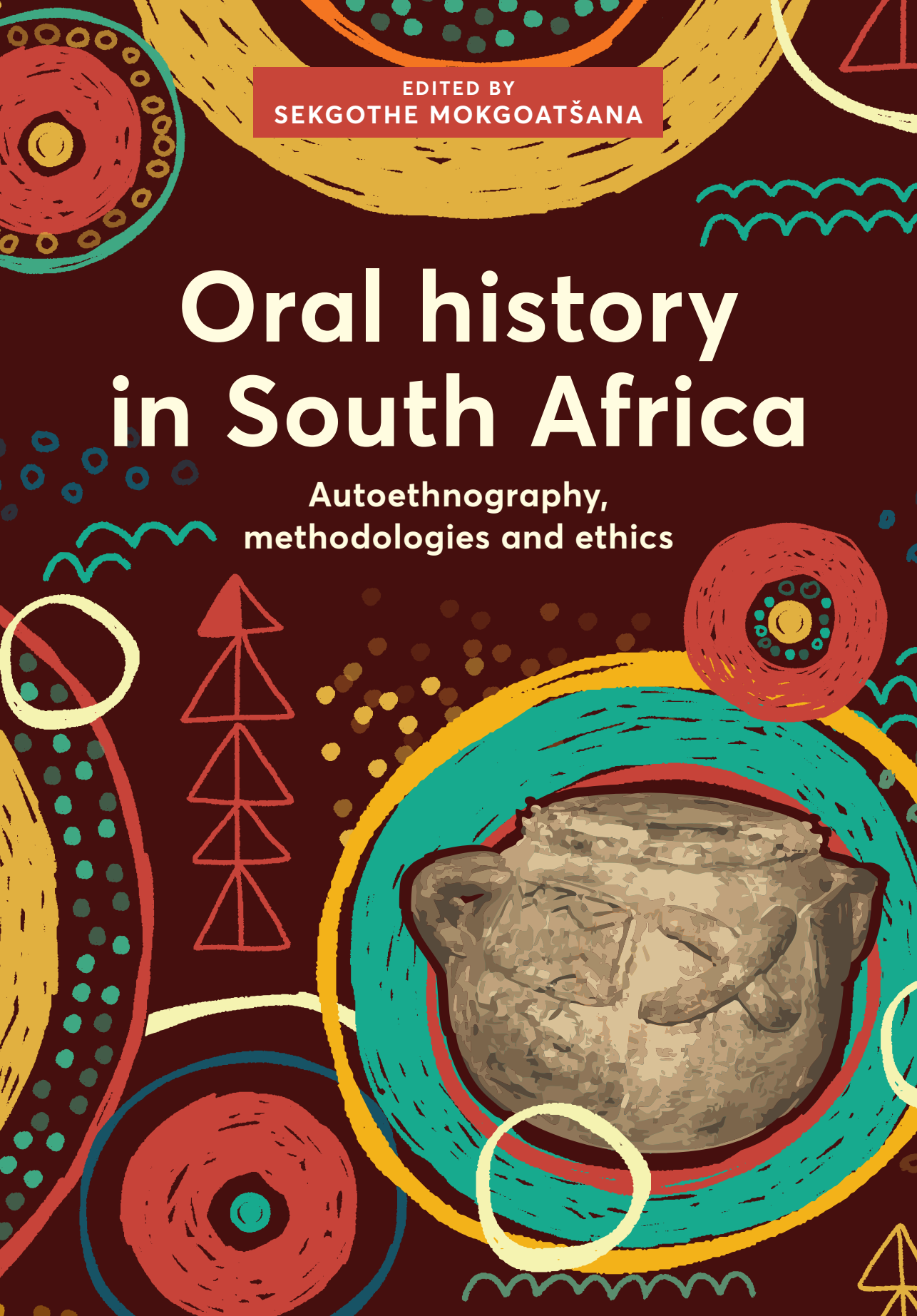
EDITED BY
SEKGOTHE MOKGOATŠANA

Oral history in South Africa

Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics



Oral history in South Africa

Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics

NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR THE HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ITUTA
Published by ITUTA Books, an imprint of AOSIS.

AOSIS Publishing
15 Oxford Street, Durbanville, 7550, Cape Town, South Africa
Postnet Suite 110, Private Bag X19, Durbanville, 7551, Cape Town, South Africa
Tel: +27 21 975 2602
Website: https://www.aosis.co.za

Cover image: The cover design was created by Natascha Olivier/Coco Design with the use of an illustration by Pikisuperstar {4766234} obtained from Freepik.com, titled 'Hand drawn music festival poster template' available from https://www.freepik.com/free-vector/hand-drawn-music-festival-poster-template_4766234.htm#position=19, copyright-free under the Freepik licensing terms. And a photograph of a venda drum provided by the editor. It is available at https://wmic.net/venda-ngoma-drum/, titled 'Venda 'Ngoma' (Drum)'.

Published in 2025
Impression: 1

ISBN: 978-1-990982-15-6 (print)
ISBN: 978-1-990982-20-0 (casebound)
ISBN: 978-1-990982-16-3 (epub)
ISBN: 978-1-990982-17-0 (pdf)

DOI: https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397
How to cite this work: Mokgoatšana, S 2025, *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town.

Printed and bound in South Africa.

Listed in OAPEN (http://www.oapen.org), DOAB (http://www.doabooks.org/) and indexed by Google Scholar. Some rights reserved.

Oral history in South Africa

Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics

Edited by
Sekgothe Mokgoatšana

ITUTA

Social Sciences, Humanities, Education and Business Management domain editorial board at AOSIS

Board members

Peer-review declaration

The publisher (AOSIS) endorses the South African 'National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum Best Practice for Peer-Review of Scholarly Books'. The book proposal form was evaluated by our Social Sciences, Humanities, Education and Business Management editorial board. The manuscript underwent an evaluation to compare the level of originality with other published works and was subjected to rigorous two-step peer review before publication by two technical expert reviewers who did not include the volume editor and were independent of the volume editor, with the identities of the reviewers not revealed to the editor(s) or author(s). The reviewers were independent of the publisher, editor(s) and author(s). The publisher shared feedback on the similarity report and the reviewers' inputs with the manuscript's editor(s) or author(s) to improve the manuscript. Where the reviewers recommended revision and improvements, the editor(s) or author(s) responded adequately to such recommendations. The reviewers commented positively on the scholarly merits of the manuscript and recommended that the book be published.

Research justification

Colonial-apartheid writing of history in South Africa has, to a greater extent, 'neglected' consciously or unconsciously the use of oral testimonies. The book captures the methodologies and ethics in the use and contextualising of oral histories in filling the gaps left mainly by literature. The approach in this book is about locating and spacing oral history methodologies and ethics in the proper context, given the complex nature and diverse society of South Africa. This book contains original research studies. It aims to assist academics, researchers and specialists in the field of oral history as a method and discipline to enrich their studies and broaden their views. The book aims to address the growing need to establish oral history as an important resource in providing and protecting oral history archives from representing marginalised communities to bring about redress.

The book is divided into ten chapters written by academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners of oral history in South Africa. It challenges the Western narrative of methodologies and ethics in oral history. These narratives used urban contexts identical to racial connotations and reinforced them. Lack of spaces for cultural practices and observation, and liberation studies in the writing of history are hereby highlighted. This book provides a historical as well as methodological elucidation of the importance of ethics in oral history. In the South African context, no such book has been published in the country. The Afrocentric aspects have been used by different authors in their analysis of relevant legislation and academic literature.

The book explores these 'injustices' and transformation or lack thereof in South Africa in oral history since the birth of a fully democratic nation-state in 1994. In this book, the authors try to 'arrest' the manifested and isolated interventions by other practitioners. These initiatives by the contributors in this book attempt to dismantle the colonial-apartheid conscious 'neglect' of the ethics and methodologies in oral history. However, it is noted in this book that several factors contributed to this hangover of adopting the Western approaches in oral history and using those theories. This book covers many themes of oral history, methodologies and ethics with original arguments and perspectives.

All the chapters in this book move beyond the usual enquiry, which is limited in focus to oral history methodologies, ethics and approaches and characterises the nature of common threads in attempts to write and produce credible history not only working from written documents but also using oral testimonies. These bridge the gap between documented history and the one embedded or in the custody of those interviewed. It unravels the complex systems and factors that (re)produce and shape the divisive kind of history writing.

The uniqueness of this book also lies in its transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity, allowing voices from across disciplines so vastly connected as history, theological studies, museum studies, archival studies, indigenous knowledge studies, folklore studies and many intersecting at the common ground using an interview as the basis for enquiry. Beyond the usual use of interviews, the book focuses on the less considered voice of the rank and file, the ordinary rather than the dominant discourse. This book breaks ivory tower conventions that obfuscate the voice of the poor and the trodden and accords such a voice to the 'all-knowing researcher' whose view is oftentimes an outsider's view. The crux of this book finds expression in recognising that interviewees are holders of knowledge and that the interview moment is not a moment of extracting knowledge from the source but a conversation, an exchange of ideas between the researcher and the interviewee.

The authors confirm that no part of the work has been plagiarised. Sections of Chapter 9, 'Interviewing and authoring for *Tell Your Mother's Story*', by Kogielam Keerthi Archary, are based on previous publications, and the necessary acknowledgements to these are provided in the chapter.

The target audience of the book is fellow scholars in oral history, history, theological studies, museum studies, archival studies, indigenous knowledge studies and folklore studies.

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana, Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies, Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences, University of Limpopo, Sovenga, South Africa.

Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms and tables appearing in the text and notes

List of abbreviations and acronyms

AGM	annual general meeting
AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
ASA	African Studies Association
AZANYU	Azanian National Youth Unite
BWL	Bantu Women's League
CANRAD	Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy
CIKS	Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems
CMMI	Charlotte-Mannya-Maxeke Institute
CPUT	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
CTP	coffee-table publication
DACST	Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
DGSD	Democracy, Governance, and Service Delivery
DIN	Decolonial International Network
DISA	Digital Innovation in South Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSAC	Department of Sports, Arts and Culture
DST	Department of Science and Technology
ESARBICA	Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives
GHREC	General Human Research Ethics Committee
HRM	human resource management
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IIE	Independent Institution of Education
IK	indigenous knowledge
IKS	indigenous knowledge system
IKSs	indigenous knowledge systems

IOHA	International Oral History Association
IT	information technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LGBTI+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning
LHR	Liberation Heritage Route
MA	master's degree
MBA	Masters of Business Administration
MEC	Member of the Executive Council
MECs	Members of the Executive Council
MoU	memorandum of understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MSA	Monash University, South Africa
NAI	Nordic Africa Institute
NARYSEC	National Rural Youth Service Corps
NHC	National Heritage Council
NIHSS	National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences
NIMOHP	National Indigenous Music and Oral History Programme
NIMP	National Indigenous Music Programme
NOHP	National Oral History Programme
NRF	National Research Foundation
NUL	National University of Lesotho
OHASA	Oral History Association of South Africa
OHJSA	*Oral History Journal of South Africa*
PoC	people of colour
RADLA	Research and Doctoral Leadership Academy
RAU	Rand Afrikaans Universiteit
SA	South Africa
SACOIR	South African Council on International Relations
SADC	Southern African Development Cooperation
SADET	South African Democracy Education Trust
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAHRA	South African Heritage Resource Agency
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SARAP	South African Research and Archival Project
SGB	School Governing Body
SMS	'Social memory studies'
STD	Secondary Teachers Diploma

TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TYMS	*Tell Your Mother's Story*
UFS	University of the Free State
UJ	University of Johannesburg
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Unisa	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

List of tables

Notes on contributors

Chitja Twala
Department of Cultural and Political Studies,
University of Limpopo,
Polokwane, South Africa
Email: chitja.twala@ul.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3561-2694

Chitja Twala is currently a full professor of history in the Department of Cultural and Political Studies at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. Twala was previously an associate professor (Department of History) and vice-dean (Faculty of the Humanities) at the University of the Free State (UFS), Bloemfontein campus, South Africa. Twala holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in History from UFS. Twala has a substantial publication record on the history of liberation movements, with special reference to the African National Congress (ANC). Twala is the author of nine chapters (co-authored two) in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 4* (1970–1990) and *The Road to Democracy in South Africa: Volume 6* (1990–1996), published in 2010, 2013 and 2019, respectively. Twala is the recipient of the Mellon Foundation and the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS) grants. Twala has had the following visiting fellowships: Harvard University (USA); Kwame Nkrumah African Studies Institute at the University of Ghana (Ghana); the University of California, Los Angeles (USA); and the Department of History at the University of Ghana (Ghana).

