



## Emily Hobhouse's Psychosocial Developmental Trajectory as Anti-War Campaigner: A Levinsonian Psychobiography

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### Abstract

*The aim of this psychobiography was to uncover, reconstruct and illustrate significant trajectories of psychosocial development and historical events over the lifespan of Emily Hobhouse (1860-1926). The British-born Hobhouse later became an anti-war campaigner and social activist who exposed the appalling conditions of the British concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), as evidenced by primary and secondary historical data. Purposive sampling was used to select Hobhouse as a significant and exemplary subject. Levinson's four eras or seasons of lifespan development served as the theoretical psychological approach. The study was undertaken against the background of Merleau-Ponty's ontological philosophy that elucidates a human science phenomenology where the individual cannot be separated from her social world. Alexander's model of identifying salient biographical themes was utilized and a conceptual psycho-historical framework, based on both the life cycle theory of Levinson and significant historical periods throughout Hobhouse's life, was employed to assist with data gathering, categorisation, and analyses. The findings highlight significant psychosocial and historical events in the life of Hobhouse that shaped her development as an anti-war campaigner. These include: The role of her strong-willed and determined mother; the denial of an opportunity to study and pursue a formal education; her management of painful feelings of abandonment and grief; the care of her father during his illness and his eventual death; the abrupt ending of her failed romantic relationship; her networking capacity; and her open-mindedness and capacity for independent humanitarian thought. Against the philosophical background of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological ontology, Levinson's theory and eras proved valuable in identifying these particular psychosocial life experiences and historical events as having shaped Emily Hobhouse into an anti-war campaigner.*

### Brief Historical Background to Emily Hobhouse

Emily Hobhouse, who for many in South Africa is seen as a local Florence Nightingale and regarded as one of the world's bravest women (Welman, 2009), played an influential role in the history of South Africa. Emily, a British-born citizen, was denounced by her country as a traitor because of her involvement as an anti-war campaigner and social activist during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), and later during the First World War,

when she rendered assistance to vulnerable women and children (Welman, 2009).

During the Anglo-Boer war, Britain annexed the two independent Boer<sup>1</sup> Republics, namely the Orange Free State under the presidency of M. T. Steyn, and the Republic of the Transvaal, under the presidency of Paul Kruger. The establishment of concentration camps for

<sup>1</sup> Afrikaners of mostly Dutch, French and German descent.

Boer women, children and black people had been sanctioned by the British Lord Roberts. By 1901 the death toll in the camps totalled approximately 27,000 Boers, mostly women and children, and more than 14,000 black people. This was a British war strategy to demolish the morale of the Boer soldiers, also called commandos, who wanted to protect their independence from Great Britain (Cameron, 1994). Hobhouse earned much recognition for her sharp criticism of the British and colonial concentration camp system, also known as so-called “refugee camps”, of which the majority of the inhabitants were women and children (Grobler, 2004).

The controversy surrounding her life and social activism raise questions about her psychosocial motivations and activist behaviour. Levinson’s theory (1996) of human development, with its lifespan approach, assisted to interpret Emily’s life, in conjunction with a historiographic psychobiography that covers her entire lifespan.

### **Levinson’s Theory of Lifespan Development against the Background of Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology**

Levinson (1996) posits a life cycle of successive eras or seasons, each lasting around 20-25 years, during which the individual’s life structure is formed. This life structure can be seen as an underlying pattern or design of the individual’s life at a given time (Gerdes, Louw, van Ede, & Louw, 1998). The life cycle is presumed to cover the four basic eras in development identified by Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978): (a) the era of pre-adulthood (age 0-22), (b) the era of early adulthood (age 17-45), (c) the era of middle adulthood (age 40-65), and (d) the era of late adulthood (age 60 onwards). A more detailed illustration of these basic eras in development is provided in the findings and discussion section of this paper. This study, framed within Levinson’s theory, reveals significant psychosocial and historical events that shaped Hobhouse into an anti-war campaigner. The psychobiographical applicability and relevance of Levinson’s theory has been demonstrated in other psychobiographies (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010).

Levinson’s theory serves the purpose of understanding human existence as a structure where the individual cannot be separated from his or her social world. Levinsonian theory synchronizes well with Merleau-Ponty’s (1964/1968) ontological philosophy, which had its origin in Husserlian phenomenology (Husserl, 1952/2000) and serves as a foundation for understanding human being as encompassing an interconnectedness between the individual in the world and the world in the individual. An individual’s life has many components (e.g., relationships, occupational functioning, and roles played in various social contexts). The individual’s personality influences these social components, which in turn influence the individual’s personality (Levinson et al., 1978). This corresponds with Merleau-Ponty’s

(1964/1968) phenomenological view of the individual in the world and the world in the individual. It is thus within Merleau-Ponty’s (1964/1968) phenomenological ontology that Hobhouse’s Levinsonian development was contextualized. The four basic eras of the life cycle are discussed briefly below.

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

Early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence and early adult transition are the four developmental phases that Levinson (1996) included in the era of pre-adulthood. Although he provided sparse information about human development during childhood, Levinson identified the process of individuation that takes place very soon (at two to three years of age) after the child has separated biologically and psychologically from the mother. During the first step in the development of the structure of a human life and in the process of individuation, the child establishes an initial distinction between the “me” and the “not me”. This process continues throughout her or his adult development. This patterning or design of someone’s life at a given time has as its primary components the person’s relationships with others in the external world (Levinson et al., 1978). Levinson (1996) posited that the transition from pre-adulthood into early adulthood may start from the age of 17, and identified the basic developmental tasks of all the transition periods as termination, individuation, and initiation.

