A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JUNIOR: AN ADLERIAN PERSPECTIVE

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PHOTOGRAPH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JUNIOR

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ABSTRACT

Martin Luther King Junior was an advocate of non-violent social change strategies; he was a pastor, an author, the first president of the southern Christian leadership conference, a speaker, a Nobel Prize winner, and a leader. Martin Luther King junior was transformed by his deep family roots in the African American Baptist church. His formative experiences in his hometown of Atlanta were his theological studies, his varied models of religious and political leadership and his extensive network of contacts in the peace and social justice movements of his time. Although only 39 at the time of his death, Martin Luther King juniors’ life was remarkable for the ways it reflected and inspired so many of the twentieth century’s major intellectual, cultural and political developments.

The primary aim of this study was to explore and describe the psychological development across the lifespan of Martin Luther King junior, by applying Alfred Adler’s theory of individual psychology.

Martin Luther King junior’s life was explored in this study through systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of the historic data on his life, which highlighted seven significant historical periods: (a) Childhood and adolescence (1929 – 1944), (b) The inevitable (1944 – 1948), (c) The Purpose in his Destiny (1948 – 1951), (d) Family and mission (1952 – 1959), (e) Movement against segregation (1960 – 1963), (f) History is made (1963 – 1967), and (g) Unfinished business (1968).

Adler’s framework was used to recognize, convert and reconstruct his life into a coherent narrative of his psychological development throughout his life. Alexander’s guidelines for extracting salient data was utilised to ensure accurate description of Martin Luther King junior’s life. A conceptual framework that is the Adlerian Matrix was included in the study as guide in presenting the research discussion and findings in an illuminating and integrative
The research discussion and findings suggested that Adler’s theoretical framework considers the biopsychosocial, cultural and historic influences in Martin Luther King junior’s personality development. In taking the context into consideration, Adler’s individual psychology identified King junior with a social useful lifestyle because of his high social interest which influenced his striving for superiority. This lifestyle guided his fictional goal which was selfless and aimed at contributing to the wellbeing of others. The private logic about himself, others and the world, which is developed in early childhood, was a positive navigator for the development of his personality and lifestyle. Thus according to the Adlerian theory, King junior could positively balance the resolution of the life tasks of occupation, social and love & marriage.

The study of King junior’s personality development has provided an affirmative demonstration of the value of Adler’s psychological theory to understand the process of personality development in an individual life. It has highlighted the value of studying an individual life taking his context, including early experiences, family environment and every action, into consideration to understand the uniqueness of responding to life tasks and his perceptions. Recommendations were made for future research undertakings using psychobiographical research design and methodology to reveal, illuminate and reconstruct the lives of historic personalities.

Keywords: Adler's individual psychology, Martin Luther King junior: personality development, psychobiography.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1. Chapter Preview

In this introductory chapter a general orientation to the study is presented. The research problem statement and the aim of the study are described. The researcher’s personal passage is also provided and the chapter concludes with an overview of the chapters in the treatise.

1.2. General Orientation to the Research Study

This study explored and described Martin Luther King junior’s (1929 – 1968) personality development throughout his lifespan. The psychobiographical study was conducted to holistically uncover the personality development of Martin Luther King junior and enhance understanding and insight into his personality development.

Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology theoretical framework was utilized to conceptualize and interpret King junior’s personality development. The use of Adler’s theory created the basis for comprehensive efficiency in analysing King junior’s personality development using Adler’s developmental concepts in order to gain more description and understanding.

The research is classified as a psychobiographical case study design and methodology. This involved the systematic use of a theory of psychosocial and individual personality to uncover, analyse and reconstruct King junior’s life into a psychological narrative. The biographical data and life history materials that were collected and analysed were published materials on King junior. This included books,
articles and Internet sources.

1.3. Problem Statement

The value of studying individual lives has been recognized by many academics that have the understanding that individual lives are rich in personality, developmental and psychohistorical importance (Fouche, 1999). Psychobiographies have been recognized as not only ways to do a biography, but psychology as well. Psychobiographical research has become a valuable approach in qualitative research because of the growing interest about the life course and experience of the individual (Roberts, 2002). However Stroud (2004) recognized that due to the lack of exposure to the psychobiographical methodology, this kind of research has faced various challenges such as its generalizability. Interest in Psychobiographical research has however continued to grow because of its insightful approach in understanding and interpreting individual lives (Fouche & van Niekerk, 2005).

Psychobiographies offer value in trying to understand an individual life from an approach that emphasizes a holistic perspective. Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology was used as the theoretical framework in this study because of its emphasis of the holistic approach. This perspective allows the research to explore the complexity of the personality and motivations of the individual’s behaviour (Shultz, 2005).

The researcher decided to follow a psychobiographical research approach because of the way in which this approach promotes the illuminating of a life through the application of a theory (Alexander, 1988). Other motivational factors in following the psychobiographical research approach include (a) the opportunity for the researcher’s own self exploration through the process of studying the life story of another
individual, (b) the significant value and recognition psychobiographical research has received at the current academic institution the researcher is working under, and (c) no psychobiographical research study has been conducted on this enigmatic figure, namely Martin Luther King junior.

In a psychobiographical case study, the rationale of selecting a particular personality, lies in the interest in this specific person and the specific personality theory utilised to illuminate this life. The personality under study is most often that of an enigmatic, controversial or ‘great’ figure (Elms, 1994). This psychological study provides the researcher with a scientific approach to understand why some children develop into uniquely competent and creative individuals (Howe, 1997). Martin Luther King junior was chosen by the researcher because he was an example of an enigmatic, historic and great figure whose life inspired and affected many.

The literature study on Martin Luther King junior revealed that he was an inspirational and historic figure, one that could be classified as one of the ‘greats’ in terms of historic significance. He was a man of faith with hope, not only of the spiritual dimension but also for the extension of the ideals by which he preached and lived. His life was an effort to infuse the complex political and social existence with the spiritual power of God’s love (Young, 2001).

For King junior, social justice was not something that would ‘roll in on the wings of inevitability’ but he saw social justice as something that would come through struggle and sacrifice.

King junior’s lifestyle appears to have theoretical significance and applicability to Adler’s (1929) individual psychology. Martin Luther King junior was a man with high social interests. His striving for superiority was in the interests of not only his own wellbeing but that of others as well. His story and his movement have been
documented and publicized all over the world (Reddie, 2011). Elms (1994) stated that psychobiographical literature emphasises the need for psychological research on greatness, exemplary lives and exceptional figures.

This study of King junior’s exemplary life provides insight into the dynamics around the personality development and motivation of behaviour that transformed him into a great figure. This further provides encouragement for future similar psychobiographical studies of some of South Africa’s exceptional historical figures.

No psychobiographical research using Adler’s (1929) individual psychology has been conducted on Martin Luther King junior’s personality development across his lifespan. Although much literature has been written on his life and work, none of the literature provides an empirical psychological focus, specifically, no psychobiographical case study has been conducted. The available literature utilized for this study varies from internet sites to books on his life, his work and memorable speeches. The existing literature has offered a foundation from which it is possible to explore, describe and investigate King junior’s personality development.

Adler’s theory of personality development was used to conceptualize and interpret King junior’s psychological movement throughout his socio-historical lifespan. Throughout the exploration of King junior’s personality development, the use of the psychological theory is emphasised as it is able to identify the individual distinctions in his development. The present researcher contends that this particular theory complements the research subject because of its holistic teleological emphasis on understanding the complexity of an individual life.

In conclusion, the research problem of the present study is related to various focal points in this field. Firstly the psychobiographical approach promotes the application of a specific theory to illuminate a life. This qualitative approach is in demand
particularly in the South African context. Secondly, the added value of psychobiographical research is the self-exploration it provides the psychobiographer whilst studying another individual’s life. As the researcher, I was able to gain insight into the commitment and struggle of another individual who advocated for a higher purpose. The strong sense of values and principles by which the subject upheld humbled me and influenced a self-introspection into my own. This not only inspired me as an individual but also reminded me of other individuals both close to me and not, who had demonstrated such character. Like King junior who had been inspired by Gandhi, I have also been inspired by King junior, through the process of conducting the present study. Finally, studying and reconstructing the lives of controversial and exemplary figures serves as a way of understanding human development and the motivation behind behaviour. This facilitates the exploration and value of psychosocial and historical contexts impacting on individual development.

1.4. Primary Aim of the Study

The primary aim of this study was to explore, describe and provide a thorough understanding of Martin Luther King junior’s life and his personality development in terms of Alfred Adler’s (1929) Individual psychology. It was not the aim of the proposed study to generalize the findings to the larger population, instead the study’s aim was to generalize the findings of the subject to Alfred Adler’s (1929) theoretical framework.

Personality is described and explained in various ways among the different psychology schools. The particular theoretical framework allowed for the subjects personality development to be conceptualized in a developmental and holistic manner. The aim of this study was not to approve or disapprove King junior’s personality
functioning but rather to explore its nature taking into account the context and different variables of his life through a chronological history of his life.

This qualitative psychobiographical study can be described as both exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogical in nature. The exploratory-descriptive nature refers to the study of King junior’s personality development over his life span. The descriptive-dialogical nature refers description of a phenomenon and to clarify and informally test the content of a specific theory (Edwards, 1990), such as Adler’s (1929) individual psychology.

1.5. The Researcher’s Personal Passage

The decision to conduct a psychobiographical study was motivated by the researcher’s interest in exceptional historic figures. Their experiences, living circumstances and the motivation behind their behaviour generate an interest in understanding one’s own psyche and personality dynamics.

The current research study developed out of interest in Martin Luther King junior and the comparable work and exemplary life that some of South Africa’s historic figures have lived. The psychobiographical study provided the researcher with the opportunity of gaining insight into the complexity of the society and culture that King junior lived in and understand the driving forces that encouraged his passion, sacrifices and struggle. Thus the psychobiographical study, as a scientific approach, enabled the researcher to gain insight into the individual, from a psychological point of view (Howe, 1997).

The researcher considered various theoretical lenses and selected Adler’s model to assist in the reconstruction of King junior’s story, and Adler’s (1929) individual psychology naturally fitted and was found to be compatible with the research
subject’s narrative. The unique way in which Adler conceptualizes the development of the lifestyle and personality and particularly how the purpose of a particular lifestyle can shape the character of an exceptional figure was captivating for the researcher. The researcher identified and appreciated the holistic view that Adler emphasises as it is the researcher’s own recognition that from birth early relationships, experiences and actions are influential in the shaping of who one later becomes.

1.6. Overview of the Study

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter one presents the introduction and problem statement. Chapters two and three are the literature review chapters. More specifically, chapter two provides the overview of Adler’s (1929) individual psychology theory while chapter three presents a historical overview of Martin Luther King junior. Chapter four provides a discussion of a theoretical overview on a psychobiography. This chapter also focuses on a theoretical discussion of preliminary methodological considerations when undertaking a psychobiographical study. Chapter 5 presents the research design and methodology and includes a discussion of how the preliminary methodological considerations were applied in the current study. Chapter six focuses on the research results and findings as they relate to the individual personality development of Martin Luther King junior. Chapter seven concludes the study and provides a discussion on the value of the study, the specific limitations to this study and recommendations for future research within this field of psychobiography.
1.7. Conclusion

This chapter presented the introduction and problem statement of the current psychobiographical study. The primary aim of the study was presented and a personal passage from the researcher was also included. Finally an overview to the chapters of the study was presented to orientate the reader. The next chapter focuses on Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology.
CHAPTER 2

ALFRED ADLER’S INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

2.1. Chapter Preview

This chapter discusses Adler’s individual psychology as the theoretical framework utilised to understand the personality and life of Martin Luther King junior. Individual Psychology is a dynamic theory that understands life challenges according to three domains, namely: occupational, social and sexual (Adler, 1958). It is through these lenses that the life of the subject will be explicated. An overview of how Adler viewed the meaning of life and how individuals experience it will be discussed in order to orientate the reader to Adler’s perspective. The development of personality is then discussed, in order to facilitate some understanding of the subject’s life across his lifespan. The chapter will conclude with a critical evaluation of the theory and its contributions to psychobiographical research.

2.2. The Meaning of life

Alfred Adler’s (1870 – 1937) view of personality, based on the definition of Individual Psychology, is that of a whole. Adler regarded each single reaction, each movement and impulse as an articulated part of an individual’s attitude towards life. Adler (1930) emphasized the absurdness of studying bodily movements and mental conditions abstractly without any relationship to an individual whole.

Individual Psychology developed out of the effort to understand that mysterious creative power of life, that power which expresses itself in the desire to develop, to
strive and to achieve, and also to compensate for the defeats in one direction by striving for success in another (Adler, 1930).

Adler (1958) proposed that human beings live in the realm of meanings. There are as many meanings given to life as there are human beings, no one individual possesses the absolute meaning of life. Through this Adler (1958) stressed that although each individual has his or her own meaning of life, each individual has three main ties, which make up reality for him. It is in the direction of these ties that he can solve the tasks and problems of life.

The first tie is, that as a human being, one is living on earth and nowhere else. One must, therefore, develop under the restrictions and possibilities the environment sets upon him or her. In other words, one must find an occupation that would enable one to survive and prosper. In this way, in body and mind alike, human beings must develop – so that they can continue their personal lives on earth – and help ensure the future continuance of mankind.

The second tie is the understanding that one is not the only member of the human race. There are other individuals around with whom one has to associate, in order to ensure one’s own aims. People cannot live in isolation, so amongst others, one has to co-operate and share the benefits of co-operation.

The third and last tie of life is that of the gender. Adler (1930) postulates that the problems of love and marriage belong to this third tie. Individuals who experience love and marital challenges respond under this domain (Adler, 1958).

Adler (1958) indicated that it is through these three domains that every individual human being unfailingly reveals his own deep sense of the meaning of life. Individuals who have an intimate love life, work that results in useful achievements and maintain healthy friendships may be seen as content. They
understand life as a creative task with many fruitful opportunities and irreversible defeats. These individuals’ understanding of life and how one meets all the problems of life may be construed as – “Life means to be interested in fellowmen, to be part of the whole, and to contribute my share to the welfare of mankind.” (Adler, 1929, p.28).

Adler (1952) noted that the primary purpose of life for an individual is driven by the organic unconsciousness of a need, of some specific inferiority, which has to be compensated for. He further explained that, the drive to achieve compensation for one’s defects is part of everyone’s reality. For example this could be identified with the life of a small and struggling man, whose life would be interpretable as a struggle to achieve immediate greatness in some way. The deaf man’s need would be to obtain compensation for hearing. This is one of the simplest of examples. These needs and problems are ultimately related to the ties or attitudes of life.

The feeling of inferiority is always manifested in a sense of fear or uncertainty in the presence of society, whether its outward expression is one of timidity or defiance, reserve or anxiety. This need would be related to the issue of socialisation. Adler (1952) explained that through the tone of one’s feelings toward his neighbours to begin with, to his township and nation, or other nationalities, one might infer how securely his own soul is grounded in itself.

Adler (1952) maintained that the ties of life are closely related. In other words, each has an influence on the other, and impacts the other, which ultimately shapes the meaning of life for that human being. The attitude towards work is closely dependent upon one’s self-security in society. In the process of addressing occupational demands and receiving goods or privileges, individuals also have to
face the logic of social needs. If an individual is vastly divided from society, and
maintains a sense of weakness in it, this would negatively influence his sense of
self-worth and the ability of others to recognize it. As a result, he would revert to
playing things safe, suppressing his own valuation and working just to get by.

