

John Lennon: A Psychobiography

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Photograph of John Lennon



Photograph retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/melissa4071gmai/the-greatest-band-everthe-beatles/>

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Declaration by Language Editor

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Abstract

This study is a psychobiography of the famous Beatle John Lennon (1940 - 1980). John is well known for his controversial musical lyrics and unique personality, as well as the long history with the famous band that swept the world for many years. In his 40 years of life John managed to leave a vast imprint in the world through various social and political issues which still seem to be relevant today. John's complex personality has intrigued scholars and even in our modern day existence more can be learned from this extraordinary character. This study primarily aims to explore and describe the development of John Lennon with specific reference to his psychosocial personality development through the use of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory. In this single case psychobiographical research design, the theory chosen was systematically used to reinterpret and reconstruct John's life into an enlightening psychological narrative. John was born in Liverpool, England during the Second World War. He is mostly known for founding the famous band "*The Beatles*" and his controversial nature. He was selected as the subject for this study through a non-probability purposive sampling procedure. He is also known by many as an advocate for peace and equality, due to his involvement in socio-political issues later in his life. John's life has been the subject of interest for many scholars, although there appears to be no evidence of a study conducted from the theoretical perspective chosen. John's personality development, motivations and psychosocial underpinnings as a world famous individual have not yet been explored comprehensively. It is worth mentioning that a previous psychobiography has been conducted on John, however, from an Adlerian perspective. John's life was uncovered in this psychobiography through a systematic and consistent collection, analysis and interpretation of available biographical data which consisted of published materials. Seven significant life periods were highlighted and identified in the collected data for analysis through the use of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory. Additionally, the collected data were organized and integrated in a conceptual matrix which further guided the analysis, presentation and discussion of the findings. A secondary aim of this study was to test the content and stages of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) psychosocial developmental theory.

The findings of this study suggested that John experienced difficulty with his psychosocial development early in his life as it was mostly disparaging. According to the findings John only began to resolve many unresolved childhood crises later in life through the help of therapy. This study supported the applicability and relevance of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory for gaining a psychosocial understanding of the individual.

Keywords: Psychobiography; John Lennon; Erikson; psychosocial personality development

Chapter 1

Introduction and Problem Statement

1.1 Chapter Preview

This introductory chapter provides a general orientation to the study as well as discusses the study's rationale and problem statement. This is followed by a description of the research aim and theoretical orientation, as well as an overview of the chapters comprising the study.

1.2 General Orientation of the Study

This research project entails a psychobiographical account of the life of famous Beatles band member John Lennon (1940 - 1980). The researcher attempted to explore and describe the psychodynamic life of this extraordinary individual with specific reference to the artist's psychosocial personality development. The psychological framework used to investigate John Lennon's psychosocial personality development over his entire lifespan, was that of Erik Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). This theory is comprehensively discussed in Chapter 2.

The research design is a single case psychobiographical study over a lifespan, using Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory to systematically and coherently reinterpret Lennon's life into an illuminating psychological narrative. The biographical data collected for analysis were derived mainly from published materials and included biographies, excerpts from interviews as well as audio-visual media. The next section looks at the problem statement and rationale of the study.

1.3 Problem Statement and Rationale

Psychobiographical studies aim at transforming an individual's life into a coherent and illuminating story by using psychological theory in a systematic way (McAdams, 2006). The clarity that is sought in psychobiographical studies is psychological in nature and the main emphasis falls on the subject's interior world and the effects of his or her life history (Schultz, 2005). There appears to be a modern-day preoccupation with celebrities, and portrayals of their 'every move' are often misunderstood, which leads to society putting labels on them. Therefore, a comprehensive life narrative can create a better understanding of these individuals and how their behaviours develop.

According to Schultz (2005), despite the increase in studies of a psychobiographical nature, the progress of this field has been inadequate due to it being underpopulated. Additionally, academic psychologists generally prefer the pursuit of rigorous methods and nomothetical problems, thus neglecting the type of soft, idiographic scholarship that is psychobiography. Traditional researchers and developers of the field, such as Münsterberg in 1898, Stern in 1902 and Allport in 1937, stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between both nomothetic and idiographic approaches in the science of psychology, the first referring to aspects we share with others, the latter refers to our own or private aspects (Hurlburt & Knapp, 2006). In 2010 Fouché and Van Niekerk suggested that South African psychobiographies were not yet fully developed. That has however changed in a few short years, for example Ponterotto (2015) stated that psychobiographical studies have and are rapidly increasing worldwide. In South Africa passion for the genre, active academic social engineering and the establishment of psychobiography as a curriculum-driven field have been encouraged and increased by professors in the field at various institutions (Fouché, 2015). Psychobiographical research not only has considerable logistical and administrative value, it also holds

rich academic benefits for the theoretical development of South African psychology (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010).

Additional benefits of psychobiographical research include the merits of longitudinal research and theory development in various fields, including personology, developmental psychology, positive psychology, health psychology, as well as career psychology (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). The value of psychobiographical research is further emphasised by the following factors mentioned by Elms and Song (2005). Firstly, useful applications of both psychological knowledge as well as methodological and conceptual skills are made possible. Secondly, it would be commendable to test nomothetic hypotheses and to yield new theoretical concepts. Third and lastly, personalities can be understood as a worthy goal in and of itself, as well as adding to the existing body of psychobiographical knowledge.

The selection of a particular personality for psychobiographical research is primarily based on the intended individual's significance or interest in this person (Howe, 1997). It is advised that psychobiographical researchers let the subject choose them, and not the other way around (Elms, 1994). John Lennon was chosen on the basis of his interest and uniqueness, as well as on various mysterious aspects of his life that the researcher had come to know about prior to the investigation. John Lennon was known by many as the outspoken, rebellious Beatle who later became an anti-war activist and an advocate for peace (Norman, 2008). John experienced a turbulent childhood and extraordinary adolescence, followed by the fame of his band, the Beatles. A thorough literature search of existing publications on databases such as Ebscohost and in the University of The Free State's library revealed that no former psychobiographical studies had been done on John Lennon's life using Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory.

This study yielded information on the applicability and relevance of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory of psychosocial personality development and it is

hoped that this work adds to the existing knowledge base of psychobiographical research and could perhaps be used for further refinement of aspects of psychological theory. The researcher also aimed to contribute to the growing field of academic psychobiography in South Africa, but mainly to promote a better understanding of John Lennon's life.

1.4 Research Aim

The main aim of this study was to explore and describe the psychodynamic life of John Lennon, with a particular focus on his psychosocial personality development. It is crucial to note that the study did not aim to generalise the research findings to a larger population through statistical generalisation. The second aim of the study was to test the content and stages the psychosocial theory through analytical generalisation (Yin, 2009). In other words, the research findings were compared to the expected outcomes of the psychological framework used in the study. According to Fouché (1999), this comparison is facilitated by creating a dialogue between the exploratory-descriptive findings and the applied theoretical concepts and propositions as also proposed by Yin (2009, 2014).

1.5 Theoretical Orientation

John Lennon's psychosocial personality development was investigated by using Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) psychosocial theory. Erikson supported an epigenetic principle whereby genetic (biological) and environmental forces interact to bring forth particular developmental outcomes. Erikson (1963) stated that development unfolds in a sequence of eight stages predetermined by an essential genetic plan and the demands that society places on the individual at each of these stages. Furthermore, progression and development of the unfolding personality depends on the person's readiness to be driven forward, to be cognizant of and to interact with a widening radius of individuals and institutions. An overview of the study is discussed next.

1.6 Overview of the Study

This study consists of 8 chapters with the first being an introduction and problem statement. Chapter 2 describes the psychosocial personality developmental theory (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). In Chapter 3 a comprehensive discussion of psychobiography in general is provided, and is titled 'Theoretical Overview'. Following on this, Chapter 5 describes the preliminary methodological and ethical considerations related to the psychobiographical approach. An explication of the research design is presented in Chapter 6, with Chapter 7 providing the findings of the study and offering a broad discussion of these. Lastly, Chapter 8 concludes the study by discussing its limitations, recommendations and value, as well as making general reflective remarks about the study.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides the reader with general information about the study, including the rationale and problem statement. The research aim and theoretical orientations were also discussed, and the chapter concluded with an outline of the study.

Chapter 2

The Psychosocial Developmental Theory of Erikson

2.1 Chapter Overview

The psychosocial developmental theory of Erik Erikson is discussed in order to gain a better understanding of the theory postulated by this world-renowned psychologist. Background information about Erikson is provided to shed light on his life and the driving forces behind his development of this theory. Furthermore, Erikson's theory is discussed in more detail, including an elaboration of his eight psychosocial stages of development. Consequently, this chapter also discusses the expected psychopathology resulting from the unsuccessful resolution of each life stage. It was deemed vital to discuss the importance of Erikson's relation to psychobiography and the applicability of his theory for the present study.

2.2 Erik Erikson

Erik Homburger Erikson (1902-1994), well-known Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award winner (Friedman, 2000), was a pioneer in the field of psychodynamic psychology and human development. He devised the term 'identity crisis' and he is perhaps best known for his hypothesis of the eight stages of development which we know today. Literature suggests that his work was influenced and shaped greatly by the experiences of his own life. Erikson's father and mother, respectively Danish Protestant and Danish Jew, were separated before his birth. As a result, Erikson was raised by his mother and stepfather, Theodore Homburger, a German-Jewish paediatrician (Coles, 2001). It appears that Erikson's life started off with challenges as his mother refused to reveal any information about his birth (Friedman, 2000). Compounding this, Erikson was raised not knowing his biological father. These details, together with a combination of other factors, might have served as a catalyst for his interest in psychology, psychoanalysis and the evolution of his psychosocial developmental theory (Friedman, 2000).

Erik Erikson was born in 1902 near Frankfurt, Germany, the product of an extramarital union engaged in by his mother (Fleming, 2004). Erikson was Nordic looking; tall, blue-eyed and blonde. As a result he stood out and was teased throughout his school life (Friedman & Shustack, 2009). This and his inability to fit into his community sparked an interest in identity formation from an early age. Additionally, Erikson later experienced feelings of confusion when he learned that the man who had raised him was not his biological father (Santrock, 2009). This further fueled his interest in identity formation (Fleming, 2004).

2.3 Erikson's Psychoanalytic Beginnings

Erikson's interest in psychoanalysis was sparked by the revolutionary thinker Sigmund Freud who proposed the psychoanalytic theory. In summary, Freud proposed that humans are driven by motives and emotional conflicts of which they are largely unaware and thus are shaped by their earlier experiences in life (Hall, 1954). According to Freud an individual's personality can be divided into three components which he named the id, the superego and the ego. Freud used the term 'id' to refer to a reservoir of unorganised instinctual drives (Freud, 1938). This part of personality, as described by Freud, is present at birth and largely unconscious, (i.e., the id wants what it wants when it wants it). The superego is described as a rigid conscience that internalises the rules and guidelines of an individual's world, thus in opposition to the id. Freud (1938) proposed that the ego is the mediator between the id and the superego. For example, the ego may be viewed as the judge of the psyche which controls motility, perception, contact with reality as well as the delay and modulation of drive expression (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

Together with Freud's description of the components of personality, he put forward a theory of psychosexual development (Freud, 1930, 1936, 1938). According to Freud's theory of psychosexual development, there are five stages through which individuals develop namely the oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital stages (Freud, 1930, 1936, 1938). In the oral stage (age 0-18 months) the mouth is considered as the most important zone, also known as the erotic zone, as it provides nurturance for the

child through sucking and eating (Carver & Scheir, 2000; Freud, 1930). This stage of oral gratification is followed by the social pleasure of impressing parents and the physical pleasure of emptying the bowels during the second or anal stage (age 18-36 months) (Fiske, 1988; Freud, 1936). The third stage, known as the phallic stage (age 3-5 years) involves feelings of pleasure associated with the genitals and children cherish unconscious sexual desires for the parent of the opposite sex (Carver & Scheir, 2000; Freud, 1930, 1936). Later on in the latency stage (age 5 to puberty) sexual drives become less important while social interests escalate as proposed by Blatt and Levy (2003) as well as Freud (1930). The last stage in Freud's developmental theory is known as the genital stage (puberty onwards) during which sexual drives intensify and the individual develops a mature adult sexual identity to establish loving and sexual relationships (Carver & Scheir, 2000).

Some of Freud's concepts were supported and accepted by Erikson, especially the instinctual development and infantile sexuality. Corresponding to Freud, Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) concerned himself with the inner dynamics of personality and stipulated that the personality progresses through systematic stages of development. In *Childhood and Society*, Erikson (1950) intended to integrate individual psychosexual development with societal influences. Erikson then designated a matching phase for each of Freud's psychosexual stages, each with a specific mode of behaviour. However, Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) placed less emphasis on sexual urges as the drivers of development, as also less on the unconscious, irrational and selfish id. Erikson instead focused on the rational ego and its adaptive powers, and emphasised that the development of the ego is more than the result of intra-psychic wants or inner psychic energies. He also expanded the concept of the ego to include self and identity and described how the ego develops across the course of a life. Additionally, he drew attention to social influences on development as well as mutual regulation between the individual and societal cultures and traditions.

2.4 Erikson and Personality Development

Personality may be described as a constantly changing but also relatively stable compilation of all the physical, psychological, and spiritual characteristics of the individual that determine his or her behaviour, depending on the context in which the individual finds him- or herself (Meyer & Moore, 2008). According to Sigelman and Rider (2009), human development refers to the systematic changes that occur in the individual from conception to death. This suggests that development involves changes that are methodical, patterned, and relatively persistent, while the individual's customary ways remain the same. According to Newman and Newman (2006), a lifespan approach to human development strives to identify and account for moulds of transition and transformation from one life to another while recognising both intergroup differences and individual diversity within groups.

Personality theorists such as Freud implied that development was completed by the end of childhood or adolescence (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Erikson was one of the first theorists to focus on lifespan development (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). He assumed a positive view of human nature and considered humans as active and rational participants in their own development. Consequently, Erikson believed that the experience of human life is a product of the biological, psychological and societal systems (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

Erikson's theory is based on the concept of epigenesis, which states that the personality undergoes a biological unfolding in relation to the environment and socio-cultural setting (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). This development takes place in predetermined, consecutive, and clearly defined stages which must be adequately resolved in order for development to continue successfully (Capps, 2004). This epigenetic principle also specifies that the unsuccessful resolution of a given stage is evident in all subsequent stages. Furthermore, this principle suggests that unsuccessful resolutions or failures could be manifested in physical, cognitive, social, or emotional maladjustment (Elkind, 1970). Therefore, progress depends on the individual's success or lack thereof in all developmental stages (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

2.5 Psychosocial Theory

Psychosocial theory focuses on understanding the internal experiences that result from the interactions between biological, psychological, and societal systems. These systems are viewed as being intertwined, meaning that changes in any one of the systems causes changes in the others. As proposed by Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977), each of these systems could be analysed for patterns of continuity and change over the lifespan. By integrating the biological, psychological, and societal systems, a complex and dynamic map of human thought, behaviour and personality can be shaped. Erikson (1963, 1980) focused on the relationship of the ego with the environment, spanning the period of human development. According to Erikson (1963), this theory represented a shift in psychoanalytic emphasis, from the study of the individual's ego to the study of the ego's foundation in society.

2.6 Eight stages of Psychosocial Development Theory

Erikson is widely known for his contribution to the field of psychology through the developmental theory he put forward (Santrock, 2009). Many have compared him to Freud as he claims that humans develop in stages. However, Erikson's developmental stages are spread out across the individual's entire lifespan, whereas Freud's theory argues that personality is entirely shaped by the age of five (Freud, 1938). According to Fleming (2004), Erikson was known as an ego psychologist who branched out of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. According to Santrock (2009), Erikson's theory includes eight stages of human development with each stage presenting a unique developmental task that must be resolved. Additionally, the Child Development Institute (2015) postulated that the development of such a theory did not occur by means of experimental work, but through his wide-ranging experiences in psychotherapy, especially with children and adolescents from various social classes.

It took Erikson approximately 15 years of research to introduce the eight psychosocial stages of ego development which he called the Eight Ages of Man (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). He proposed that with these eight stages the

individual has the task of establishing new basic orientations to him- or herself, as well as his or her social world. According to Elkind (1970), a new element of social interaction becomes possible in each of the eight stages, the one being the individual's interaction with him- or herself and the other with his or her social surroundings. Erikson named the conscious sense of self that individuals develop through social interaction "ego identity" (Erikson, 1963, p. 273). This ego identity is known to be constantly changing due to new experiences and information that individuals acquire through interactions with others (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

Erikson's approach established the relationship between the sociocultural and socio-historical processes of society and psychological development throughout the entire life cycle (Hoare, 2005). As Erikson described it, the ego was theorised as a combining power within an individual that creates an identity through the process of dealing with personal, societal, historical and familial forces as the individual strives to master the environment (Erikson, 1980). Erikson's framework aimed to explain the occurrence of different ego qualities during critical periods of the life cycle (Erikson, 1978). His theory described psychosocial development across the lifespan as a series of crises caused by opposing psychosocial forces, unfolding epigenetically in a progression of eight stages (Erikson, 1958, 1993, 1963, 1980). Each crisis stipulated by Erikson denotes a necessary turning point triggered by the creative tension between the opposing forces during each stage of the life cycle (Erikson, 1974).

The proposed eight stages of ego development indicate points or stages where physical, cognitive, instinctual, and sexual changes combine to trigger an internal conflict or as Erikson termed it, a crisis (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). It is imperative to note that Erikson's use of the term 'crisis' does not imply a catastrophic event, simply a turning point marked by increased vulnerability and enhanced potential (Santrock, 2009). Resolution of the crisis or conflict results in either psychosocial regression or growth and the development of specific virtues also known as ego strengths or inherent strengths (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). Thus, all these stages are characterised by the ego's task of integrating certain oppositional forces, and the specific resulting ego strength or quality which is gained should such interaction take place successfully

(Erikson, 1980). Subsequently, adaptive ego strengths are viewed as resulting from their successful resolution (Hamachek, 1988).

Ehlman and Ligon (2012) suggested that individuals are posed with a developmental challenge, a primary conflict which remains present throughout a particular stage and may take on new meaning in subsequent stages. This conflict arises from a person's interaction with his or her environment, not merely the internal forces of the person (Cross, 2004). For instance, the more successful an individual is in resolving a crisis or turning point, the healthier the development will be (Santrock, 2009). As the individual negotiates a crisis at each stage of development a basic strength or virtue emerges (Cross, 2004). It is vital to note that Erikson's theory does not suggest a fixed process. Instead stages can be revisited later in life and later stages can reach pre-eminence earlier in life, suggesting that all possible psychological crises can arise at all ages (Coles, 1970; 2001). John Lennon only underwent seven of the stages due to the fact that he died at the age of 40. However, all eight stages are discussed in order to provide a comprehensive overview of Erikson's theory.

2.6.1 Stage one: Basic trust versus mistrust (0–1 year)

Stage one in Erikson's theory is known as trust versus mistrust which is considered the most fundamental stage of life and occurs during infancy (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). This statement is substantiated by Erikson as he stated that the development of a basic sense of trust in infancy is essential for further healthy personality development. Erikson (1968) described trust as the most fundamental prerequisite of vitality and a capacity for faith. In other words, a capacity to trust or not to trust shapes all other aspects of personality development, and is the core of a person's sense of identity (Boon & Holmes, 1991).

This first stage of Erikson's theory starts and extends throughout the first year of life (Elkind, 1970). During this stage the infant struggles to achieve successful nursing, peaceful warmth and comfortable excretion as discussed by Friedman and Schustack (2009). The conflict revolves around whether or not infants become able to rely on other individuals to be responsive to their needs. If the environment and care provided by the

mother satisfies the infant's needs, the child develops a sense of trust and hope. To develop this sense of trust, infants should be able to depend on their primary caregivers to meet their basic needs of being fed, comforted and having their gestures attended to. As Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) proposed, the responsiveness of the caregiver forms a crucial part in later development. For instance, caregivers who neglect, reject, or respond inconsistently to infants will cause infants to mistrust others (Friedman & Schustack, 2009; Sigelman & Rider, 2009). In contrast to this, infants who develop a secure attachment to a nurturing and trustworthy caregiver are more likely to develop healthy, close, and trusting relationships later in life (Friedman & Schustack, 2009; Hook, 2002).

While resolving the psychosocial conflict of basic trust versus mistrust, infants also begin to realise that they are separate from their caregivers (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). The development of trust allows the infant to begin the process of self-definition and infants begin to distinguish themselves from others (Blatt & Blass, 1996). Thus, a sense of self starts flourishing consequently which is vital in knowing who one is (ego identity). Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1974) then deduced that this sense of self would not be possible without the trust of the first stage.

In this stage the infant uses the basic five senses (i.e., taste, sight, sound, touch, and smell) to experience the world (Erikson, 1950; 1963; 1968; 1977). He called this social modality that the infant uses, *to get*. What is meant by this is that the infant learns to receive what is offered and elicit what is desired (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Additionally, the next social modality that appears in this stage is that of *taking and holding on* to things. Therefore, instead of being passively receptive to stimuli the infant starts to reach out and grasp at items in the surroundings (Sigelman & Rider, 2009).

Such social modalities contribute to the successful resolution of the conflict only if they are fulfilled (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). It is crucial that the caregiver provides for the infant to allow the infant to master the stage and gain the ego strength of **hope**. In addition to the social modalities, social institutions safeguard the ego strengths that emerge during each stage (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). In conclusion, stage one assists children in feeling safe enough to expand their array and

diversity of experiences necessary to develop a sense of autonomy in the following stage (Hamachek, 1988).

2.6.2 Stage two: Autonomy versus shame and doubt (1–3 years)

With a sense of trust resulting from the resolution of the first stage, toddlers enter the second stage of psychosocial development, namely autonomy versus shame and doubt. During this stage the child learns to gain control over his or her own body as well as their impulses (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). According to the authors, successful resolution of this stage results in the child knowing the difference between right and wrong. This conflict normally arises between the first and third year of life when toddlers develop new motor and mental abilities (Elkind, 1970). Other abilities include sphincter and muscular control which allow them to test limits, practice new behaviours, and make mistakes while learning new skills. These abilities pave the way for toddlers to acquire and even stronger sense of self and assert that they have wills of their own (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

During this stage it is crucial that the caregiver recognises the toddler's need to do what he or she is capable of doing at his or her own pace. This would then lead to the toddler developing a sense of control (Hook, 2002). When toddlers experiment with their abilities, they discover that they are able to control their muscles, impulses, themselves and their environments. Subsequently, this leads to the development of a sense of autonomy which refers to attaining independence, competency and self-confidence. Therefore, it is vital to allow children to be independent and learn from their mistakes without being shamed or reprimanded (Steinberg, Elmen, & Mounts, 1989). On the contrary, if caregivers are impatient, overprotective, harsh, and critical, the toddler will develop a sense of shame and doubt about his or her ability to act independently (Corey, 2005).