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

Levinson (1996; Levinson et al., 1978) identified three developmental periods during this era in which a life structure is created and evaluated for the purpose of allowing the individual to realise short and long-term goals. These include the first adult life structure (i.e., entering the adult world), the age thirty transition, and the second adult life structure (i.e., settling down). Levinson (1996) identified this as often the most dramatic era, during which physical and psychological changes peak. He added that it is the season in which conflict is experienced due to contradictions in life events; a season during which youthful aspirations are formed and pursued; and a season during which a place in society is created and a family is raised.

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

Levinson (1996) characterised middle adulthood as not only often a time of progressive decline, a growing emptiness, and loss of vitality, but also the period in which the individual overcomes her or his vast ignorance of life and achieves adult development. The theory further postulates that individuals generate organisational structures that are dynamic and promote members’ further adult development and generativity within society.

### *Era of Late Adulthood (age 60 and beyond)*

Levinson et al. (1978) asserted that health issues in this era make developmental, physiological, psychological and social changes common. People experience fundamental changes in their way of life at this age. Levinson added that this should nevertheless be seen as a distinctive and a fulfilling season. The individual can and should no longer occupy centre stage in her world and, by choosing no longer to do so, can avoid experiencing it as traumatic. Individuals should also reduce the responsibilities of middle adulthood and live in a changed relationship with society and themselves (Levinson, 1996).

### **Psychobiography as Psychohistory: Theoretical Anchoring within Case Study and Phenomenology**

As a psychohistorical research approach, psychobiography is growing in popularity, and its place in the field of psychology is firmly established (Mayer & Maree, 2017; Ponterotto, 2013; Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017). Psychobiography entails the rich and systematic study of renowned, enigmatic, or even contentious individuals in socio-historical context within a psychological frame of reference (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010) and through the use of historiographic methods (Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017). Elms (1994) referred to psychobiography as the interdisciplinary relationship between psychology and biography. Ponterotto (2014) furthermore stated that psychobiography could be considered a sub-division of a broader psychohistory that involves the psychological study and interpretation of a significant individual contextualised within particular socio-historical periods.

A common characteristic of psychobiographical research is applying a comprehensive case study approach to the psychological study of an individual's lifespan (Fouché & Van Niekerk, 2010). Stake (1995), an ardent advocate of the use of case study, defined case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case..." (p. xi). Stake (2005) made special reference to intrinsic case study, which focuses on a better understanding of a particular case. This view links well with the overall description of psychobiography. It also links with the description by Yin (2003, 2009) – another advocate of case study research – of holistic case study design, in which the researcher focuses on the overall study of the case, rather than just selected units. Psychobiography has, however, also seen the analyses of multiple case study subjects, rather than just a particular individual. An example of this is the well-illustrated study by Saccaggi (2015), *Leading the Latter-Day Saints: Psychobiographical Studies of Mormon Prophets*. The challenge for psychobiographical research remains its pursuit of best practice principles as advocated by Ponterotto (2014). Qualitative inquiry (that may also

include psychobiography as a form of case study methodology), is required to pursue a route of excellence to achieve qualitative *umbrella guidelines* for its ontology, epistemology and aims (Gergen, 2014).

As a form of case study, psychobiography has traditionally been dominated by, and anchored within, a constructivist-interpretivist research paradigm (Kőváry, 2011), a paradigm within which many phenomenological studies are undertaken. Phenomenologists are concerned with understanding others' experiences in their own terms, a process that draws them closer to the subjects they study. It is particularly due to this reason that phenomenologists play a central role in the humanist movement. In line with Giorgi's (1997, 2006) view that human reality and the individual are to be studied in a non-reductionistic manner, phenomenological methods are anchored in an ethical sense of humaneness. Phenomenologists resist the common pursuit of control in striving to establish a genuine and compassionate understanding of a person as a unified whole within a socio-historical and cultural context (Dahlberg, 2006; Gergen, 2014). This pursuit by phenomenologists of a truly genuine understanding of human experience, humaneness, and the relevance of the individual's socio-historical and cultural context, are valuable goals that align with the pursuit of psychobiography.

### **Research Aim**

The aim of this study was, by means of a focussed psychobiography, to uncover and reconstruct the life-span development of Emily Hobhouse, and to ascertain, via a developmental trajectory, the significant psychosocial and historical events that played a role in shaping her as an anti-war campaigner. A secondary aim was to illustrate the relevance of applying Levinsonian theory (Levinson, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978) to the life of Hobhouse against the broader background of the ontological philosophy of Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968). In this developmental trajectory study, via a psychobiography, a re-interpretation of Emily Hobhouse's historical life is undertaken by means of a psychological illumination of her Levinsonian development and the psychosocial forces and historical events in her life, and of how these combined to shape her as an anti-war campaigner.

### **Method**

#### *Design and Subject*

This study entails a single-case life history study with an idiographic and nomothetic design, grounded in psychobiography. Psychobiography, as a qualitative-morphogenic approach (Elms, 1994), assists in extracting individualized patterning processes in personality and focuses on the individuality of the subject (Elms, 1994;

Runyan, 1988a, 1988b). The preliminary identification of the existence of sufficient data regarding the subject forms part of the sampling process, because in psychobiography the biographical data about the subject constitutes the evidence (du Plessis, 2017). Hobhouse, as the psychobiographical subject, was selected by means of a purposive sampling technique. Her courage and activism saved the lives of thousands of women and children during Britain's conflict with the Republican Boers in the Anglo-Boer War (Grobler, 2004; Welman, 2009). The controversy surrounding her exceptional life sparked the researchers' interest and provided the rationale to select her as subject. In addition to this, no documented psychological, and particularly Levinsonian, analysis of her life existed at the time of undertaking this study.