Christina Landman
Research Institute for Theology and Religion,
Faculty College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: christina.landman2@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8905-0738

Christina Landman (a professor extra-ordinarius) has been teaching ecclesiastical and oral history at the University of South Africa (Unisa) for 42 years. Landman has been an active member of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) since 2006. In 2010, Landman became OHASA's Head of Publications, a position she still holds. Landman was the editor of the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* until 2018 when it became the accredited special collection, 'Social memory studies', of the *HTS Theological Studies* journal. Landman has engaged in a variety of oral history projects, for instance, on the history of Nana Sita. Landman has also written the history of OHASA, which is in its 20th year of existence in 2023.

John R Phori
Department of Free State Basic Education,
Bloemfontein, South Africa
Email: phorijr6504@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6915-1032

John R Phori is currently the assistant director at the Department of Free State Basic Education in Bloemfontein, South Africa, attached to the Supply Chain Management under Demand and Contract Management. Phori has over 35 years of experience in education in various aspects such as school teacher, school subject advisor for English, deputy school principal and school principal. Apart from teaching, Phori was a school publishing representative and lecturer at this very college (Motheo Technical and Vocational Education and Training [TVET]). Phori has worked in various departments of Free State Basic Education such as Values Education, Human Resources, Free State Education Research and Asset Management. He holds a PhD in Governance and Educational Leadership Management obtained from the University of the Free State (UFS) with his thesis titled 'Enhancing collaborative skills among members of the School Governing Body (SGB)' from UFS and a master's degree (MA) in Educational Leadership and Management obtained from the Rand Afrikaans Universiteit (RAU), now known as the University of Johannesburg (UJ), with his thesis titled 'The Principal and the development of an inviting culture as an aspect of strategic leadership'. Phori also holds an honours degree in Educational Management and Leadership obtained from UFS, Vista University, now known as UFS; a bachelor's degree with English 300 and Education 300 as electives; and a Secondary Teachers Diploma (STD) awarded by Thaba Nchu College, Strydom College, with English and History as major electives. Phori's academic research interests and themes include consulting work in research, reading papers at conferences, language editing in research, publication of articles in credible journals, speech writing for all occasions, feminist agitations in a progressive society, espousing research praxis in academic discourses and social justice passion for democratic humane society.

Kogielam K Archary
Research Institute for Theology and Religion,
College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: sariefoundation@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6976-3482

Kogielam K Archary was a high school educator (BPaed Arts and BA Hons) from 1988 until 2001. Archary further completed a human resource management (HRM) certificate course, an MA, a PhD and an MBA and gained industry experience from 2002 until 2013. Archary's MBA degree facilitated entry into higher education. Archary is currently an independent consultant serving as a research fellow in the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the College of Human Sciences, Unisa. This research focuses on

the Indian nationals who migrated as indentured labourers to the Colony of Natal (1860–1911) and their descendants. This work explores themes such as female indentureship, cultural heritage, transformation, personal testimonies, reflective and social memory, bicultural communities, and the life and legacy of these migrants, including their contributions to the Indian diaspora. Nationally, as the Research and Development Officer for the 1860 Indentured Labourers Foundation Verulam, a platform for networking and resource development is provided. Internationally, participation in the weekly public Zoom event of the Indo-Caribbean Cultural Centre, based in Trinidad and Tobago, promotes Indian diasporic knowledge. Archary has published articles in accredited journals, chronicling the journey and experiences of these communities on the African continent.

Motlatsi Thabane
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies,
Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa
Email: motlatsithabane@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-6093-101X

Motlatsi Thabane earned a BA in Political Science and History from the National University of Lesotho (NUL) in 1982. Thabane completed a MA at NUL in 1987, focusing on the methodology of oral history in Lesotho. In 1998, Thabane graduated with a PhD from the University of Trondheim, Norway, where his thesis examined diamond mining in Lesotho between 1955 and 1970. In the following years, Thabane collected and applied oral evidence in social history research, publishing articles in journals and chapters in books in South Africa and beyond. Thabane's work explores oral history, social history and social theory, addressing topics such as technology, land, class and ethnic consciousness, ideology and mental health. Thabane taught history for many years at the National University of Lesotho and spent two years teaching at the University of Swaziland, Eswatini. Thabane has consistently contributed to scholarly discussions through his extensive publications on diverse social issues. Currently, Thabane serves as a research fellow in the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, South Africa.

Munyaradzi Mushonga
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies,
Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa
Email: mushongam@ufs.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2840-8588

Munyaradzi Mushonga holds an honours degree in History (1990), an MA in African History (1995), a graduate certificate in Education (1995) and a PhD in Africa(n) Studies (2017). Mushonga is the programme director for the Africa Studies Programme housed in the Centre for Gender and Africa Studies at the UFS. Mushonga is an interdisciplinary researcher with expertise

in African History, Africa(n) studies, decolonial studies, postcolonial studies and higher education studies. Mushonga has taught history, environmental history, and cultural and heritage studies at the University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe, and at NUL, Lesotho. Mushonga is currently teaching and supervising honours, MA and PhD students in Africa(n) and gender studies at UFS. Mushonga is a decolonial scholar whose research is underpinned by the question: What are the things that we cannot know because of what we know? He believes in the idea of learning to unlearn in order to relearn. Mushonga is the principal and co-researcher in several research projects and is the editor of *Migration, borders, and borderlands: Making national identity in southern African communities* (Lexington Books 2023). As a dedicated decolonial scholar, Mushonga believes that another knowledge and another new world civilisation are possible. Mushonga is the inaugural Global Academic Director for the Decolonial International Network (DIN), a space for academics and activists committed to the creation of a new world civilisation that is opposed to all forms of fundamentalism.

Pfarelo E Matshidze
Department of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Heritage Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Venda,
Thohoyandou, South Africa
Email: pfarelo.matshidze@univen.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0011-2910

Pfarelo E Matshidze is a senior lecturer in the Department of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Heritage Studies at the University of Venda, South Africa. Matshidze's research areas are socio-cultural anthropology and indigenous law. Matshidze's current responsibilities are teaching and learning, research and community engagements with a special focus on ensuring that indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) are integrated into the university curriculum so that they can contribute to the emancipation of the African voice. Matshidze supervises postgraduate students. Matshidze has done extensive research and has worked closely with traditional leaders, traditional healers and other indigenous knowledge (IK) practitioners.

Radikobo Ntsimane
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
Email: radikobontsimane1268@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9697-6646

Radikobo Ntsimane is affiliated with the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), South Africa. Ntsimane's postgraduate studies used oral history methodology extensively in the areas of land dispossession and medical missions under apartheid. Ntsimane has since worked and published on the themes of memory work and death, respectively. Ntsimane is currently working as the Head of

Research in the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture in KwaZulu-Natal. Through Bridging Ages International, Ntsimane collaborates with local historians to identify heritage sites and re-enact historical events through the time travel method.

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana
Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa
Email: sekgothe.mokgoatsana@ul.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3224-2341

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana is a professor of Folklore Studies and African Languages at the University of Limpopo, South Africa, a cultural expert and an oral historian and holds a BA, HonsBA, MA and DLitt et Phil from Unisa. Mokgoatšana's PhD thesis in African Languages entitled 'Identity: From autobiography to postcoloniality: A study of representations in NS Puleng's works' is grounded in autobiography, reflexivity and postcoloniality. Mokgoatšana, together with the late Professor Phaka Makgamatha, introduced a postgraduate qualification for MA and PhD degrees in Folklore Studies. Mokgoatšana publishes on a range of topics spanning oral history, indigenous knowledge systems and folklore studies. Mokgoatšana's keen interest is in mission history and how it impacted the lives of Africans. This includes the role of the church in constructing martyrdom where there is (none), cf. Kgashane Mamatlepa, Jane Furse and Manche Masemola of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Anglican Church, respectively. Mokgoatšana's publications resist the straitjacket of African language scholarship tied to Linguistics or Literature. Mokgoatšana has served in a number of academic bodies and boards, such as the National Heritage Council (NHC), National Arts Council (NAC), SACOIR (South African Council on International Relations), IKS structures and Freedom Park, where he is a member of the strategic committee.

Stewart L Kugara
Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa
Email: skugara@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3090-1841

Stewart L Kugara is currently a postdoctoral fellow of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI)/ National Research Foundation (NRF) Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme at the University of Limpopo, South Africa. Kugara is a former University of Venda postdoctoral fellow (Department of Science and Technology [DST]), NRF, Centre in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (CIKS); senior lecturer at the University of Venda; and adjunct lecturer at the Independent Institution of

Education (IIE) MSA (Monash University, South Africa). Kugara is an interdisciplinary, intradisciplinary and multidisciplinary author with academic publications straddling the following areas: intellectual property, traditional leadership, African traditional health and beliefs, knowledge management, African conflicts management, cultural astronomy, human rights, indigenous customary law, African philosophy, and cultural philosophy and heritage studies. Kugara possesses excellent experience in customary legal issues (IKSs), research, community engagement and teaching. Kugara is now seeking a permanent career challenge with an opportunity for professional growth.

Preface

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana
[a]Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa
[b](Former) President,
Oral History Association of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa

Oral history regards the gathering and construing of eyewitness narratives of past events. As a research method, oral history relies on the memories, perceptions and interpretations of individuals of past events. Historical research is conducted through interaction and engagement with participants reflecting on past experiences, either personal or from stories or deliverance, aimed at adding to the historical record.

The Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA), established in 1999 by the then Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST), was mandated by Cabinet to conceptualise and spearhead the National Oral History Programme (NOHP) for South Africa. Since then, OHASA has escalated oral history in South Africa into an acknowledged discipline with original research projects undertaken to produce new sources and data contributing to the existing archival holdings. OHASA is growing and evolving as an imperative stakeholder and partner to develop and preserve oral history as a specialised field in the country. This book aims to address the growing need to establish oral history as an important resource in promoting and protecting archives from previously marginalised communities in order to bring about redress. It further seeks to promote oral history as the method and a theory to analyse oral historical narratives. Researchers, academics and practitioners with a keen interest in archives, history, museum studies, the arts, heritage studies, indigenous knowledge, folklore studies and oral studies will greatly benefit from this book. Information herein also extends to disciplines such as sociology, psychology and religious studies.

The dissemination and management of information and indigenous knowledge is crucial in the restoration and sustenance of the human dignity of the people of South Africa, by acknowledging their histories and narratives, thereby ensuring a future. These objectives can be achieved by promoting oral history as a research methodology and by conducting historical research and a theory to analyse oral historical narratives.

How to cite: Mokgoatšana, S 2025, 'Preface', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. xxv–xxviii. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.00

The authors of the chapters are seasoned academics and researchers affiliated with different tertiary institutions and organisations, specialising in, amongst others, history, oral history, philosophy and theology. Chapters 1–3 contain the history of OHASA from 2004 to 2022 from an autoethnographical perspective by Christina Landman. It covers the history of annual OHASA conferences, as well as the publications that ensued from it. The author describes the history of OHASA from an insider–outsider perspective using the methodological insights of autoethnography. Chapter 2 also emphasises the role of OHASA in empowering researchers nationwide to engage in oral history, in providing a platform for organic intellectuals, in sharing knowledge obtained through oral history projects and in developing oral history methodologies. Chapter 3 further focuses on the contribution this association makes towards oral history in society, heritage practice and academia.

Chapter 4, by Stewart L Kugara, Sekgothe Mokgoatšana and Pfarelo E Matshidze, relates to 'Conversational: Critical insights of decolonising oral history methodologies', where authors aim to contribute to the conversation to demystify social realities through the eyes of an indigenous African person. It further aims to persuade academics, researchers and practitioners that reality ought to be interpreted through the meanings that people give to their life world.

Chapter 5 discusses the methodological and ethical quandaries in oral historical research in southern Africa with experiences from Lesotho and South Africa, by Munyaradzi Mushonga and Motlatsi Thabane, focusing on oral research that cannot be conducted from the prescriptive point of view of only one correct manner, but to understand that situations differ, and each situation requires responses that may be unique to it. These challenges should be borne in mind, and their impact on the nature and quality of the evidence we collect should be recognised regarding making appropriate analyses and interpretations of the oral evidence we collect. Much of the views expressed in this chapter are based on the variety of social histories described as 'history from below'.