This stage can be decisive for the ratio between...the freedom of self-expression and its suppression. From a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem comes a lasting sense of autonomy and pride; from a sense of...loss of self-

control, and of parental overcontrol comes a lasting sense of doubt and shame. (Erikson, 1968, pp. 70-71)

During this stage Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) realised that toddlers exercise two sets of social modalities simultaneously, *holding on* and *letting go*. With the new abilities such as the sphincter and muscular control, the toddler starts to experience the first stirrings of the ego strength, (i.e., **will**). The social institution known to safeguard will is law and order which is a legal system providing parameters for the privileges and limitations of autonomy (Massey, 1986). Thus, trusting the environment and having the necessary autonomy to move freely in it enables children to reinforce the attitude of initiative in stage three (Hamachek, 1988).

2.6.3 Stage three: Initiative versus guilt (3–6 years)

According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977), stage three focuses on initiative versus guilt between the ages of three and six years. Here the child knows that he or she is an independent and autonomous person but not much else (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). During this stage children become masters of their own bodies (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). In this stage the child learns how to carry out actions as well as how to get along with peers, as proposed by Friedman and Schustack (2009). Some of these skills and actions that children become masters at include motor, language and imagination. These skills increase and usually children can, for example, ride a tricycle, run, cut, and hit. At preschool level children assert their power and control by directing play and social interactions. Therefore, various activities are initiated rather than being a mere response to or imitation of others' actions (Elkind, 1970).

The skill mastered in this stage helps children intrude on the boundaries of the adult world which is why it may be referred to as the stage of intrusion (Linn, Fabricant, & Linn, 1988). Due to this intrusion, parents play the eminent role in determining whether or not children will resolve the stage efficiently (Baron & Spear, 1989). It is vital during this stage that children establish secure attachments to parents of both genders as well as identifying with the parent of the same sex (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). When the child is allowed enough freedom and opportunity to initiate motor play and

when they answer and respond to children's questions, this reinforces initiative. Consequently, parents encourage guilt when they evaluate the child's motor activity as being bad, questions as being a nuisance, and fantasy or play as being senseless (Elkind, 1970).

According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) the social modality of this stage is *being on the make*. As he postulated, the conscience which is governed by initiative becomes firmly established. As Sadock and Sadock (2007) stated, this conscience mentioned above which regulates self-observation, self-regulation and self-punishment, is internalised from parental and societal authority. Though the conscience is critical and inflexible at first, it establishes the foundation for the succeeding development of morality (Sigelman & Rider, 2009).

If this stage is resolved efficiently, children develop the initiative that allows them to plan and embark on big projects and to move forward in life (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). The ego strength of **purpose** is generated when children devise bold plans and take pride in accomplishing their goals. Those who do not resolve this stage successfully are left with a sense of guilt and a negative and confused sense of self (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Unsuccessful resolution of this stage may also lead to a child feeling fearful to pursue envisioned possibilities due to lack of initiative and decision making (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Later on in life, the authors postulate that such an individual may experience low self-esteem and might have little willpower to achieve things.

The social institution associated with this stage is that of economic endeavour (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). This leads to dreams of early childhood becoming attached to possible and concrete goals in adulthood. The social institution of economic endeavour provides children with the opportunity to replace their fictional counterparts with actual adult heroes whose depiction could be actively pursued. The sense of initiative and purpose creates the way for success when primary school children face the conflict of industry versus inferiority in the next stage (Louw & Louw, 2007).

2.6.4 Stage four: Industry versus inferiority (6–12 years)

The fourth stage is known as industry versus inferiority. During this stage the child learns to derive pleasure from the completion of tasks (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Additionally, this stage allows children to focus primarily on feeling competent or industrious as they learn and do well, or, on the other end of the spectrum, feeling inferior as a result of failure (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). Industry is used as a term to describe how things are made, how they work, and what they do, which is a dominant theme in this period (Elkind, 1970). The child thus experiences an enormous curiosity to learn and gain knowledge, therefore he or she learns that producing things earns them recognition (Carver & Scheir, 2000). Children may develop a sense of industry if they are encouraged in their efforts, allowed to complete their products, and praised and regarded for their results. Successful completion of this task also yields a child who can solve problems and who takes pride in accomplishments as discussed by Friedman and Schustack (2009). On the other hand, Elkind (2007) stated that inferiority is fostered when parents view children's efforts at making and doing as mischief or disobedience. Additionally, not mastering this stage may result in the individual experiencing feelings of insecurity as if he or she is incapable of reaching positive solutions and unable to achieve what peers may be achieving (Friedman & Schustack, 2009).

As previously discussed, parents contribute largely to whether or not children master the stages of development successfully. Of course, during the first three crises the parents and immediate family are predominantly involved. As children begin to develop and grow they begin formal instruction of some sort, for instance attending primary school. During this fourth stage, teachers and the broader society's evaluation and appraisal become the focal point (Baron & Spear, 1989). A child's school experiences influence his or her industry-inferiority balance, as proposed by Carver and Sheir (2000). In other words, a popular child would consider himself or herself as industrious, whereas a bullied child might feel inferior when compared to his or her peers (Sigelman & Rider, 2009).

There are important cognitive and social skills to be mastered in this stage. During primary school, children are intent on evaluating their competencies, they engage in more social comparison than before and are likely to acquire a sense of industry if those comparisons turn out favourably (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). In return, the gained sense of industry will again reinforce mastery of academic and social skills. Healthy development entails achievement of both academic and social success (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). Thus children learn good work habits and become productive and capable of meeting new challenges (Baron & Spear, 1989). Furthermore, Sigelman and Rider (2009) concluded that this is reflected in their ability to be responsible and successfully cope with impediments as adults.

As proposed by Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977), the ego strength of **competence** is said to develop if this stage is resolved successfully. The child also learns the essentials of technology as they pertain to the use of basic utensils and tools (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Hence, technology is the social institution that shapes and facilitates participation in productivity (Massey, 1986). Once the basic foundation is set (basic trust, autonomy, initiative, and industry), young people are ready to take on the vast challenge of stage five which entails establishing an identity (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010).

2.6.5 Stage five: Identity versus role confusion (12–20 years)

The fifth stage is known as Erikson's most famous and influential of them all, as described by Friedman and Schustack (2009). This stage is called Identity versus Role Confusion and involves adolescents experimenting with different roles (e.g., son or daughter, friend and student) while trying to integrate identities from previous stages (Friedman & Shustack, 2009). This concept of identity has been investigated by many historians and Erikson admitted that the term is difficult to comprehend because it concerns "a process located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture" (Erikson, 1980, p. 22). With this term he meant that identity involves an interaction between the internal development of the individual personality and the growth of a sense of selfhood that arises from participating in society, internalising its

cultural norms, acquiring different statuses, and playing different roles (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980).

This identity concept stemmed from Erikson's clinical experience as a psychoanalyst working mainly with children, which he only pursued after trying out several other possibilities, including art (Friedman, 2000). Erikson's life experiences of being a European refugee who travelled through the United States and who was known for leading social scientists also contributed to the development of this concept (Coles, 1970). Furthermore, the rise of Hitler and World War II endorsed Erikson's interest in the interaction between historical movements and the development of personality. He then began to use the term identity against the background of World War II (Gleason, 1983).

The issue of identity arises from the onset of puberty and its numerous physiological and social changes (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Adolescents then attempt to define who they are in terms of, among other things, career, religion, and sexuality, where they are heading, and how they fit into society (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Experimentation takes up an immense role during this time and as part of their search adolescents often revolutionise their appearance, relationships, major subjects, and group memberships. However, there is also a contradicting phase where the question of how to connect previously cultivated roles and skills with current prototypes becomes a concern (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). The adolescent finds him- or herself experiencing this bipolar phase where childhood roles and fantasies are no longer suitable but where he or she is still far from being equipped to become an adult (Sigelman & Rider, 2009).

It appears that this stage is experienced by the individual as a period of confusion and disorientation as adolescents try to figure out who they are and who they want to become (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). They become more concerned with how others perceive them as opposed to who they, themselves, feel they are. Developing a defined ego identity requires "confidence that one's ability to maintain inner sameness and continuity is matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others" (Erikson, 1980, pp. 94–95). Therefore, a discrepancy between

one's own sense of self and the sense of self ascribed to one by others may result in role confusion otherwise known as identity diffusion, which refers to not having a sense of self and experiencing confusion about one's place in the world (Montgomery, 2005). Nonetheless, if one develops a clear sense of identity that is true to the self, it will most certainly match the identity that others perceive one to have (Montgomery, 2005).

Developing a sharply focused identity leads to possession of the ego strength, **fidelity** (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980). This then represents faithfulness to the promising self-definition as well as to an ideology that provides a version of self-in-world (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Attaining this ideology provides an attractive set of societal values and ideals and therefore also the social institution that supplies the imagery required for establishing a positive psychological identity (Massey, 1986). Successful completion of this stage results in a person who has a clear and multifaceted sense of self, in other words one who is able to integrate many roles into a single identity of his or her own (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Additionally, resolving this adolescent crisis of identity versus role confusion is a prerequisite for resolving the early adulthood crisis of intimacy versus isolation in stage six. In conclusion, individuals must know themselves before they can truly love another individual (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1978 1980).

2.6.6 Stage six: Intimacy versus isolation (20 - 30 years)

Erikson believed that psychosocial growth continues during the adult years and thus has no specific cut-off date. The sixth stage, known as intimacy versus isolation, covers roughly the period of courtship and early family life that extends from late adolescence to early middle age (Elkind, 1970). Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) used the term intimacy to imply much more than sexual intercourse alone. He also meant the ability to share with and care for another person without fear of losing oneself in the process. Thus it is essential that the individual develops a stable sense of his or her own identity in the previous stage in order to navigate this stage successfully (Hook, 2002). This stage then largely depends on the successful resolution of prior crises which, if unresolved, may re-occur here (Craig, 1996).

As with the case of identity, parents merely become bystanders as they no longer contribute directly to the failure or success of this stage. In other words, success or failure depends on parents only indirectly since they have contributed to the individual's success or failure at the earlier stages (Elkind, 1970). On the contrary, social conditions may still largely aid or impede the establishment of a sense of intimacy. Correspondingly, intimacy may not necessarily involve sexuality, as it includes the relationships between friends (Corey, 2005).

According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978), the ego needs to be strong enough to fend off the fear of ego loss in the case of close friendships, in the case of inspiration by teachers, in the orgasms of sexual union, and in all other close affiliations. Once again, the concern in this stage involves the necessity to maintain the integrity of the ego and not let it be incorporated into something or someone else. In Erikson's perspective a healthy functioning adult is someone who is able to form a mature love while maintaining work productiveness that does not compromise him or her being a loving person (Elkind, 1970).

Solving this crisis successfully leads to a readiness to form and participate in committed, long-term relationships (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). Once this is achieved the ego strength of **love** rises. However, if a sense of intimacy is not established, a sense of isolation develops and the individual may end up alone without anyone to care about and to share with. The social institution responsible for this stage is ethics or an ethical sense which is known to nurture a relationship with a loved one (Massey, 1986). The following stage which is centered around middle-aged adults is that of generativity versus stagnation.

2.6.7 Stage seven: Generativity versus stagnation (50 - 60 years)

This stage is known as generativity versus stagnation as proposed by Friedman and Schustack (2009). Erikson described generativity as an interest in guiding the next generation and he believed that generativity was achieved during middle adulthood (Ehlman & Ligon, 2012). Generativity focuses on expressing concern for the next generation and it is believed to derive from a desire to be needed (Ehlman & Ligon,

2012). Here the individual is seen to have largely resolved earlier crises, giving the term freedom to now direct their attention to assisting others (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Additionally, this stage is also characterised by a sense of community and willingness to direct one's energy, without conflict, to the solution of social issues (Corey, 2005). This is also a period of adjustment for the individual as he or she reviews inconsistencies between his or her dreams and that which he or she has actually achieved (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010).

If the individual successfully resolves this middle-aged crisis, generativity versus stagnation, he or she achieves a sense of having produced something that would carry on for generations to come. Thus, generativity is ensured through parenting, teaching, mentoring and leading (Slater, 2003). It would appear that middle-aged adults are more likely than young adults to have achieved a sense of generativity (McAdams, Hart, & Maruna, 1998). Therefore, it substantiates why Erikson envisioned this stage for the middle-aged years. Adults with a sense of generativity tend to be caring people, committed parents, productive workers and mentors (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010).

The ego strength acquired in this stage is **care** (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). The opposite of generativity is thus stagnation which arises as generativity fails to be achieved (Corey, 2005). Therefore, such individuals struggle to find a way to contribute to society and feel disconnected from and uninvolved with their communities (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). These individuals also tend to be preoccupied with themselves and gain their only pleasures through self-indulgence (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). Social institutions such as politics, education, medicine, recreation and religion are seen to nurture generativity (Massey, 1986). The next stage is known as integrity versus despair.

2.6.8 Stage eight: Integrity versus despair (65 years and onwards roughly)

The eighth stage was named by Erikson as integrity versus despair, where the reality of death becomes eminent and elders begin to review their lives to evaluate whether life

holds meaning (Ehlman & Ligon, 2012). Ultimately, this stage is centered around the notion of whether individuals have a sense of peace in the way their lives were led (Ehlman & Ligon, 2012). Additionally, this is a period where individual's major efforts are nearing completion and when there is time for reflection (Elkind, 1970). The crisis elderly adults have to confront is that of integrity or despair where the fear of death is an important challenge (Craig, 1996; Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). Adults who resolve this crisis efficiently will find a sense of meaning in their lives that will ultimately help them face the inevitability of death (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) integrity is something one has gained from navigating through the previous seven stages. The elderly then focus their attention on the life story or narrative identity that they have accepted as the only life they could have led (McAdams & Adler, 2006).

A sense of integrity may only arise if the individual is able to reflect upon his or her life with satisfaction. Most elderly individuals seem to attain a sense of integrity (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1986). The ego strength resulting from this stage is **wisdom** which could be passed on through an integrated heritage (Massey, 1986). However, unsuccessful resolution of this stage involves looking back upon one's life as a series of missed opportunities and directions. Despair comes in when individuals realise that it is too late to start over and ponder on what might have been (Elkind, 1970).

When reaching this stage, the individual should have developed all the previously mentioned ego strengths and resolved all the preceding developmental crises. According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) each culture requires a particular combination of these resolved crises. Integrity is only really achieved when the individual participates in the various institutions (e.g., religion, politics, technology, arts and science) which make up their home culture (Massey, 1986). The following paragraphs will give an overview of the aspects pertaining to the unsuccessful resolution of Erikson's proposed developmental crises. Specific unfavourable outcomes as well as possible resulting forms of psychopathology are briefly discussed. Although this is not a clinical study with a diagnostic or psychopathological focus, the researcher

thought it necessary to include this section, as the biography of and other literature on John Lennon contain various references to psychopathological conditions that he may have struggled with. Thus, it may be helpful to explore and explain all areas of this controversial character.

2.7 Erikson's Ninth Stage

Erikson and his wife Joan Erikson later extended his earlier work, *The life cycle completed* (Erikson, 1982). They took his theory a step further and created a ninth stage due to their own experience of ageing in their late 80s and 90s (Erikson, 1998). While in their 80s and 90s Joan began to believe that development beyond the eighth stage is possible as individuals continue to develop throughout their lifespan (Brown & Lewis, 2003). According to Erikson and Joan, the ninth stage entails the individual cycling back to the issue he or she was born with (Erikson, 1998). The pivotal aspect that marks this stage is that of loss of strength, control, and autonomy resulting in the key issue of gaining hope and trust (Haber, 2006). In other words, individuals regress back to the crisis of the very first stage, and are faced with the challenge of not giving up and being as fully alive as possible until he or she no longer lives (Verbraak, 2000).

2.8 Unsuccessful resolution of Erikson's stages

Although we prefer to focus on the successful resolution of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development which result in favourable outcomes, it is vital to discuss the unsuccessful of the stages which could easily result in unfavourable outcomes (Blatt & Levy, 2003). According to Sadock and Sadock (2007) the unfavourable outcomes may not only result in the acquisition of the negative extreme of each stage such as mistrust, shame, or guilt it may also lead to the development of psychopathological traits and even disorders. Although this study is not clinical with a diagnostic or psychopathological aim, in order for it to render comprehensiveness it is crucial to include this section as the biography and other literature on John Lennon includes references to psychopathological conditions, although undiagnosed.

2.8.1 Basic mistrust

Unsuccessful resolution of the first stage of psychosocial development leads to the acquisition of basic mistrust. Instead of trusting others, individuals with a sense of mistrust tend to experience others and the world as being dangerous and untrustworthy (Lewicky, 2006). Lack of trust in the early years of the individual could manifest as various psychopathological disorders in later life (Greene, Graham, & Morano, 2010). For instance, the belief that others are unreliable and even dangerous could predispose the individual to develop personality disorders. Subsequently, the negative view that these individuals have of others and the world as well as their consecutive pessimism regarding social relationships could contribute to the development of depressive disorders. Additionally, substance-related disorders could be the result of the individual's attempts at self-nurturance and satisfaction (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

2.8.2 Shame and doubt

If shame and doubt take over autonomy in the second stage of psychosocial development, the sense of being a failure and a lack of self-confidence could arise (Linn, Fabricant, & Linn, 1988). Excessive shaming during toddlerhood causes children to feel obnoxious and filthy. This could then result in delinquent behaviour later on as children develop a self-fulfilling prophecy attitude, in other words they begin to behave as they are thought of by others (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Rigorous and inflexible parenting in this stage could lead to a feeling of being inhibited and controlled. Consequently, this could lead the child to develop other personality disorders such as paranoia or persecutory delusions later in life. Other disorders that may arise from this constitute impulse control disorders which could be explained as the individual's refusal to be inhibited or controlled (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

2.8.3 Guilt

If children experience excessive punishment for taking initiative in stage three, a sense of guilt is the outcome. As these feelings of guilt accumulate the individual may feel driven to strive for perfection (Dunkley, Zuroff, & Blankstein, 2006). Therefore, the child learns that in order not to get punished, everything he or she does must be perfect. Driven by unhealthy fear and guilt and a fear of not being able to live up to the expectations of others, individuals might develop psychosomatic disorders (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Furthermore, punishment or severe prohibitions during the third stage could possibly produce sexual inhibitions including impotence, to name an example (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

2.8.4 Inferiority

As previously mentioned, a sense of inferiority develops when children's efforts at reaching their goals are disillusioned in stage four of psychosocial development (Baron & Spear, 1989). Feelings of inadequacy and incompetence affect an individual's eagerness to work and, as an adult, severe work inhibitions could occur (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). However, a compensatory drive for money, power, and prestige might develop in order to fend off feelings of inferiority (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Furthermore, research has shown that self-beliefs of inferiority are highly associated with depressive disorders (Allan & Gilbert, 1997).

2.8.5 Role confusion

As previously mentioned, the unsuccessful resolution of stage five of the psychosocial development is role confusion. If this role confusion continues, individuals fail to develop an intergrated identity and are left with a disturbed self-image (Sneed, Whitbourne, & Culang, 2006). As stated by Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980), this is a strong confusion about one's identity, primarily sexual and occupational, which disrupts individuals in most cases. Role confusion is linked to many forms of psychopathology such as conduct disorder, disruptive behaviour disorder and gender identity disorders to

name a few (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Additionally, an inability to separate from parents and prolonged dependence could occur, leading to the development of dependent personality disorder (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

2.8.6 Isolation

The pathological outcome of stage six, intimacy versus isolation, could be described as *distantiation*; a term coined by Erikson, meaning to distance or isolate oneself (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). If an individual is unable to form meaningful relationships or to become intimate, this could lead to the individual shutting others out (Linn, Fabricant, & Linn, 1988). One of the disorders which could result from this response to isolation and lack of capacity to love, is schizoid personality disorder (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

2.8.7 Stagnation

In stage seven of the psychosocial development, failure of generativity could lead to personal stagnation (Timmer, Bode, & Dittmann-Kholi, 2003). As a result the individual may find various escape routes such as alcohol and drug abuse as well as sexual promiscuity or infidelity (Hoare, 2002). Additionally, a higher incidence of depressive disorders was found among middle-aged adults than among younger adults; a finding which could be related to stagnation of failed expectations as they review their lives (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

2.8.8 Despair

Paralleled to integrity, a sense of despair develops when stage eight of the psychosocial development process is not resolved successfully. Individuals who experience a sense of despair struggle to accept their lives and tend to feel hopeless. Therefore, this could result in severe depressive disorders (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Additionally, other disorders which might also occur are anxiety disorders which might be related to an individual's reflection on their lives with a sense of panic as they realise that time has

run out and they have no more chances to realise their hopes and plans (Whitbourne, 2008).

2.9 Erikson and Psychobiography

Various researchers including Noland (1977) share the opinion that Erikson's two psychobiographies, *Young Man Luther* (1958) and *Gandhi's Truth* (1969) were the best work of psychobiography at the time. Noland (1977) further added that Erikson's method and practice had a tremendous influence on writing a good psychobiography. According to Noland (1977) Erikson acknowledged both normal and abnormal ego development while maintaining a focus on the interaction of the individual human ego with a facilitating or non-facilitating environment at every stage of the human life cycle. This allowed him to explore the individual and communal elements of a life and make inferences about early experiences without reducing a life to a few unconscious, repressed infantile themes (Noland, 1977).

Erikson (1993) stated that the descriptions and interpretations of lives are inevitably linked with rich psychological conceptualisations and assumptions. A number of researchers consider Erikson as an enthusiastic predecessor when it comes to psychobiography and the study of lives (Bertaux, 1981). According to Noland (1977) his significant contribution has led to his work being suggested for use as a general model in psychobiography. Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory made it possible for the researcher to analyse the subject of the study from a lifespan approach.

2.10 Critique of Erikson's Theory

Without doubt Erikson's theory has been subject to numerous criticisms, for instance Hook (2002) stated that Erikson's theory has been criticized for being too idealistic and optimistic. On the contrary, Douvan (1997) argued that although Erikson believed that growth continues in adulthood and adults are capable of constructive change, he included the possible unfavourable outcomes resulting from unsuccessful resolution of each life stage in his theory.