Adler (1952) concludes this argument by bringing in the impact this would have
on the attitude to love. The man whose inferiority has been manifested in some
way in his social life, which ultimately thwarts his occupation, would act in his sex
life as though he were trying to obtain compensation for his failures in other
spheres.

Adler (1958) emphasised that how the individual subjectively experiences
reality and chooses to create a lifestyle is more important than the abilities
provided by heredity and the impressions provided by the environment.
Individuals thus determine the meaning of, and approach to life. The self-
consistency, which an individual displays through his actions, expresses unity of
personality. This personality is then expressed through his lifestyle that
characterizes the individual in a unique way.

Adler’s emphasis on goal-directedness was that an unconscious fictional goal
provides a fundamental direction of striving towards superiority. It is early in life
that children conceive this goal. The fictional goal is the individual’s imagined
creation of success, significance and superiority (Adler, 1929; Corey, 2005).
Within each individual, there is the conception of this goal to get beyond the
present state and to overcome the present deficiencies by postulating a concrete
aim for the future. The fictional goal is subjective and it guides the individual’s
behaviour in the present towards the vision he has of future success (Adler, 1930).
2.3. The Structure of Personality

Without the sense of a goal, individual activity would cease to have any meaning (Adler, 1930). The fixing of this goal takes ‘concrete’ form during the developing stages of childhood, when the model of a mature personality begins to form. From the time when a child, weak and feeling inferior, finds himself in an intolerable situation; the child strives to develop by forming a goal, and the child’s movement is dominated by this goal. It is at this early stage that the prototype is formed, and the child is more interested in himself than in others. The unity of personality, which involves movement through life and the goal, is not built on objective reality, but on the subjective perception that the individual holds regarding life (Corey, 2005).

Each fictional goal is unique and depends on the circumstances in which the individual was raised and is based on the choices made (Mosak & Maniaci, 1989). The goal is formed in response to the child’s subjective view about himself, others and the world. According to Adler (1929, 1930, 1958) the private logic is the view and beliefs that an individual holds about himself, others and the world. It is this private logic that organises and guides the individual’s movement and behaviour towards the goal. This private logic is self-centred and would not benefit society if all situations were viewed from it (Adler, 1930).

Adler emphasised the importance of taking all parts of an individual, particularly the context, into consideration when looking at the individual’s personality and life. Adler noted that individuals have an innate creative self and constitutional attributes that interact with the social environment (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003).

The development towards an individualized goal of superiority is reflected
through the lifestyle that the individual creates in response to interacting with the social environment (Adler, 1929). The development and structure of personality could be best understood through describing these concepts, namely: constitutional attributes, social environment, lifestyle and the striving for superiority. These will now be discussed throughout the chapter.

2.3.1. Constitutional Attributes

Adler (1929, 1930) stated that it is during the developmental period of childhood that the model of a mature personality begins to develop. Adler noted that when the prototype – that early personality, which embodies the goal – is formed, the line of direction is established and the individual becomes definitively oriented towards life (Adler, 1929). Inferiority and the need to formulate goals for compensation are recognised early and confronted in this stage.

Adler (1929) added that there is the issue of inheritance, and its effect on the apperception of inferiority in the individual. Although heredity is responsible for inherited organic defects, it is what one does with his inheritance that is most important. Adler (1930) stressed that during the development of the prototype, the apperception of inherited defects makes the individual more vulnerable to exaggerated feelings of inferiority. Individuals creatively determine a fictional goal of superiority, in order to compensate for real or perceived organic deficits (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003).

2.3.1.1. Inferiority and Compensation

The term inferiority has been used repeatedly from the beginning
of this chapter, mainly because of its relevance for the development of personality and the meaning of life. Adler (1930) indicated that the understanding of psychological facts comes from the practice of medicine. Medicine provides the opportunity to see all organs striving to develop towards definite goals. In cases of organic defects, nature makes special efforts to compensate by developing another organ to take over the function of the defective one. This movement of organic life, Adler proposed, is analogous to the movement of the psyche (Adler, 1958).

Adler maintained that all individuals, including children, experience a natural inferiority whose motivation persists throughout life (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003). The presence of this goal or motivation to overcome inferiority and compensate for it can be seen in children from a very young age, as it dominates the child’s every movement (Adler, 1930).

A good example of striving for superiority in childhood is through the simple children’s pretend-play to be an adult. Being weak and small, children feel inferior to adults because of this dependency; and so they compensate for this inferiority through their pretend-play (Boeree, 2006). Every child longs for higher goals; to compensate in some way for inferiorities. An example of this would be perfectionists and obsessive compulsive individuals who are often compensating for low self-esteem or other weaknesses (Adler, 1958). Whatever men are striving for originates from their
urgent attempts to overcome the impression of deficiency, insecurity, or weakness: real or imagined (Boeree, 2006).

2.3.1.2. Complexes

Adler (1958) defined the inferiority complex as something that appears before a problem, with which an individual is not properly equipped to deal. The complex is expressed through a conviction that one is unable to solve it. Inferiority complexes can be expressed in various ways – from anger – to tears – to apologies. Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) reported that Adler viewed inferiority as a motivator in the striving for success.

Adler (1930) also recognized that some individuals become so overwhelmed by these feelings of inferiority that they focus increasingly on themselves in a negative, incompetent light – and, consequently, develop an inferiority complex.

The superiority complex is another way in which individuals respond to inferiority. Adler (1958) emphasized that no human being can bear a feeling of inferiority for very long, as he would be thrown into a feeling of tension, which necessitates some kind of action. His goal is still to get rid of these feelings, and to be superior to the difficulties, but instead of overcoming obstacles, he tries to rationalise himself into feeling superior. If he feels weak, he moves into circumstances where he can feel strong; however, he does not train to be stronger and adequate, he trains to appear strong in his own eyes. Due to the fact that inferiority feelings always produce tension, there will always be a compensatory movement
towards superiority; but it will no longer be directed towards solving the problem. The movement towards superiority will be towards the useless side of life (Adler, 1958).

2.3.2. Social Environment

2.3.2.1. Social Interest and Social Feeling

Adler (1929) viewed man as completely ‘embedded in society’ and not capable of being understood except in terms of his relationship with society. Adler (1929) understood people to act in a certain way that advances a particular life-plan developed by them (Werner, 1966). Adler (1958) believed that a child should be educated to work for the betterment of his community from his earliest years. The child should be developed to be a ‘giver’ instead of a ‘taker’.

Brennan (1966) noted that Adler’s concept of social feeling offers one a powerful conceptual tool, which could assist the notion of self-understanding. Adler considered social feeling to be an ‘innate cognitive aptitude’, which allows one to transcend private meanings and feelings by focusing one’s interest on the other’s words and behaviours – in terms of what they mean to others – a feeling with the other (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1965).

Social interest refers to: ”The capacity for identification, which alone makes us capable of friendship, love of mankind, sympathy, occupation and love, and can be exercised only in conjunction with others” (Adler, 1964, p.64).
Through the understanding and application of social interest, Adler proposed that this enhances the ability to become less involved with one’s own hopes, fears, shame and doubt, in order to become more concerned about how the other sees and experiences the world (Shultz, 1964). Schultz (1964) came to a similar conclusion in his interpretation of face-to-face relations: “I experience myself through you and you experience yourself through me” (Shultz, 1964, p.24).

Adler (1929) noted that humans cannot be understood apart from their social context, which includes the child’s cultural values and family constellation.

2.3.2.2. Birth Order

Oberlander and Jenkin (1966) claimed that regardless of orientation, most personality theorists are in agreement that early familial relationships and experiences exert a crucial influence on both childhood and adult behaviour patterns. Adler (1927) contended that differential parent-child-sibling interactions are in part determined by the ordinal position of a given child. The personality organisation of an individual has also been noted to be a reflection of goals toward which the individual has striven within the family constellation during the early years of life.

Adler (1930) noted that no two children, even those born in the same family, grow up in the same situation. According to Adler (1958), by the ages of four and five, the prototype is already built up, which requires an understanding of the child’s family
environment and relevant position, in order to understand their influences. The first- and second-born children will be briefly described because the subject of the study was a second-born child.

Adler (1930) described the first child as being at first alone and thus the centre of attention in the family. As the second child is born, he experiences dethronement and finds this change and shift in attention tragic because there is a loss in power. First-born children have been reported to carry this sense of tragedy into the formation of their prototype – and it later shows in adult characteristics, making such children more vulnerable, than other children, to traumatic experiences (Adler, 1958; Corey, 2005).

Adler (1930) reported that the position of the second child is also full of opportunities to develop character, since it is quite unique. These children are often ambitious achievers and tend to compete against the eldest child. The second-born child comes across as always being in a race, and all his characteristics will reflect this peculiar position in the family constellation (Adler, 1930). Several studies found differences in parents’ interactions with their offspring of different ordinal positions (Oberlander & Jenkin, 1966).

Lasko (1954) reported less consistent and less spontaneous expression of warmth by mothers toward their first-born child than towards their later children. He also reported less anxiety, protectiveness, interference, and more permissiveness by parents in
2.3.3. Faulty Lifestyles

Adler (1930) regarded every human being as having an individual lifestyle; and no two human beings can be absolutely alike. He maintained that it is possible to predict an individual’s future and interpret his further experiences sometimes – just on the basis of his lifestyle. Adler (1958) explained the development of faulty lifestyles and mistaken meanings given to life as being the result of faulty family atmospheres in childhood. Three basic conditions have been recognised to interfere with social interest: (i) physical inferiority, (2) neglect, and (3) pampering.

Children with a physical inferiority refer to those children who have imperfect organs, or those who suffered from diseases or infirmities during their infancy. These children are overburdened and will find it difficult to feel that the meaning of life lies in contributing to the social interests of others. Their main task is to receive assistance to draw attention away from themselves, and to develop an interest in others (Adler, 1958).

The pampered child is trained to expect that his wishes will be treated by others as laws which they must obey. He is granted prominence without working to deserve it, and would generally come to feel this prominence to be a birth right (Adler, 1958). Adler (1930) found that a pampered child is very soon confronted with life’s problems. When he cannot respond to life’s challenges because he has not been prepared, he
loses social interest and continues to search for more pampering – focusing on only himself alone.

According to Adler (1929), the neglected child has never known what love for others and co-operation can be. He incorporates an interpretation of life that does not include these friendly forces. When he meets life’s challenges, he overrates their difficulty and underrates his own capacity to meet them with the aid and good will of others. The neglected child is one who has never quite found any other person to be trustworthy.

These three situations, just described, are situations that can give a mistaken meaning to life. Children from such situations will always need help in revising their approach to problems (Adler, 1930).

2.3.4. The Style of Life

Adler (1930) believed that the lifestyle of human beings could be best seen under certain conditions of the environment. By analyzing the exact relation to the existing circumstances of the individual, the context is taken into consideration. Adler did not apply fixed or unalterable traits to the individual, he instead understood the individual lifestyle as an expressive formulation of basic convictions, values and personal meaning about life; this then guides the movement towards striving for superiority (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). In this way, Adler (1930) noted that it is when the child is confronted with difficulties and his own inferiority that the lifestyle appears clearly and distinctly.

The style of life is a unity, because it has grown out of the difficulties
of early life, and out of the striving for a goal (Adler, 1958). Adler did not formulate life stages to explain the development of the lifestyle; however he emphasized that the child’s formative years are very important and critical. Heredity and the environment have been regarded as empirical influences on the creative activity of the lifestyle’s development (Adler, 1930). The experiences an individual has within his family contribute to the development of a specific way one perceives, thinks, feels and behaves. By the end of the fifth year of life, Adler (1958) stated that a child has reached a unified and crystallized pattern of behaviour: its own style of approach to problems and tasks. At this point, the child has already fixed its deepest and most lasting conception of what to expect from the world and from itself.

The lifestyle plays a determining role in future experiences and cannot be easily changed (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003). From the time the prototype is formed in the early years, the world is seen through a stable scheme of apperceptions: experiences are interpreted before they are accepted and the interpretation always accords with the original meaning given to life (Adler, 1958). It is important to understand that Adler (1964) noted that early experiences are not decisive factors, but it is the individual’s interpretation of these events that shapes his personality (Corey, 2005; Mosak, 1984).

The style of life of a ‘normal’ man would be the individual who lives in society and whose mode of life is so adapted that whether he wants it or not, society derives a certain advantage from his work. From a psychological point of view, he has enough energy and courage to meet
the problems and difficulties as they come along.

Individual Psychology analyzes the causes of a particular lifestyle. By taking the context into consideration, one not only looks at the first five years of life and the family environment, but the value of understanding an individual’s birth position. Memories are useful in understanding the development of the personality and the lifestyle (Adler, 1930).

2.3.5. Four Lifestyle Types

Adler (1982) described four heuristic lifestyle types to classify the attitude and behaviour of individuals towards life tasks. The lifestyle types are grouped, according to the degree of social interest and the degree of movement towards success and superiority. The child himself creatively develops each style, as he uses his inheritance and environment as building blocks towards his own understanding of success (Adler, 1982).

2.3.5.1. Ruling Type

Adler (1982) described individuals with the ruling type lifestyle as those who do not have any real social interest. These individuals show anti-social and power-hungry behaviour and traits (Adler, 1958). An active display of character in individuals with this type exhibits an attitude of: ‘If I cannot be a lover, then I am determined to be the villain’ through acts of anger, sadism and manipulation. Adler (1982) noted that those less active in this lifestyle type tend to
hurt others by hurting themselves through acts of self-destruction or even through suicide.

2.3.5.2. Getting or Leaning Type

The second lifestyle type is the getting or leaning type, which has been described by Adler (1982) to be the most common in humans. Individuals with this lifestyle are known for their social interests. While their goals are community-oriented, they exhibit low activity and rely on others to take the initiative (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003). Their lack of independence and enterprise affords them the opportunity to use their charm and manipulative skills to use the help of others for their tasks of life (Adler, 1982).

2.3.5.3. Avoiding Type

The characteristics of individuals associated with the avoiding lifestyle type are usually low levels of social interest and low levels of activity. Their success is usually established through avoidance. From life tasks and social interaction to life challenges, they thrive on setting things aside, retreating into themselves. This type of lifestyle often manifests in neurotic and psychotic individuals (Adler, 1982; Boeree, 2006).

2.3.5.4. Socially Useful Type

Unlike the avoiding type, the socially useful type is the individual with high levels of activity and social interest. This type faces life’s tasks and challenges within a well-developed framework of social interest. These individuals are reared in a family environment where trust, social interest, co-operation and
family values are important (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003). Adler (1982) noted that these individuals have a high concern for the wellbeing of others and society in general. They are not only optimistic about the future, but they strive for solutions of the present problems affecting their society. Martin Luther King junior, as a socially useful type, is further discussed in Chapter 5.

2.4. Striving for Superiority

In understanding the concept of striving for superiority, Adler (1930) noted that the word ‘complex’ in terms of superiority means striving for superiority. In discussing the relationship between the inferiority and the superiority complex, it is highlighted that individuals would not strive to be superior and to succeed, if they did not feel a certain lack in their present condition.

The striving for superiority has been described as one that dominates the mind; it is part of the individual’s psyche, and it never ceases (Adler, 1930). Individuality is formed through the unique and characteristic ways that individuals develop a certain style in striving to compensate for their inferiorities (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1956). Adler (1930) noted that life is the attainment of a goal, and it is the striving for superiority, which sets the attainment of the goal in motion.