In Chapter 6, 'Objectivity and subjectivity: Twin evils in oral history research', Sekgothe Mokgoatšana and Stewart L Kugara explore the stance that historical writing demands writers to be objective in their pursuit of truthfulness – an age-old pursuit and polemic debate in history. It is a subject drawn from naturalists' set rules and criteria for ensuring that the truth is not contaminated but presented as it is. This chapter argues that the search for objectivity in oral history is a complex task that is difficult to achieve because it is not easy to distance the storyteller from the narrative, narrative events and contexts. This chapter will propose ways to eliminate bias and increase validity and reliability.

Radikobo Ntsimane, in Chapter 7, discusses the ethical considerations in the oral history interviewing and publications processes by highlighting points to be mindful of and to avoid in order not to derail a good oral history project or lead to expensive lawsuits. It describes the roles of the interviewer and interviewee in the oral history processes, concluding with the three steps in the sequence of oral history evidence production.

In Chapter 8, Chitja Twala explores the importance of oral interviews in framing histories of the South African liberation struggle. He displays how oral history and the transmission of information from one generation to the next by word of mouth can have its downsides, hampering the sustainable preservation of liberation history or, for that matter, any other history. Further to this, oral historiography has always been affected by an incremental loss of its credibility and the loss of large sets of oral historical data and stories because of a lack of documentation. This chapter further emphasises oral testimonies delivered through oral history as a subfield of the academic field of history, which greatly benefitted the liberation history in South Africa, lessening the danger of not preserving this history. It, however, cautions that oral written history cannot replace oral sources that should continuously be preserved, forming an indispensable part of history as an academic discipline.

Kogielam K Archary reflects on interviewing and authoring for *Tell Your Mother's Story* (*TYMS*) in Chapter 9, a project running from 2016 to 2025, already publishing Volume Eight in 2025 of stories about South African women, the African diaspora, nonagenarians and especially those who are referred to as organic intellectuals. In South Africa, as a result of colonialism and apartheid, there are major gaps in the public records and public knowledge, which were caused by the deliberate omission of African knowledge, technologies, stories and philosophies from the mainstream of South Africa's body of knowledge. Authoring stories about the nonagenarians enables people today to receive first-hand knowledge about occurrences before the 1940s in an attempt to address the issues of the gaps in the public records and private knowledge. This chapter highlights how word-of-mouth transmission, utilising the oral history methodology with a focus on qualitative research, lends itself to primary sources leading the way to assist in remediating the gaps that are still prevalent.

Chapter 10 focuses on using oral history in advancing feminist discourses and transformation through Charlotte Maxeke during her sesquicentennial celebrations by Chitja Twala and John Phori. It aims to contextualise the relevance of Charlotte Maxeke in the discourses of oral history in South Africa by employing feminism as the theoretical lens to advance the ideals of social transformation and women's emancipation in all spheres of

social engagements. The chapter concludes with the values Charlotte Maxeke stood for and addresses the challenges of feminism in various societies through oral history and includes opportunities for women to assume political leadership with constitutional support, social and gender disparities, societal patriarchy and gender discrimination illustrated through cultural implications in politics, religion, economy and race.

Chapter 1

The history of the Oral History Association of South Africa: An autoethnographical perspective (2004–2008)[1]

Christina Landman
Research Institute for Theology and Religion,
Faculty College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This chapter illustrates the use of autoethnography, a specific method of doing oral history. It does so by telling the story of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA). Here, the story of the first five national conferences of OHASA is told, which were annually held between 2004 and 2008, as well as the publications that ensued from the conferences. The author has attended and presented papers at all the

1. This chapter is based on an autoethnographical perspective by Christina Landman. It covers the history of the annual OHASA conferences, as well as the publications that ensued from it. The author describes the history of OHASA from an insider–outsider perspective using the methodological insights of autoethnography. An application for full ethical approval was made to OHASA, and ethics consent was received on 22 April 2022. No ethics approval number was issued.

How to cite: Landman, C 2025, 'The history of the Oral History Association of South Africa: An autoethnographical perspective (2004–2008)', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.01

OHASA conferences except the first two. The author describes the history of OHASA from an insider–outsider perspective using the methodological insights of autoethnography. After an explanation of the tenets of autoethnography, an overview of the five conferences is given and analysed as to their contribution to the field of oral history in South Africa. This is done within the personal account of the author as autoethnographer. The chapter closes by evaluating OHASA and its contribution to the body of language *vis-à-vis* oral history.

Introduction: Aim, focus and literary review

Aim and research focus

This chapter aims to use autoethnography as a method of writing history, especially oral history. Here autoethnography will be engaged to write the history of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA). Firstly, an analysis of the main output of OHASA will be made, which are the first five annual conferences held by this association between 2004 and 2008. Secondly, a description of OHASA's publications will be given, which consist of two volumes of conference proceedings – namely, *Culture, memory and trauma* (Opondo & Landman 2013) and *Oral History: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled* (Landman 2013). This will be rounded off by an evaluation of OHASA's contribution to the field of oral history in South Africa. Both the description and the evaluation will be done from an autoethnographical perspective – that is, from the perspective of the author and her participation in OHASA's culture. The author has been a member of OHASA since 2005 and is now in her sixth three-year term as the executive of OHASA after having been appointed as the head of publications in 2010.

Literary review and unique contribution

The history of OHASA has not been written yet, neither in a longer nor in a shorter version. However, reference will be made here to two articles that refer to the origin and history of OHASA. The first reference occurs in the introduction to the book *Oral History in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa* (2008, p. 15). Here, the impetus given by the 2002 meeting of the International Oral History Association (IOHA) in South Africa to the eventual launching of OHASA is described:

> In June 2002 the International Oral History Association (IOHA) held its biannual [*sic*] conference at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on the theme 'The Power of Oral History: Memory, Healing and Development'. This gathering, which was attended by oral historians from around the world,

> was a milestone in the history of the international oral history movement. Meeting of South African oral history practitioners preceded and followed this event, leading to the creation of OHASA in October 2005. (Denis & Ntsimane 2008, p. 15)

The reference to the role of IOHA in the launching of OHASA is noted and acknowledged as important, although OHASA itself regards 2004 as the year of its first National Conference, therefore celebrating its 20th conference in 2023.

Secondly, an article by Prof. Mpho Ngoepe from the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa (Unisa), with a postdoctoral fellow from Zimbabwe, Dr Sindiso Bhebhe, should be noted. In 2021, they published an evaluating article entitled 'A forgotten past is the past that is yet to be: Evaluation of (the) oral history programme of the Oral History Association of South Africa' in the *Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA)*.

The evaluation of Ngoepe and Bhebhe includes the following criticism of OHASA:

- Oral History Association of South Africa's oral history programme is elitist in that it focuses on the stories of the elite (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 60).
- The stories recorded by OHASA are inaccessible and are stashed in archives (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 60).
- Oral History Association of South Africa relies on the (ANC [African National Congress]) government to fund its conferences and makes little effort to increase its low membership (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, pp. 64, 73).
- The leadership of OHASA comprises academics and civil servants, and not even its conferences show adequate attendance of local people. Instead of rainbow attendance, OHASA smacks of 'academic tourism' (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 65).
- The 'provincialisation of OHASA' is praised, but the slow tempo of its realisation is critiqued as only the provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga have their own annual conferences. Furthermore, it seems that the provinces are also falling into the trap of holding (scholarly) conferences at the cost of working with local communities (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, pp. 66–67).
- Oral History Association of South Africa's journal, the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* (*OHJSA*), is considered a good development but is also too elitist and has published a majority of articles written by non-South Africans (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 72).

- Also, educating learners in oral history methodologies is a positive development in OHASA. The problem is that the products of learners' projects were given back to them and not kept safe for the future and made accessible to all (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 72).

The article of Bhebhe and Ngoepe (2021) raises important points of criticism. However, the authors base their evaluation of OHASA not primarily on content analysis but mainly on counting numbers – that is, the number of members OHASA has, how many articles are published under the name of OHASA, how many South African authors have contributed to the *OHJSA* and so forth.

The author shall now proceed to write a short history of OHASA, making an analysis of their conferences and publications, and her own participation in both, allowing her to describe this history from an autoethnographic perspective. This short history will be tested against the criticism of Bhebhe and Ngoepe (2021).

Method: Autoethnography as research methodology

The autoethnographer presents her research as a personal narrative. The autoethnographer acknowledges that her research reality is socially constructed and that the meaning attributed by the autoethnographer to events is constructed by language. In her texts, the autoethnographer uses language to express herself emotionally and cognitively, connecting the personal to the cultural, social and political (Ellingson & Ellis 2013, pp. 448–449). In this case, the autoethnographer has been a member of OHASA since 2006.

The autoethnographer subjects the self in the research process to introspection as to situating the self in the dialogical space between binaries, such as the binary between research and researched, objectivity and subjectivity, detached, external knowledge and personal, internal knowledge, the self as an individual and the self as in relationship with others (Ellingson & Ellis 2013, pp. 450–456). In this case, the autoethnographer situates herself between the culture of the OHASA executive committee of which she has been a member since 2007 and her personal narrative as a researcher.

The organisational autoethnographer tells stories from the heart of the organisation – in this case, OHASA – that would otherwise have been silent. The autoethnographer co-produces stories with other members of the organisation in exciting new organisational contexts. The autoethnographer engages the ethnographic gaze to bring a personal and communal understanding of the institutional culture (Doloriert & Sambrook 2012, pp. 84, 86).

Background

Origin of Oral History Association of South Africa

The OHASA is a 21st-century phenomenon. It has a dual origin, emanating both from the (then) Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) and from the IOHA, taking the year 2000 as a communal date of origin.

Firstly, the existence of OHASA can mainly be attributed to a mandate given by the post-1994 Cabinet to the (then) DACST to establish a National Oral History Programme (NOHP). The Minister of the DACST at the time was Ben Ngubane, and in January 2000, he appointed a panel of experts to advise him on drafting such an oral history programme. After several meetings, the panel met with the Minister in July 2001, and the NOHP was published in September 2001 (NOHP 2001, pp. 2, 3). One of the outcomes envisaged for the programme to be successful was 'The establishment of a national oral history association' (NOHP 2001, p. 10). At the same time, we are reminded by Khanyi Ngcobo (interview 10 May 2022) that the Minister appointed two panels, not only for establishing an oral history programme but also one for indigenous music. In 2002, the Ministry decided to merge these two programmes because of duplication, to be called the National Indigenous Music and Oral History Programme (NIMOHP) (Ndlovu 2003, p. 2). After OHASA was established and the name 'Oral History Society of South Africa' was finalised incorporating both the oral history and the indigenous music programmes in 2003/05, all the programmes for their annual National Oral History Conferences have been providing space for indigenous music, both in live performances and in paper presentations.

Secondly, the stimulus for realising this envisaged outcome was the conference of the IOHA held in South Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in Pietermaritzburg from 23 to 27 June 2002. Philippe Denis, professor of Church History at UKZN, was part of the IOHA Conference Committee. During an e-mail interview (Denis 08 May 2022), he explained the connection between IOHA and the establishment of OHASA as follows:

> It was at the IOHA Conference in 2002 in Pietermaritzburg that the idea of establishing a South African oral history association with the support of the National Archives in Pretoria (Graham Dominy and Many Gilder) was floated for the first time. An Interim Steering Committee was subsequently established of which I was nominated president. It must have been 2003. The first National Oral History Conference was held in Pretoria in October 2004. The second one was held in Boksburg in 2005. It was at that conference that OHASA was formally constituted with a Constitution.

The author attended and presented a paper at the 2002 IOHA Conference in Pietermaritzburg and gives her impressions here in terms of autoethnography. The author, originally a medievalist, has engaged in oral

history research since 1996, when she joined the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at Unisa. Whilst interviewing church-based activists who were tortured during the apartheid era, the author had to deal with the acute re-traumatisation of interviewees. This convinced her to enrol for a second doctorate in (pastoral) therapy. Between 2001 and 2007, she did her practical work at the polyclinic ('Outpatients') of Kalafong Hospital in Atteridgeville, then still viewed as the 'black township' of Pretoria.