Another major criticism against Erikson's theory is that it reflects a male bias and is limited in its explanation of female development (Douvan, 1997). If this criticism was true, it does not have an effect on this specific study due to the fact that the subject is male. Furthermore, Hook (2002) pointed out that Erikson's theory represents 20th century capitalistic values of an American society and thus, may not be culturally sensitive. On the contrary, Erikson did investigate the cross-cultural applicability of his theory (Brown & Lowis, 2003).

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the psychosocial theory of Erikson as well as each stage pertaining to it. The ages of each stage have been included as is proposed by Erikson. It was also vital to discuss the major critiques of this theory to provide a comprehensive overview of the approach to this study. Furthermore, both normal and abnormal development in the context of psychosocial development theory were elaborated on, to support the arguments presented by the critiques. Additionally, a section about Erikson and psychobiography was included to provide psychobiographical usefulness of Erikson's theory.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Overview of Psychobiographical Studies

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter provides a discussion regarding psychobiographical research as well as the relationship between psychology and biography. It is crucial that psychobiography is defined and described for an enhanced understanding thereof. Other related concepts such as autobiography, biography, life history, life story, psychohistory, historical psychology, historiography as well as personality assessment are discussed. The purpose of including such concepts is to differentiate them from psychobiography. Furthermore, an overview of psychobiography as a form of case study research is also provided to shed light on case study methodology. This then includes other concepts such as case study epistemology, case research objective, case research design, and case research method. In conclusion, it is important to discuss the history and major trends in psychobiography together with the value of such research.

3.2 Psychology and Biography

Psychology and biography may bring uneasy similarities as proposed by Elms (1994). In psychology the biographical approach has traditionally been viewed with controversy and accompanied by a sense of uncertainty (Anderson, 1981; Runyan, 1982). Other's views suggest that the best means to capture a human's life is through the incorporation of psychology and biography (McAdams, 1994). There are, however, various controversies in the discipline as many personality psychologists have traditionally not viewed themselves as biographers (Elms, 1994).

Scientific psychology points out the need for reliable evidence and utilises theoretical paradigms of developmental personality psychology to outline and explain the typical pattern of human development (Howe, 1997). Jacobs (2004) stipulated that academic psychology is theory-based and concerned with the development of general phenomena including abnormal, biographical, cognitive, developmental, personality,

and social psychology. Prior to the advancements of modern psychology, psychologists did not consider the study of individual lives as contributory to the formulation of psychological theory as proposed by McAdams (1994). Other theorists are of the opinion that psychology researchers tend to use participants who share similar historical and social contexts as that of the researcher in order to produce universal scientific knowledge (Simonton, 2003). According to Simonton (2003), the use of historical material would instead yield information about human behavior that is far more diverse in terms of culture. Thus, adding value to the understanding of individual lives.

Biography is defined by telling a story of a life through the descriptions of experiences and events (Strouse, 1988). Another description of biography refers to a structured account of a life written by another, mostly according to fictional conventions (Cole & Knowles, 2001). The first biographers hardly ever relied on psychological concepts to understand their subject's lives as proposed by McAdams (1994). As an alternative, other interpretive methodologies are utilized in biographical studies to explain individual life occurrences within their specific cultural and structural settings (Roberts, 2002). Furthermore, the duty of a biographer is to enlighten the reader about an individual's entire life whom, in most cases has ended (Schultz, 2005). Therefore, biography could be depicted as the study of an individual's life throughout an entire lifespan (Howe, 1997).

Biographies are often criticized for lacking structure and maybe being too subjective to be viewed as scientific (Runyan, 1984). According to Smith (1998) biographers need to be conscious of the value conflicts and doubts that may be provoked in life-writing. Other criticisms of biography entail its reliance on arts, literature and history when mapping the progressive course of an individual's life (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005). The complexity and uniqueness of this methodology requires that it be viewed more theoretically than an observatory skill or process. In contrast, those in favour of biographical studies highlighted that critics of the single-case method hold a noticeably restricted view of science. Other psychologists dismiss biographical research and neglect their intellectual responsibility (McAdams, 1994).

Apart from the various viewpoints pertaining to biographies, Elms (1994) and Schultz (2005) suggested that biographies more often than not include psychology and vice versa. Thus, they declared that the troubled alliance between the two concepts resembles a vague impression of the boundary between them. Regardless of psychobiographical research having been criticized as being non-scientific, continued effort and perseverance by social scientists and personality psychologists have resulted in valuable life history research (McAdams, 1988). The variation between the two disciplines comes to play depending on the extent to which psychological theories are applied in the interpretation of biographical data (Howe, 1997). According to Van Niekerk (2007) psychology is a scientific discipline that highlights empirical proof and conceptual models in order to explain behavior and development, whereas biography is a subjective and intuitive approach that emphasizes the uniqueness of individuals rather than the commonalities between them. There is, however, a reciprocal relationship between the two disciplines as biography improves psychology and *vice versa* (Elms, 1994).

3.3 Psychobiographical Definitions and Descriptions

Psychobiography is described by Bromley (1986) as a biographical study in which psychological concepts, methods, and findings play a major role. Schultz (2005) added to this description as it's defined as the analysis of historically significant lives through the use of psychological theory and research. Additionally, Runyan (1988) postulated that psychobiographical research concedes an in-depth study of the whole person in time and context through the narrative of individual experience. The development and progress of understanding interesting individual lives is fast becoming an increasingly important objective in both psychology and the social sciences overall (Perry, 2012).

McAdams (1994) explained that the aim of the study of individual lives is to detect the key underlying story that animates a person's life. This was referred to as focusing on one facet of a life or a single mysterious enquiry (Schultz, 2005). It is thus inevitable that psychobiographers would use biographical data to achieve the aim mentioned above (McAdams, 1988). However, it is crucial to understand that

psychobiography is not biography as it aims to make both psychological and fictional sense of the subject under study (Roberts, 2002). Psychobiography may be explanatory and interpretive in that it deals with the question of motives (Schultz, 2013). Therefore, the psychobiographer uses formal psychological theory and research to explain and interpret individual lives (Runyan, 2002). Psychobiography could thus be viewed as the systematic use of psychological, personality theory to transform a life into a comprehensible and illuminating story (McAdams, 1994).

Psychobiography has also been described within the context of a qualitative narrative case study, which is concerned with interpreting and understanding the stories people tell about their lives (McLeod, 1994). Consequently, psychobiography is seen as an engaging discipline as it seeks to understand the changing experiences and outlooks of individuals and emphasizes the importance of subjective accounts individuals give to their past, present, and future (Roberts, 2002). Various materials could be used to gather information about life stories such as diaries, journals, letters, and biographical material (Willig, 2008). Although the spectrum of materials is quite wide, those regarded as relevant for psychobiographical studies include personal documents that create a biographical sketch of the individual within a psychological, social, and historical context (McLeod, 1994). Hence, psychobiography essentially serves to illuminate both inner, subjective experiences and the connection between life and theory (Schultz, 2005). Nevertheless, the core of psychobiography is summarized as the study of an entire life, from birth to death with the aim to discern, discover, and formulate the central story of an entire life according to psychological theory (McAdams, 1994). The study of lives grants a better opportunity for the study of personality than traditional longitudinal research, due to its holistic and unique nature (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005). In addition, insight into the ways in which individuals reform their past and shape their present, future and social relations could be gained from psychobiography (Hones, 1998).

3.4 Psychobiography and Related Concepts

As previously mentioned, due to the vast similarities and uneasy alliance between the various related concepts pertaining to this discipline, it is imperative to include a discussion on the concepts and possibly any confusing terms. Thus, resulting in a better understanding of psychobiography.

3.4.1 Autobiography and biography

Autobiography entails the story of an individual's life, authored by the individual himself or herself (Bertaux, 1981). Although it refers to objective facts and records, this discipline more often than not tends to be selective and biased since the perspective from which it is written is subjective (Roberts, 2002). Autobiography shares properties of biography as it depends on a varied selection of sources (Bromley, 1986).

Biography portrays a structured account of a life written by another, typically according to factual conventions (Cole & Knowles, 2001). A good biography clarifies and individual's life through the use of history, art, and literature that outlines the individual's progress through life (Howe, 1997). Limitations which set the two disciplines apart from psychobiography include lack of scientific structure and the absence of a psychological perspective of the individual (Runyan, 1984; Schultz, 2003).

3.4.2 Life histories and life stories

Relationships and patterns among multiple lives are examined in life histories and both subjective and objective information obtained from a number of sources are exploited (McAdams, 2006). According to Bromley (1986) life histories are described as a scientific reconstruction and interpretation based on the best evidence available of formative and critical accumulative episodes in a person's life. The aim in life stories is to understand similarities between various individuals as opposed to focusing on the uniqueness of a single life such as in psychobiography (Rosenwald, 1988).

As proposed by McAdams (1994) and Runyan (1982), life stories entail biographical accounts of individual lives thus providing a complete account of that person's life while highlighting the most important aspects thereof. The key factor is the subjectivity of the author's personal thoughts, feelings, and motives (Fouché, 1999). Although life histories are considered interpretive and the presentational work of a researcher, life stories are commonly applied to narrated stories by the author (Stroud, 2004).

3.4.3 Psychohistory, historical psychology and historiography

Psychohistory is viewed primarily as a historical exercise which utilizes formal psychological theory in an attempt to historically interpret cultural, political, and social events as proposed by Berg (1995). Additionally, as previously mentioned the existence of tension between the various disciplines adds confusion about the scope and definition of psychohistory due to the tensions between history and psychology (Runyan, 1988). Furthermore, Runyan (1988) added that the relationship between the two disciplines is not characterized only by cooperation and recognition of mutual interest, but also by misunderstanding, hostility, and suspicion.

Runyan (1988) described historical psychology as referring to the history of psychological phenomena and the history of thought about the psychological development and important formative and cumulative influences on the life course. Other researchers state that historiography is past-oriented and seeks to shed light on current questions of interest about the historical past (Anderson, 1988). This discipline thus involves an intense study of existing materials as a means to reconstruct past information into a meaningful array of historical explanations (Berg, 1995).

3.4.4 Personality assessment

Fouché (1999) defined personality assessment as being related to the measurement and evaluation of lives in progress. In other words, it focuses on the individual's way of being in the present and analyses forces such as identity, models of thinking, traits, and values that characterize the individual and differentiate him or her from other individuals

(Claasen, 2006). This approach shares similarities with psychobiography, in that it also demands a psychological description of what the individual is like at designated points on a timeline (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005). However, the main difference between personality assessment and psychobiography is that the latter does not require an element of prediction as is the case with personality assessment (Alexander, 1990). Therefore, psychobiography is directly concerned with the problem of developmental understanding and allows the researcher to track human development in a manner that exceeds static personality assessment of clinical case studies (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005).

3.5 Psychobiography as Case Study Research

According to Yin (2009) case study research requires an intensive investigation of a singular unit such as a person, group, or organization within a contextual setting. Together with life history research, psychobiography is considered an exceptionally good example of specialized case study research as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2001). For that reason, case study research could be differentiated from other related forms of research such as action research, ethnographic study, and field study on the basis of certain characteristics it displays (Cavaye, 1996).

3.5.1 Case study epistemology

Epistemology is defined as the researcher's belief about the manner in which knowledge is constructed (Willig, 2008). Hart (1998) suggested that different views of reality such as interpretive and positivistic paradigms rely on alternative ideas about the nature of knowledge and demand alternative approaches to the research. Due to its versatile nature, case study research could be used in both traditions as proposed by Willig (2008). In psychobiographical studies, case research is mostly used within a qualitative framework as it aims to understand the nature of a phenomenon as well as to elicit meanings from complex social behaviours (Yin, 2009). Equally, case research could also be used within a qualitative paradigm where predefined variables would be measured according to predefined measures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, a

single case experimental research design represents the above (Yin, 2009). Moreover, psychobiography is an interpretive practice not used to explain human behavior in terms of universal laws, rather it tries to understand and interpret meanings and intentions that might trigger everyday human actions within their context (Willig, 2008).

Case studies arose from the desire to understand complex social phenomena, which paves the way for the investigation of holistic and meaningful features of real-life events (Yin, 2009). Additionally, case studies focus on change and development, together with the incorporation of a holistic perspective allowing for the development of idiographic insight into the occurrence under study (Stake, 2005).

3.5.2 Case research objective

The objective of case research entails various facets such as to describe phenomena, construct theory, as well as test existing theoretical concepts and relationships (Fouché, 1999). Furthermore, in case research the construct of analytical generalization succeeds and describes the generalizability of case studies to theoretical propositions (Yin, 2009). In place of computing statistical frequencies, case studies could be generalized to theoretical propositions in way similar to when a scientist generalizes from a single experiment to theory (Yin, 2009). Another advantage of case studies refers to the facilitation of conceptual refinement of emerging theoretical formulations and the discovery of new insights into social and psychological processes (Willig, 2008).

Case research as Neuman (2003) described it, is a process of conceptualization and description of phenomena. This conceptualization occurs when hypotheses are generated and explanations developed for observed relationships (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005). These statements about relationships provide the groundwork for constructing theory as proposed by Bromley (1986). Cooney (2010) suggested that grounded theory is a formalized approach to inductive case research. This suggests that theory emerges as the researcher collects and interprets data regarding a phenomenon (Neuman, 2003).

Authentication or disconfirmation of existing theory is an inferential process whereby cause-and-effect relationships are tested in agreement with a natural science model (Yin, 2009). Plans are tested by gathering and relating data from the observed reality with logical hypotheses or predictions derived from theory (Colborn, 1996). In psychobiography, either or both inductive and deductive case research could be utilized as research objectives might include the refinement or testing of theory (Bromley, 1986).

3.5.3 Case research design

Research design may be described as a logical series that links data to the study's primary research questions and its subsequent conclusions as proposed by Yin (2009). Each research design brings about various complexities, with some designs involving the study of a single case, while others include the study of multiple cases (Bless, Higson-Smith, & Kagee, 2008). In single case studies, a phenomenon can be investigated in depth providing a rich description thereof (Cavaye, 1996). Additionally, a single case study also enables theory construction through the development and refinement or confirmation and refutation of concepts against real world data (Yin, 2009). On the other hand, Bromley (1986) suggested that in a multiple case study data across various cases could be analyzed, which allows the researcher to verify that the results are not the product of a unique research setting.

In the case of psychobiographies, researchers most commonly rely on a single case design. However, it cannot be discarded that a multiple case design could at times be employed, where the researcher would conduct comparative biographical studies of subjects through intensive, exploratory interviews into conversation with one another (Rosenwald, 1988). Thus, these designs have proven its worth in the biographical study of career development as well as the comparative study of significant individuals (Gronn, 1993).

3.5.4 Case research method

Case research method allows researchers to systematize observation as explicit control and manipulation is absent in this discipline (Neuman, 2003). Additionally, this method aims to gain an idiographic understanding of the case under study within its eccentricity (Hart, 1998). This discipline also utilizes a variety of tools and techniques for data collection and analysis (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005). In addition, it draws attention to relative data through a holistic perspective on various dimensions of the case and contributes to knowledge by relating findings to generalizable theory (Yin, 2009).

The researcher needs to select methods of data collection and analysis carefully in order to produce suitable materials for the study (Yin, 2009). According to Bromley (1986) there are two types of data collection namely, (a) quantitative methods based on numerical data, and (b) qualitative methods based on linguistic data. In most cases, case research utilizes a combination of both methods depending on the researcher (Willig, 2008). However, in qualitative research the assumption of multiple realities exists, thus the world may be viewed as a subjective function of personal interactions and perceptions (Willig, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of qualitative researchers is to explore, describe and understand phenomena within its context in order to attribute meaning to it (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Contextual understanding is a vital goal of a qualitative researcher and to achieve this, direct and in-depth knowledge of the research setting is crucial. Thus, case methods are associated with interviews, verbal data and observation (Stake, 1995). On the other hand, in quantitative research outcomes are assessed with procedural measures such as checklists, indices, or questionnaires (McLeod, 1994). Such studies produce results in the form of numerical indicators or ratings such as frequencies over time (Willig, 2008).

Case study research involves drawing from multiple sources of information such as documents, interviews, observations, archival records, artifacts and photographs (Struwig & Stead, 2004). Historical researchers make use of two major sources of data namely; primary and secondary sources (Berg, 1995). Primary data sources are materials produced by the subject for instance, excerpts from interviews (Strydom &

Delpont, 2005). Secondary data however, stems from material that is derived from someone else which includes biographical literature on the subject's life (Woolums, 2011). Consequently, psychobiographers utilize qualitative evidence such as diaries, letters, personal documents and recorded information which is the primary source of information (Simonton, 2003).

The next section focuses on the history of psychobiography which may also shed light into this growing discipline.

3.6 History and Trends in Psychobiography

Literary biographers before the 20th century rarely employed psychological concepts when interpreting their subject's lives (McAdams, 1994). This may have been partly due to the researcher's desire to glorify their subjects by omitting accuracy and in-depth studies (McAdams, 1994). Therefore, the desire to glorify significant individuals lead biographers to neglect the subject's failures, imperfections, feelings, desires, and fantasies (McAdams, 1994).

Later the emergence of psychoanalysis sparked an interest in the effects of childhood desires and frustrations on adult life (Runyan, 1982). The 1910 publication of Freud's *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his childhood*, catalyzed the first true relationship between literary biography and psychology. According to Elms (1988) Freud's work was regarded as the first genuine psychobiography and presented various guidelines for psychobiographical research. These guidelines included the rejection of pathography and idealization as well as the avoidance of both, together with arguments built upon a single cue and conclusions based on inadequate data (Elms, 1988). Furthermore, his attempt to illustrate the dynamics underlying creativity proved problematic, due to his argument that da Vinci's creative images stemmed solely from an infantile wish was difficult to prove (McAdams, 1988). However, despite this flaw in his theory Freud's work was influential and it redefined the mission of biography and psychology as applied psychoanalysis (Elms, 1994).

According to Runyan (1988) in the 1910s and 1920s the number of psychoanalytic biographies escalated, consequently numerous criticisms of the method surfaced. Despite the criticisms, psychobiography prevailed and early attempts such as Prince's 1915, *Psychology of the Kaiser: A study of his sentiments & his obsessions*, and Hall's 1917, *Jesus, the Christ, in light of psychology*, were carried out. Other successful studies continued during the 1920s and 1930s which included works on, Caesar, Darwin, Lincoln and Napoleon to name a few (Runyan, 1988). However, the most distinguished was Erikson's 1958, *Young man Luther: A study in psychoanalysis*. All the way through the 1960s psychobiography amplified and matured as evidenced by Erikson's second related study, *Gandhi's truth: On the origins of militant non-violence* (1969).

As time went by the amount of psychobiographical publications has increased since 1970 (Runyan, 1988). This increase in psychobiographies began to elevate awareness that both traditions of psychology and biography contributed largely to the unraveling and understanding of individual lives (Elms, 1994). Contrary to this, despite the increase awareness and auspicious beginning of psychobiographical studies, it has not progressed sufficiently due to the lack of experts in the field (Schultz, 2005). One of the reasons for this occurrence he added, is that academic psychologists generally prefer to pursue rigorous methods and nomothetical/quantitative problems, thus neglecting the type of idiographic/qualitative discipline that is psychobiography. Additionally, Schultz (2005) stated that the amount of psychobiographical work in institutionalized academic psychology, and the endowment of formal academic training in psychobiography were limited and unusual. Although psychobiographies may be outnumbered by quantitative researches, training in this discipline has become a more common practice, especially in the United States, and researchers both nationally and internationally aim to deliver more in the field of psychobiography (McAdams, 2006). Additionally, Ponterotto (2015) stated that there is an emerging rise and interest in psychobiographical studies worldwide as he mentions a number of universities promoting this field in South Africa too. This rise in the field may be due to the extremely useful experience of studying lives as it contributes to the development of the recognition of the self and the other (Kővary, 2011).

Following is a list of international psychobiographies that have been recently conducted; *Barack Obama in Hawaii and Indonesia: The making of a global president* by D.Sharma, 2011; *George W. Bush and the redemptive dream: A psychological portrait* by D. P. McAdams, 2011; *A psychobiography of Bobby Fischer: Understanding the genius, mystery and psychological decline of a world chess champion* by J. G. Ponterotto, 2012; as well as *Lucy in the mind of Lennon* by T. Kasser, 2013.

The first psychobiography conducted in South Africa took place in 1939, although this discipline was only officially initiated as a research project at the University of Port Elizabeth now known as Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. This served as the catalyst for the studies that followed at master's and doctoral level examining the lives of literary, political, religious, and sporting figures (Perry, 2012). Additionally, Fouché and Van Niekerk (2010) stipulated that most of the psychobiographical work has been conducted by researchers linked with the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, Rhodes University in Grahamstown, and the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein.

In contrast to the growing numbers of psychobiographies, Fouché and Van Niekerk (2010) argued that this discipline has not yet fully developed its true identity in South Africa. They suggested that in order for this approach to become sedimented as an institutionalized academic approach a passion for the genre, active academic engagement and the establishment of psychobiography as a curriculum-driven field is required. Psychobiographical research offers various advantages, not only logistical and administrative value, but also holds rich academic benefits for the theoretical development of South African psychology (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Other professionals in the field advocate the significant value of psychobiography for the development and testing of theories related to human development. Additionally, Fouché and Van Niekerk (2005) suggested that South African academic institutions utilize psychobiography as a research design and methodology in the study of individual lives more often, than was the case in the past. Examples of relatively new psychobiographies produced in South Africa include; *The life of Beyers Naudé: A psychobiographical study* by Barbara Burnell in 2013, *A psychobiography of Helen*

Martins by Donna Mitchell in 2013, and *Josephine Baker: A psychobiographical study* by S.R. Eckley in 2012 to name a few.

3.7 Value of Psychobiographical Research

As it has been highlighted previously, psychobiography embraces significant value in multiple aspects. Below is a detailed discussion on the various spheres of psychobiography, which may shed light further into this discipline.

3.7.1 Individual case within the whole

Psychobiographical research allows the researcher to investigate and provide a unique and rounded description of the individual within the subject's entire socio-historical context (Carlson, 1988). By doing this, the researcher is able to study individualized patterning processes of the whole personality instead of singular elements (Elms 1994). In other words, the researcher has the flexibility to create a holistic picture of individuals as an interconnected organism.

3.7.2 Subjective reality

As previously suggested, psychobiography provides an in-depth description of the subject's internal experiences (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Corey (2005) proposed that subjective reality in other words, the way in which reality is interpreted subjectively is more valuable than objective reality. Thus, knowledge and understanding of subjective reality allows the researcher to relate to the subject whereby an emotionally compelling narration of the subject's life story could be created (Runyan, 1984).