Adler (1930) claimed that, all individuals, share and struggle against feelings of inferiority. Every symptom of an individual’s life is expressed in a movement, in a process. Adler (1929, 1930, 1958) stated that the future is tied up with one’s striving and one’s goal, while the past represents the state of inferiority or inadequacy, from which the individual is trying to escape and to overcome. This striving for superiority is based on the individual’s subjective goals that reflect
either a healthy or an unhealthy dynamic (Jones & Lyddon, 2003). Therefore, Adler understood striving for superiority to be all about what is meaningful to the individual and his/her purpose of life embedded in the attainment of the goal. Adler (1929) noted that this striving for superiority is largely influenced by a need to overcome, which contributes to the wellbeing of others. The striving for superiority manifests itself in two ways: striving for power and for social interest.

2.5. Evaluation of the Theory

Adler’s work in psychology is essentially the study of the separate personalities that we all are; hence, it is referred to as Individual Psychology. The supreme importance of this contribution to modern psychology is due to the way in which it reveals how all activities and roles of an individual are drawn together to better explain purpose and meaning to the individual life (Allen & Unwin, 1930). Radin (1929) suggested that Individual Psychology covers the whole range of psychology in one survey; and as a result, it is able to mirror the indivisible unity of personality.

Freud took the memories of success and failure in the sexual life as being highly important; while Jung tried to reveal the super-individual whom he believed to have as much power as the sexual and higher values for life (Allen & Unwin, 1930). Adler (1929) being a physician of wide and general experience, sought to unite the conception of the unconscious more firmly with biological reality. Adler was a man of the original school of psychoanalysis, and apart from psychoanalysts, such as Freud, he emphasised that individuals do not form their unconscious memories around the same central motive, and not all such memories are related to sexuality (Mosak, 1984, 2000).
Individual Psychology has contributed to the value of the family environment, early memories, birth order, socialisation and dreams in human and personality development (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956; Corey, 2005). Adler (1930), who first transferred the principle of bodily understanding to root itself in biology, had a major influence on Psychology. Organic defects and positions of inferiority have all, according to Adler, contributed to understanding human development, the soul and the intellect (Allen & Unwin, 1930).

Over time as life has evolved, Adlerians, such as Watts and Mosak have shown commitment and dedication to the development of Individual Psychology. It has become necessary over time to adapt the theory to be able to address modern psychological, spiritual, sexual, occupational and social issues. The study and understanding of the current issues affecting the wide spectrum of different modern societies and cultures have enabled this adaptation (Corey, 2005).

Boeree (2006) noted that part of the criticism of Adler’s theoretical framework was its vagueness and the difficulty in empirically validating it, even though Corey (2005) states that research has proven the effectiveness of the theory over time. “There has never been a method so rigorous and yet adaptable for following the fluctuation of that most fluid, variable and elusive of all realities, the individual human soul.” (Adler, 1930, p.39). The present researcher recognises the importance of acknowledging that different aspects of life and experience have influence on the self-created, yet ongoing development of the human soul and personality.

Adler (1958) stated that every word, thought, feeling or gesture contributes to one’s understanding. The mistakes one may make can be checked and corrected by a thousand other expressions; but one cannot finally decide the meaning of an
expression until one can see its part in the whole. The present researcher understands that this is the fundamental truth in the Adlerian theory – to understand the self by looking at the whole.

2.6. Psychobiography

Adler (1958) recognised that it is not an easy task to understand a human being. Individual Psychology is perhaps the most difficult of all psychologies to learn and to practise, because it requires taking into account details and parts of the individual contributing to the whole. The value of studying the subject of the present study through the lens of Adler’s psychology was the importance it places on the social element in the psychological life of the individual.

Adler (1930) noted that the individual becomes an individual only in the social context. Beginning from home, to school, around companions, to larger social communities and associations, the formation of the individual is greatly influenced and formed by this social context.

Adler (1964) believed that individuals formulate a unique narrative of their life that provides meaning. He focused on how goals, life tasks, complexes, values and mistakes all contribute to life’s challenges and provide purpose and guidance for the individual’s life (Corey, 2005).

The importance of initiating an Adlerian theory is to study the subject within the socio-cultural and historical context – taking into account the subjective view of reality, which highlights the individual lifestyle within the bounds of teleology (Pozzuto, 1982). An Adlerian psychobiography promotes an understanding of the individual because it explores the social context, heredity and influences which
have impacted the individual in his development (Pozzuto, 1982).

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has explored Alfred Adler’s Individual Psychology as the theoretical perspective that will be utilised in understanding the subject of the study. The concepts explored and highlighted in this chapter facilitate holistically and teleologically understanding the subject. The life style and social interest lies in understanding the fundamental drives of the individual – to strive for superiority that would not only benefit him – but also the larger community.

In Chapter 6, Individual Psychology will be applied to the life of Martin Luther King junior’s in order to promote an understanding of his personality development across his lifespan. The format by which the data will be presented will be according to main concepts presented in this chapter. This will promote a systematised and organised framework of extracting and analysing the research data. The concepts which will be presented in chapter 6 will be as follows: (a) The meaning of Life (b) The Unity of personality, (c) The structure of personality i.e.: Inferiority and compensation, Inferiority complex and Superiority complex, Striving for superiority, Private logic and Fictional goal, (d) Style of Life i.e. Lifestyle Types and Family environment and (e) Birth order. The next chapter provides a historical and biographical overview of the life of Martin Luther King junior.
Chapter 3
The Life of Martin Luther King Junior

3.1. Chapter Preview

This chapter provides a historical overview of the life of Martin Luther King junior. His life is presented over a chronological period – beginning with his birth in 1929 to his death in 1968.

3.2. Life History Context and Significance

Martin Luther King junior may be considered to be the voice of the 20th century. His voice clearly delineated the moral issues of the second half of the twentieth century. His vision profoundly inspired people from the American South to Southern Africa, from the Berlin Wall to the Great Wall of China (Carson, 2001).

Martin Luther King junior was a man of faith. He not only preached the gospel of Jesus in the hope of resurrecting the spiritual body; but he preached the resurrection of social expansion in society. His life was an effort to combine the complex political and social existence of people with the spiritual power of reality. His mission aimed to create a new state of justice with mercy – by leading with truth without violence (Carson, 2001). "Martin Luther King Junior expanded on Gandhi’s use of non-violence and the force of truth to liberate not only the former sons and daughters of slaves, but the sons and daughters of slave owners as well” (Carson, 2001, p.34).

Although only 39 at the time of his death, Martin Luther King junior’s life was remarkable for the ways it reflected and inspired so many of the twentieth
century’s major intellectual, cultural and political developments (Ramdin, 2004).

The struggle for black rights in America began during the period of enslavement when Africans were held in permanent oppression and considered as possessions. Two hundred and forty years passed under this oppression until the Thirteenth Amendment to the US Constitution formally ended African enslavement in 1865 (Reddie, 2011).

Cell (1982) noted that the ultimate cause behind segregation was white racism. In both South Africa and the American South, colour prejudice was deep-rooted. Blackness was associated with all things evil, ugly and satanic; while whiteness was associated with all things pure, beautiful and godly.

After the enslavement ended in 1865, African Americans continued to play a fundamental role in resisting non-citizenship and emerging patterns of racial segregation (Reddie, 2011). Segregation had never been the tradition of the American South before the Civil War.

Slavery was a system of direct, and vertical, domination. Its essential characteristic was not separation of the races, but close contact between them. The personal relations of slavery combined many forms of attitudes and behaviour: exploitation, cruelty, mutual dependence, perhaps even warm paternal affection. (Cells, 1982, p.83)

The official ending of enslavement however did not uplift the African-American society as it should have. Immediately after the Civil War (1861 – 1865) ended, the Confederate states, which had been against the ending of enslavement, enacted black codes. These explicit discriminatory laws excluded the
newly freed Negroes from the vote, state-supported educational institutions and
from many social services. These black codes demonstrated the white man’s urge
to keep the black man in his place, (Cell, 1982).

The Civil War, which was based on the fractious issue of slavery, headed by
Republican president Abraham Lincoln, was an anti-slavery-based civil war. The
black codes being enforced by the Southerner’s threatened to reverse the results of
the war and by means of congressional enactment, constitutional amendment and
military occupation, the black codes were reversed (Cell, 1982; Reddie, 2011).

The Reconstruction era, which began in 1863, was the process of restoring unity
and guaranteeing rights to freed slaves. This was aimed at freeing the African
Americans by allowing them to sit where they wished in public and be served in
any public places they wished (Rose, 1964). However this era did not last as many
white Southerners interpreted the Reconstruction as a ploy to promote black
domination. This lead to the emergence of vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux
Klan, that were determined to put the Negro back in his place through acts of
intimidation and violence (Reddie, 2011).

Fredrick Douglass emerged from the Civil War in 1865 as the African
American leader who was recognized as the representative of his race by the white
establishment. His was the first recognized national African-American leader
leading up to Martin Luther King junior, nearly a century later (Reddie, 2011).
Douglass’s focus was on the newly emancipated African Americans who were
forced to rent land, accommodation, equipment and loan from Southern Farmers in
return for a portion of their crops. This arrangement implied permanent
indebtedness that tied the former enslaved people to the land (Reddie, 2011).

Douglass was criticized by African Americans as an ‘Uncle Tom’ who was
handpicked by the white power structure. Several other leaders, who followed on the road to fighting against inequality, also faced criticism from African Americans (Reddie, 2011).

Booker T. Washington, the first African American to dine at the White House with President Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, took leadership after Douglass’s death in 1895. White Americans criticised the President for entertaining a Negro and threatened that this action would result in the killing of a thousand Negroes in the South before they will learn their place again (Bush, 2009). Washington was criticised by African Americans as encouraging them to undertake traditional stereo-type professions such as farming techniques for men and home economics for women. Washington died as a dominant leader in the African American community in 1915 (Reddie, 2011).

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was the first African American to obtain a PhD from Harvard University in 1895. He believed that education was the key to improving the lives of African Americans. His political activism was characterized by his role in the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909. This was a multi-ethnic organisation committed to the political, educational, social and economic equality of rights for all and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination. Criticism that he faced as a leader, despite his progressive ideas, was that he was the ‘white-man’s Negro’ who had never done anything yet to benefit the Negroes. Du Bois died at the age of 95 in 1963 (Bush, 2009).

Remaining consistent and pivotal to the struggle for black rights in America was the role of faith. What developed in America with respect to civil rights and social progress has been envisioned and steered by black churches, their pastors
and members (Reddie, 2011). By the time King senior became the pastor at
Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1931; many African American leaders represented
faith groups with political agendas (Carson, 1998). King senior’s church, like
many, was interested in America’s obsession with race, particularly the colour
(tone) of the skin. During slavery African Americans with lighter skin regarded
themselves superior to the darker skinned African because ‘white blood’ coursed
their veins. This preoccupation with colour led to those with lighter complexions
occupying more professional occupations within African American society (Rose,
1964). “The African American’s struggle for rights and equality not only involved
a frontal struggle against white prejudice, but also a subtler fight to address
colourism” (Reddie, 2011, p.25).

King senior was known to fight discrimination when it impacted on him or
those close to him. He had no defined strategy to his opposition to segregation yet
he had a crucial influence on his son’s understanding of segregation and the need
to confront the racism problem (Reddie, 2011).

Racial segregation in America included the segregation or separation of
facilities, services and opportunities such as medical care, employment, education
and transportation (Cell, 1982). Through most of the twentieth century, in which
King junior was born, segregation across America dominated the daily living of
African Americans. The government created a policy to segregate the country by
making low interest mortgages available to families. Although black families were
legally entitled to these loans, they were mostly denied these loans, because the
planners behind this initiative had labelled many of the black neighbourhoods
across the country as ‘in decline’. This encouraged white families to move to the
suburbs, after World War II, while black families were forced to live in the inner
The government uprooted many established African American communities by building elevated highways through their neighbourhoods. This often resulted in the demolition of single-family homes and the people were forced into federal housing called ‘The Projects’ (Bush, 2009).

McAdoo (1997) noted that family is one of the strongest and most important traditions in the black community. Thousands of slaves were known to run away in search of members of their families. The strong family tradition among blacks survived the slave system, legal segregation, discrimination and enforced poverty. A remarkable 75% of black families included both husband and wife up to the 1960s; from the 1980s figures began to decline due to rapid urbanization and unemployment.

World War II which officially began in September, 1939 was the greatest struggle the world had ever experienced. It killed more people, cost more money, damaged more property and affected more people than any other war in history (Truman, 1941). However, the impact that the war had, particularly on the African Americans was both positive and negative. African American women gained more power and role identification as they were used to work on machinery that the men would be utilising during the war. This gave women, post-war, more prominence and presence over time in the work place (Bush, 2009).

African American soldiers were predominantly treated far less equally. They were not integrated in the combat units and were often used as unskilled labour such as loading supplies or burying the dead (Bush, 2009). World War II did not advance African Americans very far with regards to civil rights, despite the emergence of a recognizable, yet small black middle class in America after the
war. The War, which ended in 1945, brought an end to the Great depression of 1929 but it also ignited other wars including the Cold war (1945 – 1991) and Vietnam War (1955 – 1975) (Bush, 2009).

In 1967 King junior made a statement against the Vietnam War. He saw the war as an enemy to the suffering in America. King junior could not understand why the African American man was being sent to fight for his country, when his own country could not give him justice and equal rights. King junior joined the anti-war movement in 1967 where he provided a voice for many white students and recent graduates who were now at an age to be recruited into the war that was killing many Americans (Reddie, 2011).

The aforementioned life history context and significance aimed to provide the reader with an economic and socio-cultural context of America before and during the life of Martin Luther King junior.

3.3. The Lifespan of Martin Luther King junior

The literature review on the life of Martin Luther King junior is presented sequentially, in such a way that his individual personality development can be clearly viewed. The life periods will be discussed in a way whereby the reader will be able to note the salient aspects and events over the developmental period in King junior’s life. The historical periods have been named and recreated, as inspired by Carson’s (1998) biography on King junior. They are divided into the following segments namely: Childhood and Adolescence (1929 – 1944); The inevitable (1944 – 1948); the Purpose in his Destiny (1948 – 1951); Family and mission (1952 – 1959); Movement against segregation (1960 – 1963); History is

3.3.1. Childhood and Adolescence (1929 – 1944)

Martin Luther King junior was born as Michael King in the city of Atlanta, Georgia, on the 15 January 1929. He was born on the cusp of the Great Depression of 1929 under the presidency of Herbert Hoover. This was a severe worldwide economic depression resulting from the stock market crash, preceding World War II. The effects of the Great Depression in America included unemployment, decreased product prices, low to non-existent profits and bank savings were all depleted. Suicidal Rates increased and violent protests resulted in more deaths. The Great Depression ended in 1939 (Ramdin, 2004).

Martin Luther King junior was born into a middle-class African American community. He described his community as one characterized by an unsophisticated simplicity. No-one was poverty stricken and the community was cohesive– with minimum crime and deep religious conviction among the community members (Carson, 1998).

