learned more about Indian grievances, studied the law, wrote letters to officials, and organized petitions (Nanda, 1987). In May 1894, Mohandas established the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) (Gandhi, 1949). Initially, the NIC only had wealthy Indian members, but with Mohandas’ diligent work, it expanded its membership to all classes and castes. Mohandas became well-known for his activism and evidence of this was even published in newspapers as far as England and India. Within a few years, Mohandas had become a leader of the Indian community in South Africa (Nanda, 1987).

3.2.3.3 Rumblings of the Storm

In July 1896, after living three years in South Africa, Gandhi took six months leave and
sailed to India with the intention of bringing his wife and two sons back with him (Gandhi, 1949). While in India, there was a bubonic plague outbreak which was believed to be spread by poor sanitation. Mohandas offered to help inspect latrines and made suggestions for improved sanitation. Although others were willing to inspect the latrines of the wealthy, Mohandas was unprejudiced, inspecting the latrines of the untouchables as well as the wealthy (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003). During this visit to India, he met veteran leaders like Badruddin Tyabji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Banerjee and the great patriot, Tilak (Nanda, 1987). He also met the wise and noble-hearted Gokhale and was instantly engrossed by him (Gandhi, 1949). Gokhale was an energetic political leader in India at the time. From the moment they met, until Gokhale's death, Mohandas would look to Gokhale for political guidance through spirituality and Gokhale in return, watched over Mohandas as a father would a son (Erikson, 1969).

Mohandas addressed a large public meeting in Mumbai and was due to speak in Calcutta shortly afterward, but before he could do so an urgent telegram from the Indian community in Natal obliged him to cut short his stay (Gandhi, 1949; Nanda, 1987).

3.2.3.4 The Storm

In November 1896, Mohandas and his family departed for South Africa. Mohandas was not aware that while he had been away from South Africa, the *Green Pamphlet*, which was the pamphlet of Indian grievances he had established in South Africa, had become exaggerated and distorted (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). On arrival in Durban, Mohandas’ ship was detained and put into quarantine as a large mob of white South Africans waiting at the harbour for him, believed that Mohandas was returning with two shiploads of Indian passengers to
overrun South Africa (Gandhi, 1949). When Mohandas disembarked, he managed to get his family to safety, but he himself was assaulted with bricks, rotten eggs, and fists (Gandhi, 1949). The police arrived in time to save Mohandas from the mob and escort him to safety. News of this cowardly assault received extensive publicity (Nanda, 1987) and Joseph Chamberlain, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent an order to Natal to prosecute all those who were responsible for the attack (Gandhi, 1949). Mohandas contested the claims against him and refused to prosecute those who had assaulted him, thus spoke the Mahatma in him (Nanda, 1987). This incident was seen as one which strengthened Gandhi's prestige in South Africa (Rossenberg, 1997).

3.2.3.5 The Boer War

In 1899 the Boer War began. Mohandas sympathized with the Boers as they were fighting for their independence but advised the Indian community to support the British cause, on grounds that since they claimed their rights as British subjects, it was their duty to defend the Empire when it was threatened (Gandhi, 1949). Mohandas organized the Indian Ambulance Corp in which 1,100 Indians heroically helped injured British soldiers (Gandhi, 1949; Rossenberg). What pleased Mohandas the most was the fact that Indians of all creeds and castes lived and faced danger together (Nanda, 1987).

3.2.3.6 Return to India

In 1901, at the end of the war, Mohandas felt he was ready to return to India with his family. He feared that his professional success in South Africa might turn him into a ‘money-maker’ (Gandhi, 1949, p. 183). With great difficulty he persuaded his friends to allow him to leave and promised to return should the community need him within a year.
Mohandas arrived in India in time to attend the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. He was satisfied to see his resolution on South Africa pass with acclamation (Nanda, 1987). However, he was disappointed with the congress as he felt that Indian politicians talked too much but did little. He also disapproved of the importance given to the English language in their deliberations and was deeply upset at the unsanitary condition of the latrines in the camp (Gandhi, 1949).

Mohandas stayed in Calcutta as Gokhale's guest for a few days then toured India. He traveled in third class in order to gain first hand knowledge of the habits and difficulties of the poor (Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924). Mohandas realized that the discomfort of third class travel in India was not primarily due to the indifferences of railway authorities but rather as a result of the dirty habits of the passengers themselves. He then suggested that educated people should voluntarily travel in third class so as to reform these people's habits and be in a position to air their justifiable grievances. This assessment as well as the remedy suggested was characteristic of Mohandas’ approach to all social and political problems. That is, equal emphasis on obligations as on rights (Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987).

3.2.3.7 To South Africa Again

Mohandas had hardly set up in practice in Mumbai when a cablegram from the Indian community in Natal recalled him to South Africa (Gandhi, 1949). As he had given his word that he would return if needed, he left his family in India and sailed to South Africa again.

Mohandas had been called to put an Indian case before Joseph Chamberlain who was visiting South Africa (Gandhi, 1949). But Chamberlain who had been given a gift of thirty-five million pounds from South Africa had no plan to alienate the European community
Thus, Mohandas failed to win Chamberlain's sympathy. At the same time, he discovered that the situation in the Transvaal had become more threatening for the Indians. He therefore decided to stay on in Johannesburg and enrolled as an advocate of the Supreme Court (Gandhi, 1949). Although Mohandas stayed on in South Africa specifically to challenge European arrogance and to defend against injustice, he harboured no hatred in his heart and was in fact always ready to assist his opponents when they were in distress (Nanda, 1987). It was this rare combination of willingness to resist wrong and capacity to love his opponent which bewildered his enemies and compelled their admiration (Erikson, 1969; Nanda, 1987; Rossenberg, 1977).

3.2.3.8 Result of Introspection and Soul Searching

In 1906 the so-called Zulu rebellion broke out. Mohandas again offered his help to the Government and raised an Indian Ambulance Corps. He was content with him and his men nursing the injured and dying Zulus whom the white doctors and nurses were unwilling to touch. It was during these marches through the Zulu country that he pondered deeply over the kind of life he should lead in order to dedicate himself completely to the service of humanity (Gandhi, 1949; Parel, 2006). He realized that absolute continence or brahmacharya was indispensable for the purpose, for one "could not live both after the flesh and the spirit" (Gandhi, 1949, p. 264). And so immediately after his return from the Zulu campaign in 1906, Mohandas took the vow of brahmacharya (a vow of abstinence against sexual relations, even with one's own wife) as he believed that family life was lessening his potential as a public advocate (Gandhi, 1949). He found this vow very difficult to follow, but worked diligently in order to honour it for the rest of his life: “Suffice it to say that with the gradual disappearance
in me of the carnal appetite, my domestic life became and is becoming more and more peaceful, sweet and happy” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 232). The decision to take the vow was directly influenced by the Bhagavad Gita which he had been reading regularly every morning for some time and committing to memory (Gandhi, 1949). Another doctrine of the Gita which influenced him profoundly was ‘non-possession’ (Nanda, 1987; Rossenberg, 1997). As soon as he realized its implications he allowed his insurance policy of R 10,000 to lapse. Henceforth he would put his faith in God alone (Nanda, 1987). Mohandas further believed that one passion fed another, so he restricted his diet in order to remove passion from his palette (Gandhi, 1949; Rossenberg, 1997). He simplified his diet from strict vegetarianism to unspiced and usually uncooked food, with fruits and nuts making up for most of his diet. Mohandas also believed that fasting would help the urges of the flesh and conducted lengthy fasts throughout his life whenever he felt necessary.

3.2.3.9 A simple life

As noted before, Mohandas was deeply influenced by the Gita which resulted in him wanting to purify his life by following the concepts of aparigraha (non-possession) and samabhava (equability) (Gandhi, 1949). It was not until a friend suggested he read Unto This Last by John Ruskin, that he became excited about the ideals (Parel, 2006; Rossenberg, 1997). What Ruskin preached, or rather what Mohandas understood him to preach, was the moral dignity of manual labour and the beauty of community living on the basis of equality (Nanda, 1987). Ruskin inspired Mohandas to establish a communal living community called Phoenix Settlement just outside of Durban in June 1904 (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). Phoenix Settlement became an experiment in communal living, a way to abolish unnecessary possessions and to live in a society with full equality. Mohandas moved his newspaper, the Indian Opinion,
and its workers to the Phoenix Settlement, followed by his family a short while later (Gandhi, 1949). The settlement contained a building for the press and each community member was allocated three acres of land on which to build a house made of corrugated iron (Gandhi, 1949; Rossenberg, 1997). In addition to farming, all members of the community were to be trained and expected to assist with the newspaper. Mohandas studied ‘the art of laundering’ and began washing his own clothes (Gandhi, 1949). He learnt how to iron, starch a stiff white collar and cut his own hair. Also, despite his busy practice as a lawyer and demand of public work, he offered a free service for two hours a day as compounder in a charitable hospital (Nanda, 1987). In addition, he provided home schooling for his two sons and nephew. Furthermore, he read books on nursing and midwifery and even served as a midwife when his fourth son was born.

But Mohandas could not stay long at the Phoenix Settlement. Duty called him to Johannesburg where also, later, he established another colony, the Tolstoy Farm, based on similar ideals to Phoenix (Gandhi, 1949). In both of these settlements the members did all the work themselves. Extreme simplicity of the life was observed and was reinforced by a strict code of moral and physical hygiene (Gandhi, 1949). No medicines were kept as Mohandas strongly in the cure of nature. Every member was also required to practice some handicraft. Mohandas himself learnt to make sandals (Nanda, 1987). Mohandas also took on the role as schoolmaster to the children at the ashrams. He believed they needed to be ‘trained’ mentally, physically and spiritually:

I regarded character building as the proper foundation for their education, and if the foundation was firmly laid, I was sure that the children could learn all the other things themselves or with the assistance of friends (Gandhi, 1949, p. 279).
3.2.3.10 The Birth of Satyagraha

Mohandas anticipated future struggles with the South African Government and knew from his own individual experience that no brute force could crush the spirit of a man who was ready to defy and willing to suffer (Gandhi, 1949). Mohandas decided that he could train others to do that which he could do himself. Individual resistance could be expanded and organized into a mass struggle in the prosecution of a moral equivalent of war. Mohandas believed that his vow of *brahmacharya* had allowed him the focus to develop the concept of *satyagraha* in 1906 (Nanda 1987). In the very simplest sense, *satyagraha* means passive resistance (Gandhi, 1949; Parel, 2006; Rossenberg, 1997). However, Mohandas believed the English phrase of ‘passive resistance’ did not clearly represent the true spirit of Indian resistance, as passive resistance was often considered to be used by the weak and was a tactic that could potentially be conducted in anger. Mohandas needed a new term for the Indian resistance. He therefore chose the term *satyagraha*, which literally means ‘truth force’. He believed that exploitation was only possible if both the exploited and the exploiter accepted it. Therefore if one could see beyond the present situation and see the universal truth (i.e., in this manner, truth could mean ‘natural right’, a right granted by nature and the universe that should not be impeded on by man.), then one had the power to make change (Gandhi, 1949).

In practice, *satyagraha* was a focused and forceful nonviolent resistance to a particular injustice or unfairness. According to Gandhi (1949) *satyagrahi* (a person using *satyagraha*) would resist the injustice by refusing to follow an unjust law. In doing so, he would not be angry, would put up freely with physical assaults to his person and the confiscation of his property, and would not use foul language to degrade his adversary. A *satyagrahi* also would
never take advantage of an adversary’s problems. The goal of satyagraha was not to discern a winner and loser of a battle, but rather to bring about understanding of the ‘truth’ and agree to annul the unjust law.

3.2.3.11 The Black Act

Mohandas officially used satyagraha for the first time in March 1907 in South Africa when he organized opposition to the Asiatic Registration Law (also known as the Black Act). The Black Act required all Indians to get fingerprinted and keep registration documents on them at all times as well as pay a £3 immigration tax when traveling (Gandhi, 1949). While using satyagraha, Indians refused to get fingerprinted and protested outside the documentation offices. Mass protests were organized, which saw miners striking and masses of Indians traveling illegally from Natal to the Transvaal in opposition to the Black Act. Many of the protesters were beaten and arrested, including Mohandas (Rolland, 1924). He was sentenced to two months imprisonment but before the prison term was over General Smuts offered to revoke the Black Act if the Indians voluntarily registered themselves. Mohandas agreed to the compromise as he always believed in trusting the opponent. But the other Indians were not so trusting and one of Mohandas’ followers charged at him and threatened to kill him if he registered. On the day Mohandas planned to register, he was attacked by this same follower and a few others, and severely injured. After regaining consciousness he was informed that his assailants had been arrested, but he insisted they be released (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997).

Mohandas registered but was greatly disappointed when Smuts went back on his word and refused to revoke the Black Act (Hardiman, 2003). The Indians retaliated by burning their registration certificates and defying the ban on immigration to the Transvaal. Mohandas was
arrested a second time in September 1908 and sentenced to two months imprisonment, but was given a sentence of hard labour this time. The struggle continued into the next year and in February 1908 he was arrested a third time and sentenced to three months’ hard labour. He used his jail time for study and prayer, declaring that "the real road to ultimate happiness lies in going to jail and undergoing sufferings and deprivations there in the interest of one's own country and religion" (Gandhi, 1949, p. 272).

In 1911, the Black Act was temporarily settled which brought about a postponement in the satyagraha protest (Nanda, 1987; Rossenberg, 1997). In 1912, Gokhale visited South Africa and before his departure, he assured Mohandas that the Union Government would revoke the Black Act, thereby removing the racial bar from the immigration law and abolishing the £3 tax (Gandhi, 1949). Mohandas, however, had his doubts about the Union Government keeping its promise and was not surprised when they did not honour it. To make matters worse, the Supreme Court ruled that only Christian marriages were legal in South Africa. This meant that all Indian marriages in South Africa were invalid and all Indian wives became concubines. This provoked Indian women, including Kasturbai, Gandhi’s wife, to join the struggle (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003).

Without a permit, Indians were not allowed to cross the border from the Transvaal into Natal, and vice versa (Hardiman, 2003). In reprisal, Indian women from the Tolstoy Ashram crossed the border without permits and proceeded to Newcastle with the intention to persuade the Indian miners situated there to strike. They succeeded in their in endeavour and for this they were arrested. The strike spread, seeing thousands of miners and other Indians under Mohandas’ leadership march to the Transvaal border in a resolute act of non-violent defiance. Mohandas made strict rules for the conduct of the satyagrahis who were to submit patiently and without
retaliation to insult, assault or arrest (Nanda, 1987). Mohandas was arrested and sentenced, but it did not hinder the spread of the satyagraha defiance. At one point there were about fifty thousand labourers on strike and several thousand other Indians in jail (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). The Government reacted with repression and even opened fire into the crowds, killing many innocent people.

Mohandas was released and, in January 1914, a provisional agreement was reached between him and General Smuts, having the main Indian demands accepted (Gandhi, 1949; Rolland, 1924). Mohandas had proved that nonviolent protest could be effective and greatly successful (Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987; Rossenberg, 1997). Having spent twenty years in South Africa helping fight discrimination, Mohandas decided it was time to head back to India. In July 1914, Mohandas and his family sailed for England where Gokhale had called him. Before departing, he sent a pair of sandals he had made in jail to General Smuts as a gift. Recalling the gift twenty-five years later, Smuts wrote: "I have worn these sandals for many a summer since then even though I may feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man" (Nanda, 1987).