The paper presented at IOHA 2002, 'Journeying with stories' (Landman 2002, pp. 1946–1960), dealt with the relationship between oral history and counselling and the need for an oral historian to have basic narrative counselling skills. Stories from interviewees and possible stories from patients were told to illustrate this point. The paper was aptly placed under Section 16, 'Trauma, memory and reconciliation'.

This was the author's first encounter with international oral historians. During this international conference, 154 papers were read in English or Spanish, the official languages of IOHA. The author was exposed to papers that recorded the successes or failures of commissions and research projects in Nigeria, Brazil, Argentina, Poland, Finland, Russia and, of course, South Africa to heal memories after political violence. Because of this exposure, the author joined IOHA as a member and attended and gave papers at their biannual conferences *inter alia* in Prague, Czech Republic (2010); Buenos Aires, Argentina (2012); Barcelona, Spain (2014); and Jyväskylä, Finland (2018). She was elected as the African representative on the council of IOHA in 2010 and acted for a short period from 2016 as editor of the IOHA journal, *Words and Silences.* In 2016, the author underwent major back surgery and was unable to attend IOHA India 2016. The contact between OHASA and IOHA is maintained through Sean Field (vice-chair 2008–2010), Philippe Denis and Radikobo Ntsimane (African representative 2008–2010).

Build-up to the First National Oral History Conference in 2004

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana (interview 22 April 2022), Khanyi Ngcobo (telephonic interview 10 May 2022) and Radikobo Ntsimane (interview 22 April 2022) who were founding members of OHASA and are at present serving on the executive committee of OHASA recall that in 2003, a preparatory meeting, called by the DACST and the National Archives, was held in the Sheraton Hotel in Arcadia, Pretoria, 'with black and white participants' (Mokgoatšana, interview 22 April 2022). Here, a decision was taken that an Oral History Association would be formed. An interim steering committee was elected consisting of Philippe Denis (chair, University of Natal), Sekgothe Mokgoatšana (deputy-chair, University of the North),

Sean Field (University of Cape Town), Patricia Opondo (University of Natal) and Vuyani Booi (curator of the Liberation Struggle Archives at the University of Fort Hare).

The interim steering committee was to draft a constitution and organise the First National Oral History Conference. A serious need was identified for recording, archiving and writing black history in South Africa. Membership in the envisaged oral history association would be extended to scholars and/or academics, archivists and practitioners in the recording and archiving of (oral) history.

On 10 January 2004, Mandy Gilder, deputy national archivist, sent an invitation letter under the letterhead of the National Archives and Records Service in South Africa as host to attend an Oral History Conference in Pretoria. Attendees were invited to prepare presentations on their archival institutions and programmes and attend a presentation on 'the formation of the Oral History Association of South Africa' on the last day of the conference.

The First National Oral History Conference took place from 25 to 28 October 2004 in the Manhattan Hotel in Pretoria, South Africa. It was opened by Dr Graham Dominy who at the time was the chief director of the National Archives. The keynote address was delivered by Dr Humphrey Mogashoa on the topic of 'What is oral history? Reopening the debate in the South African context' (Draft Report 2004, p. 1). The programme consisted mainly of:

- Presentations by national bodies, such as the NOHP (Prof. C Ndlovu), the National Indigenous Music Programme (Mr A Peterson and Mr V Booi) and oral history recordings in the national archives (Ms B Kotze)
- Reports on projects funded by the DACST
- Reports from regional archives such as the Cape Town Archives (Dr F Vester) and the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Archives (Ms P Mwandla)
- Reports from oral history centres such as Sinomlando (Mr R Ntsimane) and the Centre for Popular Memory (Dr S Field) (First National Oral History Conference 2004, pp. 1–6).

On 28 October 2004, OHASA was officially formed, and the following national oral history committee was elected:

- Philippe Denis (chair)
- Sekgothe Mokgoatšana (deputy-chair)
- Patricia Opondo (editor)
- Nomvula Mbangela (project officer)
- Sean Field (international liaison)
- Vuyani Booi (research)
- Khanyi Ngcobo (secretary) (minutes of the Oral History Interim Committee 25 February 2005).

The meeting concluded with a visit to Freedom Park, thereby establishing a tradition of visiting a heritage site at the end of each conference (First National Oral History Conference 2004, p. 5). As the author joined OHASA only in 2006 at its Third National Oral History Conference, she has no experience with these events apart from interviewing Mokgoatšana, Ntsimane, Ngcobo and Denis in 2022 on the origins of OHASA. They became her colleagues on the OHASA Excom, on which they have served with proper intervals. At present, they are serving members of the OHASA Excom. Philippe Denis left OHASA in 2008.

In terms of autoethnography, it is important to note that OHASA represented a culture with which the author was not fully familiar at the time of joining. By 2006, the author was an academic theologian and, from 2006 onwards, a licenced pastor in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, eventually chosen as the executive of this predominantly black church. She was not primarily familiar with the OHASA culture that included traditionalists, other religions, brands of Christianity and non-Christians in a research environment where religion was minimally important and explored. This contributed both to her exposure to a wider research community and research fields and to her contribution, albeit small, to incorporating religious research into the National Oral History Forum.

Analysis of conferences 2005–2008

2005: Second National Oral History Conference

The second National Oral History Conference of OHASA carries the word 'annual' in its title as a prophecy for future conferences. It was held from 18 to 21 October 2005 in the Birchwood Executive Hotel in Boksburg, Gauteng (Second Annual National Oral History Conference 2005). Philippe Denis was the chair of OHASA.

This conference did not carry a general theme as subsequent conferences had. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana remarked during an interview (22 April 2022) that, at the original planning and launching of the OHASA Conferences, it was decided that there would not be a central theme but that everybody would be enabled to come and talk or report on oral research done in any field and on any topic. This changed from the next conference onwards. Conferences from then on carried a theme, but subthemes allowed possibilities to talk just about anything pertaining to oral history.

This conference, like the previous one, was opened by Dr G Dominy, the chief director of the National Archives. The keynote address was by Dr Otsile Ntsoane from the DACST, thereby emphasising the strong bond between the National Archives and the Department in hosting this OHASA conference. Ntsoane furthermore combined the portfolios of oral history

and indigenous music as originally established by the Minister in his paper entitled 'Oral history and oral performance in post-apartheid South Africa'.

Although it was an open theme, four major subthemes were presented at this conference in six sessions:

- Research on trauma experienced during apartheid and the construction of its memory in post-apartheid times
- The healing of memory through reconciliation, leading to nation-building and community development
- An analysis of symbols in traditional and contemporary liberation songs
- Teaching oral history in schools.

Reports were given on national oral history projects, and the work of the steering committee was put to the meeting for testing. During this conference, 22 papers were delivered of which 12 were read by lecturers attached to universities and ten by practitioners. Under 'practitioners' is understood as those attached to archives and museums, schoolteachers, independent researcher-practitioners and others not attached to universities. It seems that the divide between academics and practitioners at the beginning of OHASA was more or less 50/50. Most of the papers do not tell the stories of the elite but reflect research on toyi-toyi protests in the 1980s (C Twala & Q Koetaan), the reconstruction of memory and identity in Tshwane townships and informal settlements (J Mabelebele), and the Mpophomeni community looking at its past and future (T Qwabe) to mention but a few.

It was at this conference that it was decided that conferences would, in future, rotate between provinces (Mokgoatšana, interview 22 April 2022).

2006: Third National Oral History Conference

The third OHASA conference, 'Culture, memory and trauma', was held from 07 to 10 November 2006 at the Akani Richards Hotel in Richards Bay, South Africa. It was hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal province.

Philippe Denis welcomed those present as chair of OHASA. The opening address was given by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms NGW Botha. Henceforth, all OHASA conferences would be opened by the Deputy Minister of the Department of Arts and Culture, the department being one of the main sponsors of the annual conference (Third National Oral History Conference 2006, p. 2).

The first guest speaker was Prof. Langalibalele Mathenjwa from SAHRA (South African Heritage Resource Agency) with a paper on 'The resourcefulness of elders and their strategic thinking in dealing with culture, memory and trauma' (later published in Opondo & Landman 2013, pp. 1–10)

and reflects the bond between OHASA and other heritage agencies. The second guest speaker was Prof. Philip Bonner (1945–2017) from the Wits History Workshop, who combined academy and practice in his paper 'Apartheid, memory, and other occluded pasts' (Opondo & Landman 2013, pp. 11–33).

Of the (other) 28 papers read at this conference, 20 were from academics and only eight were from practitioners. Both the scholarly and practical papers gave voice to the voiceless, that is, to the Zondi women of Greytown (Magwaza 2013, pp. 89–96), the sangomas in KwaZulu-Natal (L Mkasi), as well as the Democratic Republic of Congo refugees in Durban (Baruti Amisi) and the Rwandan refugees in post-apartheid Cape Town (Field 2013, pp. 131–151). There was only one paper read by a speaker from outside South Africa, Catharine Moyo from the National Archives of Zimbabwe speaking on 'Capturing a fading national memory: The role of oral historians in Zimbabwe' (Opondo & Landman 2013, pp. 159–166).

Fifteen of the papers delivered at the 2006 conference were published in the first of three volumes of OHASA conference proceedings. The first volume carries the title of *Culture, memory, and trauma* and was edited by Opondo and Landman (2013). The second volume, titled *Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled*, contains papers from the Fifth and Sixth National Oral History Conferences in 2008 and 2009 (Landman 2013b). The third volume, *Oral history: Heritage and identity,* caters for the papers of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth National Oral History Conferences held in 2010, 2011 and 2012 (Landman 2013a). From 2013 onwards, the papers were reviewed and published in the *OHJSA*, which belonged to OHASA. From 2020, they were reviewed and published in a subsection of the accredited journal *HTS*. Therefore, except for 2007 when the conference was organised locally, OHASA provided public space for conference papers to be published when the speakers submitted their papers for publication.

This was the first OHASA conference attended by the author. She arrived late because of a delayed flight and had to sit in the wings because the venue, which could hold 300 people, was packed to capacity. Later that day, she read a paper on 'Women's stories of being cursed: Healing between Western medicine and township spiritualities'. These were the stories of women who came for counselling experiencing 'the curse of the *sangoma*' in their personal lives when their husbands or boyfriends cheated on them or deserted them. Placing these stories within the oral information given by other papers informed the author of the cultural challenges of dealing with the trauma of being cursed. This information was not readily available in mainline Christian discourses.

2007: Fourth National Oral History Conference

The fourth OHASA conference was presented under the title 'Truth, legitimacy and representation: Oral history and alternative voices' was hosted by the Limpopo province at the Ranch Hotel just outside Polokwane, South Africa, from 23 to 26 October 2007. Philippe Denis was still the chair of OHASA.

The welcoming address was given by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) of Limpopo (DSAC [Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture]), Joyce Mashamba, and the opening address by the Deputy Minister of DAC, NG Botha. The keynote address was given by Dr Nomathamsanqa Tisani from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) on 'In pursuit of oral history through alternative discourses' (Fourth National Oral History Conference 2007, p. 2).

Again, the conference was well attended. The speakers had to pay for their transport, but for this conference and future OHASA conferences, all speakers and OHASA executive members were awarded paid accommodation.

Twenty-eight papers were read by 30 speakers. Twenty-one of them were attached to universities, and nine were practitioners. Five were from universities outside South Africa, of which three were from Kenya and the others from Zimbabwe and Botswana. In terms of the remark by Prof. Mokgoatšana (Interview 22 April 2022) that OHASA was established by both black and white, it can be noted that five white and one brown speaker read papers at this conference, which is an average for conferences to follow.

The conference subthemes invited abstracts which, again, reflected research done on the grassroots level. The following are examples: Under the subtheme *Ethics: Gossip, lies, slander and defamation*, MR Mchunu presented 'The controversy around Inkosi Bhambatha's death'. Under *Truth, legitimacy, representation and alter/native discourses*, Nkosingiphile Malima, a trainee from the Sinomlando Centre for Oral History in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, investigated the confession of Mr Mavimbela of KwaMachibisa in Pietermaritzburg on the Edendale Beer Hall and the destruction of the 'natives' in the 1970s. *Oral history and development* attracted the research of Nongo Phiri from the University of Venda on 'Challenges faced by homeless men and women in Holy-Trinity Catholic Church at Braamfontein, Johannesburg'. Under this subtheme too, Prof. Julie Wells from Rhodes University presented an academic paper based on practice titled 'Layers of meaning: Constructing community ownership and development from oral history narratives'. The subtheme *Memories of the struggle and (re)constructing history* invited Dr Marietjie Oelofse,

a founding member of OHASA and at the time teaching at the University of the Free State, to talk on 'Remembering the truth: An oral history perspective on the victim hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa'. Lastly, one of the case studies that particularly caught the attention was 'Traditional and cultural practices of the Northern Ndebele community in Mokopane, Limpopo Province', presented by Malehu Lamola, MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages at the University of Venda. This is the only OHASA conference in which no papers were published by OHASA as none were submitted by the speakers.