3.7.3 Socio-historical context

Psychobiography raises a holistic understanding of the individual by taking into consideration his/her whole context (Roberts, 2002). The life history material used makes it possible to expose cultural influences on human development, as the individual subject can be considered with the abundance of his or her entire socio-

historical context (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005, 2010). The result of this is that both larger contextual and sub-contextual influences on human development are discovered (Fouché, 1999). Additionally, the researcher acknowledges the individual's social and historical contexts (Goodson & Sikes, 2001).

3.7.4 Process and pattern over time

One of the requirements of psychobiographical research is that it is conducted on finished lives in order to trace patterns of development and behavior, that way it can be fully described across the individual's entire lifespan (Carlson, 1988). Therefore, providing an integrated and comprehensive picture of human development and forming an understanding of personality (Fiske, 1988). This longitudinal approach is beneficial to the researcher as it presents a complete representation of human development within the particular time setting (Alexander, 1990).

3.7.5 Theory testing and development

Additional benefits of this approach to studying human lives, is that it provides a 'workroom' to test and develop theories of human development (Carlson, 1988). Theory is a vital aspect of research as it guides the identification of design and objectives in data collection as well as acting as a template for generalization. As previously discussed, analytical generalization is used to compare findings of the study to existing theory in order to test, extend, or develop it further (Yin, 2009). Discernments gained from psychobiographical research could thus lure attention to conceptual complexities in the understanding of individual lives, that prompt research and theory refinement (Schultz, 2005). With all this in mind, psychobiography has proven its worth in the testing and development of theory in aging and gerontology, career development, human health, leadership and personality development (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Additionally, Fouché (2015) suggested that data is not collected with the aim to solve pre-set research questions, instead data is collected simply because information is integrally interesting and valuable.

3.8 Chapter Summary

It is clear that psychobiography has origins in and shares characteristics with many related fields as it was indicated that all approaches are intertwined. Confusion and disagreements between the various concepts is expected as their differences are often subtly presented. As with multiple areas in the field, and despite the presented advantages of psychobiography its design and methodology are often criticized. It is crucial that the critique of psychobiographical method is discussed to minimize any challenges as well as the ethical considerations which are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

John Lennon's life: A Historical Overview

4.1 Chapter preview

This chapter provides a historical overview of the life of John Lennon. John's lifespan is presented over six historical periods according to Erikson's theory, from his birth in 1940 to his death in 1980. To achieve a comprehensive overview of John's life, this chapter is divided into six sections, namely; (a) Born into chaos (0 - 1 year), (b) Mother and father's absence (1 - 6 years), (c) Love of music renaissance (6 - 12 years), (d) Rise of the Beatles (12 - 20 years), (e) The rebel in search of peace and love (20 - 28 years), and (f) The final years (28 - 40 years), which sees a discussion of his unexpected death. For purposes of this study Lennon's years have been divided into these chronological stages in order to provide a comprehensive view of his life in accordance with significant phases of Erikson's theory. The titles of the stages indicate the momentous milestones of his life discussed below.

4.2 Born into Chaos (0 - 1 year)

John Lennon was born on the 9th of October 1940 in Liverpool, England. His father was Alfred Lennon, a merchant seaman and his mother, Julia Stanley, an usherette. Alfred and Julia married in December 1938 during World War II (Norman, 2008). After celebrations at a local pub, Alfred and Julia separated to spend their wedding night at their respective homes (Norman, 2008). Their union was short-lived as Alfred was often away defending his country. According to Norman (2008), John's birth was marked by ferocious German attacks and the wailing of air-raid sirens, with bombs being dropped near the hospital where he was born (Norman, 2008).

John was often left in the care of his aunt Mimi, Julia's sister, as Julia frequented bars and often had affairs with other men (Kane, 2005). More often than not, John was also taken care of by neighbours in cases where Mimi was unable to do so (Riley, 2010). In other words, it would seem that for a period of time John was taken from one

home to the next and often found himself waking up at night to a dark and empty house, as his mother would engage in social activities until the early hours of the morning (Riley, 2010). Neighbours reported often being woken by John's cries in the middle of the night, and as a result they went to his rescue (Goldman, 1988).

From the literature it is clear that John's first experiences were somewhat extraordinary, from the unusual union of his parents to his birth during World War II. Together with the hostile environment of the historical context John found himself in, the home environment was not much different (Goldman, 1988). John's needs as a baby and toddler were often forgotten and the unstable shuffling between Mimi and Julia might have been the reason for John's insecurities and undisciplined behaviour at school (Goldman, 1988).

4.3 Mother and Father's Absence (1 – 6 years)

It is clear from the literature that both John's parents were absent in his life from the day he was born (Kane, 2005). On the one hand Lennon's mother appeared to be more interested in her social endeavors than in the life of her own son, as she more often than not would leave him unattended. On the other hand, his father's profession limited his ability to assume his fatherly duties as he would have to be away for periods as long as 18 months at a time (Norman, 2008). From a very early age John witnessed his mother returning home drunk or with a new lover (Riley, 2010). Due to the instability of John's mother and Alfred's demanding job, John was placed in the care of Alfred's brother when he was just four years old (Norman, 2008).

In 1946 when John was six years old he moved in with his mother and her then partner, Bobby Dykins, who she later had more children with (White, 1992). John did not get along with Bobby and as a result would often run away to his aunt Mimi's house (Goldman, 1988). Despite John and Bobby's hostile relationship he stayed with his mother and Bobby until his father returned from sea once again. Upon Alfred's return he tried to mend his marriage with Julia but was unsuccessful; a failed negotiation which culminated in a very physical quarrel in John's presence (Norman, 2008). Due to

Alfred's absence and his frequent altercations with Julia, John began to form a hostile opinion of his father from an early age (Norman, 2008).

As John frequently escaped to Mimi's house in a move to distance himself from his stepfather, Bobby, Alfred suggested that Mimi become his caregiver in Alfred's absence (Riley, 2010). When Alfred eventually returned he planned to emigrate to New Zealand and take John with him. However, Julia quickly realised Alfred's intentions and forced John to choose between his parents as they argued in front of him (White, 1992). Evidently John chose his father but, having witnessed his mother walk away, cried and ran after her pleading for them to remain together (Goldman, 1988). Consequently, Alfred walked out of John's life and disappeared for 20 years (Spitz, 2005).

After this episode John continued to live with his mother and stepfather Bobby under poor conditions and equally poor moral values at the time, as Bobby and Julia were not married (Norman, 2008). After various arguments and unpleasant experiences which implicated John, Mimi persuaded Julia to hand over control of John to her. John was thus under his aunt's care until the age of 23 years (Kane, 2005). It is unmistakable that John's first five years were marked by neglect, being passed from hand to hand and being forced to choose between his parents only to ultimately lose both (Goldman, 1988). It can thus be said that the emotional trauma Lennon endured as a result of this could have shaped his rebellious nature from an early age (Riley, 2010).

In Mimi's care John was expected to adhere to the structure provided by his aunt although he was still being shunted between her and Julia. In Mimi's house he was provided with his own room and was expected to adhere to strict bath and bed times (White, 1992). If John misbehaved he was punished by his aunt and continuously resisted this punishment (Riley, 2010). Although he lived with his aunt, John's mother still visited him regularly and often brought him gifts; this behaviour having been viewed as her way of dealing with the guilt of giving him up (Kane, 2005).

At the age of six years Mimi enrolled John at Dovedale Primary School (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984) where he performed well and his teachers had high hopes for his academic abilities. At school John enjoyed being the focus of attention and was often

seen taking up leadership roles within his friendship groups (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). Due to his persuasive, charismatic and strong nature it was inevitable for John to become involved in many physical fights with fellow pupils at school, especially those who questioned or resisted him (Norman, 2008). John's artistic side also surfaced in primary school as he was often seen painting, drawing and had, by the age of seven, mastered the mouth-organ (Norman, 2008). On the one hand, John displayed characteristics of a social nature, he also enjoyed spending time alone in his room reading, writing or painting (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). On the other hand, John also displayed less than appealing characteristics at a very early age, amongst these shoplifting and drawing grotesque pictures of handicapped people which he found hilarious (Norman, 2008).

John later entered Quarry Bank High School in 1952 (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984) which was a prestigious and well-known grammar school. Here John was identified by teachers as having academic potential and was thus placed in the academic A-stream. This, however, was a brief period of willing, co-operative behaviour on John's part as he soon began to change and acquired a disruptive and confronting nature (Norman, 2008). John quickly began to thrive on the attention he was receiving for disrupting classes and disobeying his teachers. Some of the misdemeanours included setting alarm clocks to go off in class, collapsing blackboards on teachers and spraying children with writing ink (Norman, 2008). It seemed that John was trying to distinguish himself from his peers by acting tough and adopting what they called the local "Teddy Boy" dress style (a well-known phenomenon among British teenagers in the 1950s). This style included Edwardian jackets and very tight jeans and by following this trend the boys intended to look stylishly tough (Riley, 2010).

From an early age John struggled with conformism, evading the academic obligations of school and following his passion of reading, writing and drawing (White, 1992). Instead of participating in class, Lennon would make sketches depicting his teachers in a humorous manner, also targeting the physically and mentally disabled (Kane, 2005). His drawings provided him with popularity at school when these were included in a mini-newspaper, *The Daily Howl*. This newspaper also contained running

jokes about celebrities and black people which might have suggested that John could have shown racist tendencies. However, according to Ono (2005), John was anything but racist as is evident from the lyrics of his famous song 'Imagine'. This song suggests John's desire for a world with no violence, no racism and no war (Ono, 2005). John's artistic abilities were viewed by his aunt Mimi as a waste of time and a distraction from his school work. Mimi would often enter his room and discard all his poetry, sketches, and writing, which infuriated John as he felt that his genius was not being respected (Norman, 2008).

In 1955 John's beloved uncle passed away; an event which John did not process very well. His attitude towards the world became hardened as a result (Kane, 2005). This incident seems to have woken John's interest in his biological mother as he had now lost the only male figure in his life (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). As John entered adolescence he began to show interest in building a relationship with his mother and thus began to visit her more frequently (Norman, 2008).

Adolescence for John seemed to be marked by less than appealing characteristics. For instance, his sexual awakening peaked during this time and he displayed his distorted view thereof in unpleasant or socially undesirable manners. John viewed females as sex objects to be kept in a box and only taken out to play with (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). He idolised Brigitte Bardot as a sex object and had a recurring memory of being sexually attracted to his mother (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). Furthermore, as John began spending more time with his mother due to his uncle's death, he began seeing her more as a friend than a mother which must have confused John's feelings towards her (Norman, 2008).

4.4 Love of Music Renaissance (6 – 12 years)

In the 1950s the rock and roll phenomenon had been discovered across the Atlantic and John became an instant fan of this new wave of music as a 14 year-old (Goldman, 1988). Music and especially rock and roll constituted an escape for John from his everyday life and this introduction to rock and roll set him on the course of a musical career (White, 1992). Mimi did not approve of John's new interest, while his mother

Julia encouraged him to pursue this passion for music, having bought him a guitar and teaching him to play (Norman, 2008).

Later in high school John founded his first musical group and called it “The Quarrymen”, positioning himself as the band leader and having written his first song, ‘Hello, little girl’ by the age of 18 (White, 1992). John’s band soon began to play shows, one of which becoming the opportunity where he met Paul McCartney who was soon to be a fellow-Beatle. John and Paul began writing songs together and a partnership was born. Although Paul’s talent made John feel insecure at times, he knew that he was a valuable asset to the band. Later Paul introduced George Harrison, the next Beatle member and an exceptional guitarist to John (Norman, 2008).

John’s love of music was consuming much of his time, causing him to fail all his high school subjects, including his favourite one, (i.e., art) (Norman, 2008). Due to his low marks John was unable to enter college, but Mimi managed to get him into an art college to study a four-year diploma in arts and design (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). However, John was not interested in the idea of studying; he merely wanted to become a millionaire. His fellow students and teachers viewed him as disruptive and problematic, never submitting assignments and always doing his best to prevent learning in the classroom (Norman, 2008). John would project his dislike of college onto the paintings he produced for the first term, with them often being described as aggressive and dark by his fellow students (Coleman, 1995).

In 1958 Julia died on impact as she was run over by an off-duty police officer; a further experience of loss for the young John (Kane, 2005). Later in an interview John admitted that he was in a “blind rage” for almost two years after his mother’s death (Kane, 2005, p. 42). After this John had no intention of completing his art studies and as a result he failed an annual exam (Lennon, 2005). John then focused all his attention and commitment to rock and roll and decided to leave art college to start touring in Hamburg, Germany, with his band now called “The Beatles”. His mind was made and Mimi’s disapproval of his decision was not going to stop him from pursuing his dream (Norman, 2008).

4.5 Rise of the Beatles (12 – 20 years)

Upon arrival in Hamburg the Beatles were contracted to play a 48-night engagement at a local Hamburg club in August 1960. Being away from Mimi's excessively controlling nature allowed John the freedom to experiment with various substances and to engage in acts of adultery with married women (Norman, 2008). He often used stimulants like amphetamines to help him play through a set that could easily last up to nine hours (Kane, 2005). The band members' time in Hamburg helped the band to master their stage presence and test out new songs written by Lennon and McCartney (Riley, 2010). Although John had an alluring stage presence, he was very insecure about his singing and guitar playing. Subsequently, John began questioning his future as a musician as he felt that his future lay in art and poetry (Norman, 2008).

Upon the return of the Beatles to Liverpool, they started to play their music at a Liverpool club, the Cavern, and began to draw a lot of attention (Coleman, 1995). It was at this club that John met Brian Epstein who became the band manager until 1967 (Goldman, 1988). Later on it was said that Brian got involved with the Beatles through his sexual attraction to John and rumours spread rapidly that the two were engaged in a homosexual affair when they left on vacation soon after the birth of John's first son, Julian (Kane, 2005). John described their relationship as a love affair that was never consummated (Harry, 2000a). However, John later admitted to a close friend that he had allowed Epstein to masturbate him (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). Although there appears to be no evidence of John having anti-Semitic or racist views, sources have stated that he would often ridicule Brian for being homosexual and Jewish and enjoyed Brian's hurt reactions (Norman, 2008). John's ridiculing of Brian was viewed as John's way of asserting his desire to be the band leader and Brian simply the manager (Norman, 2008).

In 1962 when the band travelled back to Hamburg, John learned that a dear friend, Stuart Sutcliffe, had died; this news affected John tremendously. His reaction to this news led John to hide his pain and turn to alcohol and drugs for relief (Norman, 2008). According to Norman (2008), John spoke about Stuart for the rest of his life. While in

Hamburg the band's dynamics changed, as the drummer was then replaced by Ringo Starr just before Beatlemania swept Lennon, McCartney, Harrison, and Starr towards stardom (Riley, 2010).

According to Norman (2008) the word Beatlemania was coined in 1963 due to the mass hysteria that greeted the Beatles wherever they went. The Beatles released their first single, 'Love Me Do', in 1962. This item reached number 17 on the British charts and the band then went on to record their first album, 'Please, please me' in 1963 (Miles, 1997). Out of the four Beatles, John and Paul wrote most of the songs of their albums which later became the well-known hits we know today (Miles, 1997).

Everywhere the Beatles went they were greeted by fans and this began to affect John as he felt overwhelmed by the attention (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). The Beatles then began to perform songs mainly written by John and Paul, instead of covering standard rock and roll songs (Norman, 2008). As the fame of the Beatles began to take off, John felt that being in the band limited his abilities to express himself concerning relevant world issues and began to feel frustrated by the responsibilities of being a Beatle (Kane, 2005). As previously mentioned it is clear that John disliked structure and rules, which is probably why he felt confined and unfulfilled by the duties of the band, i.e. saying and doing what was expected of him (Coleman, 1995).

On April 8th 1963, John welcomed his first son (Julian) with then wife Cynthia (Coleman, 1995). Cynthia and John got married in 1962 just before the rise of the Beatles and divorced in 1968 due to a number of affairs that John had engaged in (Coleman, 1995). According to Sweeting (2015) Cynthia was the third child of Charles and Lillian Powell. She was born in Blackpool in the opening days of World War II, where her mother had been evacuated from the family home in Liverpool (Sweeting, 2015).

Despite his busy schedule and constant touring, John always made time to phone Julian and enjoyed any time spent with him (Norman, 2008). However, John struggled to form a good relationship with his son due to his career obligations during the period of 1963 to 1965 (Kane, 2005). Among John's song writing and touring he managed to

write his first book in 1963, titled 'In his own write', which received rave reviews. Following this achievement he published his second book, 'A Spaniard in the works', in 1965, also having received great acclaim for this achievement (Norman, 2008).

Later in 1965 the Beatles were appointed Members of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), which John accepted reluctantly as he viewed it as another Beatle obligation (Norman, 2008). In 1966 the Beatles decided to stop touring and focused on producing albums as they experienced difficulties performing live due to the screaming of the fans (Miles, 1997). No touring meant that John was expected to spend more time assuming his duties as father and husband. However, he did not find this freedom appealing and left for Spain to act in a movie and contemplate his future (Norman, 2008). During his time in Spain Lennon began contemplating the idea of leaving the Beatles. It was also during this time that he was introduced to the drug LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) (MacDonald, 2005). According to MacDonald (2005), John became instantly addicted to the LSD; the effects of which caused his songs to contain surreal images and hallucinations (MacDonald, 2005). The song writing of this period stood in contrast to his former songs which had depicted love and simplicity (Gould, 2008). For instance, John's new form of surreal lyrics can be heard in the song 'Lucy in the sky with diamonds' on the Sgt. Pepper album released by the Beatles in 1967. Furthermore, examples of this can be seen in the same song where he sings of newspaper taxis, gargantuan flowers and a girl with kaleidoscopic eyes (Gould, 2008). To John, drugs served as an escape from his Beatle existence as he started to dislike performing due to the hysterical screams of the crowd (Gould, 2008).

In 1967 John travelled to India to practice transcendental meditation. He was joined by Cynthia and his band members (Norman, 2008). During this time the Beatles constructed their next two albums; the songs of which alluded to the time in India (Miles, 1997). While in India the band's manager, Brian Epstein, died and John admitted to being apprehensive about continuing with the band without Epstein's managerial skills (Norman, 2008). It can be said that this trip to India brought various changes not only to John but also to the band as a whole. John then began to realise that his marriage to Cynthia was deteriorating primarily due to his inability or desire to invest time and

energy in it (Kane, 2005). Rumours had been circulating for a while that John and Cynthia had been living together in what was described as a sibling existence (Norman, 2008). They simply began tolerating each other and the physical aspect of their relationship was non-existent as John continued to indulge in multiple sexual exploits while on tour (Norman, 2008).

From an early age John displayed characteristics of having an eccentric personality which needed to be stimulated or else he would lose interest in personal relationships. In November 1966 he found the right person in Yoko Ono (Kane, 2005), an avant-garde artist. He was still married to Cynthia at the time as they only divorced in 1968, and soon after he publically announced his love for Yoko Ono (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). Yoko Ono seemed to have a strong influence on John as his creative focus began to shift beyond the Beatles and together they recorded three albums between 1968 and 1970 (Norman, 2008). This was followed by John's creation of the Plastic Ono band and they released three singles, (i.e. 'Give peace a chance', 'Cold Turkey', and 'Instant karma') (Harry, 2000b).

According to Coleman (1995) John decided to leave the band in 1969 but he was not allowed to inform the media at this time due to the stipulations of his contract. The Beatles then broke up in 1970 and John decided to leave for New York, USA, with Yoko. John became furious when Paul also decided to leave the band as he wanted the world to know that he had started the band and that consequently he was the only member who could disband it (Wenner, 2000). John attributed the break-up of the band to the death of their previous manager, Epstein, as he felt that the band would not survive without Epstein. Following the band's break-up, McCartney decided to lead the band's next project, a film titled 'Magical mystery tour' (Wenner, 2000).

John began to focus all his attention on making albums with Yoko, which turned out to be a huge success (Norman, 2008). There was a time of hostility between John and the band members as John reported feeling that his relationship with Yoko was not respected by them (Wenner, 2000). Yoko played a very important role in John's life and she seemed to have influenced him in various aspects of his life. An example of this is the fact that she encouraged him to get involved with politics and to pursue his artistic

talents (Wenner, 2000). Due to her persistent encouragement regarding politics, John began to write various protest songs (Kane, 2005). Yoko's influence over John as well as her personality were so powerful that John was convinced she was worth leaving the Beatles for. In John's mind he had outgrown the Beatles and was not impressed with the band's rejection of Yoko (Coleman, 1995).

4.6 The Rebel in Search of Peace and Love (20 – 28 years)

Once the Beatles separated in 1970 John and Yoko underwent primal therapy together in order to deal with repressed childhood emotions. Primal therapy refers to the process of regressing to one's childhood and reliving painful experiences in hopes of resolving emotional issues (Kerr, 2007). This marked another significant phase in John's life as he began to confront his childhood trauma, motivating him to move away from all forms of religion (Norman, 2008). The time spent in therapy paved the way for John's solo album, titled 'John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band', where we find the emotional song "Mother" in which he lays bare his feelings of childhood rejection (Harry, 2000b). Another emotional song in which John cathartically confronts his childhood feelings is "Julia", dedicated to his mother (Sheff, 2000). This solo album has often been referred to as Lennon's primal album as it follows the form of primal therapy he underwent and displays various of his childhood issues such as his mother's rejection of him and her later death (Norman, 2008). It can thus be said that his music moved from the standpoint of objective reporting to a more subjective expression of himself (Sheff, 2000).

In history John is viewed as the first superstar to use his fame to promote political and social causes (Kane, 2005). From an early stage in the Beatles' rise to fame, John could be seen wearing anti-war buttons on his beret, even though this went against the contractual responsibilities of remaining an apolitical band (Kane, 2005). The Beatles, but most importantly John, were seen as an outspoken band regarding political and social issues, which was not welcomed by their manager Brian Epstein (Norman, 2008). Brian's protests on this matter did not deter John from refusing to play to a racially segregated crowd in Jacksonville, USA, when the Beatles toured there in 1964

(Norman, 2008). Additionally, by becoming involved with Yoko, John's early activism had been aggravated (Norman, 2008).

During the years between 1968 and 1969 there were numerous protests around the world regarding social and political issues. John and Yoko thus became actively involved in such protests but focused mostly on protests against the ensuing Vietnamese war (Norman, 2008). John's rebellious nature was now beginning to flourish as he even went as far as returning his MBE medal in 1969; the ultimate symbol of British establishment (Norman, 2008). According to Norman (2008), John did this to protest against Britain's involvement in the Nigerian civil war, (i.e., the Biafran war). Another example of John and Yoko's passion for social issues is found in their famous honeymoon, where they demonstrated for peace and attracted worldwide attention. This demonstration consisted of various acts, with one of the most significant of these being their decision to remain in bed and there being interviewed by the media (Norman, 2008).