### *Data Collection*

The researchers were assisted by the library services of the University of the Free State (UFS), Bloemfontein, to access databases such as NEXUS, EBSCOhost, PsycLIT and the Social Sciences and Citation Index so as to collect published and other publicly available socio-historical and biographical sources related to Hobhouse. Both primary and secondary sources were included in the collection process. These documents included books, magazine articles, and internet articles, as well as extracts from letters written by Emily herself. The harvested sources used to extract evidence on her life included numerous published materials (e.g., Beukes, 1992; Hall, 2008; Kriel, 1956; Roberts, 1991; Terblanche, 1948; Van der Merwe, 1970; Van Reenen, 1970, 1984; Welman, 2009).

### *Data Extraction and Analysis Procedures*

Two general strategies were applied in the process of data extraction and analysis. Firstly, the researchers relied on the theoretical conceptualization and life cycles proposed by the applied theory of Levinson, which assisted in maintaining the focus on the original aim. Ponterotto (2014) referred to this as theoretical anchoring. The second general strategy included the development of a case description (Yin, 2009) by means of specified operational measures. In this regard, use was made of Alexander's (1988, 1990) principal identifiers of salience that aided in identifying significant themes within the data-sets. In addition, a conceptual psycho-historical framework or matrix was utilised to assist in the categorization and analysis of the significant themes.

### *Alexander's Model*

Alexander's (1988, 1990) principles of salience provided an overall indication of which data required extraction and further examination. Two analytical strategies were utilized. The first strategy is based on asking the data questions by which it can be sorted (Alexander, 1988;

Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher does this by asking pertinent questions of the data that will result in answering the study's aims in accordance with the conceptualizations and propositions of the applied theory. The second strategy is to let the data reveal itself (Alexander, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### *Asking the data questions*

The researchers asked two questions that aided with the extraction of salient information.

- Question 1: "Which themes in the data sets could be used to assist in reconstructing and illustrating psychosocial Levinsonian development over the lifespan of Emily Hobhouse?"
- Question 2: "How will the researchers create a dialogue or comparison between the extracted socio-historical and biographical data on Emily Hobhouse and particularly prominent historical events and psychosocial developmental experiences over her lifespan, anchored within the theory of Levinson?"

### *Allowing the data to reveal itself*

The second method used in data extraction is "letting the data reveal itself" (Alexander, 1988, p. 268). This was achieved by applying Alexander's (1988) nine principal identifiers of salience, which include: primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, error or distortion, isolation, incompleteness, and omission. See Alexander (1988, 1990) for a detailed description of these principal identifiers.

### *Conceptual Psycho-Historical Framework or Matrix*

A psycho-historical framework or matrix was used to superimpose, cross-tabulate and integrate the socio-historical and biographical data on Hobhouse in relation to the life cycles or eras proposed by Levinson (1996). The socio-historical periods provided a longitudinal developmental "portrait" of Hobhouse's life. These historical periods included the following: (a) Life in a Cornish rectory (1860-1894); (b) America and the prospect of love (1895-1897); (c) A new beginning: The London years (1897-1899); (d) Emily and the Anglo-Boer War (1900-1901); (e) Peace (1902-1909); and (f) The twilight years (1910-1926). This broad chronology functions as a time-series approach whereby the researchers could track developmental trends or changes over time, as well as identify significantly influential historical events in Emily's life. This also ensured adherence to Merleau-Ponty's ontological elucidation of the individual's interconnectedness to a social world. In this psychobiography, it entailed the interconnectedness between Hobhouse and the socio-historical world in which she lived during 1860-1926.

### *Ethical Sensitivity, Rigour and Trustworthiness*

Permission to undertake this study was granted by the

researchers' institutional departmental research review board at the UFS. Ethical considerations included the invasion of privacy and the potential embarrassment to the subject or to relatives (Runyan, 1984). A further ethical consideration surrounds whether the subject is deceased or living (Ponterotto, 2013). A guideline put forward is that a psychobiography should preferably be carried out on a subject who is long deceased (Ponterotto & Reynolds, 2017) so that no surviving relatives would be embarrassed (APA, 1976). Emily's privacy was respected in that the researchers only collected evidence on her that was sourced from existing published works to which the general public had free access. This ensured an ethical sensitivity to what Ponterotto (2013) terms "never-before-revealed sensitive information". Rigorous method-checks (Krefting, 1991; Ponterotto, 2014) were applied by the researchers to enhance the study's trustworthiness. These included the following:

1. A historically accurate and psychologically balanced description of Emily as subject.
2. The specification of the theoretical conceptualisation of the applied psychology theory, namely that of Levinson.
3. Embedding the study in proper socio-historical and cultural context.
4. Triangulation in data collection and analysis. The researchers triangulated the interpretation of data with each other during analyses. Triangulation is a popular and systematically rigorous method of ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative research (du Plessis, du Plessis, & Saccaggi, 2013; Giorgi, 1997).
5. The use of a systematic approach by means of Alexander's (1988) model, and the use of a conceptual psycho-historical framework or matrix based on both Levinson's theory and the significant historical periods over the lifespan of Emily Hobhouse.