From this conference, the author clearly remembers the paper 'Life in "the Dark City": A tale of abandoned South African women and children in Morogoro, Tanzania', presented by two doctoral students from the UKZN, Stephen Muoki Joshua and Wanyenda Chilimo. During apartheid, many members of uMkhonto we Sizwe were stacked in refugee camps in Tanzania. The men returned after 1994, and many women and children remained behind. The author remembers this paper because some of the men who returned and were taken up in the South African Defence Force (SADF) were referred for counselling at Kalafong Hospital because they could not cope in the army after spending many years in refugee camps (Fourth National Oral History Conference 2007, p. 5).

The author furthermore remembers an interesting response from attendants to her paper, which was titled 'The silent voices of women older than 50 who are living with HIV and AIDS'. In 2007, it was yet again decided that a national AIDS plan would focus on people under the age of 48 years. The author then, in the two years before the conference, interviewed several women – black and white, rich and poor – who were over the age of 50 years and who were living with HIV and AIDS. In this paper, the author pointed to the factors that had made married women in this age group vulnerable to HIV infection, one reason being male *penopausal* infidelity in marriage. Male members in the audience reacted strongly to the use of the word 'penopause' and, during question time, even challenged its existence. Menopause is a 'women thing', it was said, and men do not experience penopause. The discussion on this continued informally throughout the conference, with men standing in small groups vigorously discussing this – and giving feedback to the author. It seemed that the main conclusion reached by the informal discussion was that penopause, as a time when (married) men engage in extra-marital affairs to prove their virility, does not exist! The discussion even continued to the next conference. The 2007 conference was an elective one. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was elected as the new chair of OHASA.

2008: Fifth National Oral History Conference

The fifth OHASA conference was titled 'Hidden voices, untold stories and veiled memories'. It was hosted by the Eastern Cape province in the Regent

Hotel in East London from 06 to 10 October 2008 where Sekgothe Mokgoatšana, a professor in the Department of Cultural and Political Studies at the University of Limpopo and a cultural expert, presided as OHASA chair.

The keynote address was given, as in previous conferences, by Ms NGW Botha as deputy minister of Arts and Culture. The guest speaker was Prof. J Peires of Walter Sisulu University. The title of the paper, 'Using oral traditions in the writing of history: A review of the methodology evolved out of international best practice', reflects the quest of OHASA since its inception to formulate scholarly oral history methodologies (Fifth National Oral History Conference 2008, p. 3).

A large number of speakers, namely, 51, participated in this conference reading 46 papers. Most of the speakers, 42, were attached to universities and nine were practitioners. Five were from universities outside South Africa: Lesotho, the University of Sheffield (R Johnson), the George Mason University in Washington D.C. (B Carton) and L Hadfield of the Michigan State University. Only six of these papers were submitted by the speakers and published in the second volume of conference proceedings, *Oral History: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled* (Landman 2013b, pp. 1–83).

Again, the research presented was on grassroots voices, often combined with methodological challenges. One example should suffice, namely, that of Tshepo Moloi (2013) from the Local Histories and Present Realities Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand who gave a paper on 'Oral testimonies by former members of the Azanian National Youth Unite (AZANYU): The sayable and unsayable in an oral history interview' (published in Landman 2013b, pp. 1–17) in which the voices of the scarcely heard were combined with the method(s) of doing oral history.

At this conference, the voices of high school students were heard. Three learners from Chief Ampie Mayisa High School, D Madiba, E Mabuza and M Ntshalintshali, presented a paper on 'Community history writing: Lessons, issues and concerns of Chief Ampie Mayisa High School'. This paper was not submitted to OHASA for publication.

The author delivered a paper on 'Concepts of illness and healing amongst farm workers in the Hoedspruit area', expanding on her interviews with farm workers on the religious causes and cures for HIV and AIDS. At this conference, the author was especially informed about what speakers pointed out as 'sayable' during interviewing and its methodological implications. This was of upmost importance to her research amongst farm workers who were at least 80% illiterate and who were vulnerable as workers, which impinges on what was for them 'sayable'.

Evaluation

The evaluation of OHASA's first five conferences and ensuing publications are not done here in terms of the evaluative article by Bhebhe and Ngoepe (2021) referred to above. However, these authors do provide useful categories for evaluation. The following, then, is the author's autoethnographical evaluation of OHASA's activities from 2003/04 to 2008:

- The stories retrieved through oral history methodologies presented at the OHASA conferences presented grassroots and previously unheard voices, such as those of elders, women, refugees and mineworkers. There were also papers on 'cultural leaders' such as King Shaka and Zakes Mda. However, the research and stories were not those of any elite.
- The papers delivered at these OHASA conferences are published in conference proceedings, 15 papers in *Culture, memory and trauma* (Opondo & Landman 2013) and six papers in *Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled* (Landman 2013b). However, these 21 published papers are a fraction (17%) of the 121 papers delivered between 2005 and 2008. Some of them might have been published in other accredited journals, but as 40 (a third) of these papers were delivered by practitioners, they might be lost for posterity if they have not been published elsewhere. Unfortunately, they are not even stashed in archives. However, they are available on videos made of all the conferences. These videos are available from the National Archives in Pretoria.
- Although OHASA is struggling to convince its speakers, especially practitioners, to publish their research, it has and is playing an enormous role in empowering people to research, speak publicly and even publish. Oral History Association of South Africa thereby promotes oral history research nationally through its conferences, which rotate between provinces.
- Oral History Association of South Africa relies partly on the Department of Arts and Culture for its funding but is mainly sponsored by the hosting province. Lately, outside funding such as that of the NIHSS (National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences) has been secured.
- However, OHASA's membership is indeed very low. Members pay conference fees but question what benefits there are to being a member as the publications are not available to members in hard copies but only online.
- The leadership of OHASA comprises academics, community leaders and archivists on a provincial level. At conferences, special arrangements are made to transport local people to the venue of the conference. Oral History Association of South Africa soon started to plan with the provinces to hold the conferences in the townships.

Conclusion

The author has experienced OHASA to be relevant to the aim with which it was launched – that is, to empower people from a range of societies to research and tell the stories of the voiceless. During the early conferences of OHASA, the focus was on retelling the stories of those who suffered during apartheid. This was done with methodologies that would unveil hidden voices whilst dealing with the re-traumatisation of the interviewee and the healing of memories.

During the first five conferences, OHASA – at first an unknown entity amongst historians and social scientists locally – managed to gather and maintain enthusiasm for the emerging oral history as a viable subject for academics and practitioners alike. During the first five years of its existence, OHASA broke through several boundaries. Those are the boundaries between cultures and cultured voices, between academics and practitioners, between black and white, and between positivistic and subjectivistic methodologies. It brought the voiceless into the public arena and created partnerships between academics of different scientific orientations and between academics and practitioners. It created a forum for discussion where communities and public speakers meet. It provided training for those who could not get training in oral history methodologies anywhere else.

Oral History Association of South Africa has many challenges in bringing its conferences and publications to the people, in enhancing its membership and in becoming financially independent. Ironically enough, OHASA's main challenge is to marry these opposites – that is, to bring the oral to publication and to archive its own history.

Chapter 2

The history of the Oral History Association of South Africa as autoethnography (2009–2015)[2]

Christina Landman
Research Institute for Theology and Religion,
Faculty College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

This chapter continues to describe the history of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) as autoethnography, thereby illustrating this method in practice. Here the period under discussion is 2009–2015. During this time, OHASA held seven annual national conferences. Papers from these conferences were published in conference proceedings and the newly founded *Oral History Journal of South Africa*.

2. This chapter is based on an autoethnographical perspective by Christina Landman. It covers the history of the annual OHASA conferences, as well as the publications that ensued from it. The author describes the history of OHASA from an insider–outsider perspective using the methodological insights of autoethnography. An application for full ethical approval was made to the Oral History Association of South Africa, and ethics consent was received on 22 April 2022. No ethics approval number was issued.

How to cite: Landman, C 2025, 'The history of the Oral History Association of South Africa as autoethnography (2009–2015)', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 17–31. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.02

The author has attended and read papers at all these conferences, which enables her to describe the history of OHASA from an autoethnographical point of view. Autoethnography is explained, and the seven conferences are analysed as to their contents. This chapter closes with concluding notes as to the role of OHASA in empowering learners nationwide to engage in oral history, in providing a platform for organic intellectuals, in sharing knowledge obtained through oral history projects and in developing oral history methodologies.

Introduction: Aim and background

Aim and research focus

The aim of this chapter is to describe the history of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) using autoethnography as a method. The period under discussion lies between 2009 and 2015. The author will reflect on the seven OHASA conferences held during this time as well as on OHASA's publications. These publications are (1) Volume 2 of the conference proceedings titled *Oral history: Representing the hidden the untold and the veiled* (Landman 2013b) with papers from the 2009 conference; (2) Volume 3 titled *Oral history: Heritage and identity* (Landman 2013a) with papers from the 2010, 2011 and 2012 conferences; and (3) the journal of OHASA – the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* – which has been published since 2013. This will be rounded off by an evaluation of OHASA's contribution to the field of oral history in South Africa.

The author shall now proceed, after defining autoethnography, to write a short history of OHASA from 2009 to 2015, making an analysis of its conferences and publications from an autoethnographical perspective.

Autoethnography as a research methodology in oral history

Defining autoethnography in terms of oral history can be very complicated or rather simple. From the definition, it means that the personal experience of the interviewer takes a central place in the description and analysis of history (Ellingson & Ellis 2013, p. 448; Ellis, Adam & Bochner 2011, p. 273). The self expresses itself both emotionally and cognitively in connecting with the culture of the interviewee(s) as co-researcher(s) and/or with the culture of the institution, which in this case is OHASA (Doloriert & Sambrook 2012, pp. 84, 86).

The author positions herself – humbly and with full acknowledgement of her subjectivity – as an autoethnographer of this history because (1) she has attended and read papers at all seven OHASA conferences

under discussion and (2) she was the editor of both the conference proceedings of these conferences and the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* (*OHJSA*).

Background

In 2000, the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Ben Ngubane, acted on a decision by the 1994 Cabinet and appointed an advisory committee to draft a National Oral History Programme (NOHP) for South Africa. One of the recommendations of this NOHP was to establish an oral history association (NOHP 2001, p. 5). In 2022, the meeting of the International Oral History Association held in South Africa was a further stimulus to launch the OHASA in 2003 (Denis & Worthington 2002, pp. v–viii; Denis e-mail interview 08 May 2022).

In 2004, OHASA held its first annual national conference in the Gauteng province of South Africa. It was mainly meant to be a platform for practitioners in oral history to come and report on their projects (First National History Conference 2004, pp. 1–2).

In 2005 at the Second Annual National Oral History Conference (Second Annual National History Conference 2005, pp. 1–6), also in Gauteng, more papers of an academic nature were presented than reports by practitioners from museums, archives and community projects. Oral History Association of South Africa thus became a forum of healthy interaction between academics and practitioners. This distinction between academics and practitioners is of course uncomfortable as people who were attached to universities presented papers at the conference on their oral history practices and projects, thereby being practitioners themselves. Here 'practitioners' – for lack of a better word – will be used to refer to people from museums, archives, schools and any other institutions that are not universities.

The conferences from 2006 to 2008 dealt with issues related to oral history which were relevant to the times:

- Oral History Association of South Africa 2006 retold the stories of apartheid trauma and looked at the healing of memories in post-apartheid times (Third National History Conference 2006, pp. 1–6)
- Oral History Association of South Africa 2007 dismantled the untruths of the past and revoked, through oral history, voices alternative to mainstream history (Fourth National History Conference 2007, pp. 1–6)
- Oral History Association of South Africa 2008 focused on bringing to light hidden voices, untold stories and suppressed memories (Fifth National History Conference 2008, pp. 1–7).

From 2009 onwards, this was to change, and the OHASA voice was to lose its innocence.