John and Yoko moved to New York in 1971 where John released his next album, 'Imagine', dealing with the significance of the Beatles breaking up as evidenced in the song "How do you sleep" (Norman, 2008). According to Norman (2008), this song was directed at McCartney and alludes to John's withdrawal from their relationship. As war manifestations still dominated much of societal norms, John and Yoko continued with their opposition against it. The couple befriended various anti-war activists and performed in aid of the cause against the Vietnamese war, with John's powerful song "Give peace a chance" (Norman, 2008). This song soon became an anthem for all anti-war activists, which attracted the attention of the Republican administration who considered John's acts a threat to their leadership. John's message and advocacy for peace was so strong that USA officials made various attempts to deport them (Kane, 2005).

After numerous legal battles John managed to obtain permanent residency in the USA (Norman, 2008). Upon this achievement, John began spending many hours supporting various charities and he would eventually become his generation's leading social critic (Kane, 2005). One social issue John was very passionate about concerned

women's rights and liberation, as portrayed in the song 'Woman is the nigger of the world' from his album 'Some time in New York' (Norman, 2008). It is clear that his union with Yoko exerted many influences on John's life, this being one of them (Kane, 2005). Yoko managed to change John's perspective about women as he had been quoted saying that Yoko was the first woman to confront his chauvinistic attitude towards women (Sheff, 2000).

4.7 The Final Years (28 – 40 years)

John and Yoko's relationship marked a turning point not only for the Beatles but also in John's personal life. The year 1973 brought about some instability in their relationship as Yoko felt that John's image as a Beatle was overshadowing hers as an artist (Coleman, 1995). Added to that was John's substance abuse which dates back to the beginning, as previously discussed (Kane, 2005). Yoko also felt that she was being blamed for the disbanding of the Beatles (Kane, 2005). Yoko went as far as suggesting that John should take a lover as he was to move to Los Angeles for 18 months and would be away from her (Coleman, 1995). The lover suggested by Yoko was her assistant, May Pang, who she trusted to look after John in her absence. John appeared to be very happy during the time spent with May, and would often indulge in drugs and alcohol (Coleman, 1995). Thanks to May, John began to play an active role in his son's life and she also motivated John to keep writing songs (Kane, 2005).

John's new involvement with his son was very important to him as he had regretted not being present in Julian's early life (Norman, 2008). During these 18 months away from Yoko, John released two albums, 'Walls and Bridges' and 'Rock 'n' Roll' (Norman, 2008). John's hands seemed to be busy with what he loved initially, which was music and writing. He co-wrote songs for other singers and produced an album for Harry Nilsson (Norman, 2008). Later in 1975, after John's time away, Yoko managed to have John return home and the two reunited (Kane, 2005). After various failed attempts Yoko finally fell pregnant and soon their son, Sean, was born on October 9th 1975. Upon Sean's birth, John decided that he wanted to raise his new son and thus retired from the public eye to take on the role of househusband (Sheff, 2000).

It seemed though that John had completely transformed as he abandoned his solo career and embraced feminism by assuming the househusband role. It is not difficult to deduce that John was attempting to fix where he had lacked with his first son, as he focused on being a better father the second time around (Norman, 2008). Although John led a secluded life for approximately five years where he continued to write songs and then released a new album, titled 'Double fantasy' in 1980 (Kane, 2005). The success of his newly released album was short-lived because, on December 8th, 1980, before entering the doors of his apartment, John was approached for an autograph by David Chapman (Sheff, 2000). After John obeyed, Chapman shot him five times leaving John hanging on for dear life. Unfortunately, John was declared dead on arrival at the hospital (Kane, 2005). It is believed that Chapman killed John to obtain fame though all he had received was the title of murderer (Kane, 2005).

Without doubt John's impact on various aspects of popular culture is extensive. From music through to social and political causes, he managed to leave his imprint. As a member of the Beatles, he revolutionised popular music in terms of sound, style and attitude (Schinder & Schwartz, 2007). By assuming his solo career, he inspired and provided fans with hope for a better world even after his death (Harry, 2000b). For instance, the song 'Imagine' written in the 1970s, was voted the UK's favourite lyric in 1999 and to this day John Lennon's influential songs continue to inspire and promote the principles he advocated (Harry, 2000b).

4.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter an overview of the significant historical events and developments in the life of John Lennon were discussed. His life was divided into six chronological stages according to the matrix provided in Appendix A. These six stages were derived by looking at the significant milestones that John had accomplished throughout his life before, during and after his fame as a Beatle. According to the literature it can be said that John was born into chaos due to the political turmoil of the 1940s surrounding the time of his birth. The next stage in John's life, 'Mother and Father's Absence', deals with the neglect he endured as well as being constantly shunted from one house to the next. 'Love of music renaissance' explores the beginning of John's interest in music and his

early experiences with song writing, among others. Later in John's early youth, after having created 'The Quarrymen' band in high school, the Beatles band was born. In this chapter we see the evolution of the rise and fall of this famous band as well as John's experiences along the way. In 'Rebel in search of peace and love' as well as in 'The final years' a look was taken at his transformation from being a solo artist and experimenting with drugs to taking up the role of househusband and father.

Chapter 5

Preliminary Methodological and Ethical Considerations

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on methodological issues and challenges which might affect the quality of the psychobiographical study. In this chapter it is crucial that the strategies implemented to deal with these challenges are thoroughly discussed to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact such challenges may bring to the study. Ethical considerations pertaining to psychobiographical research are also discussed, as well as the ethical guidelines and suggestions followed by the researcher. This will hopefully ensure an ethically sound study.

5.2 Methodological Considerations in Psychobiographical Studies

Any mode of research is accompanied by criticisms and psychobiographical studies are by no means exempt from this, having in fact received many censures despite its numerous advances (Anderson, 1981). Such criticisms have been based on noted transgressions of scientific psychology and history, and the reality of such criticisms has been justified by even the most enthusiastic proponents of psychobiographical research (Fouché, 1999). In order for a psychobiography to be considered as exemplary, the researcher needs to be conscious of existing criticisms and potential obstacles inherent to the approach and must attempt to transcend these and ameliorate their effects (Schultz, 2005). Thus, the major constraints and obstacles inherent to the methodology of psychobiography as postulated by Fouché (1999) and based on the writings of Anderson (1981), Runyan (1988) and Elms (1994), to name a few, are discussed as methods employed to manage them.

5.2.1 Researcher bias

Many psychobiographers share the opinion that absolute objectivity and impartial engagement in the life of any biographical subject are impossible (Elms, 1994;

Meissner, 2003; Schultz, 2005). This is supported by Morrow (2005) and Flick (2006) in their suggestion that subjectivity on behalf of the qualitative researcher is inevitable. This may be due to counter-transference and strong emotional responses toward the subject, given the in-depth and long-term nature of psychobiographical investigations (Stroud, 2004). Times of idealising the subject are often combined with times of disapproving of him or her (Anderson, 1981). It is thus clear that researcher bias could adversely affect the psychobiographical study in terms of outcome, data collection, extraction, and analysis. Psychobiographers should apply a level of disciplined subjectivity to recognise the subjective nature of interpretation and to self-reflect on the impact of emotions, perceptions and personal history that are inevitably linked with qualitative psychobiographical research (Erikson, 1958, 1969, 1993, 1994).

There are various strategies that the researcher could implement to minimise the criticisms of researcher bias. For this study, the researcher chose a subject for whom there is considerable ambivalence and the researcher herself neither approves nor disapproves of the subject's behaviour and functioning. Such ambivalence serves as a means to prevent premature conclusions and remain 'objective' (Elms, 1994). Maintaining a healthy degree of empathy toward the subject under study is a further strategy suggested by Anderson (1981), Fouché (1999) and Elovitz (2003). The researcher aimed to maintain this level of empathy by attempting to understand and make sense of the subject's behaviour throughout the study. Lastly, it is crucial that the researcher is aware of his or her feelings towards the subject under investigation, as suggested by Fouché (1999).

5.2.2 Reductionism

On the one hand, as a qualitative approach psychobiographies place significant emphasis on the holistic analysis of human development and personality. On the other hand, when compared to quantitative methods, the criticism of reductionism seems to be of importance (Runyan, 1984). Reductionism is present in various areas of research, as suggested by Anderson (1981), Runyan (1988), Wallace (1989), Elms (1994), and Howe (1997). This is seen in the frequency with which infantile and early childhood

experiences are overemphasised as factors that shape personality. According to Schultz (2005) the importance of childhood influences on personality development is significant, but should not be regarded as the only considerable contributor. Additionally, Erikson (1993, 1994) cautioned psychobiographers against such practice which he termed *originology*. With this term, Erikson (1993, p. 18) referred to the “reduction of every human situation to an analogy with an earlier one, and most of all to that earliest, simplest and most infantile precursor which is assumed to be its origins.”

Other reasons why psychobiographies have been criticised involve the excessive focus on psychopathology at the expense of normalcy and health (Alter, 2002; Fouché, 1999; Elms, 1994). McAdams (1994) referred to this tendency as *overpathologising*, while Schultz (2005) termed it *pathography*. Therefore, this reductionistic error might lead to the researcher condensing an entire life to a neurotic tendency (Meissner, 2003), attaching a static diagnostic or psychopathological categories or symptoms (Runyan, 1988). Reductionism also involves the application of a fixed psychological formula and overemphasis on psychological variables which could cause omission of important external social, historical and cultural factors resulting in an incomprehensive analysis of the subject’s life (Capps, 2004). This presumes that psychological concepts and theories might not be applicable to the subject’s life due to the variance in their cultural contexts (Anderson, 1981). In order to move away from reductionism, Elms (1994) suggested the employment of several strategies. The first of these involved the application of a developmental theory in which the entire lifespan is considered. This allows the researcher to avoid limiting the study to a particular developmental period and therefore bypassing the reductionistic error of originology. In addition to this, instead of pathologising the subject, the researcher made a conscious effort to also convey a developmental psychological understanding and explanation of the subject under investigation. Thirdly, the researcher could investigate the subject’s life holistically by means of a comprehensive literature study incorporating multiple sources of information (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005).

5.2.3 Cross-cultural differences

In this study the researcher considered the subject's socio-historical context as well as the cultural and historical era in which he found himself as a further strategy to minimise reductionism (Howe, 1997). Lastly, psychological jargon should be minimised as well as terminology which readers from outside the psychological profession might be unfamiliar with (Anderson, 1981). Consequently, psychobiographers have often been reproached for trying to make such applications work (Runyan, 1984). According to Newman (2003) psychobiographers are advised to develop a culturally empathic understanding of their subjects. In order to learn about the socio-historical context of the subject the researcher conducted an extensive literature study (Norman, 2008). Furthermore, the psychological framework applied in this study accentuates the importance of cultural, social and historical influences on the individual.

5.2.4 Analysing an absent subject

Psychobiographical studies are often thought of as being disadvantaged in terms of their attempts to analyse a subject with whom limited or no contact is possible (Anderson, 1981; Izenberg, 2003). This obviously prohibits the researcher to directly question the subject and to obtain his or her commentary on proposed suggestions. It is thus the researcher's job to portray a picture of the subject from primarily written sources which could contain significantly less information than what could have been obtained directly from the subject (Runyan, 1988).

On the contrary, analysing an absent subject could also hold several advantages. According to Elms (1994) the psychobiographer is able to access various information sources covering the subject's entire lifespan, affording the researcher the opportunity to analyse events from a distant vantage point. This then results in a more accurate and more objective view of the subject's life. Another advantage constitutes the lack of restriction by therapeutic considerations such as informed consent or confidentiality (Carlson, 1988). Elms and Song (2005) suggested that this may present a more

balanced description of the subject since the focus expands beyond maladaptive behaviour alone (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005).

In order to minimise the limitations caused by the absence of the subject under study, the researcher has conducted an extensive literature search. Much biographical data on the subject was collected and reviewed, including books as well as other published sources such as audio-visual documentaries and interview excerpts. These materials are mentioned throughout the study and are mentioned in the reference list.

5.2.5 Elitism and easy genre

Other criticisms of psychobiographical studies include claims of elitism and of it being an easy genre (Stroud, 2004). Elitism refers to the idea that psychobiographers tend to focus on leaders, rulers and privileged members of society while ignoring the lives of ordinary men and women (Runyan, 1988). According to Runyan (1988), psychobiographies are appropriate for studying individual lives from any social realm because the focus should be placed on being human and, more specifically, on personality development. Therefore, subjects need to be chosen irrespective of social class and rather on the basis of personal characteristics. Additionally, elitism depends not only on the chosen subject, but also on the interpretations offered by the qualitative psychobiography. This may be minimised if the psychobiography does not offer interpretations that elevate the subject (Runyan, 1988).

To a certain degree psychobiographies could be characterised by predictability, (i.e., they are mostly analyses of a life from birth to death) which some critics have considered easy (Runyan, 1988). According to Runyan (1988) and Elms (1994) writing a superficial biography would indeed be easy, but it takes significant effort, determination and thoroughness to produce a satisfactory one. A good psychobiography is described by Schultz (2005) as a cogent and comprehensive narrative of consistent and viable data. Therefore, the complexity of psychobiography is visible in its requirement of having to consult numerous sources, acquire thorough psychological knowledge, and retain substantial literary skill (McAdams, 1994).

The subject chosen for this study, John Lennon, was chosen predominantly based on his actions and personality characteristics. Before his rise to fame he was considered a regular young man from an ordinary family without any above average characteristics (Norman, 2008). Additionally, John was considered to be below average in terms of his academic performance in school, and his aunt Mimi who raised him worked extremely hard to supply the family with the basic necessities (Norman, 2008). Therefore, although John Lennon later became a very famous man, the criticism of elitism does not seem to be justified in this study as focus is also placed on the years before his rise to fame.

When looking at the criticism of the study being an easy genre, the researcher could argue that forming a holistic portrait of the subject's life and personality was an extraordinarily complex task. In order to learn about the subject and his cultural and socio-historical contexts, the researcher conducted an extensive literature review which made the study even more challenging. Additionally, the use of theory and a model required broader data collection and analyses as well as an integration of findings. Furthermore, the easy accessibility of new published material constituted a further challenge of the study, meaning that an extensive search had to be conducted.

5.2.6 Inflated expectations

Psychobiographers should be cognisant of limitations when it comes to inflated expectations. For instance, psychological interpretations of an individual's life should be recognised as supplementary to other existing explanations. In other words, psychological explanations should not replace historical, political and economic explanations, but instead add to them (Vorster, 2003). Additionally, all explanations should be regarded as hypothetical rather than definitively factual (Anderson, 1981; Stroud, 2004).

In this study the researcher recognises that the case study on John Lennon was predominantly carried out from a psychological point of view. The discussions pertaining to this study were thus limited to the theory discussed in Chapter 2. Therefore, the researcher does not claim to have uncovered the full complexity of John Lennon's life

and personality development. Moreover, as no psychological theory can be regarded as definitive, the aim of this study was to sketch a plausible psychological picture of John, rather than propose any absolute conclusions about his life.

5.2.7 Infinite amount of biographical data

One very crucial methodological issue in psychobiography is the competent handling of biographical material (Simonton, 2003). This is partly due to the fact that psychobiographers are faced with vast amounts of information from which relevant data needs to be extracted (Elms, 1994). This could thus pose a challenge for the psychobiographer to treat the data in such a way that important information is revealed (Alexander, 1988). Alexander (1990) devised an approach by which biographical data can be reduced and whereby salient data in need of further enquiry can be identified. Firstly, he suggested questioning the data in order to provide a structure for organising the large amount of data. Secondly, he formulated nine indicators of salience that the researcher could use for further extraction and organisation of important data. The nine indicators of salience are: (a) primacy, (b) frequency, (c) uniqueness, (d) negation, (e) emphasis, (f) omission, (g) error or distortion, (h) isolation, and (i) incompleteness.

5.2.7.1 Questioning the data

This approach to collecting data is done by extracting and systematically categorising information into themes of personality development and functioning that correspond to the theory utilised in the study. This strategy thus facilitated the sorting of an excessive amount of data to answer questions that were operationalised within the theory applied in order to reveal critical information about the subject under investigation (Alexander, 1988). In order to extract units of analysis relevant to the objectives of the study, the researcher approached the collected data with the following general questions in mind:

1. "Which of the data contained in the collected biographical material would enable and facilitate the exploration and description of John Lennon's psychosocial personality development as well as the possible contributing factors prevalent in his functioning?" In order for the researcher to answer this

question it is crucial that Lennon's life history be conceptualised in terms of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory of psychosocial personality development.

2. "To what extent does the content of Erikson's psychosocial theory (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) relate to the indicators of psychosocial development as reflected in the data gathered?" It is thus crucial that the researcher compares the data gathered with the propositions and conceptualisations of the framework chosen for this study. Additionally, the researcher is able to informally test the content and propositions of the theory applied in this research.

5.2.7.2 Letting the data reveal itself

The other proposed strategy of data extraction is known as *letting the data reveal itself* (Alexander, 1988). Its purpose is to reduce the data to manageable proportions and specifically applies to selecting data and marking it for further investigation of possible underlying conscious and unconscious intent (Alexander, 1990). According to Alexander (1988, 1990) there are nine guidelines for extracting salient data which he referred to as the nine principles of salience. The researcher attempted to follow these guidelines consistently in order to identify data and descriptions that were significant in terms of the study. Below is a discussion of all nine indicators of salience together with examples of how the researcher applied them to the data used in the study.

1. *Primacy*: Schultz (2005) postulated that the first information in a text could bear psychological significance and certainly deserves close attention. Furthermore, Elms (1994) stated that such information is regularly perceived as being most important or foremost in mind. When extracting data, closer attention should thus be given to information such as early memories and first experiences (Elms, 1994).

Primacy in John Lennon's life is evident in that, as a baby, his mother would leave him alone in the house when she went out in the evenings (Norman, 2008). According to Norman (2008), another example of *primacy* is found in John being

shifted from one house to the next due to his mother's inability to look after him. In his early teenage years John began experimenting with drugs, and smoking became a big part of his youth (Norman, 2008).

2. *Frequency*: According to Schultz (2005) frequency refers to repeated communications, events, obsessions, patterns, symbolic representations, or themes. Furthermore, such repetitions or obsessive references to a message, incident, or theme indicate an increased certainty regarding its significance (Alexander, 1988). However, Elms (1994) suggested that monotony might decrease awareness or perceived importance of a message, stating that the significance of a message should not be underestimated.

The notion of frequency is mostly present in John Lennon's life in his fixation with his mother, possibly due to her absence in his life. For instance, John referred to Yoko Ono, his second wife, as "mother" and even wrote a song with this title (Norman, 2008). Additionally, Shotton and Schaffner (1984) suggested that during his teenage years John frequently displayed a distorted view of females, as he viewed them as sexual objects and not as human beings. This was to become a recurring theme in his life as evidenced in later years (Norman, 2008).

3. *Uniqueness*: This entails aspects in the collected data that are unusual or singular and thus worthy of closer attention (Alexander, 1988). These may include events such as unique memories or other information marked by the subject as being unique or unprecedented (Schultz, 2005). Additionally, unexpected or unexplained outcomes in a sequence of events also indicate uniqueness (Alexander, 1988). Furthermore, it is vital that the researcher is cognisant of more subtle signs of uniqueness such as those arising from departures from generally accepted language or cultural expectations (Alexander, 1988).

John's uniqueness was demonstrated in various ways throughout his life. One example is his recurring memory of being attracted to his mother and viewing her as a friend instead of his mother (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984).

4. *Negation*: According to Alexander (1988) that which is denied or turned into its opposite is known as negation. Elms (1994) suggested that a subject's perception of who he or she is, is as important as his emphasis on who he or she is not. Negation statements often indicate possibly repressed or unconscious material (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2005). Moreover, Elms (1994) viewed such statements as truths that the subject wants others to believe or wants to believe himself.

One example of negation in John's case was his inability to understand that his comic depictions of physically, mentally and even black people were offensive (Norman, 2008).

5. *Emphasis*: According to Alexander (1988) there are three forms of emphasis that the researcher must take note of, namely over-, under-, and misplaced emphasis. Overemphasis refers to when an event, considered by the reader as mundane, is excessively stressed. Underemphasis, however, entails seemingly important information such as a major life experience being noticeably underscored. Misplaced emphasis occurs when irrelevant information is stressed with undue force because the outcome is not credibly linked to the stated or implied means (Elms, 1994; Schultz, 2005).

When reviewing the literature on John's case, it is evident that many aspects of his life, mainly his affective experiences and personality, were *underemphasised*. On the other hand, his controversial behaviour and statements made were *overemphasised* by many biographers (Kane, 2005). Emphasis was also *misplaced* when John was viewed as a threat to the American government due to his activist actions for peace and cessation of war (Norman, 2008).

6. *Omission*: This refers to what is missing, particularly the absence of expected content (Schultz, 2005). According to Elms (1994) this may be the hidden vital clue in the subject's life which might be revealed upon questioning. Furthermore, when favouring rich descriptions of actions or events,

information regarding the subject's affect is most often omitted (Alexander, 1988).

Omission is evident in biographers' failure to include in-depth explorations and descriptions of John's affective experiences. Limited details regarding his early childhood and upbringing are provided by the literature. Furthermore, information about the time John spent in New York with his wife Yoko is also limited. John's life is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

7. *Error or distortion*: This principle encompasses the presence of mistakes, mostly regarding people, places, and times (Schultz, 2005). According to Alexander (1988) errors and distortions could be indicative of important absent motives or conflicts which often go by undetected.

In John's case there appears to be no sign of this principle as John was a well-known public figure and thus there was limited error or distortion (Norman, 2008).

8. *Isolation*: This refers to an isolated fragment of information that stands out from the text or does not fit (Alexander, 1990), thereby posing the question of how the information makes sense within the presented context (Elms, 1994). These seemingly out of place associations or comments could serve the purpose of uncovering the deeper meaning of the isolated fragment of the unconscious (Schultz, 2005).

This is present in John's life as he appeared to have changed radically after marrying Yoko Ono. His behaviour and even persona seemed to be strongly influenced by his second wife (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). For instance, John became a stay-at-home father to look after his second child, Sean Lennon, something he did not do with his first child, Julian (Norman, 2008).

9. *Incompletion*: Something that is not finished is essentially an indication of a topic that is introduced and subsequently dismissed without closure (Alexander, 1988). This may signify the subject's failure to conclude a story which might be evident in him abruptly ending a sequence before its closure,

using distraction without a return to the original sequence, or completing a means-end sequence without an explanatory means-end relationship (Alexander, 1988). According to Schultz (2005), incompleteness is viewed as avoidance of certain thoughts or actions with associated negative emotions.