### Findings and Discussion

The findings are discussed by means of overlapping or superimposing the four eras or seasons of development proposed by Levinson (as a developmental trajectory) with the significant socio-historical periods over the lifespan of Hobhouse. These historical periods included the following: (a) Life in a Cornish rectory (1860-1894); (b) America and the prospect of love (1895-1897); (c) A new beginning: The London years (1897-1899); (d) Emily and the Anglo-Boer War (1900-1901); (e) Peace (1902-1909); and (f) The twilight years (1910-1926). A few of the aforementioned historical periods were also sub-divided into more specific historical periods.

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

#### ***Life in a Cornish rectory (1860-1872): The Cornwall years***

Since information concerning Emily's pre-adolescent years is sparse, the researchers are unable to provide precise commentary on the process of individuation during her childhood. However, Emily clearly continued the process of individuation as she progressed through adolescence, as is evident in her relentless desire for education and her dream of being able to make her own decisions (Welman, 2009). Emily's relationship with her siblings and mother played a positive role in her childhood years. Although her mother respected the strict discipline demanded by their father, she loved her children and mediated the harsh measures he laid down (Terblanche, 1948). Emily's mother was strong-willed and determined, but her soft side was revealed in her care for the needy. She ran a regular soup kitchen for the poor in the community and visited households to care for the ill. Emily internalised her mother's behaviour, making it her own, and also emulated it many years later in Southern Africa during and after the Anglo-Boer War. Thus, it was largely the influence of her devout mother's compassion for the poor and the weak that laid the foundations for Emily's commitment to helping those in need (Roberts, 1991; Van Reenen, 1970).

#### ***Life in a Cornish rectory (1872-1878): The years of passing***

Up to the age of 14, her home life was secure and loving. She received extensive religious education from her father. He was a silent and forbidding man and Emily was taught that he was omniscient, to be loved and always to be respected. The fact that Emily felt removed from her father's affection would play an important role in her personal development and most likely her later views with regard to women's rights (Welman, 2009). When Leonard, her youngest brother, left for Oxford to commence his further education, it was a dreadful blow to Emily (Hall, 2008). Furthermore, Emily experienced her first developmental crisis at an early age when she was denied the opportunity of formal education, partly due to her father who forbade her this aspiration. She clearly showed her resentment of the sexist tradition of the education dispensation of the time, where girls were generally trained at home to be obedient wives for men as the heads of the household (Terblanche, 1948). It has been stated that Emily viewed her lack of formal academic training as one of the causes of her decision-making "mistakes" in later life (Hall, 2008; Welman, 2009). It is probable that this would have resulted in an unsatisfying life structure (Levinson et al., 1978). In addition, she experienced family losses and the departure of her eldest sister, Carrie, who left home to get married. Alfred, Emily's elder brother, left St Ives to make a life for himself in the colonies. Mother Caroline's spirit

was broken by this. The remaining children kept to themselves and reportedly experienced much confusion (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948). Emily's sense of isolation deepened as womanhood dawned (Van Reenen, 1970). Emily's need for love and acceptance from the dominant male figure in her life, her father, remained unfulfilled. It seemed that Reginald played the heavy-handed father in all matters of Emily's life (Fisher, 1971). This contributed to her inability to fulfil her goals and desires and evoked feelings of incompetence. Emily did not obtain the knowledge she desired and was constantly aware of this lack in her development and growth. She later noted this as the cause of many of the mistakes she made in the years that ensued (Terblanche, 1948; Welman, 2009).

In order to fulfill the task of individuation, Emily needed to move toward an adult self that was better equipped to understand the responsibilities, burdens, and satisfactions of early adulthood. Levinson's task of initiation, as described in Stroud (2004), was to allow her to test out new choices and explore new relationships in her adult world, and, in doing so, to lay the basis for building an Entry Life Structure in the next period. Another major component of leaving the pre-adult world is to separate from the family of origin, but in Emily's case she would remain with her family of origin for many more years than that proposed by Levinson (1996). This resulted in a slow-paced process of psychosocial individuation for Emily.

***Life in a Cornish rectory (1877-1882): The years of passing (continued)***

Emily experienced many losses during this period. When she was 16 years old, Emily suffered the loss of her favourite friend, Thomas. At age 17, her closest sister, Blanche, died (Hall, 2008; Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). These traumatic events did not bode well for the transition process Emily had to cope with. The turning point in Emily's life came at age 20 when the loss of her mother would force her to make major life choices (Hall, 2008). In 1880, when Mother Caroline died of a brain tumour, Father Reginald was shattered by the loss of his wife and his general health degenerated. Although Maud and Emily nursed him through the crisis, he had lost what little gaiety of spirit he possessed (Hall, 2008). Leonard was away at Oxford and thus the congregational responsibilities had to be shared by Maud and Emily. Levinson's (1996) assertion that each era is unique in character is substantiated by this study, in that Emily's life course changed radically after her mother's death. Emily was at a cross-era transition period and, as Levinson (1996) proposed, not only found herself experiencing a change in life structure, but was also confronting a fundamental turning point in her life cycle. Contrary to Levinson's (1996) theory regarding the forming of an own home base, she did not form a new home base. She did, however, transform the childhood relationship

with her father into an adult pattern, which coincides with Levinson's findings. Emily did not start a romantic relationship, but used her circumstances and the process of individuation to move herself toward an adult-self that could better understand the burdens, responsibilities and also satisfactions of early adulthood. She had no meaningful external relationships in which she could enjoy companionship and the sharing of interests. However, she had an active community life: visiting every house, canvassing for and leading the choir, managing the Young Men's Friendly Society, and caring for the poor (Hall, 2008; Terblanche, 1948).