3.2.4 Great soul in beggar's garb (1915–1932)

3.2.4.1 Back in India

On his way to India, Mohandas was scheduled to make a short stopover in England. However, when World War I broke out during his journey, Mohandas decided to stay in England and form another Indian ambulance corps to help the British (Rolland, 1924). When the British air caused Mohandas to take ill, he sailed to India in January 1915 (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924).

Mohandas’ struggles and triumphs in South Africa had been reported worldwide and by the time he reached home he was a national hero. When World War I broke out, Mahatma had to be
restrained in his action for India’s independence. As part of satyagraha, Mahatma had vowed to never take advantage of an opponent's troubles. As the British were fighting in the war, Mahatma could not fight for Indian freedom from British rule. But Mahatma refused to be idle in his deeds. He therefore readily promised his ‘political guru’, Gokhale, that he would spend the first year in India studying the county and, acquainting himself with the people and their tribulations (Gandhi, 1949).

3.2.4.2 The Mahatma

It was during his first year back in India that Mohandas was given the honorary title of Mahatma (Great Soul) by Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, who wrote Great Soul in Beggar's Garb and winner of the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). The title, Mahatma, represented the feelings of the millions of Indians who viewed him as a holy man. However, Mohandas never liked the title as it had the connotation that he was special compared to everyone. Gandhi has always viewed himself as ordinary.

Mahatma found that his unwanted fame got in the way of accurately experiencing the conditions that the poorer people experienced. In an attempt to travel more anonymously, he began wearing a dhoti (loincloth) and sandals (the average dress of the masses) during this journey. This became his wardrobe for the rest of his life.

Also during this year of observation, Mahatma founded another communal settlement in Ahmadabad which he called the Satyagraha Ashram. In May 1915, at the end of his year's travels, Mahatma settled down at the Satyagraha Ashram (Gandhi, 1949). The members of the Satyagraha Ashram comprised of twenty-five men and women, who took the vows of truth, ahimsa, celibacy, non-stealing, non-possession and control of the palate, and dedicated themselves to the service of the people (Gandhi, 1949). Mahatma lived on the Ashram for the
next sixteen years, along with his family and several members who had once been part of the Phoenix Settlement.

Mahatma’s first public address in India was at the opening ceremony of the Banaras Hindu University in February 1916 (Gandhi, 1949; Nanda, 1987). At the ceremony, Mahatma addressed many distinguished guests including princes and the Viceroy himself. Speaking in English, Mahatma stunned them by expressing his humiliation and shame at being compelled to address his countrymen in a foreign language (Nanda, 1987). He then spoke to the princes, stating that there will be no salvation for India unless they stripped themselves of jewelry and held it in trust for their countrymen in India. This caused a huge upset, with some princes walking out of the ceremony.

His first satyagraha in India was in 1917 in Champaran, Bihar, where at the request of poor peasants, went to inquire about their grievance of exploitation. The peasants were compelled by British indigo planters to grow indigo on 15 percent of their land and part with the whole crop for rent (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003). News of Mahatma’s arrival to inquire into their sufferings spread like wild fire, resulting in thousands of peasants arriving in Champaran to inform him of their difficulties. The police superintendent ordered Mahatma to leave as he was seen as causing an upset in the district. When Mahatma refused, he was summoned to appear in court where thousand of peasants followed him. The embarrassed magistrate postponed the trial and released him without bail (Rossenberg, 1997). Later, the case was withdrawn and Mahatma proceeded with his inquiry. While doing his inquiry, he educated the peasants in the principles of satyagraha and at the same time teaching them that the first condition of freedom was freedom from fear. Mahatma recruited volunteers who helped to instruct the illiterate and ignorant peasants in basic hygiene (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). He also ran schools for their
children. This type of activity was typical of Mahatma. He taught people to fight for their rights and at the same time, taught them to fulfill their obligations. He believed that free people must learn to stand on their feet. Consequently, the more he worked for the people the less welcomed his presence became to the Government who were at last obliged to set up a committee of inquiry. Finally, the report of the committee of which Mahatma was a member went in favour of the tenant farmers. The success of his first experiment in satyagraha in India greatly enhanced Mahatma's reputation in his country.

In 1918, Mahatma used his influence and satyagraha to change inequities between Indians (Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924). He received an urgent appeal from the textile workers of Ahmedabad whose dispute with the mill-owners was taking a serious turn. After gauging whether the workers' demands were legitimate and mill-owners' refusal to submit the dispute to arbitration unreasonable, Mahatma asked the workers to strike. They took a pledge of non-violence at the request of Mahatma but after a few days their enthusiasm began to diminish. Mahatma feared that they might break the pledge and resort to violence. Since it was the fear of starvation which drove the workers to desperation, he decided to starve himself. He declared that he would not touch food until a settlement had been reached. Mahatma's reputation and prestige had reached such a high level that people did not want to be responsible for his death as fasting made him physically weak and sick, with the potential for death (Nanda, 1987; Parel, 2006; Rossenberg, 1997). Thus, at the end of three days, both parties agreed on arbitration.

Almost immediately after the dispute in Ahmedabad, Mahatma was called to the Kheda district of Gujarat. The peasants, who were on the verge of starvation, were being forced by the Government to pay the usual tax. Mahatma advised satyagraha, persuading both well-off and poor peasants not to pay any tax until those who could not pay were granted remission
(Hardiman, 2003). The no-tax campaign lasted for about four months at the end of which the Government suspended the assessment for the poor peasants.

In 1917 Mahatma made a decision to support the British, even though they were the very empire of which he wanted independence from (Rolland, 1924). Viceroy Lord Chelmsford invited Mahatma to a War conference in Delhi to enlist the support of Indian leaders for the recruitment campaign. At that time Mahatma believed that the British Empire was by and large a power for good, and that since India had on the whole benefited by British connection, it was the duty of every Indian to help the Empire in the hour of its need. Mahatma not only supported the resolution of the War Conference but actually toured the Kheda district (where previously he had led the peasants in *satyagraha*) to persuade people to enlist (Hardiman, 2003).

3.2.4.3 Turning against the British

At the end of the World War I, Mahatma thought it was time to focus on the fight for Indian *swaraj* (self rule) (Gandhi, 1949; Rolland, 1924). He found his opportunity in 1919 when the Rowlatt Act was approved. The Act allowed the British in India to eradicate ‘revolutionary’ elements by imprisoning them indefinitely without trial (Rossenberg, 1997). In retort, Mahatma organized a mass *hartal* (general strike), which began in March, 1919 (Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924). Unfortunately, due to such a large scale protest, the crowd became uncontrollable and in many places it turned violent (Gandhi, 1949). Mahatma was forced to suspend the *hartal* but not after over 300 Indians had died and over 1000 were injured from British reprisal in the city of Amritsar (Gandhi, 1949; Rossenberg, 1997). Satyagraha had not been realized during this protest which later became known as the Amritsar Massacre. This fueled Indian anger toward the British and the violence that had erupted from the *hartal* showed Mahatma that the Indian people did not yet fully believe in the power and effectiveness of *satyagraha*. Hence, Mahatma spent much of
the 1920s advocating for satyagraha and learning how to prevent nationwide protests from becoming violent (Parel, 2006).

In March 1922, Mahatma was jailed for sedition and sentenced to six years imprisonment (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). But after two years, Mahatma was released due to ill-health following surgery for appendicitis. Upon his release, Mahatma discovered that Hindus and Muslims in India were engaged in violent attacks with each other, which he found most disturbing. As penance for the violence, Mahatma began a 21-day fast, known as the Great Fast of 1924. Many thought he would die by day twelve as he was still recovering from surgery. But Mahatma was unyielding in his effort and both Hindus and Muslims agreed on temporary peace.

In 1925, Mahatma began advocating self-sufficiency as a way to gain freedom from the British (Hardiman, 2003). The British, having established India as a colony, allowed India to supply Britain with raw materials which Britain used to make woven cloth. This expensive cloth was then imported back to India from England (Gandhi, 1949; Rossenberg, 1997). Mahatma saw this as unnecessary and therefore advocated that Indians spin their own cloth to free themselves from the dependence on Britain. Mahatma promoted this idea by traveling with his own charkha (spinning wheel), often spinning yarn even while addressing the crowds. In this way, the image of the charkha became a symbol for Indian independence (Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924; Rossenberg, 1949).

3.2.4.4 The Salt March

In December 1928, the Indian National Congress (INC) led by Mahatma, announced to the British government that if India was not granted the status of a Commonwealth by December 31, 1929, they would organize a nation-wide protest against British taxes (Rolland, 1924; Rossenberg, 1997). But the request fell on deaf ears and Mahatma took action. Having many
British taxes to choose from, Mahatma decided to choose one that symbolized British exploitation of India's poor (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). He settled on the salt tax as it was a spice that was used in everyday cooking, even for the poorest in India. The British had made it illegal to own salt not sold or produced by the British government in order to make a profit on all salt sold in India (Nanda, 1987).

The Salt March began in March, 1930. Mahatma and 78 followers marched from the Sabarmati Ashram toward to the sea, about 200 miles away (Gandhi, 1949). As the days passed, the group of marchers grew, building up to about two or three thousand (Rossenberg, 1997). The determined marchers, walked approximately 12 miles per day in the sweltering sun. The group reached Dandi, a coastal town, in the beginning of April, and spent the entire night praying (Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924). In the morning, Mahatma addressed the crowd. He ceremoniously picked up a piece of sea salt that lay on the beach, technically breaking the law (Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987; Rossenberg, 1997). This was the beginning of a momentous, national endeavor for Indians to make their own salt. Thousands of people flocked to the beaches, picking up loose salt while others evaporated salt water to obtain salt. The vigor and drive created by the Salt March rippled throughout India and led to peaceful protests and marches. Soon, Indian-made salt was sold across the entire country. The British responded in the only manner they could, they began mass arrests.

When Mahatma announced that he planned a march on the government-owned Dharasana Saltworks, he was arrested and imprisoned without trial (Hardiman, 2003; Rossenberg, 1997). The British had hoped that Mahatma's arrest would put an end to the march but they had underestimated his followers. The march was taken over by poet, Sarojini Naidu who led the 2,500 marchers (Nanda, 1987). As the group reached the 400 British policemen who were
waiting for them, the marchers moved into a line of 25 at a time. The international press watched as marchers were beaten with clubs even after they refused to raise their hands to defend themselves. After the first 25 marchers were beaten to the ground, another line of 25 would approach and be beaten, until all 2,500 had marched forward and been battered (Nanda, 1987; Rossenberg, 1997). The news of the brutal beating of peaceful protesters by the British shocked the world (Hardiman, 2003). Lord Irwin, the British viceroy, realized he had to make an effort to stop the protests and met with Mahatma. As a result, the Delhi Pact was made. The pact granted limited salt production and the freeing of all the peaceful protesters from jail on condition that Mahatma called off the protests (Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987). Whereas many Indians felt that Mahatma had not been granted enough during these negotiations, Mahatma himself viewed it as a definite step on the road to independence.

3.2.5 Freedom and Martyrdom (1933–1948)

3.2.5.1 Indian Independence

India’s independence did not happen overnight, it was a gradual progression which took patience, perseverance and determination. Mahatma conducted another fast in 1933, this time for 21 days (Hardiman, 2003). His motive was self-purification, but also resulted in his image being enhanced as a holy man or prophet. The adoration and worship this fast brought concerned Mahatma, so much so that he decided to retire from politics in 1934 at age 64 (Rossenberg, 1997). However, five years later, when the British viceroy boldly announced that India would support England during World War II without consulting any Indian leaders beforehand, Mahatma came out of retirement. The British Parliament realized that they were once again facing mass protests in India and began discussing possible ways to create an independent India (Rossenberg, 1997). Prime Minister Winston Churchill was against this idea as he was not
willing to lose India as a British colony. Nevertheless, the British announced in March 1941 that it would free India at the end of World War II (Hardiman, 2003). But this was not acceptable in the eyes of Mahatma as he believed that independence should be granted as sooner. He therefore organized a ‘Quit India’ campaign in 1942 and as a result, like many times before, the British jailed him (Nanda, 1987; Parel, 2006).

When Mahatma was released from prison in 1944, Indian independence seemed to be in sight (Hardiman, 2003; Rolland, 1924). However, disagreements between Hindus and Muslims had resurfaced. Given that the majority of Indians were Hindu, the Muslims feared they would not have any political power if India was given their independence (Hardiman, 2003). The Muslims suggested India be split, allowing the provinces which had a majority of Muslims to become an independent country (Rolland, 1924; Rossenberg, 1997). But Mahatma was adamant that India remained whole and did his best to bring all sides together. This time, however, the dispute between Hindus and Muslims proved immense for even the Mahatma to resolve (Hardiman, 2003). India became a war ground. Innocent people were subjected to acts of violence including rape, murder, and the burning of entire their houses (Rolland, 1924). In an attempt to stop the violence, Mahatma toured India. And although violence did halt in areas he was present in, it was impossible to be everywhere all the time. The British, having watched the raging war between the Hindus and Muslims from a distance, decided to free India. But not before acquiring the Hindu’s to agree, against Mahatma’s wishes, to have India partitioned. In August, 1947, Great Britain granted independence to India and to the newly formed Muslim country of Pakistan (Hardiman, 2006; Parel, 2006).

The fighting between the Hindus and Muslims continued as millions of Muslim and Hindu refugees marched in and out of India and Pakistan, to their respective countries. Many refugees
died from illness, exposure and dehydration all the while having to deal with the ongoing violence. To stop this wide-spread violence, Mahatma once again began fasting stating that he would only eat once he saw clear plans to stop the violence. He commenced his fast in January, 1948. Muslims and Hindus knew that Mahatma, given his frailty and age, would not be able to withstand a long fast. After a few five days, group of more than a hundred Muslims and Hindus approached him, promising peace and thus ended Mahatma’s fast (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2006; Parel, 2006).

3.2.5.2 Assassination

Unfortunately, not everyone was pleased with the plan for peace. A few radical Hindu groups believed that India should never have been partitioned and partly blamed Mahatma for the division.

On January 30, 1948, Mahatma, then 78 years old, spent his last day as he had many others. The main part of his day was spent discussing issues with various groups and individuals who called upon him for advice and guidance. Just after 5 pm, Mahatma began walking to Birla House for the daily prayer meeting. A crowd had surrounded him as he walked, being supported by two of his grandnieces. He raised his hands and touched the palms together to greet the crowd that was waiting. Every one returned the greeting. Many came forward wanting to touch his feet (showing a sign of respect) even though they were not allowed to do so, as Mahatma was late for the prayer meeting. While on his way to the prayer meeting, a Hindu named Nathuram Godse bowed before Mahatma, rushed forward and shot him three times with a semi-automatic pistol aimed at the heart. Mahatma fell, his lips uttering He Ram (the name of God). Although he had survived five other assassination attempts, the shots were fatal and Mahatma died.

Shortly after Mahatma’s assassination, Prime Minister Nehru addressed the Indian people.
With a trembling voice he broke the news of Mahatma’s death on the radio:

The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere and I do not quite know what to tell you and how to say it. Our beloved leader, Bapu as we call him, the father of our nation, is no more... The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. The light that has illumined this country for these many years, and the world will see it and it will give solace to innumerable hearts. For that light represented the living truth, and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom... (Rossenberg, 1997, www.about.com).