John's sudden murder in 1980 by Mark Chapman is a good example of *incompletion*. His death yielded an incompleteness to his life story as he did not have the opportunity to gain closure. Additionally, an example of this was his inability to experience Erikson's 8th stage of *Integrity versus despair*.

5.2.8 Validity and reliability

5.2.8.1 Criticisms

Psychobiographical research often comes under criticism with regards to notions of validity and reliability (Fouché, 1999). These criticisms relate to the trustworthiness of the study and the quality of the psychobiographical research design and methodology. Specific criticisms include: (a) the validity of retrospective and introspective data, which tends to be subjective; (b) the method's ability to test generated hypotheses; (c) the internal validity of the approach because alternative explanations about the subject often exist; and (d) the external validity of the research method because findings of the individual case cannot be securely generalised (Howe, 1997). Yin (2009) suggested that the quality of any case study's design can be measured by the four tests common to all social science research methods, namely: (a) internal validity, (b) external validity, (c) construct validity, and (d) reliability. In qualitative research these tests are often referred to as: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) confirmability, and (d) dependability (Yin, 2009).

1. *Internal validity or credibility*: This relates to establishing a causal relationship between conditions and is considered more relevant to explanatory or causal studies than explanatory or descriptive studies (Newman, 2003). Yin (2009) postulated that credibility in psychobiography has to do with the accuracy of inferences, which depends on the accuracy of the collected data. In order to evaluate such accuracy, the researcher would have to be cognisant of all

alternative explanations and possibilities. Adjunct to this statement, Elms (1994) warned psychobiographers to refrain from drawing conclusions from inadequate data. Rudestam and Newton (2001) recommended in-depth and prolonged exposure to the data as well as adequate submersion in the data, so that any distortions and recurring patterns can be investigated and validated.

Another possible threat to the credibility of the qualitative psychobiographical study is researcher bias (Fouché, 1999). This could result from the researcher's subjective attitude to the chosen subject and or enthusiasm for a particular theoretical assumption or interpretation (Elms, 1994).

The process of triangulation has been recommended to enhance the credibility of forms of case study research such as psychobiography (Willig, 2008). The triangulation is based on the principle that convergence of multiple perspectives offers mutual confirmation of data to elucidate themes or theory and to ensure that all aspects of the phenomenon are investigated (Flick, 2006). This multiplicity minimises the distortion from a single source or biased researcher because data is cross-checked (Tindall, 1999). According to Patton (2002) there are four types of triangulation that could be useful for case study research. *Data triangulation* maximises the range of data sources to which the researcher poses the same questions. *Researcher triangulation* refers to involving different evaluators to provide multiple perspectives on the interpretation of data. *Method triangulation* refers to multiple methods of enquiry used, and *theory triangulation* occurs when different theories are utilised to interpret the same data set. Triangulation not only enhances the trustworthiness of a study, but also has a positive impact on confirmability and dependability (Krefting, 1991).

2. *External validity or transferability*: This refers to the extent to which findings of the study can be generalised beyond the immediate case study (Yin, 2009). According to Runyan (1988), psychobiographers should refrain from generalising their findings to other cases, because the suggestion of a single individual as representative of a larger population is both controversial and

questionable. Additionally, single cases provide a poor basis for generalising findings (Yin, 2009). Subsequently, Yin (2009) argued for a distinction between *statistical generalisation*, where the sample is intended to generalise to the larger population (as a quantitative survey research), and *analytical generalisation*, where a particular set of results is generalised to a broader theory (as in qualitative case study research). Transferability is therefore a less important criterion in psychobiographical research, where findings are considered inherently descriptive (Fouché, 1999).

3. *Construct validity or confirmability*: Construct validity includes a number of aspects: (a) the correct operational measures for the concepts studied; and (b) neutral findings based solely on the ideas and information of the literature and theoretical frameworks and not on the researcher's characteristics and preferences (De Vos, 2005). According to Yin (2009) a chain of evidence should be produced whereby all data, constructs, and variables considered could be traced. Data triangulation (i.e., the use of multiple sources) proves helpful in this regard (Krefting, 1991). Another strategy to ensure the clear presentation of the operational definitions and study variables is a conceptual matrix (Fouché, 1999). Additionally, the research could be subjected to an auditor to follow the study's progression, understand the decision-making process and the nature of the interpretations, as well as determine whether or not other researchers would draw similar conclusions (Flick, 2006).
4. *Reliability or dependability*: This refers to whether the findings, conclusions and recommendations are consistent with the presented data (Krefting, 1991). The goal of dependability is to minimise errors and biases in the study to afford another researcher the opportunity to arrive at the same findings and conclusions if he or she were to conduct the same case study (Yin, 2009). Thus, a fit between the research question and data collection and analysis procedures is essential for the study to be reliable. Flick (2006) thus suggested that the research process be documented in a systematic and

comprehensive manner. In order to facilitate this, the use of a case study protocol and the development of a case study database are recommended (Yin, 2009).

5.2.8.2 Applications to overcome validity and reliability criticisms

In order to address the above-mentioned concerns regarding validity and reliability, the researcher found it crucial to apply the following strategies.

1. *Internal validity or credibility:* After a careful analysis of Yin's (2009) concern regarding internal validity, the researcher recognised that it was vital to maintain credibility in making general inferences throughout the study. Although the aim was only to explore and describe the historical life of the subject within the context of a psychological framework, and not to explain a cause-and-effect relationship, credibility was recognised as important. Credibility was achieved through extensive and prolonged engagement with the biographical data on John Lennon's life. Additionally, the researcher applied data and researcher triangulation. Through data triangulation, the researcher consulted multiple sources of data which were examined and cross-referenced. Researcher triangulation entailed presenting methods and analyses to the supervisor for feedback. Theory triangulation was not employed by the researcher as this study utilised only one theory to explore the subject's life.
2. *External validity or transferability:* Transferability was not a major concern in this study as it did not aim to generalise findings to a broader population through statistical generalisation. In its place, John Lennon was selected as a unique and complex personality whose life and development were intensively investigated and documented. The focus of this study fell on comparing the findings of the study to the propositions of the chosen psychosocial developmental theory.

3. *Construct validity or confirmability*: To ensure confirmability it was crucial for the researcher to clearly identify the concepts and stages under investigation as well as their operational measures. The available literature on the theory used in the study informed this conceptualisation. The conceptual framework for the theory, as well as the data analysis matrix are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.
4. *Reliability or dependability*: In order to enhance dependability, the researcher employed a systematic and consistent approach to data selection and analysis. The coding system consisted of a conceptual matrix wherein the relevant, salient data were placed and evaluated. The matrix was grounded in the constructs of the psychosocial developmental theory and informed by Alexander's (1988, 1990) guidelines for extracting salient data.

The foregoing section discussed the various methodological considerations inherent to the psychobiographical research approach, provided suggestions for minimising these difficulties and explored their relevant applications to this study. In addition to methodological considerations, the researcher is also faced with certain ethical considerations to be considered which can be vital to the psychobiographical work (Fouché, 1999). Below is a discussion on the potential ethical dilemmas inherent to psychobiography, providing an explanation of the approaches followed by the researcher to ensure that ethical principles were adhered to throughout the study.

5.3 Ethical Considerations in Psychobiography

It is often said that qualitative research methods present some unique ethical challenges such as those relating to confidentiality and informed consent (Ponterotto, 2010, 2014). Ethical concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality in psychobiography seem to be of marked importance, as the psychobiographer is lodged in an in-depth investigation of the subject's private world (Elms, 1994). According to Elms (1994) an important issue relates to whether the psychobiographer will study a living or deceased

individual. Other issues may surface depending on the kind of data that is permissible to use and whether findings are to be published sensitively and truthfully (Fouché, 1999).

Some related ethical guidelines in psychobiographical research were highlighted by Elms (1994) when he noted the limited involvement of the American Psychological Association in psychobiographical and psychohistorical ethics. However, the American Psychiatric Association convened a task force in 1976 that established two ethical guidelines for psychobiography (Runyan, 1988). According to these guidelines psychobiographies may be conducted only on: (a) deceased subjects, preferably without any surviving relatives likely to be embarrassed by unsavoury revelations; and (b) living subjects who have given informed consent (American Psychiatric Association, 1976). These guidelines do not directly emphasise confidentiality and respect. Therefore, Elms (1994) suggested that all intimate knowledge be treated as such. Additionally, he emphasised the importance for psychobiographers to reflect on the ethics of their work and to ensure that their research is ethically justified to a certain degree. Additionally, Ponterotto (2013) stipulated that since no set of ethical guidelines for psychobiographers currently exists, researchers are left to their own ethical judgment and moral compass as they engage the often highly personal endeavor of the intensive study of an individual's life. However, Ponterotto (2013) reported some important guidelines to be cognizant of such as, (a) balancing objective research with respect for the psychobiographical subject, (b) inviting subject or next-of-kin to read and comment on working drafts of psychobiography, (c) reporting never-before-revealed sensitive information on a subject and (d) the role of interdisciplinary consultation. Ponterotto (2013) also warned against the use of psychological diagnoses as part of the psychological profile.

Due to the nature of this study, few ethical considerations were encountered. The researcher chose a deceased individual and therefore no informed consent was necessary. The data gathered on the subject was predominantly found in published materials that exist in the public domain and are thus freely accessible. This therefore minimised the possibility of potential embarrassment for any of the subject's surviving relatives and friends. Despite some negative depictions of the subject in the gathered

data, the researcher maintained a high level of respect for Mr Lennon. It is worth noting that the Department's Research Committee and the Committee for Title Registrations of the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of the Free State, gave permission for this study to be conducted.

5.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter an overview of the most important methodological difficulties in psychobiographical research and the researcher's attempts to overcome or minimise them were provided. Furthermore, a brief discussion was included of the ethical considerations inherent to psychobiographical studies and the relevance thereof to this particular study. The following chapter takes a closer look at the research design and methodology.

Chapter 6

Research Design and Methodology

6.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on the study's design and methodology. Aspects such as the research objectives, research method, as well as data collection, extraction, and analysis procedures are discussed. Concepts pertaining to the validity and reliability of the study as well as ethical concerns are also briefly revisited.

6.2 Research Design

This research could be described by Plummer (1983) and Runyan (1982) as life history research with a qualitative single case design. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) life history research tracks the array and course of experiences in an individual's life. A single case research design is used to test, clarify and challenge theoretical propositions, particularly against a unique individual case (Yin, 2009). The research design could specifically be defined as a single case psychobiographical study over the course of a lifespan (Fouché, 1999). This design utilises psychological theory in a systematic manner to coherently reconstruct and reinterpret an individual life by providing an illuminating narrative that contributes to both knowledge and theory construction (McAdams, 1994).

Edwards (1990) suggested that qualitative case studies such as psychobiography are both exploratory-descriptive and descriptive-dialogic in nature. The exploratory-descriptive side allows the researcher to provide an accurate and rich description of John Lennon's psychosocial personality development over his lifespan. This yields an in-depth understanding of an individual case, within the subject's socio-historical context (Fouché & De Vos, 2005). The descriptive-dialogic nature of the study permits the researcher to provide an authentic portrayal and description of a phenomenon and to test and clarify the content and aspects of specific theories and models (Martin, 1996; McLeod, 1994). The theory used in this study is Erik Erikson's

(1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) psychosocial theory of personality development. This theory was discussed in Chapter 2.

6.3 The Psychobiographical Subject

Howe (1997) stated that the selection of a particular personality for psychobiographical study is primarily based on the individual's significance or interest. It is advised that the subject chooses the psychobiographer and not necessarily the other way around (Elms, 1994). John Lennon (1940 - 1980) served as a single case whose psychosocial development was revealed in the present psychobiography.

A non-probability purposive sampling procedure was employed to select Lennon as psychobiographical subject. Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgment to determine the desired attributes and to ensure richness of data (Strydom & Delpont, 2005). Purposive sampling in conjunction with case study research is effective when the case is especially unique or forms part of a specialised population, or when the purpose of the study is to achieve a deep understanding of a specific individual (Newman, 2003).

John Lennon was selected as the subject for this psychobiographical study on the basis of interest and uniqueness, together with the many infamous areas of his life such as his drug abuse and odd behaviours as discussed in Chapter 4. The researcher thought it would be beneficial to provide a greater understanding of John Lennon's motivations and psychological underpinnings as a world renowned member of the Beatles band and as a humanitarian. There is evidence of a lack of understanding of his life when surveying the conflicting opinions and contradictory statements that have been made. Furthermore, searches of databases such as Ebscohost yielded no evidence of psychobiographical research formerly conducted on John Lennon from the psychosocial theoretical perspective. However, it is worth noting that Kitching, a student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa, conducted a psychobiographical study of John Lennon, but from the Adlerian perspective of Individual Psychology (Kitching, 2012). Kitching recommended that Lennon be studied further through a psychosocial lens to highlight socio-political influences (Kitching, 2012).

6.4 Research Aim

The main aim of this study was to explore and describe the life of John Lennon with the specific focus on the exploration and description of his psychosocial personality development through the use of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) psychosocial theory. The principal objective is to adopt a demonstrative, inductive approach which reflects the exploratory-descriptive nature of the study. The reason for this is primarily because this study entails an in-depth exploration and description of an individual case within a specific socio-historical context (Yin, 2009).

Secondly, this study aimed to test the content and stages of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) psychosocial theory. This allowed a deductive approach as well as a descriptive-dialogic investigation to take place. The descriptive-dialogic approach involves a process through which theoretical propositions and conceptualisations are informally validated or disconfirmed by comparing case research findings with expected outcomes of theoretical models (Edwards, 1990). Therefore, a 'dialogue' between the exploratory-descriptive biographical findings and the theoretical concepts and propositions was enabled (Edwards, 1990). Thus, analytical generalisation was used for the testing of the theoretical theory used (Cavaye, 1996).

6.5 Research Method

The research method used in this study was a qualitative-morphogenic approach. According to this method, a conceptualisation of individuality within both the nomothetic and idiographic paradigms is involved (Elms, 1994). The term idiographic is used by psychologists to refer to characteristics of unique persons and nomothetic to refer to universal characteristics (Runyan, 1984). It is believed that these terms originated from the German philosopher Wilhelm Windelband (Hurlburt & Knapp, 2006) which was later introduced by Gordon Allport to American psychology with his publication, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation*. Moreover, this method together with its complementary single case design emphasises the individuality of the whole person through a holistic

qualitative description and interpretation of a single, socio-historical case (Schultz, 2005).

6.6 Data Collection

The data used in this study were collected by means of a comprehensive search through the internet, the search platform of the University of the Free State library, and the search engine Ebscohost. Both primary and secondary data sources were used. According to Strydom and Delport (2005) primary data sources are produced by the subject, whereas secondary data sources are produced by someone else who has focused on the subject (Woolums, 2011). The main sources of information used for analysis in this study were biographical materials such as *John Lennon, the life* by Philip Norman and *Memories of John Lennon* by Yoko Ono.

The primary sources from which data were collected for analysis included some of John Lennon's own publications, such as "*In his own write*" and "*Lennon remembers*", as well as interviews held with John Lennon by various people but especially the famous 1969 interview with 14 year-old Jerry Levitan in Toronto Canada. Jerry Levitan is a Beatle fanatic who at the age of 14 years sneaked into John Lennon's hotel room in Toronto and convinced him to do an interview on his thoughts about peace (Levitan, 2009). Jerry later published his famous book and short animated video based on the interview titled, *I met the Walrus*. Secondary sources included a biography of John Lennon by Norman (2008) titled "*John Lennon, the life*", as well as "*Memories of John Lennon*" by Ono (2005). Other sources included John Lennon's easily accessible musical recordings. Many of John's musical recordings give us insight into his life and experiences which helped to enrich the researcher's exploration and description of his psychosocial development. For instance, the song titled *Mother* is a personal account of the impact his mother made in his life.

All data sources were recorded in the reference list which is believed to enhance the study's trustworthiness and provides other researchers with a database that can be easily accessed and retrieved for future review (Fouché, 1999). Once the data is gathered the psychobiographer is tasked with the challenging act of examination,

extraction, categorisation and analysis of the data materials (Alexander, 1990). A discussion of salient data extraction and analysis was provided in Chapter 5.

Alexander's model allowed the researcher to consistently and systematically reflect on the collected data (Alexander, 1988). This model aligned with Yin's (2009) proposed strategies for case study analysis. One of these strategies entails data analysis guided by theoretical approaches, objectives and proportions (Yin, 2009). This strategy requires the researcher to use the theoretical orientation and research objectives to identify salient data in the collected material, for which Alexander's guidelines proved most useful.

According to Yin (2009) a second strategy is to formulate a case description by developing a descriptive framework to organise and integrate case information. In order to achieve this goal, the researcher developed a conceptual matrix that permitted data categorization and analyses (Fouché, 1999). This conceptual matrix is discussed below.

6.7 Conceptual Matrix

As proposed by Yin (2009), a data analysis matrix was employed in this study. The researcher developed a conceptual matrix for the categorisation of data which assisted as a screening grid during data analysis. This matrix was developed according to the framework of the psychological theory applied in this study. The researcher designed a matrix of John Lennon's psychosocial development (see Table 6.1) to categorise data in the framework proposed by the psychosocial developmental theory.

Table 6.1 presents the periods of historical development in John Lennon's life (already discussed in Chapter 4) in six rows on the left describing these significant historical periods. The periods range from birth (age 0) to death (age 40). The columns at the top of the matrix represent the psychosocial developmental stages proposed by Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) (i.e., trust versus mistrust; autonomy versus shame and doubt; initiative versus guilt; industry versus inferiority; identity versus role confusion; intimacy versus isolation; and generativity versus stagnation). During data

collection, extraction and analysis, the researcher focused on salient biographical data related to these aspects.

During the collection, extraction, and analysis of salient biographical data related to John Lennon's psychosocial personality development, specific attention was paid to the developmental crises that corresponded with John's psychological and social development. In terms of historical development, John's life was divided into the six historical stages previously stated. According to Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory, "Infancy" was titled "*Born into chaos*" (0–1 year), referring to the psychosocial developmental crisis of "*Trust versus Mistrust*". Secondly, "Early childhood" (1–6 years) has been titled "*Mother and father's absence*" reflecting the crisis of "*Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt*" and "*Initiative versus Guilt*". The third stage, "Middle childhood" (6–12 years), was titled "*Love of music renaissance*" including the crisis of "*Industry versus Inferiority*". The fourth and fifth stage overlap, "Adolescence" and "Early Adulthood" (12–28 years), were titled "*Rise of the Beatles*" and "*The Rebel in search of Peace and Love*". They encompass the crises of "*Identity versus Role Confusion*" and "*Intimacy versus Isolation*". Lastly, the sixth stage, namely "Adulthood", was titled "*The final years*" (28–40 years), revealing the crisis of "*generativity versus stagnation*". Erikson's theory of psychosocial personality development was thoroughly discussed in Chapter 2.

The matrix, as presented in Table 6.1 below, assisted the researcher in systematically and consistently categorising and analyzing the biographical data collected on Lennon's life. In this way, the researcher was able to construct a longitudinal portrait of each of the stages of psychosocial personality development and the components of the theory chosen respectively. The findings of the theory and their integration, as related to John's historical development over his lifespan, are provided in the chapters to follow. As Lennon died prior to him reaching all of Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, the researcher was only able to discuss six of these stages.

Table 6.1

Matrix of John Lennon's Psychosocial Development

<u>Historical Periods in the Development of John Lennon</u>	<u>Stages of Psychosocial Development by Erikson</u>						
	Trust versus Mistrust (0-1)	Autonomy versus Shame/Doubt (1-3)	Initiative versus Guilt (3-6)	Industry versus Inferiority (6-12)	Identity versus Role Confusion (12-20)	Intimacy versus Isolation (20-28)	Generativity Versus Stagnation (28-40)
Born into chaos (0-1 year)							
Mother and Father's absence (1-6 years)							
Love of music Renaissance (6-12 years)							
Life changes / Rise of the Beatles (12-20 years)							
The Rebel in search of Peace and Love (20-28 years)							
The final years (28-40 years)							

6.8 Ensuring Validity, Reliability, Rigour and Trustworthiness

Chapter 5 discussed the possible limitations inherent to psychobiographical research, together with the strategies applied to lessen possible threats to credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability. Therefore, a summary of these employed strategies to ensure rigour and trustworthiness is provided below:

1. Prolonged engagement with the biographical data on the subject.
2. Data triangulation, researcher triangulation, and theory triangulation.
3. Evaluating the researcher-subject relationship.
4. Aiming for analytical generalisation rather than statistical generalisation.
5. Applying established guidelines for the organisation of data and using clear operational measures, coding, schemes, and a conceptual matrix.
6. Enhancing the researcher's knowledge and understanding of the subject's cultural and socio-historical contexts.
7. Utilising a lifespan approach in which all historical periods of the subject's life are included.
8. Recognising all findings as tentative.

Additional to the validity and reliability concerns of the study, the researcher was also aware of the ethical considerations inherent to the study. However, this section was discussed in the previous chapter. A brief revisit of the researcher's management of these considerations is provided below.

6.9 Ethical Considerations

As formerly stated the researcher chose to study a deceased individual, thus posing fewer ethical considerations. The concerns relevant to this study involved possible invasion of the family's privacy and potential embarrassment to the subject's surviving relatives and friends. It is worth noting, however, that all data gathered and used for this study are readily available in the public domain and thus the chances for invasion of privacy and embarrassment are eradicated. As this study is of an academic nature and public data was gathered, there was no need for informed consent from close family members. It is crucial to also note that the Committee for Title Registrations of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of the Free State, granted permission to conduct this study. Ethical considerations were discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

6.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the research design and method. The subject chosen for the study, the research objectives, as well as the data collection procedures were discussed. Following this, a brief description of the techniques used to extract and analyse data were provided as these had already been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. The development and use of a conceptual matrix were included in this chapter as another form of the categorisation and analyses of data. Furthermore, a summary of the strategies used to deal with validity and reliability issues was provided and the chapter ultimately concluded with a revisitation of the study's ethical concerns.

Chapter 7

Findings and Discussion: The Psychosocial Personality Development of John Lennon

7.1 Chapter Preview

This chapter focuses on the psychosocial personality development of John Lennon. Firstly, it is crucial that a conceptual outline of the findings is provided. Following this, each of the seven stages of Erikson's theory of psychosocial personality development undergone by John Lennon is discussed according to the conceptual matrix presented in Chapter 6.