True to the tradition of that time, Emily would have been expected to prepare for marriage and to be a good wife. Any romantic aspiration she may have had during these years was, however, not only discouraged but forbidden by her father. With womanhood dawning upon her, sexual preferences and choices would have to wait for the next era of early adulthood, as Levinson (1996) proposed. Emily's womanhood was entirely ignored because of her efforts within the needy community and in taking care of her father (Hall, 2008). Her feelings of isolation deepened into "something she could not in the least understand" (Hall, 2008, p. 12). Marriage and raising a family remained important, but at best had to remain an unfulfilled component at this stage in Emily's life (Terblanche, 1948). Naturally, she formed many friendships through her community work, but, as mentioned previously, none of these friendships ever developed into something more intimate (Welman, 2009).

Emily's transition to early adulthood started once her identity changed from an everyday daughter into one of an independent nurse and caregiver for her father. This cross-era transition is certainly a time of change, and for Emily it was a time of rapid development into a young adult – not because she had left home for a career, but because the departure of the family left her alone in the house with a job as her father's caregiver (Van Reenen, 1984). She had to build a life structure that would enable her simultaneously to fulfil this role and strive to achieve the personal ambitions she had dreamed of. Emily took over the parish and congregation work (Fisher, 1971). She visited and cared for people even though they were not all her father's church members. She strode "across the landscape to distant farmhouses and miners' cottages, the basket on her arm brimming with tidbits and cast-off clothing" (Hall, 2008, p. 10). In this way, she continued the work of her mother and experienced the kind of hardship she was to see in South Africa many years later. In becoming used to doing everything herself, Emily unfortunately started to believe that she was the only one capable of doing things and that nobody else, especially men, could or would do it properly. She disregarded her frail health, a tendency that would typify the rest of her life (Hall, 2008; Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948). By following this

route, Emily continued the process of individuation and unknowingly built life structures that would ultimately prepare her for her career as a future life course.

Levinson's (1996) assertion that an individual between the ages of 17 to 22 is not in either the era of pre-adulthood or the era of early adulthood is confirmed in Emily's case, despite recognition of her extraordinary or unique circumstances. The findings point to Emily as being in the era of pre-adulthood up to the age of 20, whereafter she was left alone and forced into early adulthood. The uniqueness of her life events is further emphasized by the fact that all this happened without her leaving home or starting her own chosen career. The central component that now played a dominant role in her life is ascribed to the presence of purely circumstantial events in her life course. However, Emily chose to stay at home and not to follow her own ambitions (Fisher, 1971; Hall, 2008; Terblanche, 1948). Her love for, and loyalty to, her father could have been influenced by her unpreparedness for, and fear of, entering the real world (Welman, 2009).

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

##### ***Life in a Cornish rectory (1883-1889): Lonely times***

In applying Levinson's theoretical characteristics to Emily's life, it was found that she certainly experienced changes in her fervent desire for a special love relationship, but did not succeed in finding a life partner (Fisher, 1971; Van Reenen, 1970). Although she did not know what the course of her life would be when her father died, she used the time at home as an opportunity to build and provide a structure for the next era. Levinson (1996) regarded the task of creating a new life structure for the era of early adulthood as the beginning of a new phase in an individual's life, and yet Emily's circumstances (i.e., caring for her father and congregation) kept her from creating new life structures. For a long time to come (up to the age of 34), it seemed that Emily's circumstances would dictate her choices to a large extent. Caring for her father took up most of her time and energy, but provided her with an identity within both the parish and the community (Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970; Welman, 2009).

Whereas Levinson (1996) postulated that stressors related to choosing a spouse and establishing a career can cause a period of maladjustment, in Emily's case it seemed to be exactly the opposite during this era in her life. In the absence of a possible career or life partner, she appeared not to have experienced any significant conflict in making the decision to care for her father (Terblanche, 1948). However, once she was alone and faced with no love, no career, and no freedom, she was exposed to life stressors that were unplanned. While the need to create new structures in her life was strong, historical evidence indicates great strength of determination in Emily's ability to manage the demands

and pressures on her life at the time (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). However, she gradually succumbed to the pressure of circumstances beyond her control and a long period of general malaise ensued, possibly as a result of "caregiver-burnout" (Welman, 2009). At this stage, Emily created only a provisional life structure and began to establish an identity and place in the outside adult world through individuation from within her confined situation. Her active involvement in the community and her gradual formation of friendships (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948) are examples of structure building through individuation. Even though these activities occurred regularly and did not exclude the possibility of a romantic relationship, this did not happen. They did, however, provide her with experiences regarding different human relationships and behaviour that enhanced her confidence and fluency whenever she communicated with people. These activities seemed also to serve as an outlet through which she could regularly escape her silent and dreary co-existence with her father (Terblanche, 1948).

##### ***Life in a Cornish Rectory (1889-1894): Lonely times (continued)***

For the next five years (age 29-34), Emily would be burdened with all the duties of the household, church and her father's increasing weakness and ill health (Terblanche, 1948). Emily wrote later that those years were a period of torture for her (Hall, 2008). She had to plan her conversations with her father in order to get a verbal response from him and at least have something to talk about during lunch (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948). A possible intimate romantic relationship with John Barrett (the son of a poor, local farmer) was ended abruptly by her embittered father. After a private conversation with the young man, Barrett left town and went to America (Fisher, 1971). Her father did not agree with the breach of the social class barrier between them (Hall, 2008). However, Emily did not abandon all hope of getting married, as is evidenced by her future engagement to John Carr Jackson (Van der Merwe, 1970).