Martin Luther King junior grew up as a healthy and precocious child. He described his home environment as one filled with love. He had an older sister, Willie Christine born in 1927, and a younger brother, Alfred Daniel born in 1930. His uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances influenced his perception of the universe as a friendly one – with a God of love in it (Carson, 1998). King junior’s parents displayed unity on how Christianity should inform King junior’s attitude to white racism in the segregation-ridden Atlanta. Reddie (2011) noted that King
junior enjoyed a home life that was comfortable and stable. His mother showered him as the eldest boy with affection. It was King junior’s father who was the main authoritarian in the home and corporal punishment was often used to discipline the children.

He spent the first twelve years of his life at the Auburn Avenue home that his parents, the Reverend Michael King and Alberta Williams King shared with his maternal grandparents, the Reverend Adam Daniel Williams and Jeannie Celeste Williams. After the death of Reverend Adam Williams, his son-in-law became Ebenezer Baptist Church’s new pastor; and he established himself as a major figure in State and national Baptist groups. King senior began referring to himself, and later to his son, as Martin Luther King (Reddie, 2011).

King junior described his mother as a soft-spoken and easygoing woman, devout with a deep commitment to the Christian faith.

My mother instilled a sense of self-respect in all of her children from the very beginning. She taught me that I should feel a sense of somebodiness, but that on the other hand, I had to go out and face a system that stared me in the face: saying, you are less than, and you are not equal to. (Carson, 1998, p.3)

King senior was described as strong man. Dynamic in personality, and commanding of attention, with his physical presence. King junior admired his father’s genuine Christianity, his integrity and deep commitment to moral and ethical principles (Carson, 1998).
King Junior joined the church at the age of five. The church was like a second home to him; and he was there every Sunday. Later, King junior described Sunday school as the platform that had helped him build the ability to get along with people. Although from an early age, King junior resented religious emotionalism, and questioned literal interpretations of Scripture, he nevertheless admired black social gospel proponents, such as his father, who saw the church as an instrument for improving the lives of African Americans. During the summer, King junior worked on a tobacco farm where he could earn extra money. When he was busy there, he joined the church as his father’s assistant, helping out with the preparations for Sunday and taking on a leadership role at Sunday school (Carson, 1998). “I have always been the questioning and precocious type; at the age of thirteen; I shocked my Sunday school class by denying the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Doubts began to spring forth unrelentingly” (Carson, 1998, p.6).

King junior’s first confrontation with the issue of race arose when he was six years old. His best childhood friend, who was white, one day, told him that his father had instructed him to end the friendship. Later his parents attempted to explain the issue of race. They shared stories of the tragedies that had resulted from this problem and some of the insults that they had endured on account of it. “How could I love a race of people who hated me?” (Carson, 1998, p. 7).

As King junior grew up, he continued to face daily forms of racism including the segregated buses across town to the Atlanta University Laboratory School where he did his primary schooling. In 1942, at the
age of 13 years, King junior entered Booker T. Washington High School, after his previous school closed down due to the war (Reddie, 2011).

The death of King junior’s grandmother in his early adolescence brought him to reflecting upon immortality; and he became a strong believer in personal immortality (Carson, 2001).

From childhood, and throughout his adolescent years, King was confronted with the State of the nation in which he lived. All around him, outside the safe and loving environment of his home, he faced the system of segregation. In stores, town, schools and school buses, there was no escape. He delivered his first speech on segregation in 1944 at fourteen years of age entitled: The Negro and the Constitution.

3.3.2. The Inevitable (1944 – 1948)

”My call to the ministry was not a miraculous or supernatural something. On the contrary it was an inner urge calling to serve humanity.” (Carson, 1998, p.13).

By the age of fifteen years, King junior had entered Morehouse College. He described his days there as very exciting because of the sense of a free atmosphere. Even though he cherished his parents greatly and regularly wrote letters to them, he enjoyed the freedom he experienced on campus (Reddie, 2011).

Dear Mother,

Your letter was received this morning. I often tell the boys around the campus I have the best mother in the world. You will never know how I
appreciate the many kind things you and daddy are doing for me.  
(Carson, 1998, p.19)

King junior was able to embrace the pleasures of campus life including going to dances, parties and pool-playing. His college friends often teased him for his preoccupation with looking fashionable and elegant to impress the ladies (Carson, 2006). His group of friends comprising of the Morehouse men was known as the ‘Wreckers’ due to their reputation of ‘wrecking girls’ by charming them with their good looks and spoiling them on dates (Reddie, 2011).

The charm and confidence that he displayed may have been a reflection of his self-esteem, which encouraged his academic improvement at Morehouse College (Reddie, 2011). At this time, King junior had a substantial concern for racial and economic justice. It was here that he had his first frank discussion on race (Reddie, 2011).

During his undergraduate years at Morehouse College, from 1944 to 1948, that King junior gradually overcame his reluctance to accept his inherited calling of ministry. Morehouse president, Benjamin E. Mays and Dr George Kelsey, a professor of philosophy and religion, influenced King junior’s spiritual development. They encouraged King junior to view Christianity as a potential force for progressive social change (Ramdin, 2004).

King junior’s view of the ministry developed individually with these positive influences into viewing religion as a vehicle for modern thinking. He wanted religion to be intellectually respectable, as well as emotionally satisfying (Carson, 1998).
At the age of nineteen, in 1948, King junior finished college and was ready to enter the seminary. King senior was overjoyed at the graduation of his son, whom he assumed would join him full time as his assistant. This hope was diminished when King junior told his father that he intended to continue his studies at Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. King senior’s education had ended at Morehouse and he could not understand why his son wanted to pursue further studies, however King junior was determined (Reddie, 2011).

3.3.3. The Purpose in his Destiny (1948-1951)

In 1948, King junior entered Crozer Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania. Crozer was a progressive institution where the minority of blacks who were in the seminary mixed freely with their white counterparts on campus. They would often share dormitories and bedrooms, however not all whites were accepting of this atmosphere and this led to inevitable racial tensions (Reddie, 2011).

It was during this time that he began an intellectual quest for a way to confront and eliminate social evil (Carson, 1998). King junior increased his understanding of liberal Christian thought. He did this through studying social and ethical theories of great philosophers, from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau and Locke (Garnow, 1986).

I feel that preaching is one of the most vital needs of our society, if it is used correctly. I see the preaching ministry as a dual process. On the one hand, I must attempt to change the souls of individuals, so that their
societies may change. On the other, I must attempt to change the societies, so that the individual soul will have a change. (Carson, 1998, p.19)

Over the course of his years at the seminary, King junior used his time to expand his knowledge beyond any liberal views. Although strongly entrenched in the power of love in solving problems, King junior had despaired in this power for solving social problems. He could not see how Christian ethics and love could work beyond individual challenges to target social conflict and transform society (King, 1991).

It was through a sermon delivered by Dr Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University in 1950, that King junior first took serious interest in Mahatma Gandhi. The Gandhian perspective of non-violent resistance fascinated King junior. For King junior, Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above interaction between individuals – to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale (Carson, 1998).

As his scepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, King junior came to discover the method for social reform that he had been seeking. Previously King junior’s belief had maintained that the ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationships. Through studying Gandhi’s perspective, he came to understand that Gandhi was the first person in history to use the love ethic of Jesus as a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. This social reform he had been seeking was found through the nonviolent resistance philosophy of Gandhi (Carson, 1998).
King junior was initially uncritical of liberal theology, which emphasised the essential goodness of man, and possessed a superficial optimism concerning human nature. He gradually moved toward Reinhold Niebuhr’s neo-orthodoxy, which emphasized the intractability of social evil and explained why man often chose the low road and the depth and depravity of sin (Burns, 2004).

By the end of his seminary studies, King had become increasingly dissatisfied with the abstract conceptions of God held by some modern theologians; and he identified himself instead with theologians who affirmed their belief in the personality of God.

As a young man with most of my life ahead of me, I decided early to give my life to something eternal and absolute. Not to these little gods that are here today and gone tomorrow. But to a God who is the same yesterday, today and for ever. (Carson, 1998, p.30)

From here, King junior graduated at the top of his class at Crozer in 1951 at the age of 22 years.

3.3.4. Family and mission (1952 – 1959)

King junior graduated from Crozer in May 1951 and entered Boston University for his doctoral studies. In this next stage of his intellectual pilgrimage, King junior had the opportunity to talk to many exponents of non-violence.

Under the influences of Dean Walter Muelder and Professor Allan
Knight Chalmers, King junior expanded his view and faith in the possibilities of human beings when they allow themselves to become co-workers with God (Carson, 1998). As he studied philosophy and theology, he developed his own basic philosophical position through Personalistic philosophy theory which emphasizes that the meaning of ultimate reality is found in personality (King, 1991).

King Junior’s work at Boston University progressed very well, and his mentors, namely, Dr DeWolf and Dr Brightman, were impressed. From here, he began the process of writing his dissertation, entitled: ‘A Comparison of the Conception of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman’ (Carson, 1998).

Carson (1998) stated that this concept of God was chosen because of the central place that it occupies in any religion, and because of the ever-present need to interpret the God concept. Tillich and Wieman were chosen because they represent different types of theology.

In Boston, King junior continued to strive academically by gaining high marks from his professors and being voted as class president. In his leisure time he shot pool and played cards with his friends, despite the annoyance his father had with personal amusements and friends. King senior discouraged King junior’s use of alcohol and cigarettes as he viewed this to be a preserve for lower class, uneducated individuals (Reddie, 2011).

King junior maintained a reputation as a ladies man on campus with a number of romantic relationships. One of his first serious relationships was in his third year at Crozer with the daughter of the seminary’s
German Cook, Betty. Although King junior had developed genuine feelings for Betty, various pressures from friends and acquaintances discouraged the relationship because Betty was white. King junior ended the relationship early in 1951 (Reddie, 2011).

King junior went on to date fellow students at Crozer including Juanita Sellers and Mary Powell, but he had become cynical about relationships and they did not last (Ramdin, 2004).

In 1952 in Boston, through a mutual friend, King junior met Coretta Scott. Coretta Scott, a native of the South, was from Marion Alabama and she went to college in Ohio, Antioch College. Her talent for music and ‘quiet determination’ as described by King junior qualified her with a scholarship through the New England Conservatory in Boston; where she then met King junior. King junior was attracted to Coretta by the way in which he found it so easy to communicate with her. They had long conversations about not only her interests but also racial and economic injustice, which interested King junior. Coretta had been actively involved in movements dealing with racial issues (Ramdin, 2004).

King junior and Coretta began to date throughout 1952. They visited concerts, recitals and plays and Coretta often visited King junior’s apartment where she added a woman’s touch to the décor. King junior started talking to his parents about his new relationship and in August 1952 he took Coretta home to meet his family. King senior was wary about the relationship at first, because Coretta was ‘country girl’, unlike King junior who came from a much more privileged home. However
King junior made it clear to his parents that he had found his ideal partner. King senior officiated at the marriage in June 1953 at Coretta’s home in Alabama (Reddie, 2011).

I am indebted to my wife Coretta, without whose love, sacrifices, and loyalty, neither life nor work would bring fulfilment. She has given me words of consolation when I needed them and a well-ordered home where Christian love is a reality. (Carson, 1998, p.34)

King described his wife as stronger than he was. While she had natural fears concerning his safety and welfare, she never allowed those fears to interfere with King junior’s active participation in the movement. Together, King junior and Coretta had four children, namely, Yolanda Denise born in November 1955, Martin Luther III born in October 1957, Dexter Scott born in January 1961 and Bernice Alberta born in March 1963. King junior’s involvement in the civil rights movement and struggle for justice and peace kept him away from home and family most of the time. This impacted his responsibilities as a father and husband, particularly his children who had limited understanding of what was happening (Reddie, 2011). “When I thought of my future, I also thought of my family. I had to think of what is best for them also” (Carson, 1998, p.38).

In 1954, King junior ended his formal residential training at Boston University. After twenty-one years of being in school without a break, King junior started considering a job. But he was not sure what area of the ministry he wanted to settle down in. It was through an invitation to preach at the
Dexter Avenue Baptist Church that King Junior took interest. After delivering his trial sermon entitled: ‘The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life’, King junior was offered the position of becoming the pastor of the church.

Life at its best is a great triangle. At one angle stands the individual person, at the other angle stands other persons, and at the tiptop stands God. Unless these three are concatenated, working harmoniously together in a single life, that life is incomplete. (Carson 1998, p.43)

In 1955, as pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King junior was elected to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). King junior fought to inspire and encourage all church members to not only vote and be members of the NAACP, but he also initiated a social and political committee to update the church members on social, political and economic situations. In 1955 King junior was awarded his Doctorate on Systemic Theology.

Shortly thereafter, while serving the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church as pastor, and being elected to the NAACP, black residents elected King junior as president of the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association (King, 1968).

On December 1, 1955, Mrs Rosa Parks, a respected civilian of the Negro community and the secretary of the Montgomery NAACP, was arrested for violating segregation laws. Mrs Rosa Parks refused to move when she was asked by the bus operator to get up for a white passenger. It was later reported that Mrs Rosa Parks had not been planted there by the NAACP or any other
organisation. She had simply had enough and wanted to reclaim her sense of
dignity (Carson, 1998).

A meeting was held at the church regarding Mrs Parks arrest by the
Montgomery Improvement Agency (MIA) where King junior was appointed
head of the agency that would take the agreed bus boycott forward. Flyers
which called for a boycott of the city’s buses the following Monday were
distributed. The Bus boycott began on Monday December, 5, 1955 and
continued into 1956. King junior gained national prominence as a result of his
exceptional oratorical skills and personal courage. “One can never understand
the action of Mrs Parks until one realises that eventually the cup of endurance
runs over, and the human personality cries out, ‘I can’t take it no longer”
(Carson, 1998, p.50). He utilized the leadership abilities he had gained from
his religious background and academic training to forge a distinctive protest
strategy that involved the mobilization of black churches and skilful appeals
for white support (King, 1991).

On the 30th of January 1956, King junior attended a mass meeting at the
First Baptist church. During the course of the meeting, a noise was heard and
news reached the congregation that a bomb had exploded on the porch of King
junior’s home. Crowds gathered outside his home, ready to transform the
nonviolent resistance into a violent one against the unknown bombers and the
white policemen. Coretta and their only child, Yolanda at the time, were
unharmed. Despite this alarming incident, King junior managed to calm down
the angry crowd outside.

We believe in law and order. Don’t get panicky. Don’t do anything panicky at
all. Don’t get your weapons. He who lives by the sword will perish by the sword. Remember that is what God said. We are not advocating violence. We want to love our enemies. I want you to love our enemies. Be good to them. Love them and let them know you love them. (Carson, 1998, p.80)

On the 21st of February 1956, King Junior along with other boycott leaders, were convicted on charges of conspiring to interfere with the bus company’s operation. King Junior was trialled on March 22 and found guilty of violating the state’s anti-boycott law. The penalty was a fine of $500 and court costs, or 386 days hard labour in the county of Montgomery, King junior paid the penalty fine (King, 1991). Despite attempts to suppress the movement, Montgomery buses were desegregated in December 1956 after the United States Supreme Court declared Alabama’s segregation laws to be unconstitutional (Burns, 2004). On the 21 December 1956, King junior was one of the first passengers to ride on a desegregated bus.