Analysis of conferences 2009–2015

2009: Sixth National Oral History Conference

The theme of the sixth OHASA conference was 'The politics of collecting and curating voices'. It was hosted by the Western Cape Province from 13 to 16 October 2009 in the River Club and Conference Centre in Observatory, Cape Town. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was the chairperson of OHASA in the second year of his three-year term. He opened the conference with the Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Dan Plato, as a token of local participation and Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Paul Mashatile (Sixth National History Conference 2009, p. 2).

The author remembers this as an extremely well-organised conference attended by many locals. The guest speakers were Philip Bonner from Wits and Sibongile Masuku van Damme, a heritage practitioner and CEO of the South Africa Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA). This again confirms OHASA's connections with academics as well as with professional heritage bodies (Sixth National History Conference 2009, pp. 3–7).

Thirty-six papers were read, 24 by university lecturers and 13 by practitioners. Special emphasis was placed on the teaching and interpretation of oral history. Sean Field concluded the conference by asking the ultimate methodological question: 'From stepchild to elder: Has oral history become "respectable"?' Eleven of the conference papers were published in the conference proceedings, Volume 2, *Oral history: Heritage and identity* (Landman 2013b, pp. 87–192).

The author herself published her paper in these conference proceedings (Volume 2) titled 'Teaching oral history' (Landman 2013b, pp. 185–192). In this paper or publication, she gave the outline of an oral history course that was planned for Unisa in seven study units but was never established.

2010: Seventh National Oral History Conference

From 12 to 15 October 2010, the OHASA annual conference was hosted by the Mpumalanga province in the Protea Hotel, The Winkler in White River, South Africa. The theme was 'Oral history and heritage: National and local identities'. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was in his third year as Chairperson of OHASA (Seventh National History Conference 2010, p. 2).

Paul Mashitile gave the keynote address as Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture. He was followed, for the first time, by a speaker who was an organic intellectual, Ms Monica Zwane. Today, the term 'organic intellectual' is well known, as well as the practice of including such people in (academic) conferences. The term 'organic intellectual' is a concept drawn from indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). Here we witness the meeting point

between oral history and IKS in a practical manner, where orality is used as a method to inform research methodology. It should be borne in mind that President Sekgothe Mokgoatšana is a folklorist and an expert in indigenous knowledge, a subject that came to define the interaction of knowledge holders and oral history as a discipline and a practice. He actually popularised the concept of organic intellectuals as village professors. Organic intellectuals are not only sources of information but engage in knowledge construction as well. Organic intellectuals are people who have not necessarily undergone (high levels of) formal education but are regarded by their communities as sources of wisdom. They are elders, who are indigenous knowledge holders, whose tacit knowledge informs their interpretation of the world. Their knowledge is grounded in indigenous epistemic and ancestral knowingness. They have been socialised to apply knowledge whose cosmological, teleological, axiological, epistemological and metaphysical grounding is predominantly local, seeking no foreign spectacles to view reality.

Next, a speech was given by the colourful Prof. Pitika Ntuli who, apart from teaching at University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), is also an acknowledged sculptor and poet. Messages of support were given by the Members of the Executive Council (MECs) of the different provinces, with a welcome by the Executive Mayor of Mbombela, Mr Lassy Chiwayo. Dr Mathole Motshekga gave another keynote speech later in the conference. He was then a member of Parliament and a senior African National Congress (ANC) member. Oral History Association of South Africa thereby confirmed its alliances that are local and national, political and academic, acknowledging 'intellectuals' on different levels of society, organic and academic.

This was a conference of firsts. Not only do we find the first organic intellectual speaking here, but we also find that for the first time, there were more practitioners than academics. The number of practitioners (30) was double the number of academics (15). This may point to Mpumalanga Province as a stronghold of oral history activities and research.

Four of the academics were from universities outside South Africa. There were also six postgraduate students and four learners from the Nellsville Combined School who read papers.

For the first time, also, there were so many papers that they had to be presented in parallel sessions. There were 46 papers delivered by 51 speakers (Seventh National History Conference 2010, pp. 6, 7).

Two workshops were given: One by Sekibakiba Lekgoathi from the University of the Witwatersrand on 'Oral history and historical research in South Africa: Some theoretical and practical issues' and the other by Radikobo Ntsimane from Sinomlando on 'Access into the community for research purposes'.

Oral History Association of South Africa was therefore in the process of fulfilling one of its aims – that is, to not only train learners but also develop oral historians who needed or who wanted to refresh their training (Seventh National History Conference 2010, p. 7).

Most of the papers presented research on recovered 'suppressed and marginalised histories', for instance, that of the Northern Cape (Sephai Mngqolo), the forced removals at Graskop (Harold Lekhuleni) and deaths in the Robben Island Prison (Nolubabalo Tongo-Cetywayo). There were papers on contested sites, such as in Hammanskraal (Sarah Godsell, Mapochsgronde (Kgomotso Mokgethi) and many more. Phil Bonner presented an oral history of the BA Ga-Mphahlele. There were papers 'celebrating and interrogating Indigenous Knowledge Systems' (IKS, Otsile Ntsoane & Soul Shava). There were papers with a gender perspective on 'women as custodians of Oral History' (Rebotile Machaisa, Maano Muhadi, and Winnie Nkhuna). There were specific studies on heritage preservation (Roger Layton, Carol van Wyk, Tom Suchanandan, Brown Maaba, Cathrine Moyo and many more). Seven of these papers (Qwabe, Rhode, Mtetwa, Godshell, Gondongwe, Layton and Singh) have been published in Volume 2 of the conference proceedings, *Oral history: Heritage and identity* (Landman 2013b, pp. 1–72).

In 2010, the author gave two oral history papers: (1) 'Religious memory and healing: The oral historian as healer in three South African contexts' at the Sixteenth International Oral History Conference (IOHA) at the University of Economics in Prague on 08 July 2010; and (2) 'Reclaiming Tonteldoos as a sacred site', delivered at the OHASA conference on 13 October 2010. None of these papers were submitted for publication because the author deems them 'experiential' – that is, recovering sources that eventually cannot be considered data.

This was an elective conference. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was chosen as President for a second term. The designation 'Chair' was no longer used. At the annual general meeting (AGM) of this conference, too, the author was designated as head of publications and was to publish the conference proceedings of OHASA forthwith. Finally, in 2013, she started an academic journal under the title *Oral History Journal of South Africa*.

2011: Eighth National Oral History Conference

The theme of the eighth OHASA conference was 'Past distortions, present realities: (Re)construction(s) and (re)configuration(s) of oral history' and was hosted by the North West province at the Mmabatho Palms Hotel in Mahikeng. As mentioned, the President of OHASA was Sekgothe Mokgoatšana in the first year of his second term.

High-ranking politicians were present at the opening. They were the executive mayor of the Saku-Ngaka Molema District, Audrey Phaladi; the North West province MEC for Sport, Arts and Culture, Hlomane Chauke; the Premier of the North West province, Thandi Modise; and the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Dr Joseph Phaahla (Eighth National History Conference 2011, p. 2).

Thirty-two papers were read, of which seven (Singh, Rafapa, Layton, Jamela & Ngcebetsha, Lekhuleni, Dube, and Inkwa) have been published in the conference proceedings (Landman 2013b, pp. 75–162). Again, there were many more practitioners (19) than academics (seven), of which five (almost all) were from outside South Africa, mainly from Zimbabwe. There were also six postgraduate students (Eighth National History Conference 2011, pp. 3–6).

Outstanding for this conference was the vast number of learners who presented papers: 11 from Mpumalanga and 11 from North West province, both groups participating in family tree projects.

The papers by the learners were, unfortunately so, not published. Subthemes at this conference focused on WoMandla and orality, education and heritage, the role of IKS in oral history, and the shift from past to present as well as from past to modern. A workshop was conducted by Radikobo Ntsimane and Thandeka Majola on methodological dilemmas in oral history (Eighth National History Conference 2011, pp. 3–8).

The author read a paper on ‘The histories of children’s futures’. It was based on interviews with children in a rural ‘township’ in Grades 6 and 7 on their dream careers, as compared to the interviews with young people from the same ‘township’ who have still been unemployed ten years after finishing Grade 12. It was published in the conference proceedings (Landman 2013b, pp. 205–210).

2012: Ninth National Oral History Conference

The theme of the ninth OHASA conference was ‘Oral history, communities and the liberation struggle: Reflective memories in post-apartheid South Africa’. It was hosted by the Free State province at the Black Mountain Hotel in Thaba Nchu. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was still the president of OHASA.

The opening of the conference, as usual, included speeches by the Executive Mayor, Thabo Manyoni, as well as by the Free State MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Dan Kgothule, and of course the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Dr Joe Phaahla. One of the organic intellectuals who spoke the next day was Keikantseng Sehume (Ninth National History Conference 2012, p. 2).

The papers by 32 presenters – made up of an equal number of lecturers at universities (16) and practitioners (16) – mostly dealt with liberation struggles. Examples are the defiance campaign by the Bushbuckridge teachers in the 1980s (Isaac Mthethwa), reflective memories of women who testified at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Ntando Mbatha & Marietjie Oelofse) and the role of traditional leaders in the struggle for liberation (Simon Madhiba). Only four of the speakers (Peterson, Tembo, Dube and Lekgoathi) submitted their papers for publication. They were published in the conference proceedings, Volume 3, *Oral history: Heritage and identity* (Landman 2013a, pp. 165–210).

The author's paper fits into the category of liberation struggles with the title 'maLindi Myeza and the liberation struggle in apartheid Soweto, 1960–1990'. It was based on interviews with Lindiwe Myeza at her house in Soweto and was eventually published under the title 'Lindi Myeza: Unfreezing the walking voice' (Landman 2012, pp. 1–8), incorporating a methodological problem typical of oral history: The freezing (through publication) of the voice of an interviewee who is still alive and 'walking' and may be at a different place when published.

In the same year, from 04 to 07 September 2012, the author attended the International Oral History Association (IOHA) conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the theme 'The challenges of oral history in the 21st century: Diversity, inequality and identity construction'. She delivered a paper on 'The (re)construction of religious identity in oral history research in South Africa'. The paper was published in the conference proceedings of IOHA2012. This is mentioned to point to the ongoing international bond between OHASA and IOHA.

2013: Tenth National Oral History Conference

The tenth OHASA conference critically commemorated the 'Centenary of the Land Act 1913'. It was hosted by the Northern Cape province at the Horseshoe Inn in Kimberley from 08 to 11 October 2013. Sekibakiba Lekghoati, Professor in the Department of History at the University of the Witwatersrand, has been elected as President of OHASA. As he was abroad for academic business, Vice-President Dr Radiboko Ntsimane chaired the conference.

Two cabinet ministers presented papers: Gugile Nkwinti, Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, and Dr Joe Phaahla, Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture. With the focus on the notorious *Natives Land Act of 1913* – that restricted black people from purchasing land outside 'reserves' – the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth gave performances and presentations to display their anger in remembering this Act. NARYSEC is the acronym for the National Rural Youth Service Corps,

which is a programme to assist the youth to develop skills and find employment (Tenth National History Conference 2013, p. 2).

A total of 36 papers were read by an equal number of academics (18) and practitioners (18). However, most (15) of the academics came from universities in Zimbabwe. Most of the papers dealt with land dispossession and resistance. Cases were presented from Marikana (Thabang Khanye), the Eastern Free State (Tshitso Challa & Buti Kompi), the Cobequa of the Eastern Cape (Marjorie Jobson & Joseph Wade) and many more. The economic impact of land dispossession was scrutinised in papers such as that of Lauren Marx on Riemvasmaak and Jongikhaya Mvenene on the Transkei. The role of archives in land claims was presented in papers, such as the paper by Sindiso Bhebhe and Anele Chirume (2014) on the San people in Plumtree and Tsolotsho (Tenth National History Conference 2013, pp. 2–7).

Of special interest to the author personally (as a religion researcher) were the papers that studied the impact of the *Land Act of 1913* on sacred land (Mcebis Blayi) and on traditional health practitioners in South Africa (Nomazizi Jamela) (Tenth National History Conference 2013, pp. 3–8). The author presented a paper 'From landowners to farm workers to unskilled labourers to unemployment: Stories of the Highveld'. In this paper, she presented interviews with people in Sakhelwe, the (then) 'township' of Dullstroom (Emnothweni) in the Mpumalanga province whose forebears have lost their land to white people since the Mapoch Wars of the late 19th century, leading to their present impoverished existence in Sakhelwe.