##### ***America and the prospect of love (1895-1897)***

In 1895, at the age of 35, her father's death changed her life (Fisher 1971; Kriel, 1956, Terblanche, 1948). Emily was now free to make her own decisions and pursue her dreams, a situation that corresponds with Levinson's primary developmental task during this period. However, she had no academic training, and to start at her age was not a viable option. Her first thoughts of either studying at university or training as a nurse were met with rebuffs from every side (Fisher, 1971; Kriel, 1956). Contrary to Levinson's (1996) claim that an individual becomes stable and secure within his or her societal role at the end of this era, Emily had to use whatever knowledge, experience or contacts she had to find a place of her own in society,

because she did not have a husband or a professional career (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). Her experience in charity work probably guided her choice of where to go, thus building on the life structure that had been established in the previous era. It is the researchers' opinion that the memory of John Barrett and their fleeting romance could also have influenced her decision to go to America, since there were rumours at the time that John had gone to Minnesota (Van der Merwe, 1970).

At the age of 36 Emily dreamed of accomplishing her goal of getting married and settling down. During 1895 she left St Ives for Minnesota and worked as a missionary in a village of miners, mostly from Cornwall. During this period Emily found love in her intimate relationship with John Carr Jackson, a businessman from Minnesota, and became engaged to him. She bought a house and built a ranch in Mexico and poured money into her beloved's ailing business (Fisher, 1971; Kriel, 1956; Van Reenen, 1970). Emily waited for him to join her on the ranch, but he never did. She returned to Minnesota to find out what his intentions were. The engagement was short-lived and was broken off in 1898 when Carr stole money from Emily (Fisher, 1971; Kriel, 1956; Van Reenen, 1970). As a result of this event, Emily lost a substantial sum of her inheritance (Beukes, 1992, Welman, 2009). Hall (2008) stated that, after this event, Emily would never again submit "willingly to the authority of a male" (p. 25). The costs to Emily's personal growth were huge, as she had to rely upon herself. And so, after the failed romance, Emily's career now became the focus of her life. She was driven by a burning desire to be involved in universally worthy activities (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948). Despite her apparent mistrust of men, Emily did manage later to develop a positive and supportive friendship with South Africa's Commander-in-Chief of the Boer forces in the Cape Colony, General Jan Smuts, who later became Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa. They met for the first time in July 1903 when Emily visited South Africa with plans and funds for Boer rehabilitation after the Anglo-Boer war. They frequently corresponded by mail, and Smuts also at times provided her with financial support (Beukes, 1992; Cameron, 1994).

#### ***A new beginning: The London years (1897-1899)***

Back in England, Emily opposed the looming war between the British and the Boers of South Africa (Kriel 1956; Terblanche, 1948). However, her focus shifted to the needs of destitute people in South Africa after the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War. She criticised her own government regarding the issue of war against South Africa (Van der Merwe, 1970), became the honorary secretary of the South African Conciliation Committee's women's branch, organised protest meetings against the war, and raised funds for the destitute women and children (Terblanche, 1948; Van

Reenen, 1970). Levinson (1996) maintained that, as this developmental period draws to a close, the movement from junior to senior member of the adult world strongly influences the terms according to which one establishes oneself in the next generation. During the final stages of this era, Emily convinced her Uncle Arthur of her need to go to South Africa to oversee the funding for the destitute (Van Reenen, 1970). Her belief that anything was possible drove the process of Emily's individuation through the next eras of her development. In line with this, it seems that Emily's life fits the average age of the typical life event of career ambition, according to Levinson's (1996) theory. The prospect of marriage, on the other hand, still one of her greatest wishes, was fading as she approached the age of 40 (Beukes, 1992; Kriel 1956; Welman, 2009).

#### ***Emily and the Anglo-Boer War (1900-1901)***

According to Levinson (1996), mid-life transition (age 40-45) is seen as part of both early and middle adulthood, and can be described as a developmental bridge between the two eras. The individual has to terminate the life structure of the 30s and come to terms with the end of "youth" as it existed in early adulthood. The beginning of this cross-era saw the 40-year-old Emily leaving for South Africa, a country whose name had never featured in her youth years or ambitions (Hall, 2008; Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). It would become a time of great personal change in environmental conditions and lifestyle that she saw as a personal challenge, notwithstanding her frail health. She did not know what lay ahead, but she welcomed the adventure, pursuing her ambition and career (Van der Merwe, 1970; Van Reenen, 1970). Initially, the whole campaign was focused more on saving Britain's good name, but, as reports filtered through from South Africa of the actual conditions on the ground, indignation replaced sympathy (Hall, 2008; Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). Nightmares bearing visions of women and children in the cold open veld, hungry, hopeless and destitute, started plaguing her. The impact that these images had on her is evidenced in the following quotation from Emily's writings:

It was late in the summer of 1900 that I first learnt of the hundreds of Boer women that became impoverished and were left ragged by our military operations. That the poor women who were being driven from pillar to post needed protection and organised assistance. And from that moment on I was determined to go to South Africa in order to render assistance to them. (Van der Merwe, 1970, p. 12)

In 1901, on her visit to the refugee camps in South Africa, Emily witnessed countless cases of inhuman



suffering and deaths, but also inexplicable bravery and spiritual fortitude amongst the destitute, helping where she could. She confronted the British foreign office on those atrocities, but was ignored and prohibited from visiting the camps again (Welman, 2009). Emily was now more focused on her work than ever before, which supports Levinson's (1996) assessment that, at the end of this period, women have a more passionate engagement in work. Perhaps it was due to the central component (i.e., social activism) during this period that Emily Hobhouse herself did not experience a developmental crisis.