Along the way of life, someone must have sense enough and morality enough to cut off the chain of hate and evil. The greatest way to do that is through love. I believe firmly that love is a transforming power that can lift a whole community to new horizons of fair play, and good will, and justice. (Carson, 1998, p.63)

In 1957, King Junior sought to expand the non-violent civil rights movement throughout the South. He joined with C.K Steele, Fred Shuttlesworth and T.J Jemison in founding the Southern Christian Leadership
Conference, with King junior as president, to co-ordinate civil rights activities throughout the region. In his attempts, King junior acted cautiously, he did the same when he stressed the goal of achieving black voting rights, while addressing an audience at the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom (Garnow, 1986).

Martin Luther King junior’s rise to fame through his active involvement in the civil rights movement was not without personal consequences. In 1958, he was the victim of his first assassination attempt. While signing copies of his book, ‘Stride Toward Freedom’, Miss Izola Ware Curry stabbed him with a letter opener.

This was rather a difficult year for me. I have had to confront the brutality of police officers, an unwarranted arrest, and a near fatal stab wound by a mentally deranged woman. These things were poured upon me like staggering torrents on a cold, wintry day. (Carson, 1998, p.117)

In 1959, as soon as the victory over bus segregation had been attained, some of King junior’s friends encouraged him to go to India and meet the Mahatma he so admired. King junior, joined by his wife and friend Dr Lawrence Reddick visited India for the first time. The Gandhians accepted the Kings with open arms and praised their experiment with the non-violent resistance technique at Montgomery (Burns, 2004). King junior’s experience of India was that of a grand reception, mainly because the people in India were interested to hear King’s views on the racial problems and of the Negro spirituals (Reddie, 2011).
The trip had a great impact upon me personally. It was wonderful to be in Gandhi’s land, to talk with his son, his grandsons, his cousins and other relatives; I left India more convinced than ever before that non-violent resistance was the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom. (Carson, 1998, p.134)

3.3.5. Movement against segregation (1960 – 1963)

In 1960, after five years as the pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and resident in Montgomery, King decided to move back home to Atlanta. There, he would become co-pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church and be in a better location to direct the Southwide campaigns of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

Although King junior presumed that the move to Atlanta would result in a less-busy schedule and more time to meditate and reflect, things became even more crowded for him. It was in this same year, that King junior directed and motivated a non-violent, yet dynamic movement of Negro students. The students took action against the system of segregation in their campuses and communities across the South. The young Negro students of the South led disciplined non-violent action against the system. They were confronted by police guns, tear gas, arrests and jail sentences during the course of the demonstrations. King junior encouraged the students to continue the struggle maintaining the highest level of dignity because the ultimate aim was not to defeat or humiliate the white man, but to try to achieve friendship and
In the same year of 1960, King junior was charged with perjury because of accusations that he had falsified his 1956 and 1958 Alabama state income tax returns. He was threatened with a sentence of at least ten years. His Negro lawyers were William Ming of Chicago and Hubert Delaney from New York. After an exhausting three-day court appearance in front of an all-white jury, white judge and prosecutor and segregated courtroom, King junior was acquitted (Carson, 1998).

King organized successful protests free of conflicts with the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee; and during the spring of 1963, he guided with his staff, months of mass demonstrations in Birmingham, where local white police officials were known for their anti-black attitudes. President Kennedy reacted to the Birmingham protests and the obstinacy of segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace, by agreeing to submit broad civil rights legislation to Congress, which eventually passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (King, 1991).

Successive mass demonstrations in many communities culminated in a march on August 28, 1963, that attracted more than 250 000 protesters to Washington, D.C at the Lincoln Memorial, where Martin Luther King Junior delivered his famous ‘I have a Dream’ speech (King, 1968).

Reddie (2011) noted that King junior had spent more time revising and rehearsing that speech than any other in his life. He knew that it would be broadcast around the nation and he did not want to be underprepared. It covered all the important points of the African-
American experience in the USA and he used rich and powerful language, deeply embedded within American history and psyche.

The speech highlighted the failures of the Emancipation Proclamation to deliver real freedom and equality to African Americans. It also emphasised the indignities and brutalities suffered by blacks since Lincoln had set them free and focused on the right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. The final section was the ‘I Have a Dream’ section which spoke of his vision for America (King, 1991).

From that historical day at the Lincoln Memorial, freedom did not arrive soon enough (King, 1968). Although the movement had made astonishing breakthroughs, and established its own voice, there was a road that still had to be travelled.

On November, 22, 1963 President John Kennedy was shot in the White house from a fifth story building. The assassination of President Kennedy brought great confusion and grief to King junior and America. King junior described President Kennedy as a man with a strongly contrasted personality. He was a leader unafraid of change, even though he came to the presidency in a turbulent period. This period involved the nation suffering from its terrible injustice towards the Negro and the international ominous threat to mankind by the abyss of total nuclear total destruction (Carson, 2006).

We were all involved in the death of John Kennedy. We tolerated hate; we tolerated the sick simulation of violence in all walks of life; and we tolerated the differential application of law, which said that a man’s life
was sacred only if we agreed with his views. (Carson, 1998, p.238)

3.3.6. History is made (1963 – 1967)

During the years to follow, King’s reputation grew. In 1963 he had to deliver a eulogy for three children who had been killed by a planted dynamite blast. The assumption that Birmingham would settle after the storm of the demonstrations against segregation was premature. After resistance towards the settlement terms of desegregation in Birmingham, white youth known as the twentieth-century night riders shot and killed four young girls at Birmingham’s Sixteenth Street Baptist Church (King, 1968).

In February 1964 segregationist violence invaded the town of St Augustine in Florida and the civil rights leader, Robert Hayling, invited the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to join the struggle against this violence. The SCLC was an African American civil rights organization and led by King junior as the president. The local unit of St Augustine was seeking bi-racial committees, desegregation of public accommodation, employment and dropping of charges against peaceful protesting for constitutional rights (Carson, 1998).

The town was a stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan and the John Birch Society, comprising of white racists who inflicted intimidation on Negroes and provoked the nonviolent movements. The Klansmen abducted four Negroes and beat them unconscious with clubs, axe handles and guns. The SCLC came in to lead a heroic nonviolent campaign of 3700 Negroes amidst the violence and brutality condoned
and inflicted by the town’s police (Burns, 2004).

The campaign resulted in more than 300 arrests of SCLC members, including King junior. After much communication and extreme efforts, the SCLC succeeded in getting the governor of the state to form a bi-racial committee which would address the racial problems in St Augustine. By July of 1964 success was achieved and King junior attended the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Ramdin, 2004).

“Occasionally in life there are moments of unutterable fulfilment, which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meaning can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart” (Carson, 1998, p.256).

King junior became Time Magazines ‘Man of the year’ in 1963 and he was summoned to the White House to meet with President Lyndon B. Johnson. The following year he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (Carson, 2006).

In a 1965 Selma to Montgomery march, King junior and his lieutenants were able to keep intra-movement conflicts sufficiently under control to bring about the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The march, however, resulted in the arrest of King junior, and more than two hundred others. (Reddie,, 2011).

Shortly afterwards, white counter-protesters in Chicago physically assaulted King junior in the Chicago area during an unsuccessful effort to transfer non-violent protest techniques to the urban North. Despite these intra-movement leadership conflicts, King junior remained committed to the use of non-violent techniques. While participating in a 1966 march
through Mississippi, King junior encountered strong criticism from ‘Black-Power’ promoter, Stokely Carmichael, who claimed that the question of violence versus non-violence was irrelevant (Carson, 1998).

King junior’s effectiveness in achieving his objectives was limited – not just by divisions among the black population – but also by the increasing resistance he encountered from national political leaders (Reddie, 2011).

By 1967, King junior was being critically undermined by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, and urban racial violence escalated. King junior criticized American intervention in the Vietnam War because of its ambiguity, and because the black American soldier did not know for himself the democracy for which he was fighting. This reached a point where King junior lost the support of many white liberals (King, 2001).

3.3.7. Unfinished business (1968)

I guess one of the great agonies of life is that we are constantly trying to finish that which is unfinishable. We are commanded to do that. And so we, like David, find ourselves in so many instances having to face the fact that our dreams are not fulfilled. (Carson, 1998, p.356)

By the end of 1967, together with the SCLC, King junior had launched a Poor People’s campaign to demand and re-address their grievances to the United States Government, and to secure jobs or income for all (Garnow, 1986).
On 28 March 1968, King junior led thousands of sanitation workers and sympathizers on a march through downtown Memphis. Black youths began throwing rocks and looting stores; and this outbreak of violence led to extensive press criticisms of King junior’s entire anti-poverty strategy. King junior then returned for the last time to Memphis in April of the same year and addressed an audience at Bishop Charles J. Manson Temple on 3 April. He affirmed his optimism despite the difficult days that lay ahead (Carson, 1998).

The following evening, on April 4 1968, Martin Luther King Junior was assassinated at Lorraine Motel. He was rushed to St Joseph’s Hospital where he was pronounced dead at 7:05PM that evening. President Lyndon B. Johnson declared the 7th of April 1968 a national day of mourning for King junior. Two days later on April 9, the civil rights leader was laid to rest at the Ebenezer Baptist Church where he eulogized himself with a recording of the last sermon he had delivered at the church (Carson, 1998).

Below is an extract from one of King junior’s last sermons delivered in February 1968 at Ebenezer Baptist Church titled ‘A drum major for righteousness’:

If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, if I can show somebody he’s traveling wrong, then my living will not be in vain. If I can do my duty as a Christian ought, if I can bring salvation to a world once wrought, if I can spread the message as the master taught, then my living will not be in vain.
Segregationist James Earl Ray was later convicted of the crime 
(Carson, 1998).

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the major historical and developmental events in the life of Martin Luther King junior, in an attempt to meet the aim of the study. The findings and discussions of Individual Psychology regarding the life of King junior will be discussed in Chapter 6. The following chapter presents a theoretical overview on psychobiography.
CHAPTER 4

PSYCHOBIOGRAPHY: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

4.1. Chapter Preview

This chapter is aimed at providing an understanding of the psychobiographical approach. This will be done through the discussion of the relationship between psychology and biography. Definitions and descriptions related to psychobiographies will be provided including distinctions between psychobiographies and related concepts. The value of life history research and psychobiographical case study will also be discussed. The chapter will conclude with a theoretical discussion of the preliminary methodological considerations that have to be considered when conducting a psychobiographical study. A discussion on how these considerations were applied to the current study will follow in chapter 5.

4.2. Psychology, Biography and Narrative

A psychobiography is the study of a complete life, from birth to death, with the aims to discern, discover or formulate the central story of the whole, utilising a psychological theory (McAdams, 1994). Shultz (2005) stated that psychobiography is the name given to life histories that make use of a psychological theory as a way to understand the lives of biographical subjects and their connection between life and work.

Roberts (2002) noted that the subjects’ response to socio-cultural and economic status could also be analysed to provide a holistic picture and understanding of the life. Psychobiography is an indispensable method of
social enquiry (Elms, 1994; McAdams, 1994). Biographical research emphasises that man can only be understood, if at all, within his social and historical context. The historical records contain empirical information about human behaviour across diverse socio-cultural structures (Neuman, 2003). Insight into how individuals reshape their past, present and future and social relations is also provided (Uys, 2007).

The life histories or stories of famous and enigmatic figures have long fascinated and captivated scholars in the diverse fields of biography and scientific psychology (Howe, 1997; McAdams, 1988). Both disciplines have tried to determine how developmental differences occur, for example, in the present study, to understand how Martin Luther King junior developed into a remarkably influential, creative and courageous man. In addition biography and psychology have tried to discover how the life course of an individual can be fully understood and what would be the most effective way to observe the evolvement of a single life over a period of time (Howe, 1997; McAdams 1994).

Personality theorists such as Alfred Adler (1870 – 1937) and Erik Erikson (1902 – 1980) have suggested that a psychologically informed biography is probably the best way to capture a human life situated in time (McAdams, 1994). However, personality psychologists have not viewed themselves as biographers (Elms, 1988; 1994). Scientific psychology emphasises the necessity of reliable evidence and uses conceptual patterns of developmental and personality psychology frameworks to trace and explain the typical patterns of human development.

Biographical approaches to the study of a human life have been criticised
for their ambiguity and controversy despite their claims that people may be best understood in a biographical context (Anderson, 1981; Runyan, 1984). Fouche and van Niekerk (2005) claim that biography is further criticised for relying on the intellectual supports of literature, the arts and history when setting out the progressive course of an individual’s life.

The criticisms against psychological biography’s method of investigation include the unmanageable and subjective methodology, which makes a comprehensive scientific study not possible (Anderson, 1998; Runyan, 1984).

Counter arguments against these criticisms state that (a) they indicate an overly narrow view of science; (b) they neglect the fact that good biographical studies are highly illuminating; and (c) psychologists who study individual lives neglect their intellectual responsibility if they dismiss biographical research (Fouche & van Niekerk, 2005; McAdams, 1994).

Nonetheless, the past two decades have seen the increased interest in, and more significantly, an acceptance of biographical and autobiographical approaches among personality psychologists and other social scientists (Bertaux, 1981; Elms, 1994; Shultz, 2005).

According to Chase (2005) and Bruner (1990), psychologists, biographers and linguistics hold various definitions for the concept, narrative, based on each field’s prevailing theories and research orientation. McAdams (1994) stated that social scientists seem to be emphasising the importance of the concept of narrative as applied to the lives of individuals and their societies. The concept, narrative, is understood as an orderly series of events that take the form of a story and emphasize description rather than explanation (Broomley, 1986). Sabrin (1986) noted that narrative could be considered a
root metaphor to understand human behaviour and experience. Narrative research focuses on the individual, whose life may be understood through reporting and rebuilding the life story. Significance is particularly given to the personal, progressive and contextual quality of relationships that contribute to the complexity of a lived life (Chase, 2005; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1995). McAdams (1994) thus concludes that life narrative research and psychobiography appear to reflect the important emergence of narrative, story and biography as guiding frameworks to understand human behaviour.

4.3. Psychobiography: Definitions and Descriptions

A variety of descriptions of psychobiography exist, although there are fundamentals common in all, as illustrated below:

4.3.1. Psychobiography is a biographical study in which psychological concepts, methods and findings play a major role. By means of collecting, analysing and distinguishing life stories, psychobiographical research allows the comprehensive study of the subject in time and context through the narrative of individual experience (Runyan, 1988).

4.3.2. Psychobiography is the application of psychological concepts typically developed in the twentieth century, to subjects who lived in earlier decades or eras (Anderson, 1981).

4.3.3. Psychobiography is a way to conduct psychological research through the extensive use of biographical data in order to examine the growth of original thinking, creativity and productivity in unusual individuals (Howe, 1997).
4.3.4. Psychobiography is the study of an entire life, from birth to death, with the aim to discern, discover or formulate the central story of the entire life. This story is structured according to a psychological theory (McAdams, 1994).

4.4. Psychobiography and Related Concepts

In order to create a greater understanding of the term psychobiography, the present researcher will provide a brief description of related concepts in the following section. This will provide clarity of the concept of psychobiography in relationship to closely related concepts.

4.4.1. Psychobiography and Personality Assessment

Psychobiography focuses on lives already lived and completed. It provides psychological explanations for features of the life history which are not derived through the use of rationality or simple psychological principles (Alexander, 1988).

Personality assessment relates to the measurement and evaluation of lives in development (Fouche, 1999). Personality assessment focuses on how the person is functioning in the present and analyses the influences that help shape the individual, such as values or personality traits (Caprara & Cervone, 2004).