7.2 Conceptual Outline of the Findings

Psychobiographical studies require a biographical account of the subject's life within the context of the selected psychological theory (Fouché, 1999). Considering John's death at the age of 40, the first seven developmental stages proposed by Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) are discussed separately across each of the seven historical periods throughout John's lifespan. Examples are provided where referencing relating to each of the developmental crises and ego strengths are provided. These include events that may have impacted on John's development during a particular stage, as well as events later in his life that are thought to be resultant of the outcome of a particular developmental stage. Therefore, the researcher was able to explore each stage of John's psychosocial personality development more holistically.

7.3 John Lennon's Psychosocial Personality Development

7.3.1 Basic trust versus mistrust (0 - 1 year)

The first stage of the psychosocial personality development theory is characterised by the crisis termed basic trust versus mistrust and covers roughly the first year of life (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). The

primary focus of this stage is the relationship between the infant and his or her primary caregiver(s), in this particular case between John and his parents, Alfred and Julia Lennon. According to Erikson the quality of this early relationship determines whether or not the infant develops a healthy view of the world as a safe and trustworthy place (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Furthermore, a caring, loving, nurturing and responsive caregiver provides his or her infant with a sense of trust (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). If this stage is mastered the ego strength of **hope** is also gained (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

7.3.1.1 Born into chaos (0 – 1 year)

A number of authors have stated that John's birth on the 9th of October 1940 took place in a time of turmoil as it was characterised by German attacks and wailing air-raid sirens and bombs being dropped near the hospital in Liverpool where John was born (Norman, 2008). Additionally, John's mother did not seem to have a reputation for being a respectable and loving mother, as discussed in section 4.2 of Chapter 4. Instead of demonstrating the positive qualities that prove helpful in creating a trusting child, as discussed above, John's mother was known to be neglectful toward him as she frequented bars and left him alone on multiple occasions (Kane, 2005). According to Riley (2010) John often woke his neighbours with his cries at night upon discovering that he had been left in the house alone. Although later in life Julia attempted to be more involved in John's life by teaching him to play the guitar and through encouraging him to follow his passion, the opposite was true during these crucial early years (Riley, 2010). Despite being neglectful toward John, Julia also faced many of her own challenges, such as the loneliness she experienced through John's father being out at sea for long periods of time (Norman, 2008). Furthermore, Riley (2010) stated that Julia had various affairs with other men, which caused irreparable damage to her marriage with John's

father, Alfred. All these factors could have impaired Julia's caretaking practices and thus impacted on John's development from an early stage.

Infants depend on their caregivers to supply adequate food, protection, security, and stimulation to satisfy their physical, emotional, social, and developmental needs (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). If this is satisfactory, infants acquire the trust necessary for further healthy personality development (Elkind, 1970; Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). John lived in a small and humble house with his mother before being taken to his aunt Mimi's house (Riley, 2010). Additionally, his parents did not have an ideal marital relationship and constantly fought in John's presence, which often got out of control (Norman, 2008). Therefore, Julia might not have had sufficient time or the energy to dedicate to the much-needed attention to her son.

Once John was under his aunt Mimi's care, his life began to display some form of structure and normalcy. Had this been the case since the very beginning, according to Erikson's theory, he would have resolved the first stage successfully with a clearly gained sense of trust as a result. However, John's future behaviour and relationships revealed a strong contradiction to the above.

7.3.1.2 Discussion of stage one

According to Erikson (1950,1963,1968,1977) the unsuccessful resolution of the first stage of psychosocial development results in the acquisition of basic mistrust. This acquired sense of mistrust incessantly presents itself throughout the individual's life and is easily recognised in displayed behaviour and interpersonal relationships (Lewicky, 2006). Furthermore, it alters our perception of ourselves, others and the world, and consequently shapes how we function and conduct ourselves in our daily lives (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

The following are examples which are indicative of John's mistrust as opposed to trust. From an early age John displayed a strong character and a rebellious nature as he would resist punishment from his aunt Mimi when he misbehaved (Riley, 2010). Later, in primary school, John was often involved in physical fights with fellow pupils who questioned or resisted him (Norman, 2008). Other of John's behaviours which reveal a sense of mistrust include shoplifting and drawing grotesque pictures of handicapped people which he found amusing (Norman, 2008). Additionally, in John's adolescent years he displayed a distorted view of his sexuality by viewing females as sex objects to be kept in a box and only to be taken out to play with (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). According to Shotton and Schaffner (1984), John reported having a recurring memory of being sexually attracted to his mother. Furthermore, during his rise to fame with the Beatles, John began to use the drug LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), but signs of his drug use and abuse had already begun in his early teenage years and throughout his 20s in his use of marijuana (MacDonald, 2005). This could be viewed as an attempt at self-nurturance and satisfaction (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) stipulated that the need to self-nurture stems from inadequate parental nurturing in the first stage, a prerequisite for the development of a sense of trust.

Resolving stage one not only leads to trusting others and the world, but also to having a sense of trust in oneself (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). This impacts the individual's self-concept and self-esteem and influences whether or not the individual views him- or herself as being good enough (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). Although John had an alluring stage presence, he was very insecure about his singing and guitar playing and began questioning his future as a musician (Norman, 2008).

With regard to the ego strength of this stage, a lack of hope is not indicated in John's functioning. This is evident in his continuous efforts to

grow and develop as an artist and human being (see Chapter 4). Later in his 20s he sought the help of primal therapy together with his wife Yoko Ono; a form of therapy which focuses on resolving childhood emotional issues (Kerr, 2007). Time spent in therapy seemed to have allowed John to deal with many repressed emotions as he lays bare his feelings of childhood rejection in the song 'Mother' (Harry, 2000b). Another emotional song is 'Julia', dedicated to his mother (Sheff, 2000).

Therefore, the researcher hypothesises that John may have resolved this first stage of basic trust versus mistrust successfully, although this only happened much later in life. It appears that John may have acquired the ego strength of hope in later years as he displayed a strong desire for peace in his later years. Thus, at this stage this crisis remains unresolved until much later in life.

7.3.2 Autonomy versus shame and doubt (1 - 3 years)

The second stage looks at autonomy versus shame and doubt which typically arises between the first and third year of life (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). During this time, children begin a process of physical maturation and develop control over their bodies (Elkind, 1970). As children become aware of this new physical control, they also start to exercise new behaviours and skills. Therefore, their psychosocial development is linked with their physical maturation. Caregivers play a prominent role during this stage of development. If caregivers allow children to practice their new abilities at their own pace, they develop a sense of autonomy (Hook, 2002). On the other hand if children are reprimanded or ridiculed for their attempts at acting independently, they develop a sense of shame and doubt (Corey, 2005). The ego strength of this stage is termed by Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) as **will**.

7.3.2.1 Mother and father's absence (1 – 6 years)

Critical and impatient caregivers are likely to foster a sense of shame and doubt in their children (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). According to the literature, John's stepfather Bobby had a very authoritative approach toward him and often complained to Julia about John, and more often than not arguments erupted between John and Bobby (Kane, 2005). Furthermore, John was subjected to very strict parenting from his aunt Mimi as she tried to restore structure and discipline in his life (Norman, 2008). Although no specific examples of such incidents during his first three years of life were found in the biographical data, much of John's later behaviours support the above and resemble the possible result of unsuccessful resolution of stage two.

7.3.2.2 Discussion of stage two

From an early stage John struggled with conformism as he purposefully evaded the academic obligations of school and focused on his passion for reading, writing and drawing (White, 1992). He also refused to participate in class as he would make sketches depicting his teachers in humorous ways, also targeting the physically and mentally disabled (Kane, 2005). As a result John's academic performance began to deteriorate. This could have been his way of retaliating against his aunt as she did not encourage his artistic abilities. His aunt Mimi would often enter his room and discard all his sketches and poetry as she believed this to be a waste of time (Norman, 2008). The sense of failure and a lack of self-confidence could arise if shame and doubt dominate over autonomy in the second stage of psychosocial development (Linn, Fabricant, & Linn, 1988). This could thus explain John's behaviour at the time.

Part of the process of physical maturation in stage two involves the development of bladder, muscle, and sphincter control (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). However, there appears to be no evidence of John's physical development in the biographical data gathered. Thus, this may suggest that he may not have experienced a fixation in this stage with regards to his physical maturation (Norman, 2008). On the other hand, according to Sadock and Sadock (2007), excessive shaming during early childhood could contribute to delinquent behaviour later on. Delinquency is evident in John's case, as previously mentioned, as seen in him shoplifting and being involved in inappropriate behaviours such as the use and abuse of drugs (Norman, 2008).

In contrast, extreme inhibition and control in the early years could cause the individual to do exactly the opposite in the future (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). John's defiance of authority and rebellion, as discussed throughout Chapter 4, might be viewed as a refusal to be inhibited or controlled as he had been in early childhood. The best example of this is the fact that John refused to listen to his teachers and gained a reputation of having a rebellious nature around his classmates (Norman, 2008).

Consequently, the researcher is of the opinion that John's neglectful parents and then his aunt's strict and inflexible caregiving hindered John's navigation through the second stage of psychosocial development. This left him with an impaired sense of autonomy and control on the one hand, and a devitalising sense of shame and doubt on the other. However, the researcher suggests that although John might have experienced a sense of ambivalence in this stage, the literature shows that John did not achieve the ego strength of will at this particular stage but later on in life as is discussed later in this chapter. It is important to note that both stage two and three have been intertwined by the researcher, as may be seen in the conceptual matrix. The reason for this is that John's first five or six years of life were spent being shuttled back

and forth from one house to the next, and because he was only placed permanently under in his aunt Mimi's care from the age of five to six years (Kane, 2005).

7.3.3 Initiative versus guilt (3 - 6 years)

Between the ages of three and approximately six years, children need to deal with the crisis of initiative versus guilt (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). During this stage, children usually enter preschool where they direct play and social interactions and initiate various activities instead of merely imitating others (Elkind, 1970). With their new motor and cognitive capacities, children can manipulate others and provoke reactions which may cause them to feel guilty about the acts initiated (Welchman, 2000). Due to these reactions, others (especially parents) have a great impact on whether or not the child will resolve the stage successfully (Baron & Spear, 1989). According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) the successful resolution of the third stage leads to the acquisition of the ego strength, **purpose**.

7.3.3.1 Mother and father's absence (1 – 6 years)

The establishment of secure attachment to both parents and identifying with the parent of the same sex is important during this stage (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). The nature of Julia and Alfred's parenting style, characterised by being absent and aloof at times, might have thwarted this process in their son, as discussed in Section 4.3 of Chapter 4. Although there appears to be little evidence in the biographical data about specific examples of John's activities between the ages of three and six, there is an account of John trying to bring his parents together and save their marriage during a heated argument between them (Norman, 2008). According to Erikson's theory this may be viewed as John's attempt to take initiative. Furthermore, it can be suggested that other activities he might have initiated, such as fantasy, play, curious exploration or

questions, were probably unconstructively criticised by his parents, and later by his overly critical and protective aunt Mimi (Kane, 2005).

7.3.3.2 Discussion of stage three

It can be said that a complete lack of initiative is not evidenced in John's functioning. Various other examples in the biographical data may be interpreted as John's initiative gone wrong, although the researcher hypothesises that John did indeed demonstrate a sense of initiative. Many of John's previously mentioned behaviours, such as the physical fights and disobedience of authority, could be viewed as acts of initiative (Norman, 2008). Throughout his life, John's conduct had seldom if ever been criticised or punished by his parents. Instead it was his aunt Mimi who assumed this position (see Section 4.3, Chapter 4).

According to the literature, John usually did not show embarrassment or remorse regarding his mischievous behaviours at school, insinuating a lack of guilt concerning his behaviour (Norman, 2008). Additionally, John's attempts to justify his bad conduct at school and his arguments when he strayed from acceptable behavior, further suggests an absence of guilt (Norman, 2008).

In terms of the ego strength of purpose, it seems that this might have manifested in John's development and functioning, although it may not always have been socially acceptable. In the previously discussed behaviours, which may have been interpreted as initiative gone wrong, a sense of purpose may have been demonstrated. As John's undesirable behaviours may have been dismissed by his mother and punished by his aunt, John may have conducted his acts as a means to receive ambiguous responses as opposed to the too familiar criticism, and thus achieve purpose as the ego strength. Similarly, John's later behaviour and rebellious nature might have served the purpose of winning attention and fewer critical responses from his aunt. Purpose is also illustrated by the

pride John took in being the leader of the Beatles and gaining the reputation of being a rebel, as discussed in Section 4.5 of Chapter 4. According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) the ego strength of purpose is yielded when individuals devise bold plans and take pride in accomplishing their goals.

Thus, the researcher speculates that for John, the result of this third stage encompassed both (a) an acquired sense of initiative to do both right and wrong without any guilt; as well as (b) an underlying sense of guilt fostered by stern and critical parenting in his early years. Additionally, the researcher hypothesises that John did indeed acquire the ego strength of purpose later in life as discussed later in this chapter.

7.3.4 Industry versus inferiority (6 - 12 years)

This stage, industry versus inferiority, generally occurs when children enter a more formalised educational setting such as primary school. If they master this stage successfully, a sense of being competent or industrious develops (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). On the other hand, if children do not effectively succeed at this stage, they are left with a sense of failure or inferiority (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977). Because the child's social context expands during this stage, the evaluation, appraisal and regard of peers, teachers and the broader society becomes increasingly important (Baron & Spear, 1989). The ego strength of **competence** is said to develop if this stage is resolved successfully (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

7.3.4.1 Love of music renaissance (6 – 12 years)

In the early 1950's the genre of rock and roll music swept across the Atlantic and John became an instant fan (Goldman, 1988). Music and especially rock and roll constituted an escape for John from his everyday life, something his aunt Mimi disapproved of (White, 1992). His mother Julia encouraged his love of music by buying him his first guitar and

teaching him how to play (Norman, 2008). John later became very popular in school as he founded his first musical group called the 'Quarrymen' (White, 1992). John began displaying insecurities at this stage as he felt that his first band member, Paul McCartney, was more talented than he was (Norman, 2008). However, John acknowledged Paul's contribution to the band and decided he would be an asset to the group (Norman, 2008).

According to the literature John failed much of his high school subjects, including his favourite one (i.e., art), as his music consumed most of his time (Norman, 2008). John was thus unable to enter college but Mimi managed to enroll him in an art college to study a four-year diploma in arts and design (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). John was of normal intelligence but he was not interested in studying; he merely wanted to become a millionaire. John's fellow students and teachers viewed him as disruptive and problematic, never submitting assignments and always doing his best to hinder learning in the classroom (Norman, 2008). Despite his failures and disruptive behaviours throughout school, John possessed the necessary requirements to master the ego strength of competence but only later in life. The biographical data suggests hints of feelings of inferiority throughout this stage which only seem to subside later in life.

7.3.4.2 Discussion of stage four

In 1958 John's academic performance took an even bigger dip as he failed an art exam soon after his mother's death (Kane, 2005). He then had no intention of completing his art studies and as a result dropped out of college (Lennon, 2005). John then focused all his attention on rock and roll music and decided to start touring with his band, the Beatles. Mimi's attempts to persuade John to return to college and her strong disapproval of his decision did not stop John from chasing his dream (Norman, 2008). John's strong-willed nature regarding his dream is reflective of feelings of

competency and adequacy which propelled his eagerness to follow his passion (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977).

A sense of industry is also typically reflected in children's ability to become responsible adults who can successfully cope with impediments (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Despite John's troubled youth and unpleasant experiences, he is often described in the literature as a strong-willed and passionate individual who was able to cope with obstacles, although not always in socially desirable ways as seen throughout Chapter 4. However, John also displayed irresponsibility and at times wasn't able of successfully coping with obstacles; this possibly suggesting a sense of inferiority. Specific examples include his experimentation with substances and engaging in acts of adultery with married women (Norman, 2008). For instance, he often used stimulants such as amphetamines to help him play through long sets (Kane, 2005).

Another possible consequence of ineffectively undertaking stage four is the development of a compensatory drive for money, power and prestige in order to fend off feelings of inferiority (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Although less clear, this might have been true in John's case. An example of this is evident in his ridiculing Brian Epstein (i.e., band manager) for being homosexual and Jewish, which is viewed as being John's way to assert his desire to be the band leader and to make it clear that Brian was simply the manager (Norman, 2008). This may have been an indication of the great meaning John attached to having power and prestige.

Although the child's broader social context is the focal concern during this stage, parents also significantly contribute to whether or not the child will resolve the stage successfully (Elkind, 1970). According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977), when parents are critical and view children's efforts as a nuisance, they urge feelings of failure. Thus it is possible that in spite of John's talent and success in his band, the

disapproving parenting he received from Mimi, as discussed in the first three stages, fortified a sense of inferiority and incompetence as opposed to industry. Furthermore, in this stage children engage more in social comparison than before and are likely to acquire a sense of inferiority if those comparisons turn out unfavourably (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). One such comparison in John's case is that he constantly felt overshadowed by his band member Paul McCartney (Norman, 2008). As a result, John felt very insecure about his singing and guitar playing although he had an alluring stage presence (Kane, 2005).

In light of the above, the researcher hypothesises that John's unfortunate family and home environment, together with his problematic navigation through the first three stages of psychosocial development, overruled his promising academic and social contexts, thus cultivating a sense of inferiority. Furthermore, it appears that John at this stage did not achieve the ego strength of competence but seems to do so later in life. With mistrust, limitless autonomy, shame, doubt, unfavorable initiative, guilt and inferiority, John was at a disadvantage when he had to take on the immense challenge of the next stage – establishing an identity.

7.3.5 Identity versus role confusion (12 - 20 years)

Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980) stated that the crisis of identity versus role confusion occurs predominantly during adolescence. In this fifth stage adolescents attempt to define who they are, where they are headed and how they fit into society (Sigelman & Rider, 2009). If they succeed at this stage, they establish an integrated positive psychosocial identity and acquire the ego strength of **fidelity**. However, if they fail they are left with role confusion and a disturbed self-image (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980).

7.3.5.1 Life changes / Rise of the Beatles (12 – 20 years)

As previously mentioned, at this stage John found himself away from Mimi's excessively controlling nature which allowed him the freedom of experimenting with substances and pursuing multiple sexual exploits (Norman, 2008). In August 1960 the recently formed band members found themselves in Hamburg performing at a local club, which demanded a lot from the young teenagers, especially John (Riley, 2010). During their time at this club, the band met Brian Epstein who became their manager until 1967 (Goldman, 1988). Later on it was said that Brian's involvement with the Beatles sprouted from his sexual attraction to John and rumours quickly spread that the two were involved in a homosexual affair (Kane, 2005). According to the literature, Brian would often go on vacations with John but one particular vacation that caught the public's attention was after the birth of John's first son, Julian (Kane, 2005). According to Harry (2000a), John often described their relationship as a love affair that was never consummated.

As Beatles fame grew in the 1960's, the term 'Beatlemania' was coined, which described the mass hysteria that greeted the men wherever they went (Norman, 2008). However, this new-found fame seemed to affect John as he began to feel overwhelmed by all the attention (Shotton & Schaffner, 1984). John felt that his involvement in the band and their fame limited his abilities to express himself on relevant world issues, thus resulting in his feelings of frustration (Kane, 2005). John felt confined and unfulfilled by the duties of the band which was mentioned in previous stages, as he struggled with confinement and structure from an early age (Coleman, 1995).

7.3.5.2 Discussion of stage five

The fifth stage of psychosocial development typically portrays a time of experimentation during which adolescents who are in search of their identities often transform their appearance, relationships, major subjects and group memberships (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2010). At times, adolescents experiment outside of established societal boundaries, causing them to get into trouble and occasionally to earn the label of disruptive behaviour or conduct disorder (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). As previously mentioned, experimentation formed a major part of John's youth. His multiple sexual pursuits and consumption of drugs constitute clear examples of this (Norman, 2008). During this time John showed signs of being dissatisfied with his friends and band members as well as his failed marriage to then wife Cynthia (Coleman, 1995). His experimentation with substances became so extreme that it reflected in his song writing, and is particularly evident in the band's Sgt. Pepper album released in 1967 (Gould, 2008).

According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1980), the experimentation of the adolescent years comes to an end when an integrated identity is formed. With the appreciation and knowledge of who they are, where they belong and how they fit into society, adolescents no longer feel the need to try out different roles. Therefore, if experimentation persists, this results in an extended moratorium and is an indication that the individual is still searching for an identity (Montgomery, 2005). It is clear from the biographical data that John experimented with different roles long after the age of 18 years (see Section 4.5). Examples include John's inability to complete his studies at art college (Norman, 2008). He also experimented sexually and tried out different roles during and even after his rise to fame (Kane, 2005). Additionally, his appearance changed during the 1960's and well into the 1970's (Kane, 2005).

Throughout his late adolescence and early adult years, John searched for his place in the world. Moving between different homes from an early age and later between different cities and countries, John was clearly confused about where he belonged (Gould, 2008). Additionally, John began to withdraw from the band and his surroundings soon after meeting his second wife, Yoko Ono, in 1966 (Kane, 2005). He then began to shift his focus beyond the Beatles and, together with Yoko, created another band called the 'Plastic Ono band' (Harry, 2000b). According to Harry (2000b), the new band released famous singles such as 'Give peace a chance' and 'Instant karma'. These songs symbolise John's search for identity and his desire to belong (Norman, 2008).

This stage saw John confronting a lot of instability and uncertainty. Therefore, it is inevitable that the researcher speculates that John may not have resolved the stage successfully, but instead remained confused about himself, who he was and where he wanted to be. However, some evidence in the literature suggests that John may have begun to resolve this later on in his life. Although John struggled to form a strong self-definition and internalised societal values, he managed to become faithful to his second wife Yoko in his later years, although the same cannot be said during his rise to fame. Successful resolution of this stage, together with the preceding four stages, is considered a prerequisite for successful resolution of stage six (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1977, 1978, 1980). Consequently, John's failure to reach an integrated identity along with his prior unresolved crises and unattained ego strengths as previously mentioned probably paved the way for failing to conquer the crisis of intimacy versus isolation discussed in the section below.

7.3.6 Intimacy versus isolation (20 - 28 years)

According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978), psychosocial growth continues during the adult years. The sixth stage of psychosocial personality

development, intimacy versus isolation, roughly extends from late adolescence to early middle age. The successful resolution of prior crises is necessary for the individual to successfully resolve this stage (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). However, it is crucial to note that this does not mean that the individual will not reach stage six if prior stages have not been resolved (Craig, 1996; Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). Instead, the individual will still face the crisis of intimacy versus isolation, but will experience greater difficulty in navigating it successfully and is therefore more likely to fail to resolve this stage. Furthermore, if prior crises were unresolved, they are likely to resurface in this stage of development (Craig, 1996).