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

##### ***Peace (1902-1909)***

In March 1902 Emily received the news that the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging had been signed, which brought an end to the war (Fisher, 1971; Van der Merwe, 1970). The dream of peace was one of the goals of her youth, which also involved helping others (Terblanche, 1948). In 1903, at the age of 43, Emily returned to South Africa to investigate the post-war conditions and assist the victims of war (Van Reenen, 1970). Shocked by not only the starvation, but the compensation and repatriation muddle, she worked tirelessly in South Africa and England. Subsequently she opened home industries for the upliftment of the Boers, and to assist with rehabilitation and reconciliation she travelled to Europe and Ireland and studied spinning and weaving there (Kriel, 1956; Van Reenen, 1970). This behaviour seems to support Levinson et al.'s (1978) findings that individuals in this era assume responsibility for their own work and perhaps the work of others, but also for the transition between life cycles from young adults to senior adults. Emily endured many hardships and manual labour to get the industrial schools running (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). During this time, despite declining health, she travelled to England to discuss the future of the schools with her committee. Career-wise it seems that Emily lived a busy and fulfilled life during this era. Levinson et al. (1978) noted that during this stage of development individuals achieve senior status in their professions and take responsibility for mentoring and encouraging juniors. Emily acquired this status in 1906 when she was appointed as an advisor to the board managing public funds for the industrial schools in the then South African Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State (Fisher, 1971; Van Reenen, 1970). During this era Emily won both respect and admiration and gained many friends, amongst whom were the author and novelist, Olive Schreiner (Perry, 2012), Mrs Steyn (the wife of the previous president M. T. Steyn of the Orange Free State), and General Jan Smuts (the future prime minister of South Africa), who would all play important roles in her life (Beukes, 1992; Welman, 2009). In spite of her failing cardiovascular health, she achieved a great deal and seemingly tirelessly persisted

in doing things herself (Fisher, 1971). Emily thus seems to have remained as productive in this era as during the mid-life transition and the era of her early adulthood.

##### ***The twilight years (1910-1926)***

Levinson regarded the age 50 transition (age 50-55) as a developmental period of five years during which people reevaluate their life structures. This reappraisal affords the opportunity to explore the self and the world further and to create a basis for the structure to be formed in the next era. Levinson et al. (1978) warned that developmental crises are common at this time, especially for those whose lives have not changed significantly, or who have made unsuitable changes in the previous 10 – 15 years. Perhaps it was the evaluation of her life at the age of 50 that made Emily realise that she would probably never marry. This must have been a developmental crisis, as the realisation left her almost drowning in self-pity. Her loneliness is revealed in the reference to her once picking up a stray cat and saying: "This is the only thing that loves me just because of me" (Van Reenen, 1970, p. 102). During this period, President M. T. Steyn commissioned a memorial statue for the women and children who had suffered and died during the war. It would honour Emily's work during those years and broadcast her message to the world. Even though Emily's health was ailing, she continued to be productive in this developmental period. Emily was outspoken about her opposition to war and had strong views on the role of women in society that grew from her own suppressed and unacknowledged needs during childhood and her persistent mistrust of men – based on her experience of John Carr Jackson's empty promises of marriage and his theft of her money (Fisher, 1971), as well as her experience in childhood of her relationship with her father. For this reason, she dedicated the last 15 years of her life to women's rights and peace, which she viewed as interdependent (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948; Van Reenen, 1970). With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Emily (aged 54) travelled to Germany on a self-appointed mission to mediate for peace on behalf of her country. During her two years in Europe, she advanced her career with great success. She worked with the Women's International League for World Peace in Amsterdam, organising petitions, holding meetings, raising funds to feed the Russian babies in Austria, and visiting prisoners of war (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948).

According to Levinson et al. (1978), this structure provides a vehicle for the realisation of the era's major aspirations and goals and the completion of middle adulthood. Levinson emphasised that the decade of the fifties can be a time of great fulfilment for those who are able to rejuvenate themselves and enrich their lives. For Emily this era started with her personal affairs in total disarray. By now the Hobhouse family had split on the issue of the war in Europe. When her activities in Germany became public in England, she was branded

a traitor once again (Van Reenen, 1970, 1984). With her poor health causing great medical expense (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948) and her reputation permanently tarnished, her strength of character was severely tested. For others this may be a time of consolidating financial security and consistency in their careers. However, these do not seem to have been priorities for her future. The neglect to do so restricted the opportunity to further her autonomy. Emily seemed to focus only on the needs of others. She became a legend in Leipzig and received the Red Cross award (Fisher, 1971). Her achievements in Europe may have fulfilled and enriched her, but they also resulted in rejection by both her countrymen and her family for her open-mindedness and willingness to act and think independently (Welman, 2009).

Ironically, this era is both the nadir and the climax in Emily's life and career, for she was simultaneously reviled by her compatriots and family and hailed as a heroine by the Germans and Afrikaners<sup>2</sup>. Hall (2008) quoted one of her friends as saying: "Emily was full of faults and great gifts, but the greatest was her dedication to duty" (p. 288). Throughout her life, the process of individuation continued. It would seem, however, that Emily moved from one era to another with neither any personal long-term goals, nor any usable personal structures for late adulthood, which is preceded by a time of transition. Levinson et al. (1978) identified this transition period as the late adult transition.