In 2013, the first issue of the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* was published. The journal belonged to OHASA. It was published by Unisa Press. The editor was Prof. Christina Landman, OHASA's head of publications. This first issue was published in September before the 2013 OHASA conference and does not contain any of its papers. It contained only one OHASA conference paper, a very interesting one, that of Humbulani S. Tshamano and Theodore N. Mahosi, 'The influence of freedom songs on the escalation of witch-hunting and burning in the Venda homeland, 1989–1995' (Tshamano & Mahosi 2013, pp. 31–45). The paper was originally delivered in 2010 at the seventh OHASA conference in the Mpumalanga province.

As the journal aimed at a wider audience, and not only to publish OHASA conference papers, papers published in this 2013 issue were also by (oral) historians from Kenya (e.g. Julius Gathogo), as well as prominent members of IOHA: Pavel Mücke from Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic; Bernardo Barque from the Social Sciences School, São Paulo, Brazil; and Helen Klaebe from the Queensland University of Technology, Australia (*OHJSA* 2013, pp. 74–142).

The 2014 issue of the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* – henceforth referred to as *OHJSA* – did contain some of the papers that were delivered

at the 2013 OHASA conference on the *Land Act of 2013* (Bhebhe & Chirume 2014; Makwanise & Masuku 2014, Marx 2014). Again, other papers were also published, such as the one on orality by Chris L de Wet of the University of South Africa (*OHJSA* 2014, pp. 121–142).

Three further features of OHASA2013 need to be pointed out here. Firstly, there was a huge contingent of learners presenting their papers at this conference. There were 14 learners who participated in the Free State Archives Oral History Programme and presented 11 papers on the histories of their communities based on oral interviewing. There were likewise 14 learners from the Northern Cape Archives Oral History Programme with enchanting stories on the heroes and heroines of their communities. During the conference, there was also a handing over of prizes to the national and provincial winners of the Nkosi Albert Luthuli Young Historian 2012, Thereza Raman and Darren Visagie (Tenth National History Conference 2013, p. 6).

Secondly, this conference gave voice to organic intellectuals of which Kgosi Jantjie and Kgosi Toto can be noted (Tenth National History Conference 2013, p. 11).

Thirdly, Radikobo Ntsimane, Acting President of OHASA, made a presentation on the tenth anniversary of OHASA (Tenth National History Conference 2013, p. 9) pointing out that, indeed, OHASA has been in the business of fulfilling its mandate of establishing and promoting Oral History in South Africa for ten years. The first round of conferences rotating between the nine provinces has been concluded, and the first two were hosted in Gauteng.

2014: Eleventh National Oral History Conference

The theme of the eleventh OHASA conference was ‘Oral history and politics of transformation’. It was hosted by the Gauteng province at the Cedarwoords Park Hotel in Johannesburg from 14 to 17 October 2014. Sekibakiba Lekgoathi was the president of OHASA.

This was the first conference in the second round of rotating provinces, and OHASA was back in Gauteng. The Gauteng MEC for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation, Ms Molebatsi Bopape, gave a message of support and introduced the keynote speaker, the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms Rejoice Thizwilondi Mabudafhasi (Eleventh National History Conference 2014, p. 2).

During the conference, 29 papers were read by 51 speakers, of whom 18 were from universities; and almost double the number (33) were practitioners. Eight of the speakers were from Zimbabwean universities and one was from Japan. Fifteen Gauteng learners also gave presentations (Eleventh National History Conference 2014, pp. 3–7).

The subthemes at this conference were varied and focused mainly on 'oral history in the classroom' and archiving oral sources. The author read a paper with Marie Bredell from Dullstroom on 'Establishing an indexing system and museum at Dullstroom-Emnotweni'. Earlier in 2014, members from the National Archives came to assist the Dullstroom (Emnothweni) Museum – which only housed 'white' artefacts – with indexing and expanding its contents. This paper was not the only one by the two authors on this visit. Bredell (n.d.) gave a short PowerPoint history of the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) which left many relics and monuments around Dullstroom (Emnothweni). The author (Landman) presented the stories of local amaNdebele. The audience questioned some parts of Dullstroom's 'white' history. Bredell experienced this to be unsympathetic towards her paper and left the conference soon thereafter. This was an interesting experiment in telling the 'white' and 'black' history of the same area, especially regarding claims of who was there first.[3]

The author also read a paper on 10 July 2014 at the Eighteenth IOHA conference in Barcelona, Spain, on the topic 'Free but fragile: Human relations amidst poverty and HIV in democratic South Africa' in which more stories from Sakhelwe/Dullstroom were told.

2015: Twelfth National Oral History Conference

From 13 to 16 October 2015, the twelfth OHASA conference celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Freedom Charter (1955) under the theme 'Freedom Charter, memories, and other (un)freedoms'. It was hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal province. Sekibakiba Lekgoathi was in his third and last year of the presidency of OHASA.

The opening of the conference was rather spectacular with cultural dance performances as well as a recital of clan names by learners. Speeches were delivered by both the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Obed Opela, and the Deputy Minister for Arts and Culture, Rejoice Thizwilondi Mabudafhasi (Twelfth National History Conference 2015, p. 1).

The conference, as said, commemorated the Freedom Charter that was accepted 60 years earlier (1955) in Kliptown, Soweto, South Africa. Most of the 37 papers dealt with the Freedom Charter's values of freedom and equality, and specifically with historical forms of unfreedom and inequality, with special reference to land, culture, education, wealth, learning, industry and gender. It was the 17 KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) learners who specifically dealt with the history, contents and reception of the Freedom Charter through oral voices (Twelfth National History Conference 2015, pp. 2–6).

3. This is a personal account of the author as seen from their point of view.

The author gave a paper on 'The call for the opening of (coal)mines around Dullstroom based on the Freedom Charter'. It contained interviewees with members of the Unemployed People's Organisation stationed in Sakhelwe/Dullstroom who demanded that the mines around Dullstroom should be (re)opened to provide work for them. It was published as 'Youth on the margins as agents of change? The call for the opening of mines in Dullstroom-Emnotweni based on the Freedom Charter (1955)' (Landman 2015).

Only one of the papers delivered at OHASA2015 on the Freedom Charter was published in the *Oral History Journal of South Africa* (2016, Volume 4, Number 1). It is Lauren Marx's 'Freedoms for women as outlined in the Freedom Charter: The progress of women in education' (*OHJSA* 2016, pp. 102–112).

It may well be asked why the editor of the *OHJSA* herself often published the papers she has delivered at OHASA conferences in journals other than in *OHJSA*. The reason is the system of accreditation initiated by the South African Department of Higher Education in 2005 according to which articles published in accredited journals are subsidised. Newly found journals, such as the *OHJSA*, must wait for three years before they can apply for accreditation. Academics attached to a South African university were 'forced' by their institutions to publish in accredited journals.

Consequently, those who published in the *OHJSA* were practitioners not attached to universities or academics from outside South Africa. Of the 14 articles published in the *OHJSA* in 2015, five were by academics from Zimbabwean universities. Of the 15 articles published in the *OHJSA* in 2016, nine were from universities in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Ethiopia. As these academics from outside South Africa became research fellows at South African universities, it became increasingly difficult for the *OHJSA* as an unaccredited journal to attract enough academic articles to apply for accreditation.

Evaluation (2009–2015)

Thematic renewal: From 2009, the topics and papers read at OHASA conferences shifted from apartheid trauma and post-apartheid reconstructions to the politics of gathering sources, the formation of identity through storytelling, present methodological and other challenges, and how to reflect on the past so as not to repeat the mistakes of previous regime-like practices.

New to the conference menu were two conferences that were commemorative of specific events in the past that happened during the 20th century: Those are the *Native Land Act of 1913* (OHASA2013) and

the Freedom Charter of 1955 (OHASA2015). Oral History Association of South Africa also celebrated its tenth year of existence in 2013.

During this time, OHASA in a sense 'lost its innocence' as was said earlier. Whilst the first five conferences focused on filling the huge gaps left by apartheid and by correcting apartheid histories, OHASA in 2009 started working – presenting case studies – on formulating methodologies that would establish oral history as a discipline to be taught at schools and universities.

However, the case studies reported on in papers were based on the voices of the people and were not elitist.

Speakers: During the seven OHASA conferences from 2009 to 2015, there were 277 speakers reading 248 papers. Some papers had more than one presenter. Of these, 127 were academics, and 150 were practitioners. There were 8% more practitioners than academics participating. Although OHASA was not in the first instance an academic society, the presence of so many academics – with skilled practitioners – gave a good standing in both the academic and practical worlds, the two 'groups' extensively influencing each other to be both scientific and practical in their research.

Learners: Also, at least two more categories of people were invited to attend and participate in the conferences (2009–2015) under discussion. Previously, it was mainly academics and practitioners, as well as postgraduate students, who participated. Now there was growing participation from learners. Oral History Association of South Africa, with the help of people from the National Archives, especially Belinda Mahajana, Brenda Kotze, Matome Mohlalowe and Thabang Khanye, visited secondary schools in the vicinity of where a conference was to be held. They would train learners from these schools who would then come and present their papers at the conference.

During these times, more than a hundred learners read papers at the seven conferences. Many more participated through cultural dancing and proclaiming their clan names. Oral History Association of South Africa hereby started to 'grow its own timber' and provide for a new generation of oral historians.

Organic intellectuals: Apart from learners, from 2010 every conference would have organic intellectuals as guest speakers alongside academic speakers. Under organic intellectuals, OHASA understood the wise people from a community, be it a village or a 'township', who were honoured as source persons of wisdom by their community as such. They may or may not have official training. The idea was that these organic intellectuals will come and share their indigenous knowledge so that it can be reserved for later generations. However, these speeches were never published and are only available on video from the National Archives.

The author remembers that the participation of organic intellectuals was driven by Sekgothe Mokgoatšana, the then-president of OHASA. This was an important learning curve for the author who in academia was not exposed to these indigenous voices and their wisdom. The author also remembers one case when an organic intellectual presented 'old wisdom' as was required from her. She gave a presentation on what a good woman was according to the culture to which she was attached. The author, herself a gender activist, was silently uneasy with the measurements of unfreedom, inequality and subordination that were approvingly expressed by this organic intellectual. The author is not gay but would feel similarly uneasy if an organic intellectual may speak unfriendly on this. This may be a challenge for OHASA in the future when choosing organic intellectuals to flower their conferences.

Workshops: Also new to the OHASA conference menu since 2010 were workshops held by academics and practitioners to train those in need of knowledge on the practice of oral history. Members of OHASA presented these workshops free of charge, sharing knowledge on methodologies to the benefit of the broader heritage society.

Publications: Although OHASA already held its first conference in 2004, its first publications only appeared in 2013. In 2010, Christina Landman, professor at the Research Institute for Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa, was elected to the Portfolio: Editor (later: Head of Publications). The reason for her election was probably because of her experience in academic publishing. She has been the editor of an already accredited history journal since 2005, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*. At the time of her appointment, there was already a great backlog in publishing the conference papers that have been submitted since 2006. Furthermore, the editor was tasked to begin with an academic journal for OHASA. Consequently, in 2013, four publications of OHASA saw the light in physical form:

- Culture, memory, and trauma (Opondo & Landman 2013), with the proceedings of OHASA2006
- Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold, and the veiled (Landman 2013b), with the proceedings of OHASA2008 and OHASA2009
- Oral history: Heritage and identity (Landman 2013a), with proceedings of OHASA2010, OHASA2011 and OHASA2012
- The newly founded *Oral History Journal of South Africa* (Volumes 1, 2, 3, 2013–2015)
- For the time under discussion, 2009–2015, a total of 61 articles were published after double-blind peer review in the proceedings and in the *OHJSA*. As the *OHJSA* did not only publish papers delivered at OHASA

conferences, only 12 papers were published in *OHJSA* 2013–2015. This means that of the 248 papers read at the seven OHASA conferences from 2009 to 2015, only 41 papers were published by OHASA itself – that is, 6.5% of the total.

Publishing the papers read at OHASA conferences remained a serious issue during this time without an immediate solution.