3.4 Gandhism

Mahatma's philosophy is made up of various elements, and has been interpreted from different angles. According to Parel (2006), some treat it primarily as political theory, while others see it as an original theory of conflict resolution and non-violence. In addition, there are those who regard it as containing ideas extremely relevant for both economic development and for the maintenance of a sustainable economy. Finally, there are those who find in it significant ideas on the relationship of art to society. When looked at individually, each gives an in-depth, but unavoidably partial understanding of the whole. The fact is that individual themes in Mahatma's philosophy make full sense only when they are seen in their relationship to one another and to the whole (Parel, 2006). Some of these are briefly highlighted below:

3.4.1. Gandhi's principles

Truth

Mahatma dedicated his life to the wider purpose of discovering Truth. He tried to achieve this by learning from his own mistakes and conducting experiments on himself (i.e., fasting, celibacy,
vegetarianism). He therefore called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

Mahatma stated that the most important battle to fight was overcoming his own demons, fears, and insecurities (Gandhi, 1949). He summarized his beliefs first when he said "God is Truth" (Gandhi, 1949, p. 57). He later changed this statement to "Truth is God" (Gandhi, 1949, p.263). Thus, Satya (Truth) in Mahatma's philosophy is ‘God’.

*Ahimsa (Non-injury to living beings)*

Although Mahatma was not the originator of the principle of non-violence, he was the first to apply it in the political field on a huge scale.

*Vegetarianism*

The idea of vegetarianism is deeply ingrained in Hindu traditions in India, and most Hindus were vegetarian. In keeping his vow to his mother, he gained more than a diet - He gained a basis for his life-long philosophies.

*Brahmacharya (celibacy)*

Mahatma saw Brahmacharya as a means of becoming close with God and as a primary foundation for self realization. In his autobiography he tells of his battle against lustful urges and fits of jealousy with Kasturbai. He felt it his personal obligation to remain celibate so that he could learn to love, rather than lust. For Mahatma, Brahmacharya meant "control of the senses in thought, word and deed” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 176).

*Simplicity*

Mahatma believed that a person involved in social service should lead a simple life which he thought could lead to Brahmacharya. His simplicity began by renouncing the western lifestyle he was leading in South Africa. When he returned to India, he wore a dhoti, until he died, to express the simplicity of his life.
Faith / Spirituality

Mahatma practiced Hinduism all his life, deriving most of his principles from Hinduism. As a common Hindu, he believed all religions to be equal, and rejected all efforts to convert him to a different faith. Mahatma believed that at the core of every religion was truth and love. He also questioned what he saw as hypocrisy, malpractices, and dogma in all religions, including his own, and he was a tireless advocate for social reform in religion.

3.5 Conclusion

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi believed that no matter how great his love for his country may have been, his faith in his ideal, in religion expressed in Truth, was greater still (Rolland, 1924). The moral influence of his character, his gospel and Satyagraha cannot be weighed in any material scale. Nor is its value limited to any particular country or generation but rather an imperishable gift to humanity (Nanda, 1987). He died at the hands of one of his own people, to the eternal glory of what he had lived for and to the eternal shame of those who failed to understand that he was the best representative of the religion for which he suffered martyrdom. The following chapter describes the psychobiographical approach which was used to facilitate a deeper understanding of the personality development of Mahatma Gandhi utilizing Erik Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory as a lens.
CHAPTER 4

PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

4.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter is aimed at providing an understanding of the psychobiographical approach. In doing this, the relationship between psychology and biography will be discussed. Definitions and descriptions regarding psychobiographies are provided as well as distinctions between psychobiography and related concepts are highlighted. In addition, the value of life history research and psychobiographical case study is presented. The chapter is concluded with a discussion on the preliminary methodological considerations which need to be considered when undertaking a psychobiographical study. Methodological issues and concerns that require consideration when undertaking a psychobiographical study are highlighted, as well as recommendations of how to deal with them.

4.2 Psychology, Biography and Narrative

A psychobiography can be described as a way of doing psychology, not merely a way of doing a biography (Elms, 1994). Psychobiography is the name given to life histories making substantial use of psychological theory and/or research as a means of shedding light on the interior lives of biographical subjects, and the connection between the life and the work (Schultz, 2005). It is, therefore, a study of a complete life, from birth to death, with aims to discern,
discover or formulate the central story of the whole life; a story structured according to psychological theory (McAdams, 1994). Powerful insights regarding how individuals reshape their past, present and future and their social relations are also provided (Uys, 2007). Roberts (2002) affirmed that their response to socio-cultural and economic status can also be analysed.

Life stories or histories of famous figures have long captivated and intrigued scholars in the diverse disciplines of biography and scientific psychology (Howe, 1997; McAdams, 1988). Biography and scientific psychology sought to distinguish how differences in the development of such an individual come about (i.e., how do particular children develop into unusually capable, remarkably creative and industrious men and women?). In addition, both fields attempt to ascertain how the life course of an individual can be fully understood and what would the most effective medium be through which the evolvement of a single life over a period of time may be observed (McAdams, 1994).

Yin (2003) has noted that the significant value of psychobiographical case studies has been advocated by various scholars in the field of life history research for the development and testing of theories relating to human development. Various theorists such as Alfred Adler (1870-19737), Erik Erikson (1902-1980) and Henry Murray (1893-1988) have suggested that a psychologically informed biography or life history is arguably the best method of capturing a human life situated in time (McAdams, 1994). Yet, according to Elms (1994), most personality psychologists have not viewed themselves as biographers. Howe (1997), asserts that psychology tends to highlight the importance of reliable evidence and thus applies conceptual patterns of developmental and personality psychology frameworks when tracing and explaining the typical patterns of human development.

Biographical approaches to the study of a person have frequently succumbed to criticisms of
ambiguity and controversy, despite appealing claims that people may be best understood in their biographical context (Anderson, 1981a; Runyan, 1984). According to Anderson (1981a; 1981b) and Runyan (1984), the criticisms against psychological biography’s method of investigation include the unmanageable and subjective methodology which makes a comprehensive and thorough scientific study not possible.

The counter arguments presented against these criticisms state that they a) are indicative of an overly narrow view of science, (b) neglecting the fact that good biographical studies are highly illuminating, and (c) psychologists neglecting their intellectual responsibility when they fail to take biographical information into account (McAdams, 1994). Nevertheless, the past two decades have seen an increase of interest in, and more significantly, the acceptance of biographical and autobiographical approaches and frameworks among personality psychologists and other social scientists (Bertaux, 1981; Elms, 1994; McAdams 1994; McAdams & Ochberg, 1988; Runyan, 1982).

According to McAdams (1988; 1994) social scientists generally seem to be highlighting the importance of the concept of narrative as applied to the lives of individuals and their societies. The concept narrative is described by Bromley (1986) as an ‘orderly account of a series of events’ which can take the form of a story and emphasizes description rather than explanation. Sarbin (1986) believed that narrative can be considered a core metaphor for the understanding of human behaviour and experience. Furthermore, Bruner (1986) stated that psychologists from differing influences may benefit from moving away from logico-deductive modes of experience and begin to explore narrative dimensions of human development. McAdams (1988) concluded that life narrative research and psychobiography thus appear to reflect the important emergence of narrative, story, and biography as guiding frames for studying and for understanding
behaviour.

4.3 Psychobiography: Definitions and Descriptions

A range of descriptions of psychobiography exist, although there are fundamentals which are common to all, as illustrated below:

- Psychobiography is the systematic application of psychological theory to transform a life into a sound and illuminating story (McAdams, 1988).
- Psychobiography is a way of doing psychological research in which biographical data is used extensively to examine the growth of unique thinking, originality and productivity in extraordinary individuals (Howe, 1997).
- Psychobiography is the application of psychological concepts typically developed in twentieth century, to subjects who lived in earlier decades or eras (Anderson, 1981).
- Psychobiography is the study of an entire life, from birth to death, with the aim of discerning, discovering, or to formulating the central story of the entire life. This story is structured according to psychological theory (McAdams, 1994).

In order to bring about a greater understanding of the term psychobiography, the researcher will provide a brief description of related concepts in the following section. This will help to clarify the concept of psychobiography by comparing it with other closely related and often confusing terms.

4.4 Psychobiography and Related Concepts

4.4.1 Psychobiography and Personality Assessment

Psychobiography commonly focuses on lives already lived and thus tends to provide explanations for features of the life history which are not easily derived through the use of
rationality or simple psychological principles (Alexander, 1988). Personality assessment is aimed at examining developing lives, mainly focusing on describing the person presently, as well as analyzing the influences that helped to shape the person. According to Aiken (1997) this is achieved by administering psychological tests or other instruments to evaluate behaviour and other personal characteristics.

4.4.2 Life Histories and Life Stories

Life histories examine relationships across many lives in a particular group in search of similarities and patterns (Bareira, 2001). Roberts (2002) describes life histories as a fairly complete narrative of the individual’s life as a whole, highlighting the most important aspects. Bromley (1986) further explains it as an attempt to reconstruct and interpret the major formative, critical and culminative episodes in a person’s life by making use of both subjective and objective data. Life stories generally refer to the collection, interpretation and report writing of the life of a person in the context of the story told (Roberts, 2002). It presents various kinds of information regarding the person, as provided by the narrator. Therefore, it is primarily subjective as it is an account of events, circumstances and relationships in the person’s life according to the narrator (Bromley, 1986). According to Goodson and Sikes (2001), the depiction of lived experience into a life story is one interpretive layer, but to move to life history adds another layer through further investigation.

4.4.3 Historical Psychology, Psychohistory and Historiography

Historical psychology can be described as the history of psychological phenomena or the history of thought about psychological development and the life course (Runyan, 1988a).

Psychohistory is the use of formal psychological theory in an effort to further interpret political, social and cultural events. For that reason, it is mainly a historical exercise (Berg, 1995;
Runyan, 1988a).

Historiography can be described as the attempt to collect information from the past using various data sources (i.e., government documents, newspaper editorials, photographs and films) in order to reconstruct a meaningful set of historical explanations (Berg, 1955). According to Anderson (1990) historiography is past-orientated research which aims to stimulate current interest through an intensive study of existing material.

4.4.4 Autobiography, Psychological Case-Study and Psychobiography

Autobiography is the self-authored documentation of an individual’s life, or parts of it. Therefore, Bromley (1986) states that an autobiography tends to be biased and selective as it is usually written form a subjective perspective.

A psychological case study involves the documentation of specific events or emotional episodes within a certain period in an individual’s life, using evidence which allows the researcher to reconstruct and interpret it (Louw & Edwards, 1993). In addition, the case study method is a crucial component of research in the development of new approaches to therapy (Louw & Edwards, 1993).

Psychobiography focuses on an individual’s life over an extended period, thereby focusing on the person in their totality (Bromley, 1986). It is the combination of both psychology and biography. Edwards (1990) assert that psychobiography facilitates theory building through the development and refinement of concepts and can be utilized for theory testing by confirming or disconfirming theory.

4.4.5 Single-Case Experiment

The single-case experiment utilizes pre-defined measures in order to assess pre-defined variables. According to Bromley (1986), closely controlled conditions are established to conduct
a study of one or more aspects of behaviour of a single case. This type of study aims to record and measure specific changes that occur in individuals as a result of the application of particular interventions. Consequently, it provides the researcher with an opportunity to draw definite, accurate and valid conclusions about causal relationships (Gerdes, 1989). The major disadvantage is that the controlled conditions eliminate any external influences which would have influenced the subject under normal circumstances (Gerdes, 1989).

4.5 The Value of Life History Research and Psychobiographical Case Study

4.5.1 The Uniqueness of the Individual Case within the Whole

Psychobiography is morphogenic in nature; it is a study of individualized patterning processes and ‘wholes’ in personality rather than specific fragmented dimensions of personalities (Elms, 1994). The life history approach provides a unique and holistic description of the person being studied (Elms, 1994; Runyan, 1984).

4.5.2 The Socio-Historical Context

Runyan (1984) affirmed that by looking at a person holistically, as is the case with life history research and psychobiographical studies, attention is given to a larger contextualized background within which the individual existed. In addition, Goodson and Sikes (2001) affirmed that there is an essential interactive relationship between individuals, their perceptions and experiences as well as historical and social contexts with their associated events.

Mahatma Gandhi lived in radical socio-historical times in India and South Africa. In order to contextualize this background, emphasis is placed on his socio-cultural experience, the process of socialization and family his history (Roberts, 2002).

4.5.3 Process and Pattern over Time

Life history is related to the complete explanation and understanding of behavioural processes
and developmental patterns over time (Runyan, 1984). The researcher is able to trace patterns of human development from start till the end of a person’s life due to the fact that psychobiographies tend to focus on finished lives (Carlson, 1988). It then becomes possible to form a more comprehensive understanding of personality in action which will enable the researcher to document different dimensions and processes of an individual’s functioning at any point in time and in any specific situation (Fiske, 1988).

4.5.4 Subjective Reality

Life history research offers the researcher an enlightening description and understanding of the thoughts, feelings and inner experiences of the subject (Mouton, 1988). Watson (1976) claimed that it is significant to understand a subject’s life history as a subjective document from the subject’s point of view. This will allow the researcher to develop the required level of sympathy and empathy for the subject as he explores the subject’s world (Runyan, 1984).

4.5.5 Theory Testing and Development

Life history material provides an ideal setting for validating and developing various personality theories. The story serves as a template against which the researcher can compare and analyse the collected data (Uys, 2007). This aids in the conceptualization and operationalising of case data within the framework of theoretical constructs, and allows for generalizing from the case study to the theory (Yin, 2003). Therefore, life history research provides a perfect opportunity for validating and developing various theories of human development (Carlson, 1988). Furthermore, Roberts (2000) suggests that new conceptual insights can be gained or existing theories can be illustrated during collection, interpretation and the presentation of the research.
This first part of this chapter provided a brief outline to facilitate an understanding of the psychobiographical approach, an approach well suited to study the life of Mahatma Gandhi. In the next section of this chapter, the important methodological considerations required in undertaking a psychobiographical study are discussed as well as the application of these considerations to the study of the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

4.7 Methodological Considerations in Psychobiography

Anderson (1981b) states that no enterprise involving psychology has received as much criticism as psychobiography. Even the most experienced psychobiographers face major limitations and obstacles that do not usually confront other kinds of researchers (McAdams, 1994). Runyan (1983; 1984) indicated that many of the criticisms against psychobiographical studies are related to the idiographic approach to the study of lives. The researcher should take note of the methodological difficulties that confront the psychobiographical approach when choosing to follow this method in studying individual lives. These limitations, as well as mechanisms for reducing their influence within this study are discussed in the sections to follow.

4.7.1 Cross-cultural differences

Psychobiographical studies may be considered a form of cross-cultural research as it is assumed that the culture in which the subject lived would have differed from our present day culture (Anderson, 1981a; 1981b). The result of this is that the concepts would not necessarily be applicable to the behavior of the subject, and furthermore not cross-culturally sensitive. In light of this, it is recommended by Anderson (1981) that the researcher undertake extensive and in-depth historical research in order to develop a culturally empathic understanding of the subject. In addition, Anderson suggests that the psychobiographer should adopt an anthropologist’s approach to research which would involve familiarizing himself or herself with the culture from
the viewpoint of the people who live in it, especially from the subject’s point of view. Berg (1995) suggests that the researcher should consult a variety of data, ranging from primary sources (e.g., original artifacts and documents) to secondary sources (e.g., published documents, newspaper editorials and interviews).

4.7.2 Reductionism

Some psychobiographers may assume that the application of fixed psychological formulas to the lives of historical figures constitutes sufficient analysis (Anderson, 1981a; 1988b). One form of the reductionist critique is that psychological factors are overemphasized at the expense of external social and historical factors (Runyan, 1984). According to Runyan numerous psychobiographies do not take careful consideration of the complex social, historical and cultural context within which the individual’s life was rooted, even though the subject’s life is strongly shaped by culture and a sub-culture.