The core of stage six is founded on becoming involved in a relationship and achieving a sense of intimacy or remaining isolated (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). With the term 'intimacy' Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) suggested more than sexual intercourse alone. He described intimacy as the capacity to commit to concrete partnerships, including all close affiliations such as relationships with acquaintances, family and friends as well as the ability to accept and tolerate such commitments along with their compromises (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). If this is achieved the ego strength of **love** arises (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978). However, unsuccessful resolution of this stage results in isolation which Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) referred to as distantiation from any and all forces that the individual deems a threat to his or her personality.

7.3.6.1 The rebel in search of peace and love (20 - 28 years)

In 1970 at the age of 30 after the separation of the Beatles and John's marriage to Yoko Ono, he began to undergo primal therapy as previously discussed. This form of therapy allowed John to deal with his childhood issues by reliving painful experiences (Kerr, 2007). During this time John subjectively expressed his repressed childhood emotions through his music, which served as a cathartic experience for him (Sheff, 2000). Many changes are evident during this stage in

John's life; changes which accompanied the socio-political and cultural contexts of the era (Norman, 2008). For instance, between 1968 and 1969 there were numerous social and political protests around the world which drew John and Yoko to become involved (Kane, 2005).

It was also during this time that John's rebellious nature began to flourish as he went against his manager's plea to avoid becoming involved in protests as this would affect his contract with the band (Norman, 2008). John's rebelliousness went as far as returning his MBE medal (i.e., Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire) received from Queen Elizabeth in 1969; then seen as the ultimate symbol of British establishment (Norman, 2008). John did this to protest against Britain's involvement in the Biafran war (i.e., the Nigerian Civil War). John's anti-war protests and activist behaviour became so strong and popular among anti-war activists that his powerful song 'Give peace a chance' became an anthem around the world, but especially in the USA (Kane, 2005).

These events led to John becoming his generation's leading social critic and saw him branching out into women's rights and liberation. John displayed his passion for this cause in releasing a song titled 'Woman is the nigger of the world' in his album 'Some time in New York' (Norman, 2008). Yoko's influence over John is obvious in many spheres of John's adulthood, but more specifically in his views of women. He had been quoted saying that Yoko was the first woman to confront his chauvinistic attitude toward women (Sheff, 2000).

Although John displayed promiscuity in his early years (Norman, 2008), it is clear that through therapy and Yoko's strong influence he managed to become physically intimate and displayed signs of commitment. Therefore, John's psychosocial development during this stage cannot be labeled as vulnerable. It can thus be said that the experience of therapy although later in life, may have resolved several of John's previously unresolved crises, as proposed by Sheff (2000). Furthermore, this may have steered John in the direction of intimacy as opposed to isolation.

7.3.6.2 Discussion of stage six

Despite the setbacks that John experienced it appears that, despite difficulties along the way, he managed to navigate through this stage relatively successfully. As Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) suggested, prior unresolved crises which led to the acquisition of mistrust, limitless autonomy, shame, doubt, detrimental initiative, guilt, inferiority and role confusion still continued, though to a lesser degree during this stage in John's life. After having attended therapy in 1970, at the age of 30 John appeared to have dealt with various of these unresolved issues. Thus, based on the examples provided which portray John's cathartic experience, it can be hypothesised that he may have acquired a degree of intimacy and, consequently, the ego strength of love.

7.3.7 Generativity versus stagnation (28 - 40 years)

This stage of psychosocial development occurs during middle adulthood (Santrock, 2009) and involves helping the younger generation to develop and lead useful lives. This often takes the form of bearing and raising children oneself, and is also reflected in other activities such as community service (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) suggested that the primary concern here is to give something back to the world, to do something to ensure the success of future generations. This stage also encompasses productivity and creativity. Having previously achieved the capacity to form intimate relationships, the person now broadens the investment of ego and libidinal energy to include groups, organisations and society (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

Through generative behaviour the individual can pass on knowledge and skills while obtaining a measure of satisfaction in having achieved a role with senior authority and responsibility in the community (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). According to Erikson (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978) the successful resolution of this stage leads to the achievement of the ego strength of **care**. However, when

persons cannot develop true generativity this may lead to profound personal stagnation, masked by forms of escapism such as alcohol and drug abuse, as well as sexual and other infidelities (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). Other consequences of the unsuccessful resolution of this stage include, as proposed by Sadock and Sadock (2007), mid-life crisis or premature invalidism which refers to early onset of being chronically ill or disabled physically and psychologically.

Examples of generative behaviour include, for instance, some successful artists and celebrities donating time and money to charitable causes or becoming spokespersons for organisations they see as important (Friedman & Schustack, 2009). The inability to take this generative perspective results in a feeling that life is worthless and boring (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978).

7.3.7.1 The final years (28 - 40 years)

As previously mentioned John experimented with substances and had various adulterous encounters. During his final years his marriage to Yoko suffered a major setback which they resolved by spending some time apart (Coleman, 1995). After their reunion later in 1975, Yoko fell pregnant with their son Sean and John decided to remedy his parenting approach by assuming the role of house husband (Sheff, 2000). This came about due to John's lack of involvement in his first son's life, which led John to completely transform and abandon his solo career as he focused on being a better father (Norman, 2008). Although John led a relatively secluded life from 1975 to 1980, he continued to write songs and never ceased to work towards the ideologies he strived for (Schinder & Schwartz, 2007).

7.3.7.2 Discussion of stage seven

John's death in 1980 at the age of 40 cut short his ability to complete this stage of psychosocial development. However, John's final years provided enough evidence for the researcher to speculate on certain outcomes and thus to discuss

what was yielded by the biographical data available. It is clear that John underwent a multitude of experiences from his birth in 1940 until his death in 1980, which provides a wide spectrum of his life-span development.

In the time frame between 28 and 40 years we saw John transition from drugs, alcohol abuse and even infidelity to undergoing a complete transformation as seen in his becoming a househusband and caring for his son Sean (see Section 4.7, Chapter 4). Initially it may seem that he might have experienced some difficulty in navigating successfully through this last stage of psychosocial development, as previously mentioned, which suggests an inclination to experience a sense of stagnation and feelings of worthlessness (Erikson, 1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978).

However, the latter part of John's life, together with the previous discussion in this chapter, displayed signs of generativity through his desire to change many socio-political aspects of his era, such as women's rights and liberation issues etc. Other examples of his generative behaviour include his desire to raise his son with Yoko and to undo the wrongs he had committed with his previous son. Additionally, John left his mark in the world through his powerful lyrics encouraging peace and harmony, as seen in the song 'Imagine' which was written in the 1970s and was voted the UK's favourite song. To this day John's influential songs continue to inspire and promote the principles he advocated (Harry, 2000b). Thus, on the basis of Erikson's theory (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977, 1978), the researcher speculates that John may have successfully resolved this psychosocial stage of development and gained the ego strength of care long before his death at the early age of 40 years.

In Chapter 2 a discussion is provided regarding psychopathological outcomes which may occur if Erikson's stages are unsuccessfully resolved as proposed by Sadock and Sadock (2007). It is worth noting that although the literature may suggest possible signs of psychopathology in Lennon's development, he was undiagnosed (Norman, 2008). Therefore, the researcher did not elaborate further

on the matter although a discussion is provided to ensure the comprehensiveness of this study.

7.4 Conclusive Summary of Ego Strengths

7.4.1 Stage 1: Basic trust versus mistrust

It is clear from the information provided previously that John did not acquire the ego strength of hope, which results from the successful resolution of this psychosocial developmental stage. The biographical data shows that John did not develop a sense of basic trust with his caregivers due to the unfortunate circumstances he experienced. For instance, as previously mentioned John was only an infant when often left alone by his mother, thus having his needs unsatisfied. This later reflected in his rebellious nature and defiance of authority. John only managed to resolve this and many other life crises much later in his life.

7.4.2 Stage 2: Autonomy versus shame and doubt

The ego strength at this stage upon successful resolution of the life crisis is will according to the psychosocial developmental framework. John however, did not achieve this ego strength as he experienced a sense of shame and doubt as seen in the biographical data provided. John's caregivers were more often than not critical and impatient toward him bearing in mind that he was approximately three years of age. John lived with his mother and stepfather until the age of five years during which he experienced various arguments with his authoritative stepfather. Later, under the care of his aunt Mimi he continued to experience very strict parenting. As previously discussed, Mimi would often discard his artistic talents by destroying his sketches and poetry. Therefore, this may have resulted in his feelings of shame and doubt later manifesting in his delinquent and rebellious behaviours. John only managed to resolve this crisis later in life.

7.4.3 Stage 3: Initiative versus guilt

Despite his unfortunate first few years of life John managed to achieve the ego strength of purpose accompanied by this stage. Although not always in socially desirable manners as previously discussed, John took pride in accomplishing goals which is indicative of a sense of initiative. For instance, at approximately the age of five years John displayed initiative when he tried to bring his parents together during a heated argument as previously mentioned in this chapter. Although there appears to be little biographical evidence of John's activities between the ages of three and six Norman (2008) postulates that John often initiated fantasy play and demonstrated a curious explorative nature.

7.4.4 Stage 4: Industry versus inferiority

From the data discussed previously in this chapter John did not seem to form a sense of competence and industriousness although some incidents may suggest otherwise. For instance his mother's encouragement to pursue his love of music and his popularity in school due to his band the "Quarrymen" may suggest a sense of competence and industry. However, John displayed more feelings of inferiority which are evident in his compensatory behaviours of assertion of power and intense interest in prestige. Thus, the researcher believes that the ego strength of competence was not achieved between the age of six to 12, but much later in life.

7.4.5 Stage 5: Identity versus role confusion

As previously discussed, John's late teenage years and beginning of his 20's were marked by experimentation with substances as well as multiple sexual pursuits. The researcher believes that his behaviours hindered him from forming an intergrated identity at this stage of his life, thus preventing him from achieving

the ego strength of fidelity at this particular stage, only achieving it later in his 30's as discussed previously in this chapter.

7.4.6 Stage 6: Intimacy versus isolation

During his late 20's and the preceding stage of John's life there is clear evidence in the biographical data that various changes took place in terms of his psychosocial development. John began to face previous unresolved crises through the aid of Primal Therapy as previously mentioned. He began to focus on his relationship with his wife Yoko as well as become involved with socio-political causes. Therefore, it is safe for the researcher to suggest that the ego strength of love was achieved at this stage.

7.4.7 Stage 7: Generativity versus stagnation

As the previous unresolved crises seem to be resolved in the last two stages of John's life it is safe to suggest that the ego strength of care was achieved at this stage, approximately in his late 30's. This is evident in John's behaviours during his last years of life. He became involved in his son's life by becoming a full time father as well as other generative behaviours of passing on knowledge and leaving his mark in world of peace and love.

7.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of John's psychosocial personality development. A conceptual outline of the findings was provided, after which the researcher illustrated each of the seven psychosocial developmental stages undergone by John Lennon in his short life. The seven historical periods of Lennon's life were thus illuminated in the context of Erikson's psychosocial personality development theory. The next chapter mentions the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of this study.

Chapter 8

Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

8.1 Chapter Preview

This final chapter concludes the study. Presented below is a discussion of the limitations of the study and accompanying recommendations for future research, followed by comments on the value of the study. The chapter concludes with general remarks on the study yielded by the researcher's process of personal reflexivity.

8.2 Conclusion

This study entailed a psychobiographical account of the life of John Lennon (1940 - 1980). The principal objective of the study was to explore and describe Lennon's psychodynamic life with a specific focus on the exploration and description of his psychosocial personality development according to Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory. This objective thus needed a detailed biographical account of John's life to which the theory could be applied.

The secondary objective of the study was to test the applicability and relevance of the content and stages of the selected psychosocial theory. This elicited a comparison of the research findings with the propositions and conceptualisations contained in Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory. The exploratory-descriptive nature of the psychobiographical study facilitated the attainment of the objectives.

The findings yielded by the theory were provided in Chapter 7 and can thus be summed up as follows. The primary conclusions are, firstly, that John's navigation through the psychosocial personality development stages was equally successful and unsuccessful. Secondly, John's life showed a drastic change later in his life. Third, and lastly, the findings of this study supported the use of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory to gain a psychological understanding of John as an individual. The limitations of this study and accompanying recommendations are discussed in the next section.

8.3 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations

8.3.1 Psychological framework used

Erikson's psychosocial theory (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) posed a limitation to the study in itself in that it lacked a clear and sufficient explanatory structure for some of its constructs. Although this theory provided possible aetiological explanations for why the individual would reach a certain outcome of a certain stage (e.g., critical and impatient caregivers might prompt a sense of shame and doubt in their children), it neglected to explain the specific criteria which constitute an outcome. An example of this is found in the sense of initiative referred to in stage three of the psychosocial theory. The theory indicated that successful resolution of this stage results in the acquisition of a sense of initiative, implying the initiation of activities. However, the theory did not specify the nature of activities that compose an established sense of initiative. Thus, any initiated activities, whether they be good or bad (i.e., adaptive or maladaptive), might be interpreted as being representative of a sense of initiative. In this light, the researcher was confronted by the question of whether John's initiated 'bad' acts (e.g., misbehaving at school, etc.) could be representative of a sense of initiative. Similarly, the theory did not stipulate inclusion-exclusion criteria for the constructs (e.g., John might have felt industrious through his acts) or identity. For instance, John's role confusion might have constituted an identity in and of itself. It is thus recommended that future research should aim to re-evaluate the theory's explanatory framework in terms of its constructs and should attempt to further refine the criteria that make up the constructs within adaptive development and functioning versus maladaptive development and functioning.

Another limitation of the study, specifically pertaining to the use of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory, involves the insufficient differentiation between the two opposing outcomes of each stage and their maladaptations. John was deprived of control in his early years which could have contributed to him acting and behaving the way he did (see Chapter 7). However, his behaviours might as well have been

interpreted as compensatory behaviour for an acquired sense of shame and doubt. On the contrary, John's desire for power could represent a sense of industry when interpreted as a compensatory drive to fend off feelings of inferiority. Future research might consider exploring the relationship between the different outcomes of various stages and destructive behaviour.

A third limitation is found in the limited information available on the relationship between Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) normal developmental theory and psychopathology. Although psychopathology was not a key aspect in John's life in this study, it could be beneficial for future research to attempt to bring this aspect into relation with his psychosocial personality development in order to provide an integrated and holistic view of psychosocial development. As a result, the researcher refrained from pathologising John and instead aimed to convey a psychological understanding and explanation of his actions and experiences. Therefore, it is recommended that more research be conducted on the relationship between psychosocial theory and psychopathology.

8.3.2 Subject of study

Regarding the chosen subject of this study, there appears to be a limited scope of information provided by data sources. Rich biographies in particular were limited and most of the sources available focused on information regarding Lennon's rise to fame as a member of the Beatles. Therefore, the researcher had to rely heavily on authors such as Norman (2008) and Kane (2005), as these provided more detailed, although still restricted, information about John's life before he became famous. Additionally, although the mentioned authors included brief overviews of John's life, family and development, detailed information on specific aspects such as his religion and sleeping patterns, for instance, were ignored. Therefore, some important themes have not been adequately explored and the richness of the study was diminished. The recommendation here is that future psychobiographers select a subject about whom there is a vast body of biographical information.

Another limitation involves the accuracy and objectivity of the data sources. Some views of John's early life and upbringing varied, with some of these sources containing conflicting views. Thus, the researcher was faced with the possibility of having to draw conclusions from inadequate data. This was eradicated by the researcher refraining from doing so by engaging in in-depth and prolonged exposure to the data as well as adequate submersion in the data. This allowed the researcher to investigate and validate any distortions, variations and recurrent patterns.

8.3.3 Psychobiographical research

The preliminary considerations related to the methodology of psychobiographical research and the manner in which they were dealt with, were comprehensively discussed in Chapter 5. Additional limitations pertaining to the use of the psychobiographical approach in this particular study are discussed below.

The first aspect to consider is that of external validity, because the findings relating to John's psychological development and functioning cannot be generalised to a larger population group. However, the aim of the study was analytical generalisation instead of statistical generalisation. Therefore, the focus fell on comparing the findings to the psychosocial personality development theory.

Secondly, the internal validity of the study relating to causality is relatively low. Hence, as previously stated, the aim of the study was not to explain a cause-and-effect relationship, but to explore and describe the historical life of the chosen subject within the context of a psychological framework. Credibility was reconsidered as important and was achieved through extensive and prolonged engagement with the data on John's life. This included an in-depth exploration and analysis of data samples, data and researcher triangulation.

Thirdly, the findings of the study are tentative and restricted to the psychological framework of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory. There are various other possibilities to explore and describe human development and functioning, and thus the findings of the study should not give rise to any overstated claims. On the contrary, it

might enhance alternative explorations and descriptions of John's psychological development and functioning.

In conclusion, psychobiography with its qualitative character and narrative dimension is a comprehensive, lengthy and time consuming endeavor (Fouché, 1999). In light of this, the analysis, presentation and discussion of the findings required a great deal of time, complicated documentation and, at times, replication. Future researchers considering a psychobiographical study should make sure that they realise the extensive nature of the approach. The value of the study and recommendations for future research are discussed in the next section.

8.4 Value of the Study and Recommendations

8.4.1 Psychological framework used

Due to its significance, Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory has been suggested for use in psychobiography (Noland, 1977). The theory enabled the researcher to analyse the subject of the study holistically and the interdependence of his various life stages as well as longitudinally over the entire lifespan. Additionally, the theory allowed the researcher to explore and describe both the individual and communal elements of the subject's life, and link his inner experiences with outer reality.

Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory is widely used by practitioners in the psychology profession to conceptualise patients' problems and direct therapeutic interventions as proposed by Kivnick and Wells (2014). The findings of the study supported the use of Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory to gain a psychological understanding of the individual and therefore it might ratify the continuing applicability and relevance of the theory. Furthermore, psychology practitioners are often advised to keep an open mind when they utilise theories and models in their work with patients (Greene & Kropf, 2011). The constructs and outcomes proposed by theorists are not necessarily definite and must not be stringently followed without taking into account the individual's uniqueness (Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 2011). Therefore, this study demonstrated the importance of an open-minded perspective, specifically with regard to Erikson's (1950, 1963, 1968, 1977) theory. An example of this is how John, despite his

obvious difficulty navigating through the beginning stages of his life, seemed to have resolved many of his childhood crises toward the end of his life.

8.4.2 Subject of study

The subject of this study, John Lennon, was a famous member of the Beatles band, known for his uniqueness as a person (Norman, 2008). Although his impact in the world of music and in the social-political context is extensive, little research seems to have been conducted from a psychological point of view. As such, this study might elicit further research into Lennon's life as well as into the psychosocial developmental theory chosen for this study.

Most of the biographical data available on John Lennon's life focuses on his rise to fame as a Beatle. Emphasis is also placed on his relationship with his second wife, Yoko Ono. There is limited data from an exploratory-descriptive vantage point and information on his early childhood has been neglected or was not documented, as previously mentioned. This study thus explored and described John's development and functioning within his particular life context and without seeking to determine a cause-and-effect relationship. Consequently, this study introduced a new dimension to the study of John's life, consequently shedding light on Lennon as an individual.

It is vital to note that John Lennon was selected on the basis of interest and uniqueness as well as the existence of many unsolved or untold mysteries surrounding his life (e.g., neglect, psychopathology and unusual behaviours). His uniqueness and the fact that he founded the very famous Beatles band increased the effectiveness of purposive sampling (Neuman, 2003), thus making him a suitable candidate for this study. Additionally, as previously stated, there appears to be no evidence of an existing psychobiographical study on John's life using the specific psychosocial developmental theory chosen. The other psychobiography focused on applying the individual psychology of Alfred Adler.

8.4.3 Psychobiographical research

The general value of psychobiographical research was previously discussed and what follows is a discussion of the particular psychobiographical approach followed for purposes of this study.

To begin with, the study focused on John Lennon's psychosocial personality development and his functioning. Therefore, the study investigated a novel and different dimension to the life of John Lennon that has not previously been portrayed. Secondly, this study applied a psychological framework to a detailed biographical account of John's life in order to gain a psychological understanding of the subject's development and functioning. Thus, the study illustrated the value of biography for psychology and, in turn, the value of psychology for biography (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Additionally, the data gathered were situated within Lennon's particular socio-cultural and historical contexts, which forced the researcher to interpret his development and functioning against this background. As a result, the important influence of contextual factors such as family, community and institutions on human development and functioning were highlighted. Last but not least, this study contributed to the available body of psychobiographical studies in South Africa and added to the field's growth within academic psychology.

8.5 Reflective Remarks

According to Ponterotto (2014) psychobiography is a highly personal industry, and therefore it is used to clarify the analyst's personal motivations through a process called personal reflexivity, as proposed by Kóváry (2011). Personal reflexivity refers to reflection on the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research. Also, it includes thinking about how the research may have affected, and possibly altered us as people and as researchers (Willig, 2008). Ponterotto (2014) further explained that these unconscious aims exist whether we take them into consideration or not, and they

determine our approach. In light of this, the researcher thought it necessary to describe her relationship to the subject and include her biases and expectations (Ponterotto, 2014).

One of the strongest incentives for undertaking this study was the researcher's firm belief in a non-judgmental approach. It is undeniable that famous musicians are often labeled and made out by society as egoistic and eccentric individuals. There is a tendency to forget that these individuals are also human beings like the rest of us. By stating this, the researcher is not attempting to justify such individuals' unacceptable behaviours. However, the researcher attaches value to the ability to separate human beings from their behaviour and to refrain from judging the person or their actions. This study thus allowed the researcher to provide possible explanations for Lennon's actions and experiences, with the hope of extending a view of him, not as a rock star and rebellious person, but instead as a human being with a troubled upbringing and interesting personality (Norman, 2008).

Another motivation for having embarked on this study involved a fascination and interest in the field of psychobiographical study. The researcher personally enjoys research which is conducted from a qualitative standpoint as this approach allows for a more personal engagement with the subject under investigation. The researcher is also intrigued with finding out personal details and in-depth information about remarkable individuals. Secondly, the researcher is of the opinion that such extraordinary individuals may serve as examples and lessons for current and future generations.

It is crucial to note that the researcher was in the beginning of her psychology career when this study was conducted. The researcher's knowledge of conceptualising an individual's actions, experiences and problems holistically over a lifespan has without doubt been enriched, thanks to having conducted this psychobiographical study. As conceptualisation forms a large part of training and practice in the psychological field, this study served as a helpful learning tool.

8.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a conclusion to the study by outlining its limitations as well as making possible recommendations for future research. Additionally, the value of the study and further recommendations, where appropriate, were presented. In conclusion, the researcher's general reflective remarks finalised the study.

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