4.4.2. Life Histories and Life Stories

Life Histories provide information of social experience, through the collection of oral or written autobiographies from a sample of people.
who share some similarity, such as an occupational career (Fouche, 1999). Life Histories focus on examining relationships, similarities and patterns across many lives (McAdams, 1994; Bromley, 1986). This differs from a psychobiographical study that focuses on a single life (Rosenwald, 1988).

A life story refers to the biographical account of a person’s life as told by the narrator (Runyan, 1982). It is therefore primarily subjective in its account of the events, circumstances and relationships in the person’s life (Bromley, 1986).

4.4.3. Historical Psychology, Psychohistory and Historiography

Historical psychology can be described as the history of psychological phenomena and the history of thought about the psychological development and the life course (Runyan, 1988; 2003).

Runyan (1982) noted that psychohistory can be described as the application of psychology to history; in the same way that psychobiography is the application of psychology to biography. Psychohistory is the application of formal psychological theory to interpret historical political, social and cultural events (Runyan, 1988; Schultz, 2005).

Historiography is research which focuses on the past, in order to illuminate a question of current interest through the intensive study of material that already exists (Anderson, 1990; Simonton, 2003). Berg (1955) described historiography as an organised collection and objective evaluation of data related to the past, in order to explore and
restructure information into a significant set of historical explanations.

4.4.4. Autobiography, Psychological Case-Study and Psychobiography

Autobiography refers to the self-authored documentation of an individual’s life, or parts of it. It tends to be biased and selective because of its subjective perspective (Bromley, 1986).

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

A psychobiography is the systematic application of psychological theory to study an individual’s entire lifespan, with a holistic focus (Bromely, 1986; McAdams, 1994).

4.4.5. Single-Case Experiment

The single-case experiment refers to the study of one or more aspects of one subject, under closely controlled conditions (Bromely, 1986). The study aims to record and measure specific changes that occur in individuals as a result of the application of particular interventions. The researcher is able to draw definite, accurate and valid conclusions about causal relations (Gerdes, 1989). However strictly controlled laboratory settings create an exclusion of any external influences and produces
results that differ under normal circumstances (Simonton, 1993).

4.5. The Value of Psychobiographical 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 of the whole personality and emphasizes the individuality of the whole person rather than single elements (Elms, 1994). Psychobiographical life history research allows the researcher to investigate and provide a unique and holistic description of the individual being studied (Elms, 1994; Runyan, 1982).

4.5.2. The Socio-Historical Context

Fouche and van Niekerk (2005) affirm that the use of life history materials provides a structure to uncover cultural influences on human development through the consideration of the individual within the socio-cultural context in which he lived. The unique description and understanding of the individual provides the researcher with a larger contextualized background from which to reveal the subject’s socio-historical culture, socialization and family history (Robert, 2002; Runyan 1982). By using this approach to research the subject, a more holistic description of Martin Luther King junior is possible.
4.5.3. Process and Pattern over Time

Runyan (1984) states that life history is related to the complete explanation and understanding of behavioural processes and developmental patterns over time. Psychobiographies focus on completed lives which allows the researcher to trace patterns of human development from start till the end of the subject’s life (Carlson, 1988). The researcher is then provided with a more comprehensive understanding of the personality in action; allowing the researcher to record different dimensions and processes of personality functioning at any time or situation (Fiske, 1988).

4.5.4. Subjective Reality

Life history research offers the researcher an insightful description and understanding of the subject’s inner experiences, thoughts and feelings (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is significant to understand the 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 while exploring the subject’s world (Runyan, 1984).

4.5.5. Theory Testing and Development

Finished lives enable psychobiographers to trace human development and life history material provides an opportunity to test and develop theories of human development (Carlson, 1988). Roberts (2000) suggests that new theoretical insights can be gained or existing theories
can be illustrated during collection, interpretation and presentation of the research.

The first part of this chapter provided a brief outline to facilitate an understanding of the psychobiographical approach, used to study the life of Martin Luther King junior. In the next section of the chapter, the methodological considerations required when undertaking a psychobiographical study are discussed.

4.6. Psychobiographical Ethics

Elms (1994) stated that the nature of psychobiographical research raises ethical concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality. The psychobiographer collects and prepares data into a balanced and coherent way in which the individual lived his life. It is thus essential that the psychobiographer considers and resolves ethical considerations whilst preparing the case study (Elms 1994).

Fouche (1999) notes that some of the issues that may arise in a psychobiographical study include choosing whether the psychobiographer will study living individuals or those already deceased. A further issue may include what kind of data is permissible to use or in aiming to publish the findings, the researcher must decide what goes to print (Elms 1994; Fouche, 1999).

The APA (2000) also stipulated ethical guidelines related to psychobiographical work. These included that psychobiographies should ideally be conducted on deceased individuals, secondly – psychobiographies may not be conducted on any living person without his prior consent to being
studied, interviewed or information collected or published on him.

The researcher chose to study a deceased individual. Having considered the ethical guidelines and considerations, all data collected was published material. No informed consent was required for the study because of its academic purpose and there was no intention to publish. The nature of the study poses no threat of embarrassment or scrutiny to any of Martin Luther King Junior’s surviving relatives. The aim of this study was to be of good academic value offering increased psychological insight into the life and development of a historical figure.

4.7. Conclusion

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

The second part of the chapter highlighted the preliminary methodological issues and criticisms inherent to a psychobiographical study. The ethical considerations and the application were also addressed. The following chapter presents the research design and methodology of the present study.
CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1. Chapter Preview

This chapter presents the research design and methodology of the current study. The objectives and method are discussed including the data collection, extraction and analysis procedures.

5.2. Research Design

The present research study on Martin Luther King junior may be specifically defined as a single-case psychobiographical study over a lifespan (Fouché, 1999). The design serves as a means of inquiry into an individual case through an illuminating narrative that contributes to both knowledge and theory building (McAdams, 1994).

This qualitative psychobiographical study can be described as being both exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogic in nature (Edwards, 1990). The exploratory-descriptive nature refers to the provision of a rich and accurate description of King junior’s psychological development over his lifespan so as to provide an in-depth understanding of his individual case within its socio-historical context. The descriptive-dialogic nature refers to the faithful portrayal and description of a phenomenon and to clarify and test the content of specific theories such as the theory of Adler (1929) highlighted in the study (Edwards, 1990).

5.3. The Psychobiographical Subject

Martin Luther King Junior is an individual who was studied in this qualitative
case study. Case study research provides the opportunity for the systematic analysis of the complexity of a lived completed life (Carlson, 1988; McAdams, 1994). The sampling technique is purposive as King was specifically selected for his contributions to his country and the global community.

5.4. Research Objective

Martin Luther King junior is a monumental historical figure around the world. He was not only a religious leader but also a national civil rights leader and activist in the fight for equality. Therefore the primary objective of the current research study was to illuminate the life of Martin Luther King junior using Alfred Adler’s theory of Individual Psychology

5.5. Research Method

The research method can be described as qualitative-morphogenic in nature (Elms, 1994). This method emphasizes the individuality of the person as a whole, as opposed to the individual encountered in single elements (Runyan, 1984). By applying the selected psychological concepts to King junior as a singular case over his entire lifespan, a dialogue was created between the exploratory-descriptive findings and the theoretical concepts and propositions for the purpose of analytical generalization.

5.6. Data Collection

Data was collected from several information bases; the principal source was autobiographical materials and works produced by Martin Luther King Junior. Other additional sources such as materials produced by contemporaries or
journalists were consulted. Yin (2003) recommends that published materials be used in psychobiographical studies for a number of reasons: they are stable resources that can be frequently and repeatedly reviewed and are means to substantiate information from other sources.

5.7. Data Extraction and Analysis Procedures
Yin (1994) proposes two general strategies in dealing with data analysis. Firstly the researcher can rely on theoretical propositions. These are the propositions upon which the single case study design was presumably based on, propositions which have shaped the study and which reflect the research questions that were there initially.

The second approach is developing a case description whereby the researcher utilises a descriptive framework for organising the case study. Significant Concepts of Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology highlighted in chapter 2 will be used as the framework to extract and analyse research data in an organised and systematic way. These concepts are the: (a) The meaning of Life (b) The Unity of personality, (c) The structure of personality i.e.: Inferiority and compensation, Inferiority complex and Superiority complex, Striving for superiority, Private logic and Fictional goal, (d) Style of Life i.e. Lifestyle Types and Family environment and (e) Birth order. By following a systematic approach in organising the data presented in chapter 2, the present researcher was able to conceptualise and formulate hypotheses when applying the theoretical framework to the research subject. This is indicated in chapter 6.

Stroud (2004) and McAdams (1988) state that in an effort to avoid being consumed by vast amounts of information and allowing the researcher to organise
and analyse data in a systematic way, the researcher should utilise Irving Alexander’s (1988) nine salient guidelines for identifying important units of data. These are:

**Primacy**

This is a moment of a ‘first’ in someone’s life, a first incidence on which they build all other behaviour and motivation.

This can be viewed in the first incidence that King junior experienced discrimination at the age of 6 years old when he could no longer not be friends with a white boy (Carson, 1998). This first incidence may have encouraged King junior to fight for equality and have a vision for the future whereby people are treated as equal. This motivation is later depicted in his famous ‘I have a dream’ speech.

**Frequency**

This refers to that which occurs frequently. The frequency with which something is reported is often an indication of increasing certainty surrounding it and its importance.

King junior was frequently placed in leadership positions in the civil rights movement and religious circles. This included roles such as president of the NAACP, the SCLC and MIA in which he led the bus boycott of 1955 (Carson, 1998; Reddie, 2011). Literature indicated that people frequently listened to him when he spoke and this made him an inspirational, empowering and influential leader.

**Uniqueness**

This refers to that which is singular or odd to that particular person. Alexander (1988) noted 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 come from common cultural expectations.

An example of uniqueness as a salient aspect in King junior was his commitment to fighting inequality and racism through the love of Jesus, using a non-violent approach. Regardless of the countless times that King junior and his people were attacked, he always encouraged his people to love the white man and speak the truth with dignity and peace.

**Negation**

This is that which is the opposite. There may be a particular belief or understanding of an individual, which is in fact the opposite in reality. Individuals in the white community and often in the black community indicated to have a belief that King junior hated the white man and sought justice and revenge. They did this through regular violent attacks despite King junior’s pleas of a non-violent approach and a dream in which white and black children could one day be friends (Carson, 1998).

**Emphasis**

This refers to that which is either over- or underemphasised. Overemphasis is usually seen when something that is held to be commonplace receives a great deal of attention, while under emphasis arises when something that seems important receives little attention.

Literature reviewed on King junior placed overemphasis on his political and religious life, while underemphasis was placed on his close relationships with his siblings, wife and children.

**Omission**

This refers to that which is missing from the picture, that element of a person’s
life which seems to have been omitted when considering their lifespan.

Literature reviewed on King junior on his lifespan is the omission of detail concerning his inner emotions and close relationships with wife and children.

**Error**

This refers to the presence of mistakes – be they related to facts in general, or to the person.

Common occurring errors related to King junior as a person was the misconception that he was a troublemaker negro who wanted domination. The white police and the bombing at his house in 1956 depicted this in his constant arrests.

**Isolation**

This refers to that which stands alone or does not fit with the information as a whole, leaving one asking the question, ‘Does this make sense?’

An instance of isolation may be seen in King junior’s dismissal of his father version for King junior’s future. King junior had always indicated a high level of respect and obedience towards his father, but his father expected him to work as his assistant after graduating at Morehouse College. King junior continued to further his studies and later work in a different church than his father’s.

**Incompletion**

This refers to that which has not been finished, and this can often be seen when closure has not been achieved.

King junior was assassinated at the age of 39 in April 1968. He did not live long enough to see the efforts of his work flourish into the non-racist and democratic America that it eventually became.
The nine guidelines for the extraction of salient data assisted the researcher to reflect and organise material in a consistent and systematic manner (Fouche, 1999). During the collection, extraction and analysis of the biographical data, the researcher focused on the experiences that indicated personality development as indicated by the general life tasks, social environment, inferiority and striving for superiority and culture. All these constructs were discussed in Chapter 2.

5.8. Methodological Considerations in Psychobiography as applied to Martin Luther King junior

Meissner (2003) stated that psychobiographers are caught in the commitment to explore the inner meaning of controversial and great historical figures. This creates a methodological dilemma since history does not necessarily reveal the layers of meaning and unconscious motivations inherent in the subject’s life.

Psychobiographical research holds criticisms, which are based on noted transgressions of scientific psychology, or history - or both, and these criticisms have been justified (Elms 1994).

Psychobiographers therefore remain challenged to write good studies because of the major challenges and constraints that do not face other researchers (McAdams, 1994).

When it comes to the execution of psychobiographical studies, these difficulties have to be noted before one can continue and the present researcher will indicate how these shortcomings have been accounted for in this study.

5.8.1. Researcher Bias

Due to the in-depth and long-term process of the psychobiographical study, the researcher may experience a personal reaction towards the
subject, which could in turn be seen as counter-transference (Stroud, 2004). Anderson (1981) states that one of the threats to this form of research is the possibility of idealising or degrading the subject.

The present researcher was continuously aware of this in the development of the study. The researcher was fascinated by the subject’s moral values and inner drive to understand himself and others. The supervisor of the study assisted the researcher to maintain this self-awareness while compiling the research and to maintain balance between subjectivity and objectivity.

5.8.2. Reductionism

One of the criticisms of reductionism is that it explains adult character and behaviour only in terms of early childhood experiences and neglects later formative processes and does not take into account the historical, social and cultural context in which the individual lived (Runyan, 1984). An emphasis upon over analysing pathology instead of normality in the subject has also been highlighted (McAdams, 1994).

The present study has addressed this by analysing the research subject in a holistic manner. The historical, social and cultural context of Martin Luther King Junior was consistently taken into account and applied in the formulation of the study because of its great significance. This was done, as suggested, through the use of multiple sources during data collection and analysis (Fouche & van Niekerk, 2005). The selected theoretical framework, Adler’s Individual Psychology, places emphasis on taking into account personality development across the entire lifespan of the subject.
5.8.3. Cross-Cultural Differences

Anderson (1981) noted that psychobiographies may be considered as a form of cross-cultural research as it is assumed that the culture in which the subject lived would have been significantly different from the cultural life today. Stroud (2004) stated that psychological concepts might not be applicable or cross-culturally sensitive. In this situation, Anderson (1981) suggests that the researcher undertake in-depth and extensive historical research in order to develop a culturally empathic understanding of the subject.

Neuman (2003) suggests that the researcher should therefore understand the individual’s culture from the subjects’ viewpoint to be able to interpret the meaning of specific actions and statements. The researcher acknowledges the challenge in applying modern psychological concepts and theories to subjects from historical eras; however Adler’s 1929 theoretical framework places emphasis on society and culture for the individual’s development.

The researcher acknowledges the challenge in applying modern psychological concepts and theories to subjects from historical eras; however Adler’s 1929 theoretical framework places emphasis on society and culture for the individual’s development.

The researcher did not live in the same period as Martin Luther King Junior, however the economic and socio-political status of the subject’s time share some similarities to that of the South African Apartheid regime of which the researcher is familiar. The literature reviewed on
Martin Luther King junior allowed the researcher to gain some understanding of the subject’s cultural values.

5.8.4. Analysing an Absent Subject

In psychobiographical studies, all analysis of information occurs when the subject being studied has completed his life. The chosen subject of the study has completed his life. Carlson (1988) stated that the aim of psychobiographical study is to discern and discover the central story of the entire life.