Runyan also noted that psychobiographies focus on psychopathological processes rather than normality or health. This criticism is referred to as overpathologising (McAdams, 1994). According to Elms (1994) the early history of psychobiography was predominantly aimed towards a psychoanalytic and psychodynamic understanding of the lives of great men. In addition, the later formative influences are neglected for early childhood experiences (Runyan, 1988b; Wallace, 1989). This form of reductionism was identified by Erik Erikson as originology (Anderson, 1981a). Too much emphasis on childhood events and critical periods in childhood developments runs an immense risk relating to the contentious issue of continuity and consistency in personality from childhood to adulthood (McAdams, 1994; Wallace, 1989).

These critiques can be minimized through the proposition of the following strategies and precautions:
(a) The use of multiple sources of data collection and analysis (Runyan, 1988). This would entail the psychobiographer synthesizing many different kinds of data from multiple sources that converge on a particular explanation. McAdams (1994) affirms that the psychobiographer is required to check social and historical sources in order to attain sufficient evidence beyond simple psychological reductionism.

(b) The avoidance of excessive use of psychological jargon (Runyan, 1988). Fouche (1999) states that technical terms and psychological terminology should be used appropriately and in moderation. This reduces the probability of explaining all events and aspects, related to the subject, solely in reductionist psychological terminology (Anderson, 1981a; Runyan, 1988b).

(c) The avoidance of pathologising the subject through the use of health-orientated approaches (Elms, 1994). Instead, a eugraphic approach should be used in which the psychobiographer plots how the subject becomes and remains psychologically well. The use of a nonpathographic approach reduces the likelihood of originology and overpathologising (Elms, 1994).

(d) Approaching the subject as a complex, whole person in context (Anderson, 1981; Howe, 1997). This can be ensured by having a maintained understanding of the multifaceted personality and socio-historical background of an individual as opposed to assuming that any reductionistic psychological analysis can capture it (Anderson, 1981a; Howe, 1997).

4.7.3 Analyzing an absent subject

Analyzing an absent subject is often viewed as a disadvantage for psychobiographical researchers as the researcher seldom has contact with the subject. However, Anderson (1981) states that the psychobiographer is at an advantage as they are able to access various information sources as well as having the opportunity to analyze events in the light of the eventual effects. Anderson also affirms that a psychobiographer has an advantageous position of balanced
description, which implies that the biographer is not limited by therapeutic considerations. While a therapist may develop a distorted view of her client because she focuses on the facets of the client’s behavior that are maladaptive, the biographer is free to develop a well-rounded and objective account of the subject.

4.7.4 Researcher Bias

Psychobiographical research is relatively in-depth and long term and therefore may result in countertransference reactions from the researcher (Stroud, 2004). For example, the researcher may idealize the subject and enjoy the status of being associated with such an acclaimed figure. According to Anderson (1981a) these emotional reactions are usually not deliberate, and the author may actually believe that he or she is only identifying and describing the subject’s personality.

With the purpose of reducing the difficulty related to the criticism of researcher bias, the following strategies or steps could be employed by all psychobiographers:

a. Develop empathy for the subject. This is particularly useful as a safeguard against the inclination to be reproachful (Anderson, 1981a).

b. Request close acquaintances and other biographical experts to read the manuscript, and comment on specifically on the psychobiographer’s relationships with the subject (Anderson, 1984b; Schurink, 1988).

c. Analyze all feelings about the biographical subject. The biographer should include an appendix in his or her written work, describing thoughts about the subject, his or her preconceptions, and the manner in which he or she decided to write about the person (Anderson, 1981a; 1981b).

4.7.5 Validity and Reliability Criticisms
Runyan (1988) stated that the psychobiographical approach has been criticized for the lack of controls and the difficulty of generalizing findings. The literature on the validity and reliability in case study research proposes the following strategies and precautions so as to aim at meeting the test for construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability:

1. Construct validity: This refers to establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2003). The researcher is required to select and clearly conceptualize the specific constructs or variables that are to be studied. This should be done in a comprehensible manner, and in relation to the original objectives of the study. The clear conceptualization of concepts or variables increases the researcher’s ability and clarity of which indicators or constructs he or she wants to operationalise during data collection (Yin, 2003).

2. Internal validity: This refers to establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to be led by other conditions as distinguished from false relationships (Runyan, 1984). This can be ensured by spending sufficient time, and doing in-depth research with subject material to check for distortions. In addition triangulation could be used (Rudestam & Newton, 1992).

3. External validity: This refers to establishing the domain to which the study’s findings can be generalized (Runyan, 1984). The researcher should aim to generalize the findings to the theory and not to other case studies or the larger population.

4. Reliability: This refers to demonstrating that the operations of study, such as data collection procedures, can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2003). By following a consistent and easily comprehensive coding system the auditability of the themes within the data is enhanced (Rudestam & Newton, 1992) thereby increasing the reliability of the
4.7.6 Infinite amount of biographical data

McAdams (1994) stated that psychobiographers often find themselves faced with limitless information. Anderson (1981) suggested using a split-half approach when dealing with large amounts of information. This approach requires the researcher to divide information in two parts, one of which is used to identify theoretical propositions and constructs, while the other investigates the material in order to compare and test the theoretical propositions identified in the first body of material.

In addition, Alexander (1988) also provided two main methods of approach to personal data, by which the psychobiographer may reduce large amounts of data to a manageable quantity. One method involves sorting raw data using nine helpful guidelines (namely, primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error or distortion, isolation and completion), designed to identify salient material that demands further scrutiny. These nine guidelines are elaborated upon in chapter five. The other method involves asking the data a question, which is an obvious technique used by psychobiographers who sort huge amounts of material for answers to specific questions.

4.7.7 Inflated expectations

The psychobiographer should bear in mind two particular limitations of psychobiography. Firstly, psychobiographers need to acknowledge that psychological explanations add to other explanations and not replace them. Secondly, psychobiographical explanations should be recognized as speculative, and not viewed as the final word about the subject (Anderson, 1981).

4.7.8 Elitism and easy genre

Psychobiographies have been disparaged as being both easy and elitist. Runyan (1988b)
stated that a superficial biography might be written quickly and easily. However, he also stated that a good biography demands in-depth consultation with numerous sources, psychological knowledge of the subject’s socio-historical context and good literary skill.

4.8 Methodological Considerations in the Psychobiographical Study of Mahatma Gandhi.

The aforementioned methodological issues and concerns were considered in this psychobiographical case study of Mahatma Gandhi, and will be discussed in this section.

4.8.1 Cross-Cultural Differences

The researcher shares a common cultural characteristic with Mahatma Gandhi as they both share the same religious background, namely, Hinduism. This brings about a better understanding of how his responsibility as a Hindu may have impacted his life and work.

However, he lived in a period in India and South Africa that was socio-politically, economically, and culturally very different to that of the researcher. Therefore, in an effort to develop historical empathy with Mahatma Gandhi, the researcher included readings in her literature study that related to the historical period, community and culture in which Mahatma Gandhi lived.

4.8.2 Analyzing an absent subject

Anderson (1981) states that a common criticism of psychobiography is that less personal data relating to the subject under study is available to the psychobiographer than what is available to a psychotherapist. This was overcome in this study by conducting an extensive literature study which included autobiographies, biographies, journal and magazine articles as well as a movie based on the life of Mahatma Gandhi.

4.8.3 Reductionism
In order to minimize reductionism in the psychobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, the study was approached in the following way:

- An extensive and thorough literature study was undertaken. The study applied psychological theory as well as the exploration culture and times in which Mahatma Gandhi lived. With the use of multiple sources and socio-historical material, the possibility of doing a reductionistic study of Mahatma Gandhi was minimized.
- The researcher made use of a developmental theory, namely, Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory, which not only gave attention to childhood personality development, but rather on personality development across the lifespan.

4.8.4 Researcher Bias

In an attempt to avoid idealizing and denigrating Mahatma Gandhi, the researcher explored her feelings and attitudes towards Mahatma Gandhi throughout the study, noting feelings and attitudes that developed during the literature study, data collection and analysis phase. The supervisors of the study also provided feedback to the researcher during the course of the research process, thus maintaining researcher objectivity.

4.8.5 Validity and Reliability Criticisms

Low construct validity is often referred to as a criticism of case study research. Therefore, in an attempt to overcome this criticism, the researcher clearly conceptualized the stages and developmental tasks related to personality development according to the research literature of the theoretical framework utilized.

The general aim of this study was to explore and describe the personality development of Mahatma Gandhi over his lifespan. Consequently, internal validity was not a major concern in this research study since the internal validity is more significant for causal (i.e., exploratory) case
Maintaining a high level of credibility in making general deductions throughout the study was of utmost importance. This was accomplished in the following ways:

- A prolonged engagement with the literature on the life of Mahatma Gandhi was undertaken.
- The use of data triangulation. For example, multiple sources on Mahatma Gandhi were examined and cross-referenced to prevent and overcome distorted interpretation of literature.

External validity was not a concern of this study as the aim was not to generalize the findings of this study to a larger group (i.e., statistical generalization). However, the findings of Mahatma Gandhi’s personality development were compared with, and generalized back to, the development theory of personality (i.e., analytical generalization).

This study aimed at achieving reliability by employing a coding system for the raw data. The coding system consists of a conceptual and operational matrix of categories in which the biographical and autobiographical evidence is placed. A more detailed discussion and explanation of the coding system, or matrix of categories, is provided in Chapter 5.

4.8.6 Infinite amount of biographical data

This research primarily utilized primary data sources (i.e., Gandhi’s letters, speeches and autobiography). This was done as it was convenient and easy to access material, and allowed the researcher to cross-check, back reference and engage with the material on a continuing basis. Existing biographies and autobiographies were also included in the literature study as this proved beneficial in providing a longitudinal and lifespan impression of Mahatma Gandhi as a subject.

4.8.7 Inflated expectations

The researcher recognizes that this study on Mahatma Gandhi has been conducted primarily from a psychological perspective, which cannot account for or explain the full intricacy of the
personality development of such a historic figure.

4.8.8 Elitism and easy genre

This criticism does not appear justified in the application to the study of Mahatma Gandhi. Although, he has received much media attention and various books have been written about him, they were not based on sound psychological theory.

Concerning the possible criticism that a psychobiographical study of Mahatma Gandhi is an easy genre, the contrary can be argued in that the multidimensional nature of Mahatma Gandhi’s life and personality made this a complex undertaking.

4.9 Psychobiographical Ethics

Psychobiographers are required to consider and resolve ethical issues that may negatively impact their study. The first issue relates to choosing a suitable subject. Elms (1994) states that an important question arises while planning a psychobiography, that is, Should the study be conducted on living or only deceased subjects? Other issues are also pertinent such as what kind of data is permissible to use (i.e., the use of archival material only, only what the family views as suitable, or all kinds of available material) as well as the manner in which the psychobiographer wants his material to be presented.

The American Psychiatric Association issuesed guidelines in 1976 that are still used by psychobiographers today. The guidelines are as follows (Elms, 1994):

- Psychobiographies should ideally be done on deceased persons, who do not have close surviving relatives that might be embarrassed by findings of the study. As the subject of this study is already deceased and only second and third generation members are still alive, no verbal permission was needed undertake this study.

- Psychobiographies may only be done on living persons who have freely consented being
studied, interviewed and written up for publication.

The abovementioned guidelines make no significant reference to confidentiality in psychobiographical studies. However, Elms (1994) suggested that all intimate knowledge obtained by the psychobiographer should be treated and documented with respect. Furthermore, Elms indicated that every psychobiography needs to be justified ethically to some degree.

4.10 Conclusion

In the first part of this chapter the relationship between psychology and biography were discussed as well as definitions and descriptions regarding psychobiographies. Distinctions between psychobiography and related concepts were also highlighted including the value of life history research and psychobiographical case study.

In the second part of this chapter, the methodological issues and concerns as well as the minimization of the criticisms associated with psychobiographical methodology were discussed. In the following chapter the research design and methodology of this Psychobiographical study of Mahatma Gandhi is elaborated upon further.
CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Chapter Preview

The research design and psychobiographical subject of this study are presented in this chapter. The objectives and method are also described as well as the data collection, extraction and analysis procedures.

5.2 Research Design

The study of Mahatma Gandhi may be described as life history research (Runyan, 1988) with a qualitative single-case design (Yin, 2003). The research can be specifically classified as a psychobiographical study of a single case over an entire lifespan. This research design serves to transform the subject’s life into a coherent and illuminating life story through systematic use of psychological theory (McAdams, 1988). Yin (2003) cited that this design is used to confirm, challenge or extend theory with a specified set of propositions and circumstances under which these propositions are believed to be true.

5.3 The Psychobiographical Subject

Psychobiographies conduct individual accounts of life experiences within the contemporary cultural and structural settings, and have the important merit of aiding the task of understanding major social shifts, by including how new experiences are interpreted by individuals within
families, small groups and institutions (Roberts, 2002). It is for these reasons as well as for his courage, values and uniqueness, that the researcher has selected Mahatma Gandhi as a suitable psychobiographical case. The sampling technique was purposive since Mahatma Gandhi was deliberately selected.

5.4 Research Objectives

Mahatma Gandhi is a monumental figure, not only in South Africa, but to the rest of the world. He was a major political and spiritual leader of India and the Indian independence movement (Nanda, 1987). Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to examine Mahatma Gandhi’s life experiences in order to explore and describe his personality development over his entire lifespan. In order to do this, the researcher utilized the psychosocial developmental theory of Erikson (1950) to investigate the various stages of his personality development.

This objective is reflective of the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study. According to Edwards (1990) it consists of a detailed and accurate description of an individual case, with the aim of providing an in-depth understanding of the individual case within a specific social setting.

5.5 Research Method

The research method utilized in this study can be described as qualitative-morphogenic in nature (Elms, 1994). Runyan (1983) states that instead of the individuality encountered in single elements, this method emphasizes the individuality of the entire person. Thus, it provides a qualitative holistic description of the individual within a particular socio-historical setting.

5.6 Data Collection Procedures

In this study, the basic units of analysis will be biographical material that spans the developmental stages of Mahatma Gandhi’s life. These units will be defined and demarcated to
include those materials produced by Mahatma Gandhi himself and biographical literature which pertains to him as an individual, and covers his entire life-span. In doing so, it will ensure that (a) both primary data (i.e., documents produced by Mahatma Gandhi) and (b) secondary data (i.e., documents produced by others) are studied. Secondary materials that focus on life-history, development and personality in their description of Mahatma Gandhi are also included. Yin (2003) recommended the use of published materials in psychobiographical studies for a number of reasons, including that they are stable resources that can be frequently and repeatedly reviewed and are a means to substantiate information from other sources.

5.7 Data Extraction and Analysis Procedures

Data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining evidence. Analyzing case study evidence is especially difficult because the strategies and techniques have not been well defined in the past (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, Yin suggested that every analysis should start with a general analytical strategy which will provide priorities on what needs to be analyzed. He proposed two strategies: (1) relying on theoretical propositions, and (2) developing a case description. These are discussed in more detail below.

5.7.1 Relying on theoretical propositions

The case study is based on objectives and propositions. These propositions subsequently reflect a set of research questions that will provide insight into the objectives of the study and the content of the theoretical approach.