#### *Era of Late Adulthood (age 60 and beyond)*

##### ***The twilight years (1910-1926) continued***

Throughout her life Emily ignored her health and was entirely absorbed in her work, over-exerting her frail body and weak heart to the point of exhaustion (Fisher, 1971). Levinson et al. (1978) stated that the primary developmental task during this era is to find a new balance between one's involvement with society and with the self, something which Emily struggled to do. According to Levinson et al. (1978), it is important to make peace with the enemies within oneself and in the world in order to build a life of integrity, which is what Emily tried to do. Her greatest wish was that her name as a patriotic British citizen be cleared (Welman, 2009). Emily died on 8 June 1926. The funeral service took place on 11 June 1926 at her local church, St Mary Abbots. Low-key to the point of invisibility, the event passed unreported, even by the two local Kensington newspapers (Hall, 2008). Her ashes were sent to South Africa and were laid to rest in a niche at the Women's Memorial in Bloemfontein on 27 October 1926 (Kriel, 1956; Terblanche, 1948). For Levinson et al. (1978), development at the end of the life cycle entails coming to terms with the process of dying and preparing for one's death. Making peace with dying denotes a critical development and gives new meaning to life and to death

<sup>2</sup> Afrikaans-speaking South Africans of European descent.

in particular. Levinson held that the ultimate involvement with the self (and being ready to give it up) is what life is about. Although Emily did much self-reflection, the researchers do not have sufficient biographical evidence to indicate whether she was really prepared for death or had made peace with dying.

#### **Conclusion and Relevance of the Study**

Levinson's theory of lifespan development was used to ground the psychosocial understanding and discussion of the psychosocial development and significant socio-historical events in Emily's life via a developmental psychobiographical trajectory. The findings of this study affirm the value of Levinsonian psychobiography as well as the ontology of Merleau-Ponty for understanding human existence in the context of a social and historical structure where the individual is inseparable from her social world. The significance of building a life structure that helps one to achieve personal goals that add to the "satisfactoriness" of one's development is possibly illustrated by this study. Even during her "caged-in" years, Emily managed to develop a life structure that made it possible (even without any formal academic education) to pursue and realise her social aspirations in order to achieve the professional success she desired. Her life mirrors many conflicts, contradictions and personal developmental crises; yet her accomplishments were exceptional. What makes Emily particularly unique is that she carries two distinctly conflicting labels, "traitor" and "legend", both of which she obtained in the same era of her life course development. Van der Merwe (1970) argued that Emily was deserving of the same veneration as Florence Nightingale for the vigour with which she fought bureaucracy and saved many women and children from certain death. Taking the developmental trajectory and socio-historical events and forces of Emily's life into account, crucial psychosocial life experiences and events were indeed formative influences in her life that most likely culminated in her becoming an anti-war campaigner. A conclusive synopsis of these influences encompasses the following:

1. The role of her strong-willed and determined mother, with her soft side, as revealed in her care of the needy. Emily internalised her mother's behaviour and emulated it many years later.
2. The denial of an opportunity to study and pursue a formal education. Emily resented this sexist tradition.
3. Her coming to terms with painful feelings of abandonment, grief and rage on the death of her sister and when Carrie, her eldest sister, married and moved out when Emily was 17 years old.
4. The care of her father during his illness, which demanded much of her time and energy, but skilled her to interact with the parish and community and taught her the endurance of care-taking.

5. The abrupt ending of her love relationship and a failed romance that increased her activities and devotion to community service.
6. The death of her father, which forced her to use all her skills, knowledge and societal contacts to establish herself without support from a husband or a professional career via formal education.
7. Her networking capacity during her visits to Europe where she worked with the Women's International League for World Peace in Amsterdam.
8. Her open-mindedness and courage to act and think independently due to her humanistic approach to life.

In this psychobiography Emily emerged as a highly contentious and yet also exceptional personality, who lived a multi-faceted life characterised by strong values, firm beliefs, indisputable resilience, and an insatiable drive to help others. Her humanistic approach to life is also reflective of the underlying philosophy of

phenomenology in which a genuine understanding and respect for individuals' experiences are upheld. Furthermore, the study also demonstrates the importance of the inter-connectedness between Emily and her social and historical world across her lifespan. This is reflective of the ontological philosophy encouraged by Karin Dahlberg (2006) in which phenomenologists do not have to surrender phenomenology in order to understand an individual *per se*, but are able also to consider the influences of the social realities in which the individual finds herself. Finally, this study offers the first psychological explanation of the life of Emily Hobhouse as it unfolded through the eras, seasons and transitional periods proposed by Levinson.

In conclusion, we wish to acknowledge the exceptional recently published biography of Emily Hobhouse by Elsabe Brits (2016). Her biography provides a refreshing perspective on Emily as an exceptional woman who lived a life ahead of her time and is described as a modern woman. At the time of our psychobiographical analysis of Emily, this book had not yet been publicly available for inclusion in this study.

## Referencing Format

Fouché, P., Nortjé, N., Welman, C., & Van Niekerk, R. (2018). Emily Hobhouse's psychosocial developmental trajectory as anti-war campaigner: A Levinsonian psychobiography. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 18 (Special Edition: Psychobiography), 15 pp. doi: 10.1080/20797222.2018.1511308

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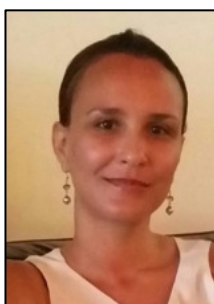


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