Psychobiographers are at an advantage because of the access they have to information that covers the subjects’ entire lifespan. Various other informants closely acquainted with the subject or biographers who have studied and documented the subjects’ life are valuable sources of information for the researcher (Elms, 1994).

Anderson (1981) noted that the psychobiographical analysis of an absent subject to test theoretical concepts is at a greater advantage because of the availability and variety of information from different sources. Analysing an absent subject also provides the advantage of doing research without the restriction of informed consent (Carlson, 1988).

Finally, Elms (1994) noted that in a psychobiography, there is no need to disguise the identity of the subject because the point is to understand the psychology of a public historic figure.

The researcher collected biographical data of Martin Luther King Junior from various sources, including books, recorded biographical reports speeches, newspaper and published articles.
5.8.5. Inflated Expectation

Anderson (1981) noted that explanations and findings from a psychobiographical study should be recognized as speculative and not taken as the final word about the subject. Psychological explanations utilized only add to other explanations instead of replacing them.

Meissner (2003) emphasised that the psychobiographer’s work should be viewed as an approximation of a historical figure, which remains uncertain and heuristic, rather than factual. Psychobiographers should be aware of the various limitations of this research method and admit that they have not reported and interpreted the entire complexity of the subject’s life (Anderson, 1981).

The researcher acknowledges that the research study on Martin Luther King Junior was conducted from a psychological viewpoint. Thus the study and the researcher cannot claim to have uncovered the full complexity and psychosocial development of Martin Luther King Junior.

5.9. Conclusion

In this chapter the research design and methodology were discussed. In addition the process of extracting and analysing the data was highlighted. The findings of the study are found in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 6

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

THE INDIVIDUAL PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT OF MARTIN LUTHER KING JUNIOR

6.1. Chapter Preview

In this chapter the individual personality development of Martin Luther King junior is presented and discussed. The findings will be presented, according to the format discussed in Chapter 2 and 5, which will predominantly cover the material presented on Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology in Chapter 2.

6.2. The Meaning of Life

Adler (1958) stressed that although each individual has his own meaning of life, each individual has three main ties, which constitute reality for him. It is in the direction of these ties that he can solve the tasks and problems of life. The researcher proposes, according to the Adlerian theory that it was through these three main ties that King junior developed his own meaning of life. His work, his family and marriage, and his role within society continued to create and shape what he knew life to mean. Sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.3 discuss King junior’s life in more detail under these three life ties.

6.2.1. Occupational

Adler (1958) stated that the value of each occupation is determined by the individual and how his work contributes to society. King junior started working
from as early as fourteen years old. He started working on a tobacco farm to earn extra pocket money with the intention of helping his parents (Carson, 1998). On most summers King junior continued to work whilst studying. At one point, he also worked as his father’s assistant at the Ebenezer Church where King senior was the pastor. Through his letters to his parents and the way in which he spoke of his work, one could see how much value King junior placed on his occupation.

Adler’s (1958) view was that work broadly encompasses everything that an individual does to sustain himself and to contribute meaningfully to the sustenance of others. It was later not unexpected, when King junior started working full-time as the pastor at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. He wanted something that would fulfil him and serve society at large. Adler (1958) maintained that work resulting in useful achievements, together with a healthy balance amongst the other two ties of life, results in contentment. King junior’s view of his work was that it was a ‘calling’, something ‘eternal and absolute’, from which he could not escape, since it was calling him to serve humanity.

6.2.2. Social

This task refers to the individual’s involvement with others – either individually or in community – excluding marital, sexual or familial relations (Adler, 1958).

Adler (1964) viewed social interest as a way of being, in which one is capable of friendship, love of mankind and occupation. This social interest can only be done in conjunction with others; and together with co-operation, this can resolve the social task of life. King junior’s life was a display of social interest. At the
age of five years old, when he joined the church, his view of Sunday school was that it was the platform that provided the capacity for getting along with people.

From as early as six years old, when King junior had first-hand experience of segregation; his interest in others, his own people and other races, grew more each day. His precociousness not only grew towards the biblical realms, but towards how society tolerated an unequal and evil world, and how he would become part of the change, the movement. Adler (1958) states that the application of social interest enhances the ability of one to become less involved with one’s own hopes, fears, shame and doubt, and to become more concerned with how others see and experience the world.

6.2.3. Sexual

The sexual task of life involves intimacy, trust, self-disclosure and long-term commitment. Sexual relationships, love and marriage are included in this life task (Witmer & Sweeny, 1992). In 1952 when King junior met his wife, Coretta, he had previously stated that over the years he had met quite a few girls. He had been known as a ladies man on campus and was part of a group referred to as the ‘Wreckers’ because they were popular and charming with girls. After dating a few girls around campus, he was inclined to become cynical on the issue of love, until a friend introduced him to Coretta (Carson, 1998). King junior told his parents that Coretta was the women for him; from the moment they started talking and sharing interests, he knew he had met his wife.

According to the Adlerian theory, King junior had been searching for a meaningful and intimate love life that would not only fulfil him individually, but also contribute to the preservation of common life.

King junior viewed his family as central pillars to his own existence. He
declared his strength and motivation to be driven by his wife. His parents had always been the building blocks of his drive to serve society, and he always considered his family when fighting for the future.

6.3. The Unity of Personality

Adler (1930) regarded each single reaction, movement and impulse as an articulated part of an individual’s attitude towards life. Therefore, one may hypothesize that King junior’s perspective towards a life of freedom for himself, his family and society in general was his main fictional goal towards which he was striving. King junior’s subjective experience of reality was not about hating the white man, but more about eliminating social evil through the power of God’s love, and creating unity among all (Carson, 1998).

This attitude towards life protected him from what Adler (1958) described as a subjective view on reality, which can so often became erroneous, and any discrepancy with the objective view could easily result in inappropriate behaviour, such as violence. King junior’s attitude was to maintain non-violence throughout the struggle for eliminating racial inequality.

Adler (1929) noted that individuals who have an intimate love life, and a work situation resulting in useful achievements and healthy friendships may be seen as content. Their perspective is that ‘Life means to be interested in fellow men, to be part of a whole, and to contribute one’s share to the welfare of mankind’. In maintaining this attitude, according to the Adlerian theory, King’s work provided a sense of self-security in society, which positively influenced his self-worth, and he could balance this with the love, support and intimacy that he received from his wife and family (Adler, 1952).
6.4. King Junior's Individual Personality Development

6.4.1. The Structure of Personality

Adler (1930) stated that it is during the early developing stages of childhood that personality is created. This occurs when the child has its first experience of inferiority, and subsequently forms a goal that dominates its movement. The unity of the child’s personality, which involves movement through life and the goal, is subjectively based on the individual’s perception regarding life.

Adler noted the importance of taking all parts into consideration, particularly the context, when looking at an individual’s life and personality (Meyer and Viljoen, 2003).

The researcher will now discuss King junior’s personality structure by individually discussing the following concepts:

6.4.1.1. Inferiority and Compensation

Adler (1929) maintained that children experience natural inferiority from the day they are born, since they are primarily dependent on their caregivers for survival. This natural inferiority is to be seen as positive and universal, as it constitutes the basis from which compensating and striving for superiority can be achieved (Meyer and Viljoen, 2003). Adler (1929) stated that the experience of natural inferiority should be guided towards social interest through co-operation.

According to the Adlerian theory, King junior was naturally dependent on his parents, and it was through this experience that he first developed his own striving towards superiority. His scheme of apperception and lifestyle began to develop
through the early interactions with his parents.

King described growing up in a comfortable home, where all his basic necessities of life were met. His parents provided an environment of Christian love, values and principles by which he could stand; and he could always count on his parents whenever he needed them. “Life had been wrapped up for me in a Christmas package” (Carson, 1998, p.5).

However, every child longs for higher goals. Whatever goals men are striving for originates from their attempt to overcome the impression of deficiency, insecurity or weakness: real or imagined (Boeree, 2006). King junior’s striving for superiority may have begun by his need to achieve independence, and to move away from his parents. He started working from a very young age in order to earn extra pocket money. He took the opportunity of working away from home on the tobacco farms in order to take on a leadership role as the religious leader there (Carson, 1998).

His parents had modelled social interest to him through their own example. His mother had always taken an interest and minor roles as an activist against inequality, especially before she was married. His father was a pastor who not only preached the gospel, but as part of the NAACP was an instrument in improving the lives of African-Americans. He used the church as a platform to address racism and discrimination amongst African Americans in their own community (Reddie, 2011).

King junior’s early motivation for working and embracing leadership roles was an act of compensating for an imagined dependency on his parents. His parents support and cooperation with these activities encouraged social interest even further in King junior.
The researcher proposes that even though King junior grew up as an ‘extraordinarily’ healthy child, he may have later experienced a measure of inferiority from the colour of his skin through his first experience of racial discrimination. As Boeree (2006) suggested, children’s strivings may originate from real or imagined impressions of some deficiency. This may result in compensations for perceived deficiencies.

In 1948 at Crozer Theological Seminary African Americans were allowed to share classes and dormitories, bedrooms and bathrooms with whites. It was at this point in his life when King was 19 years old that he became aware of the stereotype attached to his race.

I was well aware of the typical white stereotype of the Negro, that he is always late, that he’s loud and always laughing, that he’s dirty and messy, and for a while I was terribly conscious of trying to avoid identification with it.

(Carson, 1998. p. 17)

This may have been the pivotal moment in which King junior decided to fight for racial equality.

6.4.1.2. Inferiority Complex and Superiority Complex

Adler (1958) defined an inferiority complex as something that appears before a problem for which the individual is not properly equipped to deal with. It is manifested through the conviction that he is unable to solve it, and can be expressed through anger, tears or apologies.

King junior may have first experienced the inferiority complex at the age of six-years old, when his white best friend told him they could not be friends any longer
(Carson, 1998). This resulted in tears and anger in him when he realised it was because he was a Negro. The inferiority complex within him may have never been completely resolved. It continued, as he became increasingly aware of his race in college, and later when he started to doubt himself in using the power of God’s love as an approach to resolving social conflict.

King junior’s resolution of his inferiority complex may have been because he did not maintain this focus on himself nor become paralysed by it. He developed a striving for superiority and power, and shifted his view on social interest, and was therefore able to solve many of the difficulties with which he was faced.

The superiority complex has been described as a way in which the individual hypnotizes himself into feeling superior, in order to overcome his feelings of inferiority. However, the compensatory movements are not directed towards solving the problem; they are frequently directed towards the useless side of life (Adler 1930, 1958).

King junior’s life did not indicate the development of a superiority complex. His movements away from feelings of inferiority were continuously motivated to overcome obstacles and find ways of attaining achievements.

6.4.1.3. Striving for superiority

Adler (1930) noted that individuals would not strive for superiority and success if they did not feel a certain lack in their present condition. The striving for superiority dominates their mind, and becomes a part of their psyche; and furthermore, it never ceases. This striving for superiority shapes one’s individuality, and it sets in motion the attainment of a goal.

According to the Adlerian theory, King junior’s individuality reflected the
striving for superiority in his nation. His struggle to achieve equality for African-Americans and the values by which he promoted this reflected his purpose.

Adler (1929) noted that the striving for superiority is about what is meaningful to the individual and the purpose of life is embedded in the attainment of his goal. The striving for superiority is largely influenced by the need to overcome, which contributes to the wellbeing of others. The striving for superiority manifests in two ways: striving for power and social interest.

According to the Adlerian theory, it can be hypothesised that King junior’s subjective goals were healthy and meaningful and they were embedded in his goal. King junior did not aim to strive for personal power; his striving for superiority manifested in social interest as his actions were motivated by improving the lives of his people.

6.4.1.4. Private Logic

King junior was proud of the home his parents provided for him and the values and morals that they instilled in him. These early experiences of love and security played a pivotal role in shaping his view of himself, other people and the world.

It is quite easy for me to think of a God of love – mainly because I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever present. It is quite easy for me to think of the universe as basically friendly, mainly because of my uplifting hereditary and environmental circumstances. It is quite easy for me to lean more toward optimism than pessimism about human nature, mainly because of my childhood experiences. (Carson, 1998, p.3)
Adler maintained that in the early years of childhood, children deal with the unpredictable environment by means of coping; and from this experience, they develop a prototypical life-plan to cope with the real or imagined difficulties in life (Adler, 1930). A private logic is also developed, which is the subjective apperception of the self, others and the world.

King junior grew up in a stable environment with loving and supportive parents. They did not shield him from the turbulent segregated environment outside their home, but they taught him, through lessons and examples, how to stand up for yourself, and for that in which you believe. King junior’s life-plan may have been to live up to what his father had begun in improving the lives of African Americans. Therefore, the researcher proposes that King junior’s private logic may have not been self-centred – as Adler suggests in his view on private logic.

King junior believed that through God, he had the resources, the education and the necessary influence to bring about change that would benefit society; he believed that others could be educated in regard to politics, the economy and social issues, in order to make informed decisions and bring about change in society; and he believed that the world could be changed into a better place for all its citizens (Carson, 1998).

6.4.1.5. Fictional Goal

The fictional goal is developed in childhood; and this is a fictitious goal that directs the individual’s striving (Adler, 1982). This fictional goal determines the creative choice of what is accepted as truth, how to behave and interpret events – and the actualization of the unconscious fictional goal becomes the central theme of the person’s life style. It provides the person’s life with direction, purpose and
meaning on which the individual acts, as if it were true (Adler, 1929).

King junior’s private logic indicated an attitude that his striving for superiority was not centred only on himself. He had well developed social interests and his lifestyle revolved around this. His guiding self-ideal reflected that he wanted a society where people could work and play together. He was interested in proposing an environment without discrimination and violence.

Adler (1929) noted that the fictional goal can be traced in fantasies and early recollections. King junior had an early remembrance of his father that played a great part in shaping his conscience:

I remember a trip to a downtown shoe store with Father when I was still small. We had sat down in the first empty seats at the front of the store. A young white clerk came up and murmured politely:

‘I’ll be happy to wait on you if you’ll just move to those seats in the rear.’

Dad immediately retorted, ‘There’s nothing wrong with these seats. We’re quite comfortable here.’

‘Sorry,’ said the clerk, ‘but you’ll have to move.’

‘We’ll either buy shoes sitting here,’ my father retorted, ‘or we won’t buy shoes at all.’

That experience revealed to me at a very early age that my father had not adjusted to the system; and he played a great part in shaping my conscience. (Carson, 1998, p.8)

Adler (1958) maintained that as the fictional goal can never be completely attained, the individual is always in fluctuation and always becoming. Once the
private logic and the fictional goal are set, the individual acts as if the goal were attainable. The unique lifestyle of the individual thereby reflects all expressions as compensatory movements towards overcoming, perfection, superiority and success (Adler, 1982).

As King saw in his early years how the system of segregation treated his people, the fictional goal in his mind may have been to fight against it like his father: not only for his own benefit, but for the sake of society at large, including the white folk. At his death, he may have never completely attained his fictional goal; but from the way he lived his life, it reflected all of the compensatory movements towards success that Adler describes.