The units of analysis will be analyzed according to the psychobiographical model of Irving Alexander (1988). This method emphasizes the extraction of ‘core identifying units’, which is also referred to as ‘themes’ or ‘schemes’. In this model the personal data is approached according to two major routes:
• Letting the data reveal itself: This is done by applying specially designed rules to sort the raw data. These rules are used to identify what section of the material requires further examination. The nine principle identifiers of data salience are primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error or distortion, isolation and incompletion. These principles will be further discussed in 5.7.1.1

• Asking the data questions based on the research problem. Relevant development progression or indicators of personality development will be extracted from material by the systematic categorization of information into ‘stages’ of personality development. Subsequently, these will then be conceptualized and operationalised within the chosen theoretical framework for this study. This process of questioning the data will be elaborated on in 5.7.1.2

5.7.1.1 Alexander’s guidelines for the extraction of salient data

Nine guidelines were proposed by Alexander (1988) in order to extract essential information from data sources, with the aim of indicating to the researcher what information and descriptions are important in the study. These guidelines are described below as well as examples as to how the researcher applied it to the data base of this study:

*Primacy*

This refers to the relation between the concept of *first* and importance. ‘First’ is a common metaphor in language and is often seen as the ‘foundation’ upon which a structure is built. The idea of primacy within the life of Gandhi was well-illustrated by Erikson (1969) and Nanda (1987). They referred to how Gandhi in being surrounded by the influences of Gujarat (i.e., vegetarianism, non-possession) from an early age taught him the belief of non-injury to living beings and mutual tolerance between members of various creeds and sects. These foundational
beliefs can be seen as having a huge influence on his pacifist demeanor [Fischer (1962); Hardiman (2003); Meer (1996); Parel (1997; 2006); Roland (1924)] and the development of *Hind Swaraj* or ‘Indian Self Rule’ (Parel, 1997).

*Frequency*

This refers to that which occurs *frequently*. Frequency is related to importance and certainty surrounding a particular occurrence. That is, frequently reported occurrences are often an indication of increasing certainty surrounding it and its importance. The literature study of Mahatma Gandhi revealed that various biographers have repeatedly referred to him as a champion of civil rights for racial and religious minorities [Fischer (1962); Hardiman (2003); Meer (1996); Parel (1997; 2006); Roland (1924)]. This has even led to Time magazine selecting him as joint runner-up (with Franklin Roosevelt) to Albert Einstein as ‘person of the twentieth century’ (Time Magazine, 1999).

*Emphasis*

This refers to that which is either *overemphasized* or *underemphasized*. The researcher should note that which is usually held to be ordinary receiving excessive attention. Also, it should be noted that which seems important receiving little or no attention. A thorough literature search on the life of Mahatma Gandhi revealed that most biographers focused on his political, social and spiritual accomplishments but underemphasized his troubled family life.

*Uniqueness*

This refers to which is *singular* or odd. Alexander (1988) cited that in invoking the criterion on uniqueness, the various baselines with which the chosen material is being compared, must always be kept in mind. These baselines usually stem from common cultural expectations. An
instance of uniqueness as an indicator of salience, is illustrated in Mahatma Gandhi’s world renowned development and implementation of *Satyagraha* (i.e., a philosophy that is largely concerned with truth and resistance to evil through active, non-violent resistance) (Nanda, 1987).

*Negation*

This refers to that which is *denied* and is often referred to in psychotherapy as repressed or unconscious material. Negation is demonstrated by Mahatma Gandhi’s interpreting his sexual desire for his wife as “detraction from his duty towards his father” (Hardiman, 2003, p. 102). Following an old Indian tradition, Mahatma Gandhi believed that loss of semen drained a man’s vitality. He began to see his sexuality as a hindrance and believed love was tainted by sexual intercourse. In an attempt to deny his sexuality, he took a vow of celibacy in 1906 without consulting his wife.

*Omission*

This refers to what is *missing*. Whereas sufficient accounts of actions and events exist, Alexander (1988) stated that attention to affect is usually omitted. A comprehensive literature review on Mahatma Gandhi revealed that previous biographies focused on describing the great achievements and historical events in his life with little attention being paid to Mahatma Gandhi’s inner life or emotions.

*Error or Distortion*

This refers to the occurrence of *mistakes* in which ever form. These may include factual errors, such as time, place or person distortions. A commonly occurring error or person distortion with regards to Mahatma Gandhi is that he is described by some as being a crusader for civil
rights and individual liberties, and by others as an irresponsible trouble-maker and a destroyer of social harmony [Gandhi (1949); Hardiman (2003); Nanda (1987); Parel (1997; 2006)].

Isolation

This refers to that which is alone or ‘does not fit’, and leaves one asking the question “Does that really make sense?” An instance of isolation is seen in Gandhi’s harsh demands of obedience upon his wife. Although he claimed that he regarded his wife as his equal, he forced her to do many things she believed to be wrong (Hardiman, 2003).

Incompletion

This refers to that which has not been completed or finished. This can be explained by not being reached and when a sequential course being followed lacks a means-end relationship. Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu extremist in 1948 while on his way to a prayer meeting and was not able to see the full effect of his work. This can be described as incompletion. In spite of this, Mahatma Gandhi’s legacy continues to inspire and motivate people throughout the world.

The above nine guidelines of salience guided the researcher of this study to systematically and consistently reflect on collected material and data. In asking the material questions related to the theories and the research objectives. In addition, by following these guidelines for the extraction of salient data, the researcher attempted to institute a reliable approach in order to improve the study’s ‘trustworthiness’.

5.7.1.2 Questioning the data
In the process of extracting and analyzing the data in this study, the researcher ‘asked the data questions’, these were based on the theoretical approach. The purpose of these was to achieve the objectives of the study by highlighting main themes. The following questions were asked:

- **What body or section of the data will allow for the exploration and description of personality development as reflected in the life of Mahatma Gandhi?**

  In order to answer this question, the constructs of personality development must first be conceptualised and operationalised. This was accomplished through the comprehensive theoretical and literature review of the theoretical framework of Erikson in which clear definitions and descriptions of the contents and characteristics of the theory were discussed.

- **To what extent does the data obtained regarding human development as reflected in the life of Mahatma Ghandi compare with Erikson’s conceptualization of the psychosocial stages of development?**

  In order to answer this question, the relationship between the theoretical perspective suggested and the data collected on Mahatma Gandhi must be facilitated. Firstly, the extent to which the constructs of Erikson’s psychosocial stages of development are evidenced in Gandhi’s life need to be determined through a careful analysis of the category-specific organized data. Secondly, ways need to be identified in which the findings can be generalized to the applied theory by comparing the case data to the suggested theory in a process of informal testing. This process is of importance as it may generate hypotheses about the theory which could lead to further development of the theoretical framework.

5.7.2 Developing a case description

Yin (2003) highlighted the importance of the development of a descriptive framework for the
organization and integration of the case study, in accordance with the original purpose of the study. The researcher developed a conceptual matrix by which to categorize the indicators of personality development over Mahatma Gandhi’s lifespan, according to Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Stages of Development. This was done in order to facilitate the process of the data revealing itself and consequently categorizing the most salient data available. Appendix B schematically represents the personality development of Mahatma Gandhi according to Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Stages of Development. The horizontal columns were used to represent periods of historical development in Mahatma Gandhi’s life. In turn, the vertical columns were used to represent the process of life structure development.

Three types of triangulation were used in analyzing the data: (1) data triangulation which is based on using different sources of data; (2) investigator triangulation which is when research is evaluated by several independent researchers; and (3) methodological triangulation which is based on the utilization of different methods of research (Sokolovsky, 1996).

**5.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter the research design and methodology of this study were discussed. In addition, the processes of allowing the data to reveal itself and questioning the data was highlighted. The findings and discussion of the process of Mahatma Gandhi’s personality development will be presented in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Chapter Preview

This chapter will attempt to formulate a discussion on psychosocial development as reflected in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. Erikson's (1950) psychosocial development theory will serve as the mechanism by which Mahatma Gandhi's life is explored and subsequently described. The researcher is aware of the complex nature surrounding the interpretation of the human personality. Therefore, a concerted effort is made to abide by the parameters set for a typical Master's treatise. It is thus vital to note that the literature exploration achieved in this study can be criticized for being finite and therefore leaves room for further exploration of the topic at hand.

The discussion will follow the chronological stages of Mahatma Gandhi's life while superimposing on them. Erikson’s proposed psychosocial stages, with each embodying an alternative crisis. An elaborate attempt was made by the researcher to subject Mahatma Gandhi's life to a unique elucidation in order to provide a fresh opinion.

6.2 Findings and discussions

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) noted that the important task in narrative is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change. Biographies document and give an account of the
history of a person's life, working outward and inward from the personal histories of the researcher and those studied (Stroud, 2004). Biographies can therefore be described as an intertwined culmination of the subject's personal-social historical context and the researcher's personal-social contemporary context. Here we are concerned with the reconstruction of a man’s childhood as part of what he became. In the words of Erikson (1969): “For what a man adds up to must develop in stages, but no stage explains the man” (p. 98)

Mahatma Gandhi was the creator of a radical style of politics which proved effective in fighting insidious social divisions within South Africa, India and arguably throughout the world. A presentation and discussion of the findings of this psychobiographical study of Mahatma Gandhi now follows:

6.2.1 The childhood years of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1887)

The historical-chronological period in the life of Mahatma Gandhi extends from his birth to 18 years of age and therefore falls within five psychosocial stages proposed by Erikson. These are the stages of trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus interiority and identity versus role confusion.

6.2.1.1 Trust versus mistrust

The first psychosocial development stage of Erikson's theory is that of trust versus mistrust. This stage involves the first 18 months of development in a child's life, and depends greatly on the primary care giver for establishing a meaningful relationship (Craig & Baucum, 2002; Sadock & Sadock, 2003; Santrock, 2006). The quality of this relationship is depends greatly on the degree of resolution between the trust versus mistrust conflict. If the crisis is successfully resolved a resulting virtue of hope is instilled in the child (Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1965; 1978b). This hope is exemplified by the child's belief in the supportive structure of the
environment. This assurance has its roots in the environmental consistency provided by the primary care giver, and in turn, giving meaning to the infant's experience (Erikson, 1963a; 1965). Erikson (1965) further noted that it is not frustration in itself which supports an infant's neuroticism, but rather a lack of meaning in these frustrations.

As a result of limited information regarding Mohandas’ first 18 months of life, the inferences drawn by the researcher are highly speculative. Meyer et al. (2003) suggested that the extent to which infants learn to trust their environment depends mainly on the quality of the mother-child relationship. In his autobiography, Mohandas describes his relationship with his mother to be a highly respectful and loving one. He did his utmost to honour her wishes and not disappoint her. He illustrated this by refusing to eat meat because of the vow he made to his mother, even after endearing days of tasteless food and constant hunger. Furthermore, his need for his mother's approval is shown by his decision to depart for England only once his mother had approved of it. In addition, he described the pain of being away from her while residing in London, saying that “My mother's love always haunted me” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 31). The above occurance suggests a strong bond between mother and son, as reflected in his respect, honour and need for approval from her. A bond of this nature suggests that its foundation was laid in the early years of his life.

Mohandas was known for his restlessness and insatiable curiosity (Erikson, 1969; Fischer, 1962). His older sister once commented that he was as “restless as mercury” and “full of curiosity” (Erikson, 1969, p. 108). Mohandas’ infinite curiosity about the world around him stemmed from a positive relationship between himself and the world. This relationship entrenched with trust most likely has its roots in these earliest months of life. The researcher hypothesizes that for Mohandas to have approached the world around him with interest and curiosity, he primarily had to feel comfortable and trusting of his immediate environment,
namely, his home.

The caregiver has to establish trust in the home environment before it can surpass and be established or created between the child and the more unpredictable outside world. The researcher concludes that the first psychosocial crisis between trust and mistrust had been successfully resolved by him instilling the virtues of *hope* and *drive* (Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978b; Santrock, 2006) within young Mohandas. Evidence of this can be seen in Mahatma's unyielding *hope* and *drive* towards bringing about change despite having the odds against him. This is illustrated by Mahatma's determination in the fight against discrimination in South Africa and his perseverance in the fight for India's Independence.

6.2.1.2 Autonomy versus shame and doubt

Erikson's second stage, autonomy versus shame and doubt, occurs during the period from 18 months to three years of age (Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1965; 1978b; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Erikson's theory notes this stage as one of increasing physical development in the child allowing him/her greater autonomy and contact with the environment (Boeree, 2006; Morris, 1996). It more specifically refers to the growing ability to control oneself, to hold on and let go with discretion, to stand on one’s own two feet (Erikson, 1963b; 1965). Critical to the balance achieved by the child between autonomy and shame/doubt, is the involvement of the parents (Boeree, 2006; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). According to Corey (2005), children within this stage need to explore the world around them and experiment in it, to make mistakes and to test limits. Furthermore, he states that if they begin to succeed in doing things for themselves, they gain a sense of self confidence and self-control (Corey, 2005; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). In *Gandhi's Truth*, Erikson noted that Mohandas did not like the idea of being watched outdoors, indicating Mohandas' need to be free to explore and experiment outdoors (Erikson, 1969). Evidence of
Mohandas' self confidence and self control is shown many times throughout his life. For example, his ability to honour his vow made to his mother, his celibacy, being a Satyagrahi and his ability to fast for many days despite being weak and fragile at times.

Sadock and Sadock (2003) state that over-protectiveness could hinder the child's development of autonomy and the exploration of his/her inherent capacity to deal with the world while. The converse is also true—it could be harmful to have a child rely exclusivity on his/her own lack of judgment (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002). The critical balance between these two will ultimately determine, subject to later experience and revisitations, whether there is a “lasting sense of goodwill and pride” or “from a sense of loss self control...a lasting propensity to doubt and shame” (Erikson, 1965, p. 246). Mohandas' parents were neither overprotective nor uninvolved in his life. This was as a result of living in a joint family, where each child was treated equally (Erikson, 1969). In support of his son's adventurous nature, Mohandas' father would instruct those responsible to keep an eye on him while he played outside, to do so without Mohandas’ awareness. In this way, Mohandas was allowed to explore freely thereby developing his autonomy, but under the watchful eye of his respective babysitter who would be able to offer assistance he required it.

Boeree (2006) states that the maladaptive tendency of this stage is ‘impulsiveness’, which he describes as the willfulness that leads an individual, in later childhood and even adulthood, to jump into things without proper consideration of their abilities. Impulsiveness can be said to be the opposite of Mahatma's personality. All his endeavors were well thought about and carefully calculated, which may have been as a result of his shyness. His shyness allowed him the role of observer in his younger years which proved to be advantageous in later years. He writes the following about his self control:
“My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure. Its greatest benefit has been that it taught me the economy of words. I have naturally formed the habit of restraining my thoughts. And now I can give myself the certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes my tongue or pen” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 53).

The positive outcome of successful crisis intervention within this stage is the ego virtue of will (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978b). The power of the will relies on the driving force of hope (virtue attained from first psychosocial stage) to boost the will into action. However, between will and action lies a reflective period, a reflection on the will's intention resulting in initiative, that is the third psychosocial stage (Claasen, 2007).

6.2.1.3 Initiative versus guilt

Erikson's third psychosocial stage of initiative versus guilt occurs at approximately the age of three to five years. This is characterized by the child becoming increasingly active as he/she explores the environment with newly acquired locomotor and language abilities. At the forefront of these activities lies the psychological component of initiative. Initiative is the typical example of that pervading quality which at every stage attends a new miracle of vigorous unfolding, which constitutes a new hope and a new responsibility for all (Boeree, 2006; Erikson, 1963b; 1965). Thus, in addition to using these abilities which allows for greater environmental manipulation, a newly discovered understanding of these abilities and actions follows. Erikson distinguished initiative from autonomy in that initiative adds to autonomy the “quality of understanding, planning and attacking a task for the sake of being active and on the move (Erikson, 1965, p. 247). The converse is a sense of guilt over the goals contemplated and the acts initiated in one's enthusiasm over new locomotor and mental power, including acts of aggressive manipulation and coercion (Erikson, 1965). There is no doubt that Mohandas found his family
environment to be peaceful and trusting. Mohandas’ over-eager initiative during this period in his childhood is shown by his daily ritual. Mohandas was in the habit of climbing into the mango trees which surrounded his house in order to 'bandage' the mangoes indicating that he took used the initiative to care for these fruits.

According to Welchman (2000) the initiative versus guilt stage also incorporates the oppressive establishment of a moral sense as a child identifies with the parent of the same sex out of envy (oedipal stage). This occurs due to the failed result of competing with the parent of the same sex for the possession of the parent of the opposite sex, which in turn also imbues the child with feelings of guilt for having these wishes (Welchman, 2000). This stage would thus be responsible for setting the foundations of Mahatma's resolute principles evident in his conduct in years to come. Mahatma described his father as patriotic, truthful, brave, generous, incorruptible and impartial (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949). Every single one of these descriptions are personified by Mahatma, some from an early age and others later in life. It is also important to note the influence Mahatma's mother had on him. Mahatma's mother was deeply religious and is said to have left a deep impression on her son's mind (Nanda, 1987). Her influence laid the foundation for Mahatma's political stance and indirectly, the development of Satyagraha.

The maladaptation of this stage is ‘ruthlessness’ which manifests in exploitative, uncaring and dispassionate cognitions/behaviour (Boeree, 2006; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). The malignancy of this stage is ‘inhibition’ which manifests as risk-savers and unadventurous cognitions/behaviour (Chapman, 2009). The inhibited person will not try things because ‘nothing ventured, nothing lost’ (Boeree, 2006). It is evident that Mahatma was neither ruthless nor inhibited. It was Mahatma's passion and caring nature which drove him to fight for Indian rights in South Africa and later, India's independence. Furthermore, the fact that he developed Satyagraha and used it
in the struggle for freedom despite not knowing whether it would be successful against strong opponents illustrates his adventuresome manner.

The positive outcome of successful crisis intervention within this stage is the ego virtue of \textit{purpose} and \textit{direction} (Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978b; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Mahatma epitomized these virtues throughout his life. This is shown by his actions from an early age (i.e., when he moved to England for studies) into his old age (i.e., when he founded ashrams in South Africa and India and fought against discrimination in South Africa as well as India's independence). Furthermore, Mahatma's life purpose was that to empower the minorities and he did everything in his power to do this, showing unwavering determination. This purpose disadvantaged him at times, and sadly, can be seen as the reason for his death.

6.2.1.4 Industry versus inferiority

This stage, beginning at age five to about thirteen, becomes active as the child comes to a realization that a workable future does not reside within the immediate space of the family (Erikson, 1963a; 1965). During this stage children develop a sense of industry by taking pride in their productions, which is a result of goals achieved via their newly developed skills (Boeree, 2006; Meyer et al., 2003; Morris, 1996). They also develop numerous skills and competencies in school, at home and in the outside world. A sense of self is enriched by the realistic development of such competencies, and comparison with peers is increasingly significant (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Erikson noted that during this stage in his life, Mohandas developed the skill of persuasion through a “nonviolent cunning” manner (Erikson, 1969, p. 108). Mohandas would try to make friends with animals, by sometimes twisting dogs'
ears. By using his skill of persuasion, he was never bitten. From frequent references in literature covering the life of Mahatma Gandhi, we are able to view this power of persuasion through nonviolent means, which brought about many changes which were thought to be almost impossible. It is safe to say that his sense of self was enriched by this competency as he was aware of this unique ability in comparison with his peers, even though he was extremely modest about it.

Morris (1996) highlighted the feelings of inadequacy a child might internalize if they appear mediocre or insufficient in assuming a sense of industry. The researcher is of the opinion that the converse is true for Mohandas as even though he described himself as being a mediocre scholar in comparison to his peers, his morality made up for his mediocrity. Mahatma dedicates an entire chapter in his autobiography to a moral dilemma he encountered in school, in which his teacher encouraged him to copy but he refused. He was aware that he would be criticized for being stupid but it did not deter him in taking the moral high ground. He placed more importance on morality than scholastic ability, thus never feeling inadequate.

The maladaptive tendency of this stage is ‘narrow virtuosity’ and manifests as workaholic and obsessive specialist cognitions/behaviour. Mohandas was married Kasturbai at the age of thirteen, at the request of his father and grandfather. Being a child, he was not emotionally ready for this commitment and responsibility. Unfortunately, he did present with this maladaptive tendency as seen in his total obsession with his Kasturbai during his childhood years. He tried to control Kasturbai's movement, only allowing her to leave the house with his permission. He also tirelessly tried to educate her without effect. This tendency diminished in time with the development of his spirituality and search of truth. He eventually realized that a wife's striving was not to be at the serving of her husband but rather collaborative effort towards something
greater than themselves, namely, truth (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949).

6.2.1.5 Identity versus role confusion

Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development epitomizes possibly the most fundamental crisis in human psychological development, namely, that of identity versus role confusion. Erikson hypothesized the range of this stage to be from about 13 to 21 years of age. Up until this point the child has adopted numerous identifications from the outside world in order to secure a place, but at this point the ego learns to integrate all these existing roles, thus establishing an inner sense of continuity (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Morris, 1996). The inevitable result of this particular crisis resolution is the establishment of a more lasting identity, solidified in an ever-changing external world (Erikson, 1965; Welchman, 2000). As noted previously, Mohandas was married at an early age which made attaining an appropriate level of industry difficult and resulted in a maladaptive tendency. However, with regards to identity, it was considered normal in the Hindu custom to marry young and therefore his marriage contributed positively towards his identity as a husband.

When Mohandas’ father fell ill, however, his identity as a husband was tested as he was required to take on the identity as the attending child as well. Both identities (husband and child) had differing responsibilities of equal importance to him. Therefore, Mohandas’ ego was not able to integrate the roles of husband and child. Establishing an inner sense of continuity at the time was difficult and resulted in him feeling ‘double shame’ (Erikson, 1969; Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949).

According to Corey (2005) this transition period is also a time for testing limits, becoming independent and for establishing a new identity. When Mohandas was newly married, he befriended Mehtab who influenced Mohandas to eat meat. Mehtab also intentionally preyed on
Mohandas' suspicions about his wife. According to Erikson (1969), Mehtab played a personage on whom Mohandas could project his personal devil. In other words Mehtab became the personification of Mohandas' negative identity (i.e., everything in himself which he tried to isolate and subdue, but was still a part of him).

In Mahatma's autobiography, the chapter titled Stealing and Atonement explains the reason he tried smoking cigarettes was that he wanted independence, which he thought smoking would provide. But he soon realized that smoking provided no independence as he was still not able to smoke in the presence of elders. During this same period, at the age of sixteen, Mohandas began questioning his identity as a Hindu. Even though he respected Hinduism, he disliked the idolatrous nature of it. He then became or imagined to be an atheist in order to prove that religion meant nothing to him. When he realized he could not live his life without religion, he began studying various branches of Hinduism to gain a better understanding of them. He found a common thread within each branch “...the conviction that morality is the basis of all things, and that truth is the substance of all morality” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 29). From this point on, truth became his sole objective, growing in magnitude and definition every day. Thus, it should be noted that Mahatma's search for identity was not confined to this particular period in his life but rather a lifelong journey in his search for Truth. It can be said that Mohandas' Hindu identity was the centre of his being, dictating every thought and action, as “…for the vast majority of Hindus, caste was an all-enveloping identity provider in this life as in all other lives” (Erikson, 1969, p. 158). His parental relationships, his marriage, his ideologies, and political stance were undoubtedly influenced by his identity as a Hindu.

The maladaptation of this stage is ‘fanaticism’ characterized by self-important and extremist cognitions/behaviour. A fanatic believes that his/her way is the only way and usually only see
things in black-and-white (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

Mohandas' identification as a husband at an early age encouraged the maladaptive tendency of
fanaticism. In his autobiography, Mahatma openly confesses “My ambition was to make her
(Kasturbai) live a pure life, learn what I learnt, and identify her life and thought with mine”
(Gandhi, 1949, p. 10-11).

6.2.1.6 Conclusion

The childhood years dealt with Erikson's first five psychosocial stages in relation to Mahatma
Gandhi's life. An attempt to answer the question whether Mahatma Gandhi had attained the ego
virtues of hope, will, purpose and competence was made as proposed by Erikson within the
delineated age frame. Erikson wrote the following regarding Mahatma's development within
these stages -“He experimented, so he means to emphasize (and so, I believe, he was read by his
countrymen), with the devils of shame and doubt, guilt and inferiority: he challenged them and
won. And if we suspect that no great child would make sense without such a challenge, maybe
we should go all the way and say that no child would...” (Erikson, 1969, p. 107).

The stage, identity versus role confusion stage will further be discussed as it overruns into the
following stage of Mahatma's life, aptly named On the Threshold of Manhood.

6.2.2 On the Threshold of Manhood (1888-1890)

6.2.2.1 Identity versus role confusion

This stage is described as “a time of transition between childhood and adulthood”, individuals
are finding out who they are and where they are going in life (Corey, 2005, p. 63). In his
autobiography, Mahatma recalls a number of significant events which took place in his search
for true identity. The first occurred in Bombay, where he requested special consideration from
the elders of his caste to cross the ocean to England. The members of his caste did not approve of
him going to England as they believe it would corrupt him. Erikson noted the following regarding this incident, “He faced them with a courage which probably surprised him even more than it did them; but this was a matter of survival – the survival of identity” (Erikson, 1969, p. 141).

In the chapter, Playing the English Gentlemen, he describes his experiences of trying to fit into modern English society whilst trying to keep the vow he made to his mother (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949). In an attempt to fit in, he bought new clothes and took ballroom dance and French lessons. But he realized that if he could not become a gentleman by virtue of his character, the ambition was not worth having. According to Erikson (1969), “…the white flannel suit represents much more than the wrong choice of clothing by an innocent young traveler…Gandhi was highly aware of the significance of clothes as uniforms which might identify at least one’s aberrant identity fragments – until he learned to be himself, near naked” (Erikson, 1969, p. 143).

During this stage, Mohandas continued in his search for truth in order to make it part of his identity. As a student living in London, he began simplifying his daily life by moving into a smaller suite, cooking his own meals and walking to class. Mahatma said the following about living simple as a young student: “My life was certainly more truthful and my soul knew no bounds of joy” (Gandhi, 1949, p. 47).

While in England and with great difficulty, Mohandas honoured the vow (to abstain from meat) he made to his mother. Even though he was a vegetarian before the vow, it was not until he read the book, Salt’s Plea for Vegetarianism that he fully understood what it was to be a vegetarian. From this point onwards, vegetarianism became a significant part of his identity, stemming directly from his identity as a Hindu. Erikson wrote the following regarding
Mohandas’ identity crisis during this period in his life:

“The relative neglect of his studies of the law, which he cites in his autobiographic account and his summary, are justified only if understood as part of a deeper success by which young Gandhi learned to be just enough Englishman to join an English identity element with the Indian one before subordinating both first to a wider British, an then to a truly universal identity (seen in later years)” (Erikson, 1969, p. 151).

The virtues of fidelity and devotion result from a successful resolution of this stage (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978b). The researcher is of the opinion that Mohandas was able to develop a sense of fidelity as manifested by everything Mahatma stood for, namely that of Truth. He trusted in the integrity of his beliefs/principles and therefore abided by them with steadfast fidelity. Fidelity not only derived its vitality from Mohandas' unflinching spiritual identification, but also from other roles included in his identity.

Erikson provided the following comment on Mohandas identity crisis during this period in his life: “In reforming himself and others, he felt ‘himself’; but he was still a brother, a husband, a father and - even if excommunicated – a caste member” (Erikson, 1969, p. 158).

6.2.2.2 Intimacy versus isolation

Erikson's sixth developmental stage, intimacy versus isolation occurs from about 21 to 40 years of age (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1965; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Santrock (2006) suggested that if the young adult forms healthy friendships and an intimate relationship with another individual, intimacy will be achieved; if not, isolation will result. At this time, individuals face the developmental task of forming intimate relationships with others. Intimacy is defined as the “capacity to commit...to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to
develop ethical strength to abide to such commitments, even though they may call for significant sacrifices and compromises” (Erikson, 1965, p. 255). As noted previously, Mohandas was married at an early age, thereby establishing intimacy. Throughout his autobiography, Mahatma speaks about his commitment, love and passion for Kasturbai (Erikson, 1969; Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949). The sacrifice made by Mohandas and Kasturbai was that of spending time apart, yet they remained loyal to their commitment to each other. Mohandas' studies took him to England for three years before he was able to return to his wife in India.

This stage also sees the identity which was established in the previous stage attempted to be shared with another person or people (Boereee, 2006; Corey, 2005; Erikson, 1978b;). The researcher postulates that in attempt to share his identity as a vegetarian with others, Mohandas established the Vegetarian Society. The camaraderie which this society provided supported Mohandas’ identity as a vegetarian. This was especially important to him as he lived in London at the time where vegetarianism was especially rare.

Furthermore, the researcher supports Erikson’s view that the relationship between Mohandas and Kasturbai was established on shared ethical views and strengthened by compromise but only as these pertain to the flexibility of their own cultural principles/ideals (Erikson, 1959). Erikson (1965) asserted that true geniality is a function of a mutuality instituted within the relationship. He affirmed that young adults emerge from the search for identity with the keenness and willingness to fuse their identity with that of others. Though it may appear that Mahatma's marriage was based on mutual compromises, the researcher has her doubts which are highlighted in the next paragraph. However, it should be noted that the continual, internal challenges that Mahatma faced in his life were demonstrated in his unilateral decisions (e.g., vow of celibacy and isolation from people)
which led to much compromise from those close to him, especially Kasturbai.

The fusion which Erikson spoke of relates back to the seemingly uncommon ethical ground upon which Mohandas and Kasturbai built their relationship. The literature frequently mentions the untiring support Kasturbai offered her husband regardless of his endeavours. This support can be seen as a function of identity fusion. However, whether this fusion was a result of equally invested energies is questionable. The researcher is of the opinion that Kasturbai perhaps, due to her duty as a Hindu wife, supported her husband regardless of whether his policies or principles contradicted her genuine beliefs. Erikson (1969) comments the following on Kasturbai:

“Mohandas’ child bride accepted his sexual demands, whatever their quality, intensity, or frequency real was, because that was a Hindu girl’s lot” (p. 121). As a result, possibly the sacrifices were more biased, but nevertheless led to the reinforcement of Mahatma’s ideals as they received unconditional support from his wife. The psychosocial ego quality of love (Boeree, 2006; Erikson, 1978b) can therefore be seen as having been inspired in Mahatma Gandhi as a result of an accomplished crisis resolution between intimacy and isolation.

This love was a pervasive quality exercised by Mahatma ranging from his immediate family to an entire Indian nation. This quality is the very reason he is well-known today. His empathy had no bounds and is shown in his actions in later years.