6.5. Style of Life

Adler (1930) believed that the lifestyle of human beings could be best seen under certain conditions of the environment. By analysing the exact relation to the existing circumstances of the individual, the context is taken into great consideration. Adler understood the individual lifestyle as an expressive formulation of basic convictions, values and personal meaning about life that guide the movement towards striving for superiority (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). In this way, Adler (1930) noted that it is when confronted with difficulties and inferiority that the style of life appears most clearly and distinctly.

By analysing the circumstances in which King junior grew up and lived, one could easily understand how his lifestyle would reflect a goal and striving for superiority – based on the context from which he came. King junior’s experience of inferiority and his parents’ guidance motivated him into social interest and social feeling. This shaped his convictions and personal meaning about life. He strived for power in God
and education to fight in a non-violent way, using the power of God’s love and the Gandhian perspective.

Adler (1930) regarded heredity and the environment as empirical influences on the creative activity of the lifestyle’s development. The experiences King junior had within his family, according to Adler, contributed to the development of a specific way he perceived things, thought, felt and behaved.

6.5.1. Socially Useful Type

Martin Luther King junior’s lifestyle reflected the socially useful type. This is the individual with high activity and social interest. This type faces life tasks and challenges within a well-developed framework of social interest. King junior experienced segregation at schools, in public transport, with public service and also personally with friends and a white girlfriend he had. His approach in how he handled these life challenges indicated an individual who had interest in improving the quality of his own life and also those of others. Inequality and racism pushed him to fight for his people in a dignified and truthful manner. As previously mentioned, King junior grew up in a stable home environment of love, trust, social interest, co-operation and family values. This correlates with the background from which individuals with a socially useful lifestyle come (Meyer & Viljoen, 2003).

According to Adler (1982), these individuals have high concern for the wellbeing of others and society in general. King junior’s optimism about the future and how he strived for solutions for the present issues affecting society indicated a socially useful lifestyle type.
6.5.2. Family environment

King junior regarded his family environment as the place where his values and conscience were shaped. He spoke about how his father’s resistance towards segregation influenced him and also how he respected his father’s role as a father, husband and pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Through the love between his parents, the support he was given, and principles he grew up around, the Adlerian theory may describe King junior’s family environment as one of cooperation and respect. His family environment spared him from developing any faulty lifestyles of the neglected or pampered child. This may be because as the first son, his parents showered him with love and affection, so he never experienced neglect. His father was the authoritarian in the home and corporal punishment was sometimes used to discipline the children (Reddie, 2011). In this way, King junior did not develop the lifestyle of a pampered child.

6.6. Birth Order

Adler (1958) considered the individual’s psychological birth order as a most important aspect to consider. Adler (1930) noted that no two children, even those born into the same family, grow up in the same situation. According to Adler (1958), by the ages of four and five, the prototype is already constituted, which makes the understanding of the child’s family environment and position relevant to understanding its influences.

King junior was the second-born child out of three children. His older sister Willie Christine was born in 1927 and he had a younger brother, Alfred Daniel born in 1930. Adler (1930) reported that the position of the second child is one that is full of character. These children are often ambitious achievers and they tend to compete
with the eldest child. King junior may not have necessarily had to compete with his older sister, Christine King, because he was the first born son in the family. However, King’s ambitiousness, seen through his early devotion in the church, starting work at a young age, receiving a doctorate in Systematic Theology, joining the seminary and his mission in finding a way to approach social conflict, could exemplify Adler’s (1930) description of the second-born child.

The second-born child comes across as always being in a race; and all his characteristics would reflect this peculiar position in the family constellation (Adler, 1930). King junior showed ambition and drive in his character. His pursuit of higher education, despite his father’s expectation that he would finish studying after college just like him, may be a reflection of this inner drive. In 1948, he reported how at Crozer Theological Seminary he was always trying to stay away from the Negro stereotype of always being late. His life similarly depicted the literal meaning of a race, in his active participation in the civil rights movement, he was constantly occupied with actions against segregation, continuous traveling around his country, and marching for equality.

Lasko (1954) reported that parents, particularly mothers, showed more consistent expression of warmth towards children after the first-born child. Parents have been proved to be more inclined to interfere less, be more permissive, less anxious and protective of second-born and later children. This may have positively influenced King junior’s position in the family, as he would have received the necessary support, warmth and permissiveness – in all his endeavours – from his parents.

6.7. Integration of Findings

Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology theory emphasises a holistic and teleological
view of the individual, taking into account the social context in order to understand personality. From early childhood, each individual strives towards superiority to compensate for any feelings of inferiority. By the age of five-years old, the lifestyle has been developed through a private logic and a fictional goal. The individual’s attitude, behaviour and actions are guided by this goal – as he faces the tasks of life.

The biographical data and discussion indicate that Martin Luther King junior’s socio-cultural context was that of a segregated, unequal and racially divided society. The struggle of the African Americans even before the birth of King junior encouraged a strong culture among African Americans to fight for their freedom. This was done through marches and campaigns and later using religion and black churches as instruments of addressing racial issues. By the time King junior had actively joined the struggle for freedom, he had been influenced by a rich history of influential individuals in his life. These included his parents, his congregation, fellow activists, Morehouse president, Benjamin E. Mays, Dr George Kelsey, a professor of philosophy and religion and Dr Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, whose sermon inspired him to visit Gandhi.

His striving for superiority focused on his social interest and showed that he was more concerned with finding meaningful solutions to challenges that would benefit others. He had optimism about the future; and his family environment and position in the family had been positive influences on his attitude towards life.

He held a private logic that showed: (a) he had positive self-confidence and self-worth; (b) that the world was a friendly place, capable of change and growth; and (c) that others could be trusted and positively influenced by the power of God’s love. This private logic, combined with a fictional goal of striving for equality and freedom, characterised his personality as a humble, spiritual and ambitious man. The
consistency of his character shaped his lifestyle and he was able to stay true to his lifestyle amidst the impressions of the cruel divided society of America.

His experience of the inferiority complex in his earlier life motivated him with the guidance of his parents towards social interest and social feeling. He approached the tasks of life – occupational, social and sexual – positively and effectively in a non-self-centred way. His occupational and social life tasks may at times have dominated his life. King junior was constantly busy, not only as a pastorate at Dexter Avenue Church and later Ebenezer Baptist Church, but he also had leadership roles in several civil right groups namely the: SCLC, NAACP and the MIA (Carson, 1998). This resulted in a lot of traveling and time away from home. The support and commitment of his wife who shared his concerns about segregation and inequality, encouraged his balance with the tasks of love and marriage.

Adler’s (1929) view of the man who could maintain this balance was that he understands life as a creative task with many fruitful opportunities and irrecoverable defeats. These individuals’ understanding of life, and how one meets all the problems of life may be construed as – ‘Life means to be interested in fellow men, to be part of the whole and contribute my share to the welfare of mankind’ (Carson, 1998).

6.8. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a presentation of the findings and a discussion of Martin Luther King junior’s individual personality. The chapter was presented according to the sequencing and format discussed in Chapter 2 and 5. The approach of presenting the discussion took into account King junior’s dynamic life within his social environment that influenced his lifestyle development and the solution to his tasks of life. His meaning of life and private logic were presented to provide insight into how
he viewed himself, others and the world – which would ultimately integrate with his goal in life. This should have created some understanding of his personality and psychology.

The following chapter presents the conclusions and limitations of the study, and discusses recommendations for further psychobiographical studies.
CHAPTER 7
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1. Chapter Preview

In this final chapter, the aim and purpose of this study will be revisited; and conclusions will be drawn from the explored research project. The limitations and value of the study will be discussed and recommendations for future research will be made.

7.2. Revisiting the Purpose of the Study

The primary aim of the study was to explore and describe Martin Luther King junior’s life and the development of his personality in terms of Alfred Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology. This approach involved the biographical account of King junior’s life, in order to conceptualize and interpret it by using Adler’s theoretical perspective.

Because of this theoretical orientation, the study was both exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogic in nature. Thus, the contents of King junior’s personality development were interpreted and reconstructed within the framework of the development of his individual personality. The exploratory-descriptive nature of the study and the Individual Psychology conceptualization created a narrative of King junior’s personality development.

The narrative thus created enabled the researcher to apply King junior’s longitudinal lifestyle and personality development to Adler’s personality theory. Thus, the descriptive-dialogic nature of the study enabled the researcher to test whether the theory of Individual Psychology efficiently explored and described the personality development of this exceptional and enigmatic figure, Martin Luther
The following section presents a conclusion of the study, the limitations of this study, the value of the study and recommendations for future research in this field.

7.3. Conclusions of the Study

The biographical data on Martin Luther King junior and Adler’s (1929) theoretical framework implemented in the study enabled the researcher to draw conclusions from the study. These are now presented.

King junior’s culture had a profound influence on his life because of the way he grew up. His family environment, the significance of religion, and the morals and values with which he grew up all had an impact in the formation of his prototype, i.e. his personality. His family environment was one characterized by support, permissiveness, the encouragement to stand up for what he believed in and to care for and appreciate values in others. This promoted co-operation and respect in his family atmosphere.

His birth position provided him with ambition and strength of character. In these early years, as King junior learned to compensate for his inferiorities and to overcome possible complexes, his family encouraged him in his social interest. This would influence striving for superiority in a way, which not only benefits the individual, but is also concerned with the wellbeing of others.

King’s private logic of believing in himself with confidence and goodness, perceiving others as good and worthy of trust, and the world as a friendly place capable of change, encouraged and brought positive balance in the way that he approached his life tasks of occupation, social and love and marriage. His fictional goal in life and socially useful lifestyle drove his life, even though at the time of
his death, he may not have completely achieved the fictional goal of attaining equality and freedom for all.

7.4. The Limitations of this study

One of the most obvious limitations to this study was the limited information available on Martin Luther King junior's life. The political and religious aspects that dominated his life largely characterized his autobiographies. This may have been the result of King junior’s inspiring fortitude in his fight against inequality and discrimination, which did not allow him enough time at home, or to engage in any other extramural activities.

It would have been valuable to gain more information on King junior’s relationship with his wife and children, to enable the researcher to draw more inferences about his personal relationships. Also, close friends and other family members, such as his siblings, might have provided more information on these specific facets of his life. The Martin Luther King Foundation was contacted for additional information in August 2012, however communication was unsuccessful.

Another limitation to the study was the limited amount of information on King junior’s early years. The literature on his life is largely dominated by the adult years in which he fought against discrimination. Therefore, more detailed information on his childhood may well have enabled the researcher to identify specific character traits developed earlier – which only became apparent later in his life.

A limitation of the study related to the conceptualization by Adler’s (1929) personality theory is the difficulty formulating King junior’s fictional goal. The researcher was aware that this would present some difficulty to definitely identify.
Adler (1958) stated that the fictional goal can only be traced and if it is purposely sought, it is rarely obtained. However, this limitation does not simplify the complexity of the study. It can only be recommended that perhaps in future research studies, a different fictional goal could well present different conclusions.

Furthermore, Adler’s life tasks appeared more directed towards King junior’s adult development, which could have limited the identification of his resolution of life challenges and tasks in childhood: for example, King junior’s sexuality and socialisation in childhood.

Finally, Adler’s personality theory states that every thought, action and behaviour are considered part of the individual’s personality development. Not all of King junior’s actions, thoughts and behaviours throughout the 39 years of his life could be thoroughly explored and interpreted for the purpose of this academic study. Fouche (2004) stated that it is important that researchers be honest about the fact that not every detail of a research subject’s life could be presented and analyzed. This psychobiographical research study is based on Martin Luther King junior’s life, which makes it impossible for it to be compared with studies in a similar field because it is the only psychobiography being conducted on Martin Luther King junior.

7.5. Psychobiographical Case Study Research

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, psychobiographical research methodology receives significant criticism in its limitations, some of which have been justified. The major challenges inherent in this field of study include: researcher bias, reductionism, cross-cultural differences, elitism, inflated expectations, and reliability and validity criticisms. All of these were presented and
discussed in Chapter 2.

7.6. Value of the Study

One of the most important values of this study is that the researcher has provided the first psychological explanation on the life of Martin Luther King junior through a psychobiographical study – by using Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology. The study’s aim was to explore King’s junior’s life, and to describe his personality development, according to Adler’s personality theory.

In relation to the value of the study in using Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology, the theory provided a useful framework for exploring and describing those factors that influenced King junior’s individual personality development. Examples of these factors include the occupational, social, and sexual tasks that he faced throughout his life. This focus emphasised a holistic perspective for the study, which can only be beneficial for the analysis and interpretation of this exceptional historic figure.

The theoretical framework was also useful in the extraction, analysis and interpretation of the biopsychosocial and cultural and historic factors in King junior’s personality development. This further encouraged a holistic focus in the study. The research findings regarding individual personality development indicate that Adler’s (1929) personality theory holds relevance, and is applicable in understanding lifestyle development.

This psychobiography contributes to the limited yet growing number of academic biographies written in the field of psychology in South Africa. Thus, the overall value of this study lies in its contribution to this research focus area.
7.7. Recommendations for Future Research

It is recommended that a prospective study of a similar kind be done on a larger scale. A doctoral thesis may be an example which could serve as an ideal way to adequately illuminate the complexity of the research subject by integrating two theoretical frameworks.

This study aimed to highlight Martin Luther King junior’s life and personality development, according to Adler’s (1929) Individual Psychology. Thus, a recommendation is that future researchers continue from the theoretical platform laid down towards a greater understanding of his life and work. An addition of other theoretical explanations such as Erikson’s (1965) Psychosocial Development Theory could perhaps complement the study. This could also provide a more comprehensive and thorough explanation of Martin Luther King junior’s psychological developmental process.

Future researchers’ undertaking more in-depth research on this subject may consider working on an inter-disciplinary basis. This could provide an opportunity to include, for example, historians who lived in the same era. Although a historical perspective was included in the present research study, future research could provide more in-depth detail on the living conditions and influences of that time.

As this psychobiography focused on an exceptional historic figure, who fought against discrimination, and whose life has influenced many of the world’s positive changes – it is hoped that future researchers would embark on further studies on the world’s great icons – in order to understand their personality development and the motivations behind their behaviour. Perhaps this may inspire and educate future leaders and influential figures around the globe.
7.8. Conclusion

In this chapter the limitations and the value of the study were discussed. Further recommendations on future research related to the life of Martin Luther King Junior were presented, including some general recommendations for studies within the same field. Martin Luther King junior has been described around the world by such diverse figures as politicians, religious leaders, educational representatives, academics and ordinary civilians. The common thread among these descriptions is as a person deserving of admiration, honour and respect for his character, struggles, sacrifices, purpose and love and care for others.

In essence the present study has highlighted how a remarkable individual known to many, started his walk to freedom from as young as five years old. Although too young at the time of his death, he had achieved much, which others can only dream of attaining in their lifetime.

The researcher concludes with a quote from Martin Luther King junior on how he wanted others to remember him:

Every now and then I think about my own death, and I think about my own funeral. And I don’t think of it in a morbid sense. Every now and then I ask myself, what is it that I would want said? And I leave the word to you this morning; I’d like somebody to mention that day that Martin Luther King junior tried to give his life serving others. I’d like for somebody to say that day, that Martin Luther King junior tried to love somebody. I want you to say that day that I tried to be right on the war question. I want you to be able to say that day, that I tried to feed the hungry. And I want you to be able to say that day, that I did try, in my life, to clothe those who were naked. I want you to say, on that day, that I did
try in my life, to visit those who were in prison. I want you to say that I tried to love and serve humanity. (Carlson, 1998, p. 366)
REFERENCES