6.2.2.3 Conclusion

This section elaborated upon Mahatma Gandhi’s conflict between identity versus role confusion. This was followed by a discussion on the intimacy versus isolation stage. The researcher concluded that Mahatma Gandhi attained the ego virtue of fidelity resulting from a successful crisis resolution in the identity versus role confusion stage.

6.2.3 The Emergence of Mahatma (1891-1914)
6.2.3.1 Identity versus role confusion

The researcher postulated in section 6.2.1.5 that Mohandas’ search for identity was not confined to a particular period in his life but rather a lifelong journey in his search for Truth. At this point the researcher would like to note another component, referred to by Erikson, embodied in this stage. Erikson (1963a; 1965) introduced the concept of ideology as a defined world image by which young adults finds some sense of order and orientation. Erikson further noted that it is this need for ideology that makes adolescents so susceptible to the exploitation of totalitarian creeds. In the case of Mohandas, the ideology of non-discrimination of Indians consumed him at a time when discrimination amongst races was a common occurrence. In South Africa, where Mohandas worked as a young man, he faced discrimination and racism in many forms of which he was not use to in his home country. For in South Africa, Mohandas was no longer treated as a prime minister's son, but as one of the masses that made up the disempowered Indian people. These early events in South Africa ignited the passion within Mohandas to work towards his ideology. Erikson (1963a) wrote that ideologies contain an ethical corrective and that ethics should transcend ideology as well as technology. In the case of Mohandas, his ideology was based on the ethical corrective, in other words, the one could not work without the other. The researcher concluded that Mohandas’ strong conceptions and identification with the Indian people and culture resulted in an awakening of fidelity, which was proposed by Erikson (1965) to be the positive psychosocial virtue to emanate from this stage.

Erikson (1965) perceived the concept of ideology as a defined world image by which the young adult finds some sense of order and orientation. This search is easily misinterpreted and often it is only dimly perceived by the individual himself as youth is always set to grasp both diversity in principle and principle in diversity (Erikson, 1963a; Welchman, 2000). Erikson
further noted that youths should test extremes before settling on a considered course especially
during times of ideological confusion and widespread idiosyncrasies of identity (Erikson, 1963a;
Welchman, 2000). At this early stage of life, Mohandas had most likely personified the ideal of
non-discrimination towards Indians, having identified himself as one of them. Ideals offer a
world view rather than simple commandments, but in a polarized way that excludes those who
do not think was we do (Boeree, 2006; Erikson, 1965). Erikson (1963a) however noted that
youths test the rock bottom of some truths before committing their powers of body and mind to a
segment of existing order. The researcher is of the opinion that this was the case of Mohandas.
After enduring countless acts of discrimination on his first trip in South Africa, he spent some
time talking to the locals in order to establish whether this was a normal occurrence. It was only
after he had established that Indians were in fact mistreated daily, he made the decision to stay in
South Africa and fight for equality.

The researcher also believes that Mohandas had discovered an entrenched purpose in his
identification as a Hindu, and consequently, the Indian community. Erikson (1963a) wrote that in
youth, ego strength emerges from the mutual confirmation of individual and community in the
sense that society recognizes the young individual as a bearer of fresh energy. The individual
then so confirmed recognizes society as a living process which inspires loyalty as it receives it,
maintains allegiance as it attracts it and honours confidence as it demands it (Boeree, 2006;
Erikson, 1963a).

The researcher is of the opinion that Mohandas had imagined that he could assist the Indian
community and they in turn needed his assistance. Erikson (1963a) aptly concluded that identity
is a new reality for which the individual wishes to be reborn with and by those whom he chooses
as his new ancestors and his genuine contempories. This mutual selection, while frequently
associated with, and therefore as a rebellion against the childhood environment is an expression of a truly new perspective (Erikson, 1963a; Welchman, 2000).

Erikson (1965) noted that the most important conflicts within this stage are concerned with the clarification of self-identity, life goals and life’s meaning. According to Davis and Clifton (1995), individuals seek basic values and attitudes that cut across their various roles. It was during this stage in his life that Mohandas realized that he needed to make Truth his ultimate identity. This decision had major ramifications in his personal life as well as towards his political stance. In order to personify truth, he took a vow of celibacy at the age of 37 and honoured it for the rest of his life. He also began following the doctrine of non-possession, removing the importance on all worldly possessions. This included the ‘possession’ of his wife, which up until that point he believed to have full power over. This was also the starting point of his fasting, of which he took to when he wanted to ‘purify’ himself or as a method of repentance for others. With regard to his political stance, Mohandas developed Satyagraha which adopted non-violent methods in achieving his political ideology.

As stated previously, Erikson (1969) provided the following comment on Mohandas identity crisis during this period in his life by stating that in reforming himself and others, Mohandas had yet he was still ‘himself’, a brother, a husband, a father and - even if excommunicated – a caste member.

6.2.3.2 Intimacy versus isolation

As noted previously, Erikson (1965) asserted that true geniality is a function of a mutuality instituted within the relationship. He affirmed that young adults emerge from the search for identity with the eagerness and readiness to fuse their identity with that of others. For example, it was only after Mohandas had ‘freed’ himself Kasturbai, that she was able to fully support him.
The researcher postulates that this brought about greater identity fusion and consequently intimacy within the relationship.

According to Erikson this psychosocial stage also allows the identity which was established in the previous stage to be shared with another person or people (Boeree, 2006; Corey, 2005; Erikson, 1978b). The researcher postulates that Mohandas continued share his identity (that of a Satyagrahi and warrior of Truth) by establishing the Phoenix Settlement and later the Tolstoy Farm. In both these settlements, extreme simplicity of the life was observed, reinforced by a strict code of moral and physical hygiene (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003).

The psychosocial ego quality of love, resulting from the accomplished crisis resolution between intimacy and isolation (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978), becomes more apparent in this particular phase in Mohandas’ life. The researcher is of the opinion that Mohandas possessed an inherent empathy for those to whom he felt connected. When a bubonic plague broke out in India, Mohandas offered to help inspect latrines and made suggestions for improved sanitation. Although others were willing to inspect the latrines of the wealthy, Mohandas was unprejudiced, inspecting the latrines of the untouchables as well as the wealthy (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003). And later, when the Zulu rebellion began, Mohandas once again showed the great degree of his empathy when he organized the Indian Ambulance Corps. He helped nurse the injured and dying Zulus whom the white doctors and nurses were unwilling to touch, showing that his empathy knew no bounds (Fischer, 1962; Hardiman, 2003; Nanda, 1987)

6.2.3.3 Generativity versus stagnation

The establishment and guidance of the next generation is known as generativity (Craig & Baucum, 2002; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). In this stage there is strong need to go beyond self and
family and be concerned with helping the next generation; it is a time to decipher the difference between one’s dream and one’s actual accomplishments (Boeree, 2006; Corey, 2005). Erikson credits the generativity versus stagnation stage as the most critical one as it provides the crucial link between the generations. He noted that the insistence on dramatizing the dependence of children on adults blinds us to the dependence of the older generation on the younger one (Erikson, 1963b; 1965).

Erikson proposed that an adult enters this stage approximately at the age of 40. However, the researcher hypothesized that Mohandas had possibly entered this stage at a much younger age, perhaps in his early twenties or more definitely by his early thirties, therefore offering a limitation to Erikson’s theory. To support this hypothesis the researcher refers back to Mohandas’ attempt to reform his childhood friend, Mehtab, his establishment of the Vegetarian Society in London, his decision to stay in South Africa to fight for non-discrimination and his establishment of two ashrams in South Africa (Gandhi, 1949; Hardiman, 2003; Parel, 2006; Rolland, 1924).

Meyer et al. (2003) proposed that this supervision of the next generation does not only refer to the next of kin, but to humanity in general. In establishing the Vegetarian Society, Mohandas not only attempted to establish his identity as a vegetarian, but also share his wisdom and love of being a vegetarian with his fellow members.

Erikson (1965) believed that adults need to feel that others need them, and that this need finds expression in wanting to care for other people. It was for this very reason that Mohandas decided to stay in South Africa to fight for non-discrimination. He felt the Indian people of South Africa needed him and he knew he could make a difference (Fischer, 1962; Nanda, 1987; Rolland, 1924).
Mohandas also established two ashrams in his late twenties and early thirties which can also be viewed as an attempt on generativity. By establishing and living in these ashrams, he was able to pass on his knowledge of *ahimsa and brahmacharya* – both of which he believed would bring himself and those he taught, closer to *Truth*.

In line with the goal of this psychosocial stage, Mohandas nurtured his own children, children from his ashrams and his followers, in a manner consistent with his principles and in turn created a sense of accomplishment in his role as a father.

6.2.3.4 Initiative versus guilt

Erikson postulates that initiative embodies a quality of understanding, planning and attacking a task for the purpose of being active and on the move (Erikson, 1963b; 1965). Within the first three years in South Africa, Mohandas established the Natal Indian Congress in an attempt to gauge with other Indians to discuss and implement strategies to overcome injustices. In 1906, he developed the term *Satyagraha* using it for the first time in March 1907 when he organized opposition to the Asiatic Registration Law (also known as the Black Act). Mohandas seemed to be at the forefront of initiative through his sheer ground-breaking problem-solving strategy (ie., *Satyagraha*).

Developing a sense of responsibility increases initiative (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Santrock, 2006). Mohandas also took the initiative at the beginning of the Boer War to organize the Indian Ambulance Corp in which 1100 Indians boldly helped injured British soldiers. He felt a responsibility for the British on the ground that since Indians claimed their rights as British subjects it was their duty to defend the Empire when it was threatened.

As mentioned previously, the basic task of this stage is to achieve a sense of competence and initiative (Boeree, 2006; Corey, 2005; Sadock & Sadock, 2003). With that being said, the
researcher is of the opinion that Mohandas achieved a sense of competence through his successful endeavors, both political and personal. Erikson wrote about Mohandas’ progression during this psychosocial stage stating that he now had no doubt in his central competence. In the words of Gandhi (1949): “I was a reformer” (p. 158).

6.2.3.5 Conclusion

This section dealt with three psychosocial stages, namely, 1) initiative versus guilt; 2) identity versus role confusion; and 3) intimacy versus isolation. In addition, generativity versus stagnation was also discussed, whereby the researcher hypothesized that the ego virtue of care was attained by Gandhi. In addition, the following section provides further evidence of the attainment of the virtue of care. A discussion of the psychosocial stages of generativity versus stagnation and integrity versus despair within the time period 1915-1932 in Mohandas’ life will follow.

6.2.4 Great Soul in Beggar's Garb (1915-1932)

6.2.4.1 Generativity versus stagnation

According to Santrock (2006), a chief concern of this stage is to assist the younger generation in developing and leading useful lives. While living in these ashrams, Mohandas took on the role of educator. He believed it was his duty to pass on his knowledge and wisdom to his and other children at the ashrams by ‘training’ them mentally, spiritually and physically (Gandhi, 1949):

Only this much I knew - that …under ideal conditions, true education could be imparted only by the parents, and that then there should be the minimum of outside help, that Tolstoy Farm (ashram) was a family, in which I occupied the place of the father, and that I should so far as possible shoulder the responsibility for the training of the young (Gandhi, 1949, p. 278).
The researcher hypothesizes that Mahatma Gandhi had in fact embraced and internalized the ego quality of care in his search for producing something of value which would aid future generations. In addition, Mahatma Gandhi exercised this care in a manner which was not stagnating to non-Indians, but rather care to all races, castes and creeds. Erikson (1965) wrote that stagnation is significant at this stage not only because it affects the individual, but also successive generations.

Propensities such as exclusivity and rejectivity exacerbate the moralistic destructiveness of public and private morals, and that virtues such as love and care, in turn, contribute to a more insightful and universal ethic (Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978). When looking at Mahatma Gandhi’s life, the researcher agrees with Erikson’s suggestion. Even after Mahatma Gandhi’s death, his ideologies still continue to inspire people of all walks of life, from world leaders to average civilians (Hardiman, 2003; Parel, 1997; Rossenberg, 1997).

6.2.4.2 Integrity versus despair

Erikson viewed integrity as the product of the seven psychosocial stages. This stage can be seen as a powerful lens through which to view one's life, even before old age is reached (Boeree, 2006; Chapman, 2009). This essentially means that individuals should look back at their life, and perceive it to be one of productivity and meaning, with few regrets. Chapman (2009) described integrity as having no regrets or blame but rather a feeling of peace with oneself and the world. Furthermore, Erikson maintained that integrity is found only in the person who has taken care of things and people in some manner. Thereby adapting himself to the accomplishment and disappointment of being the originator of others or the generator of products and ideas (Erikson, 1963b; 1965). The researcher postulates that Mahatma Gandhi’s entire adult life was dedicated to one fundamental purpose, namely, the adamant pursuit of improving the holistic wellbeing of
Indians, and later, all discriminated individuals. Holistic wellbeing incorporates spiritual, economic, social and physical wellbeing in a complex web of aspirations which are connected at the centre of political power. In his search Mahatma Gandhi had accomplished many triumphs both large and small. The researcher believes all these triumphs were equally significant in the mind of Mahatma Gandhi. Even a small setback was an indirect success by its sheer tendency to add fuel to Mahatma’s enthusiasm. Erikson wrote the following regarding Mahatma’s perseverance: “That was Gandhi. There would be times when such investigative determination on his part meant trouble for everybody involved; for no matter what he found, decided to do, and managed to accomplish, the situation would most likely be reformed – lastingly and significantly” (Erikson, 1969, p. 167). His triumphs were a direct result of his inexhaustible ideas, along with his astute staging of these ideas.

During Mahatma’s 20 year long stay in South Africa he achieved many personal and civic victories. Civically, he was able to expel two significant discriminatory laws. In doing so, he empowered the Indian community to take a stand against injustices and discrimination, and laid the foundation for future endeavors. On a personal level, Mahatma took the vows of ahimsa, brahmacharya and aparigraha which allowed him to become closer to Truth, and ultimately God. The researcher believes that Mahatma would have looked back at his illustrious political and spiritual journey with a feeling of great contentment. He was able to almost single-handedly change the course of South Africa’s political constitution.

In addition to his contributions to South African politics and the Indian culture, Mahatma was also the proud father of four children. He attempted to raise them in a manner which incorporated the values of ahimsa, which he believed to be crucial within all individuals (Fischer, 1962; Gandhi, 1949; Parel, 1997; Rolland, 1924). Having been raised in a joint family
himself, Mahatma abided by a sense of equality when raising his children. Therefore, he never
treated one more favorably than another. Also, Mahatma and Kasturbai’s marriage evolved from
an unstable one racked with guilt and jealousy, to a dedicated and loving relationship with a
deeply spiritual connection. In his autobiography, he dedicates a chapter to Kasturbai, aptly
naming it *Kasturbai’s Courage*. Boeree (2006) stated that if, when looking back, people find
that they are satisfied that their lives had meaning and involvement, the result is a sense of
integrity. The researcher postulates that Mahatma, despite being a relentless activist, managed to
have many memorable moments of family life which he could have looked back with quiet
content.

Erikson (1965) further noted that integrity allows for “participation by followership as well as
the acceptance of the responsibility of leadership” (p. 261). Mahatma never appeared to be a
follower except if the person whom he followed shared the exact same beliefs (e.g., Gokhale).
The researcher therefore does not believe that Mahatma was ever a follower in the true sense,
even if the following was based on a compromise. Regarding the acceptance of responsibility of
leadership, there is not a more exemplary example than Mahatma Gandhi. He was a natural
leader as was already evident in his early adulthood regardless of his initial shyness.

Erikson believed that the successful resolution of this stage would result in the virtue of
*wisdom*, which he described as a detached concern with life itself, in the face of death itself
(Boeree, 2006; Craig & Baucum, 2002; Erikson, 1978; Meyer et al., 2003). As mentioned
previously, Mahatma’s life was threatened many times and he also succumbed to many assaults.
However, he always reacted calmly, even refusing to press charges against his attackers. He
often put his life in danger while fighting for injustices as if he were willing to die for his beliefs:
"There are many causes that I am prepared to die for but no causes that I am prepared to kill for"
(Gandhi, 1949, p. 247). The tenacity with which Mahatma strove toward the fulfillment of his purpose can also be perceived and is indicative of the eternal bond his identity had with his purpose.

The maladaptation of this stage is ‘presumption’ which is characteristic of conceited, pompous and arrogant cognitions/behaviour (Boeree, 2006; Chapman, 2009). Mahatma clearly refuted the maladaptation of this stage when he denied the name Mahatma (Nanda, 1987; Rosenberg, 1997). He did not like the name as it had the connotation that he was special compared to everyone, whereas he viewed himself as ordinary. He also began wearing a dhoti and sandals (i.e., the average dress of Indians) in an attempt to travel more anonymously as he did not like the fuss he made when he was recognized. The researcher postulates that Mahatma’s reluctance to be ‘worshipped’ showed his continuing search for his identity, for Truth, believing that it was his duty to serve his people and that he did not need recognition.

6.2.4.3 Conclusion

Based on the discussions regarding the integrity versus despair stage which reflected his life as fearless activist, family man and spiritual leader the researcher is of the opinion that Mahatma Gandhi had acquired the ego virtue of wisdom. The following section further substantiates the researcher’s opinion.

6.2.5 Freedom and Martyrdom (1932-1948)

6.2.5.1 Integrity versus despair

Erikson described integrity as the ego’s increased assurance of its tendency for order and meaning. He further noted that it is a post-narcissistic love of the human ego which expresses some world order and spiritual sense, regardless of how dearly paid for (Erikson, 1963b; 1965). Mahatma lived his life abiding by his perception of a world order grounded in his principles,
which had imbued a deep sense of meaning since his childhood. For the possessor of integrity all human integrity stand or falls by the one style of integrity which he possesses (Erikson, 1965b; 1965). Supporting this opinion by Erikson is the very fact that Mohandas was given the name Mahatma. All over the world Mahatma was known as the man of great determination and perseverance, immovable from his established principles. He therefore personified a style of integrity which was subsequently threaded throughout all his endeavors. This style of integrity which is developed by an individual’s spirituality, Erikson wrote, becomes the “patrimony of his soul, the seal of man’s moral paternity to himself (Erikson, 1963b, p. 268).

In such final consolidation, death loses its sting (Erikson, 1963b; 1965). The researcher has already discussed Mahatma’s fearless character in the face of death. The strength of his integrity led him to be this fearless, and ironically it was this strength of integrity in implementing his beliefs in practice which led to his assassination.

The researcher believes that Mahatma’s character earned him many supporters as well as enemies. One of these enemies took Mahatma Gandhi’s life on January 1948 by shooting him thrice in the chest (Nanda, 1987). Despite the violent end to his life, the researcher is of the opinion that Mahatma lived his life in the one way he knew best – without regrets. “Integrity is the acceptance of one’s one and only life cycle as something that had to be and that, by necessity, permitted no substitutions” (Erikson, 1963b, p. 268).

6.3 Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi had always held two great aspirations. All he did for India and for the rest of the world are best understood when seen in the light of these aspirations. The first was to demonstrate through life and work that there was a basic harmony underlying all the fundamental human strivings – the strivings for wealth, power, pleasure, ethical goodness, beauty and
spiritual transcendence. The second aim was to forge a moral link between the introspective life and the modern secular life as it was lived in the fields of economics and politics. The researcher has made an earnest attempt to illuminate Mahatma Gandhi’s life, by utilizing Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory, and in doing so, provide the reader with a possible rationale for his individualism. In doing so, the researcher hoped to provide a new outlook on Mahatma Gandhi’s life, thus allowing the reader to understand the man behind the Mahatma more fully. In the chapter that follows, the conclusions and limitations of this study are highlighted, and recommendations for future research made.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this study is to explore and describe the personality development of Mahatma Gandhi in terms of Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Development Theory. This chapter discusses possible limitations of the study. As the possible limitations of a psychobiographical case study method has already been discussed in Chapter 5, only a list of these limitations will be provided in this chapter. This chapter also highlights the conclusions drawn from the research, as well as considerations and recommendations for further study related to this topic.

7.2. Conclusions of study

The researcher concluded that Gandhi had attained the ego virtues of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and wisdom as proposed by Erikson’s (1950) Psychosocial Developmental Theory within the delineated age frame.

7.3 Possible limitations related to the psychobiographical case study method

Elms (1994) discussed various limitations related to the methodology of the psychobiographical case study. The researcher has provided preliminary considerations in the form of discussions on reductionism, cross-cultural differences, researcher bias, validity and reliability, elitism and easy genre, analysis of an absent subject, the infinite amount of
biographical data, and inflated expectations. In terms of the preliminary methodical considerations, the researcher is able to comment retrospectively on the experience of conducting a psychobiographical case study.

With regard to researcher bias, the researcher confessed that she was initially biased towards Mahatma Gandhi, idealizing him as a young child having learnt about his triumphs from an early age. However, in doing an extensive literature review, the researcher was able to gain an objective understanding of the man behind the legend, with all his trials and tribulations. In addition, throughout the duration of the study the researcher was guided by her supervisors to be introspective with regard to her emotions toward Mahatma Gandhi. Therefore, the researcher explored her feelings and attitudes towards Mahatma Gandhi throughout the study, noting feelings and attitudes that developed during the literature study, data collection and analysis phase. In doing so, the researcher remained objective towards the subject.

With regard to reductionism, the researcher had no trouble in obtaining personal data pertaining to the life of Mahatma Gandhi as multiple sources were used in data collection. The researcher also had the advantage of using Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography to corroborate this information. In addition, the researcher had access to primary material (i.e., first-hand letters) for the use of this study.

The criticism of cross-cultural differences were effaced as the researcher shares a common cultural characteristic with Mahatma Gandhi, that is, they both share the same religious background of Hinduism. This common thread transcended the differing socio-political, economic and cultural time and brought about a better understanding of how his responsibility as a Hindu may have impacted his life and work.

The psychobiographical criticism of elitism and easy genre does not appear justified in the
application to the study of Mahatma Gandhi. Although, he has received much media attention and various books have been written about him, they were more contemporary sources that added dimension. Concerning the criticism of a psychobiography being an easy genre, the contrary can be argued in that the multidimensional nature of Mahatma Gandhi’s life and personality made this a complex undertaking. It was also challenging to remain objective and refrain from researcher bias.

The criticism of analyzing an absent subjective was sidestepped as the researcher was not required to follow typical formalities such as informed consent, maintaining a safe therapeutic relationship, abiding by ethical guidelines of therapeutic practice and devising a biographical questionnaire.

With regard to the criticism of having an infinite amount of biographical data to work with, the researcher had to establish the relevancy and irrelevancy of all the material. The relevancy of the data was based on the assessment of how the data would contribute to the aims of the study.

As the study progressed, the researcher became increasingly aware of inflated expectations of the study. This study attempted to test and challenge existing knowledge rather than replace it.

### 7.4 Specific limitations of this study

One considerable limitation of the study was the limited amount of information available on Mahatma Gandhi's life. Even in his autobiography, his focus is political in nature. This may be the result of Mahatma's incredible fortitude in his fight against discrimination which did not allow him time at home or the opportunity to engage in recreational activities.

It would have been valuable to obtain more information regarding Mahatma and Kasturbai's marriage, enabling the researcher to draw further inferences about their relationship.

There was also limited information available on Mahatma's early years which forced the
researcher to make speculative deductions from available data. Further information on Mahatma Gandhi's childhood could have allowed for added discussion relating to his specific personality and character traits which became apparent in later years.

As this study is the first psychologically based research on Mahatma Gandhi's life, it cannot be compared with studies of a similar nature and is therefore left unsupported.

In addition, it is important to note that the iconic life of Mahatma Gandhi transcends that of which a theory can fully explain. Nevertheless, this study provides an important scientific contribution towards the psychological understanding of his life.

7.5 Value of the study

The researcher has provided the first psychological explanation on the life of Mahatma Gandhi as it unfolded through the developmental stages proposed by Erikson. The study intended to explore Mahatma Gandhi's life as well as to illustrate the importance of developmental tasks throughout the human lifespan. In order to do this, Erikson’s theory was assessed by examining the validity and reliability of his constructs to the life of Mahatma Gandhi. By applying Erikson’s theory to Mahatma Gandhi’s life (an individual whose life stretched into late adulthood) provided the researcher with the opportunity to note patterns and provide inferences as to causes. This would not have been possible if only a period of Mahatma Gandhi's life had been selected for study.

An individual’s life path cannot be seen as a straightforward one. And even though some individuals may have similar paths, each individual will have unique features. Therefore, it is impossible to produce a lifespan theory which encompasses all possible directions and phases that an individual may come across. With that being said, the researcher was aware of the imperfections in Erikson’s theory, but nonetheless found great value in it. The theory was
practical and comprehensive, and allowed the researcher a greater understanding of personality development.

7.6 Recommendations for future research

It is recommended that a prospective study of a similar kind be done on a larger scale. An example of this might be a doctoral thesis, which may serve as an ideal format to adequately elucidate the complexity of the research subject.

It is proposed that the presented findings of this study be taken as a spring board in the psychological analysis of Mahatma Gandhi. By doing this, it is intended to provide a point of departure from which to move towards a greater understanding of his life and his work. This study aimed to highlight Mahatma Gandhi’s life span development according to specific developmental tasks. These developmental tasks each intrinsic to a developmental stage may serve as interesting and informative research projects for the future. This could provide assistance in a more comprehensive and thorough explanation of Mahatma Gandhi’s psychological developmental processes.

Future researchers may consider utilizing additional theoretical approaches to psychological development; thereby complementing the research already conducted in the course of this study. The findings of future research studies could be compared to either enhance the reliability of existing data due to substantiation or to highlight inconsistencies, thereby providing the opportunity for further exploration. Finding inconsistencies also incites the prospect for creating new, yet related topics for further research.

Future researchers undertaking more in-depth research on this subject may consider working
on an inter-disciplinary basis. For example, the psychobiographer might enlist the assistance of a political scientist or a historian, who could provide more detail regarding possible influences of the historical period during which the subject lived.

7.7 Conclusion

The researcher noted that the constraints within which the research was conducted often contributed to the limitations of the study. On the other hand, when viewing the limitations through creative eyes, one is able to see the opportunities for future research endeavours.

Erikson’s theory proved to be robust, allowing the researcher to explore the life of Mahatma Gandhi in its entirety. As one of the aims of this study was to gain a better understanding of Mahatma Gandhi, the researcher trusts that this psychological perspective on his life has revealed fresh insight into his life. The researcher acknowledges that since this is the first psychological interpretation of Mahatma Gandhi’s life, it may contain elements of discrepancies. However, this study may serve as the first step towards a greater understanding of the intricate personality puzzle that made Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma.
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### Appendix A

**A Matrix of Mahatma Gandhi’s Life and Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Stages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Trust vs. Mistrust</th>
<th>Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt</th>
<th>Initiative vs. Guilt</th>
<th>Industry vs. Inferiority</th>
<th>Identity vs. Role Confusion</th>
<th>Intimacy vs. Isolation</th>
<th>Generativity vs. Stagnation</th>
<th>Integrity Vs. Despair</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(birth – 18 months)</td>
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<td>The childhood Years (1869 – 1887)</td>
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<td>On the threshold of manhood (1888 – 1890)</td>
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<td>Emergence of Mahatma (1891 - 1914)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great soul in beggar’s garb (1915 - 1932)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freedom &amp; Martyrdom (1933 - 1948)</td>
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Appendix B

Rationale for using variations of Gandhi’s name

**Mohandas**  Used in chapter 3 to indicate Gandhi before his transition/development into *Mahatma*.

**Mahatma**  Used chapter 3 to indicate the time period after his transition/development into *Mahatma*. Mohandas was given the honorary title of *Mahatma* (Great Soul) by Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore on his final return to India. The title, Mahatma, represented the feelings of the millions of Indians who viewed him as a holy man.

**Gandhi**  Refers to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi throughout other chapters in the study.
## Appendix C

**Definition of Hindu terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ahimsa</td>
<td>Non-violence/injury to living beings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aparigraha</td>
<td>Non-possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bapu</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhagvad Gita</td>
<td>Hindu holy book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brahmacharya</td>
<td>Vow of celibacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhoti</td>
<td>Loin cloth; traditional clothes of Indian men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartel</td>
<td>March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahatma</td>
<td>Great soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samabhava</td>
<td>Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satyagraha</td>
<td>Passive resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satyagrahi</td>
<td>A person using <em>satyagraha</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

A Concise Biographical Outline on the Highlights of Mahatma Gandhi’s Life

1 The childhood years of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1887)
1869: Born 2 October in Kathiawar, India
1876: Goes to Rajkot with parents; attends primary school there till age twelve; is betrothed to Kasturbai
1881: Starts high school
1883: Marries Kasturbai
1884: Begins eating meat in secret but stops after a year
1885: Father dies, aged 63.
1887: Passes Matriculation examination; joins Samaldas College at Bhavnagar (Kathiawar), but gives up studies at the end of first term

2 On the threshold of Manhood (1888–1890)
1888: Sails for England
1890: Passes London Matric; joins the Vegetarian Society

3 Emergence of Mahatma (1891–1914)
1891: Called to the Bar; sails for India
1892: Struggles with legal practice at Rajkot and Bombay; later settles down as legal draftsman.
1893: Leaves for South Africa; experiences racial discrimination; decides to stay in South Africa to fight racial prejudice
1894: Founds Natal Indian Congress
1896: Returns to India and starts agitation on behalf of South African Indians;
Publishes The Green Pamphlet at Rajkot; Tours Bombay, Madras, Poona and
Calcutta educating Indians in regard to grievances of South African Indians; Sails for
South Africa with wife and children.
1897: Mobbed by crowd on landing in Durban; refuses to prosecute assailants.
1899: Raises Indian Ambulance Corps in Boer War; awarded war medal.
1903: Founded Transvaal British India Association
1904: Founded Phoenix settlement
1906: Started Passive Resistance Movement
1909: Wrote ‘Hind Swaraj’ in Gujarati on the way to South Africa from London

   4 Great soul in beggar's garb (1915–1932)
1915: Returned to India; Founded Satyagraha Ashram at Kochrab, Ahemadabad
1922: Arrested and sent to Yervada Jail. Remained in jail till March 1924
1924: Started 21 days fast for Hindu-Muslim unity
1930: Started his famous Dandi March to break the Salt Law; Arrested and sentenced for
       one year
1931: Gandhi-Irwin Pact was announced

   5 Freedom and Martyrdom (1933–1948)
1933: Individual Civil Disobedience started; Arrested and remained in jail for 1 month
1936: Founded Sevagram Ashram at Wardha
1942: Addressed All India Congress Committee of Bombay and Quit India resolution
       was passed.
1944: Kasturbai dies
1948: Assassinated at age 78.