Conclusion

Between 2009 and 2015, OHASA experienced a time of bloom. Its conferences accommodated an average of 35 papers per conference. To this average should be added at least five guest speakers and organic intellectuals delivering speeches and addresses at each conference. Apart from organic intellectuals, learners were also introduced into the speaking corps. Oral History Association of South Africa indeed conformed to its aims – that is, firstly, to provide a platform for academics and practitioners to share their research on people's grassroots experiences, especially during times of trauma; secondly, OHASA engaged in training everybody – from learners to professors – in oral history methodologies.

The Oral History Association of South Africa also retained its strong bonds with the Department of Arts and Culture; the MECs of Sports, Arts and Culture in the provinces; local oral historians; and other heritage institutions. This may also have a negative effect on OHASA, as OHASA remains dependent on national and provincial funding for its conferences. A low membership, also during these times, keeps OHASA from independence.

In short, from 2009 to 2015 OHASA succeeded in sustaining enthusiasm in its projects and conferences and, to an extent, in their publications.

Chapter 3

The history of the Oral History Association of South Africa (2016–2022)[4]

Christina Landman
Research Institute for Theology and Religion,
Faculty College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

The Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2023. This chapter tells the story of OHASA in the seven years from 2016 to 2022 from an autoethnographical perspective as in the previous two chapters. During this time, seven National Oral History Conferences were held, rotating annually between the provinces of South Africa. Papers read at these conferences were published in OHASA's journal, *Oral History Journal of South Africa (OHJSA)*, as well as in conference proceedings and in 'Social memory studies' as a special collection of *HTS Theological Studies* journal. During this time, OHASA also launched the series *Tell Your Mother's Story* (*TYMS*) as a popular,

4. This chapter is based on an autoethnographical perspective by Christina Landman. It covers the history of the annual OHASA conferences, as well as the publications that ensued from it. The author describes the history of OHASA from an insider–outsider perspective using the methodological insights of autoethnography. An application for full ethical approval was made to the Oral History Association of South Africa, and ethics consent was received on 22 April 2022. No ethics approval number was issued.

How to cite: Landman, C 2025, 'The history of the Oral History Association of South Africa (2016–2022)', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 33–51. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.03

coffee-table publication. The main part of the article contains analyses of the contents of the seven conferences, firstly, in terms of its speakers and the participation of learners and organic intellectuals in their programmes and, secondly, as to the subthemes entertained by the speakers. Finally, this seven-year history of OHASA will be evaluated in terms of the strong and weak points of the association, as well as its contribution to oral history in society, heritage practice and academia.

Introduction: Aim, literary review and background

Aim and research focus

The aim of this chapter is to describe and evaluate the recent history of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) using an autoethnographical methodology. An analysis will be made of the most recent conferences; the seven National Oral History conferences from 2016 to 2022. These conferences were held annually and rotated between provinces. With reference to the conferences and the papers read there, a further analysis will be made of the publications of OHASA during this time. These are the journal of OHASA – *Oral History Journal of South Africa* (2013–2018); the conference proceedings of 2021 and 2022; and 'Social memory studies', a special collection of *HTS Theological Studies* journal. Finally, the author will attempt an evaluation of the contribution of OHASA to the development of oral history in schools, heritage practice and academia in South Africa.

Literary review and unique contribution

There are very few references to OHASA in academic, and even popular, literature. In 2021, Prof. Mpho Ngoepe from the Department of Information Science at the University of South Africa, with a postdoctoral fellow from Zimbabwe, Dr Sindiso Bhebhe, published an article titled, 'A forgotten past is the past that is yet to be: Evaluation of (the) Oral History Programme of the Oral History Association of South Africa' in the *Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ESARBICA)*.

In their evaluation, they raised the following concerns about OHASA: (1) only the stories of the elite are being researched and told (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 60); (2) the studies presented at OHASA's conferences are not published but hidden away in archives and those of the learners are given back to them and not available to the public (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, pp. 60, 72); (3) the leadership and the attendees of the conferences are academic (and government) tourists (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 65); (4) OHASA is dependent on government funds and does not have enough

members to support itself (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, pp. 64, 65, 73); (5) OHASA has not been able to fully functionalise the provinces on practising oral history and to incorporate local communities in their national and provincial conferences (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, pp. 66–67); and (6) OHASA's journal, *Oral History Journal of South Africa* (*OHJSA*), is also too elitist and publishes mainly authors from outside South Africa (Bhebhe & Ngoepe 2021, p. 72).

These aspects will play a role in the author's evaluation at the end of the article. The author has been a member of OHASA since 2006 and OHASA's head of publications since 2010. Oral History Association of South Africa was also mentioned prominently in 2008 by its then-chairperson, Prof. Philippe Denis, in his 'Introduction' to a book edited by Radikobo Ntsimane and himself. The book is titled *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa.* Denis mentioned the importance of the conference of the International Oral History Association (IOHA) that was held in 2002 in South Africa (minutes of the Oral History Interim Committee, 25 February 2005). He saw this as the stimulus for the launching of OHASA in October 2005 (Denis & Ntsimane 2008, p. 15).

Oral History Association of South Africa has, of course, already held its first National Conference in October 2004 in the Manhattan Hotel in Pretoria. This was after a preparatory meeting in 2003 in the Sheraton Hotel in Arcadia, Pretoria, which was called by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology (DACST) and the National Archives. Here, an Interim Steering Committee was elected consisting of Philippe Denis himself, Sekgothe Mokgoatšana, Sean Field, Patricia Opondo and Vuyani Booi to arrange the first OHASA conference in 2004.

Thus, the call for papers for the next OHASA conference in 2023 sums up OHASA's history as follows:

> In 2003, the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA), was born out of a merger of two programmes sharing the same objectives. These were the National Oral History Programme (NOHP) and the National Indigenous Music Programme (NIMP). In 2023, OHASA will turn twenty. To celebrate, reflect, take stock, share rare moments, and map the future, OHASA will hold a 20th Anniversary Conference in 2023. (OHASA 2023, p. 1)

The theme for OHASA2023 is 'Celebrating 20 years of telling oral histories: Researching and recording old and new stories'.

Analysis of conferences 2016–2022

A short overview of OHASA conferences and publications before 2016 reveals the following:

- The first five OHASA conferences held between 2004 and 2008 mainly presented the traumatic and previously untold stories of apartheid to a

post-apartheid audience. The stories of the interviewees were grassroots and not elitist.
- The next seven conferences, OHASA2009–OHASA2015, invited self-insight in terms of oral history methodologies and challenges. Teaching oral history in the classrooms of schools and tertiary institutions became a major focus. Thus, oral history became standardised.
- In 2013, papers delivered during the conferences of 2006–2012, which were submitted for publication, were published in three volumes of conference proceedings. Volume 1, Culture, memory, and trauma was edited by Opondo and Landman (2013) and contained papers from OHASA2006. Volume 2, Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled (Landman 2013b) published papers from the 2009 conference. Volume 3, Oral history: Heritage and identity (Landman 2013a) contained papers of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 conferences. Although these are sterling publications, they contain a fraction of the average of 35–40 papers delivered at every conference.
- In 2013 too, the first issue of OHASA's new journal, *OHJSA*, was published with articles from conferences and articles by national and international academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners.
- Since 2010, OHASA broadened its participatory basis by training and inviting learners from secondary schools to present papers. Also, as time went on, more and more organic intellectuals were invited as guest speakers.
- To empower the provinces to hold oral history conferences, the Annual National Oral History Conferences were rotated between provinces. The first nine were held between 2005 and 2013, and the second set of conferences, started again with Gauteng in 2014 and ended (again) with the Northern Cape in 2022. With the third round, the conference was again hosted by and in the Gauteng province in 2023.

The seven conferences from 2016 to 2022 will now be analysed as to:

1. Thematic development
2. Participants
3. Publications, which included two new publications, *Tell Your Mother's Story* (*TYMS*) from 2016 onwards and 'Special collection: Social memory studies' (in the *HTS Theological Studies* journal) from 2020.

2016: Thirteenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

The theme of the 13th OHASA conference was 'Chanted memories and anniversaries: Celebrating our common pasts'. It was hosted from 11 to 14 October 2016 by Limpopo province in the Thohoyandou Indoor

Sports Centre. Dr Tshepo Moloi from the Department of History of the University of the Free State, Qua-Qua Campus, was the new president of OHASA (Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, pp. 1–2).

☐ Honorary and guest speakers

The opening was done by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms Rejoice Thizwilondi Mabudafhasi. There were exciting clan name recitals by learners from Limpopo, and quite a number of local organic intellectuals gave talks, such as Hosi N'wamitwa and David Mbulaheni Malada (aka Peter Dambuza).

☐ Subthemes and papers

Although the venue in Venda was difficult for participants to access because of the lack of a nearby airport, a high number of papers were read at this conference. Also, because of student riots, the venue was changed from the University of Venda to the Thohoyandou Indoor Sports Centre which created transport problems for the organisers. Yet, a total of 53 speakers delivered 49 papers, excluding those of the guest speakers. Of these, 21 were attached to universities and 30 were practitioners. There were four speakers from outside South Africa; three from Zimbabwe and one from Nigeria. At least two postgraduate students were presenters and a total of 29 were learners (Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, pp. 3–7). Indeed, there were so many papers that were presented in three concurrent sessions.

The Oral History Association of South Africa 2016 was a commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Soweto student uprising of 1976. Therefore, the subtheme most represented was that of 'Marches, revolt, political struggles and activism'. Two papers that caught the eye were 'Soweto uprising and the marching students, 40 years later' (Sifiso Ndlovu) and 'Fees Must Fall #Students Must Rise' (Majohonke Vilakati & Sekgothe Mokgoatšana).

This conference too was a platform for the 'Introduction of the Time Travel Methodology to teach Oral History in a classroom: Bridging the known curriculum and the unknown stories' as presented by Thandeka Sibiya. The title of the paper says it all.

Charming and informative papers were also delivered by local researchers such as 'A sociolinguistic enquiry into indigenous protest lyrics in women's musical performances with special reference to VhaVenda women in Vhembe: A perspective of a kind of activism' (Elelwani Ramaite wa ha-Mafadza), which also included the indigenous music

component of OHASA (Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, p. 3). Khuliso Millicent Muthivhi gave an extremely interesting paper with the title 'Cross-cultural diagnosis and treatment of mental illness within the Vhembe region context: Towards a harmonised approach' (Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, p. 5). The learners, too, presented exciting local research, such as Rolivhuwa Gobane's paper, 'Traditional dances of the VhaVenda and their meanings: The Domba and Tshikona Dances' (Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, p. 7).

The author herself gave a paper on 'Brigalia Bam: Past and future struggles'. This was one of many papers read at this conference – as there were at previous conferences – on women's roles and participation during the struggle for political freedom in South Africa. Although most papers read at the conference were inclusive of women's experiences, ten papers specifically dealt with women, both at a grassroots level and in leadership, or rather not in leadership. Examples include transport for women-led agricultural projects in the Capricorn district (Mmakhola & Sithole), women participation in leadership positions at the University of Limpopo (Dikeledi Makwarela), women and activism during the 1980s in KwaZulu-Natal (Calda de Vries & Nomfundo Khanyile), women in combat roles in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) (Mmakhola & Sithole), and Dorothy Nyembe and contemporaries (Philisiwe Khuzwayo) (Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, pp. 3–7).

Publications

The *OHJSA* published two issues in 2016. Of the 15 articles published, a majority (11) were from the OHASA conference of 2015. However, nine of the 15 authors who published in *OHJSA2016* were from outside South Africa – that is, from Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia and Ethiopia. The *OHJSA* was still not accredited, and South Africans preferred, or were rather pressurised by their academic institutions, to publish in accredited journals for the sake of research outputs. This made it very difficult for the *OHJSA* to apply for accreditation.

2017: Fourteenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

Since 2017 was the centenary anniversary of Oliver Tambo's birth, the fourteenth OHASA annual conference theme was 'OR Tambo in memoriam: Reminiscing on a centenary of struggle, true leadership and leadership values of a liberation stalwart'. The Eastern Cape province hosted the conference at Dan's Country Lodge in Mthatha from 10 to 13 October 2017. Tshepo Moloi was in his second year as president of OHASA.

☐ Honorary and guest speakers

Opening addresses at the conferences were made by the Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Mr Mohamed Enver Surty, and the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Mr Obed Bapela. Guest speakers were Ms Luli Callinicos and Prof. Somadoda Fikeni.

At the opening, Dr Kogielam Archary was given a slot to introduce and invite attendants to contribute to an envisaged OHASA publication on original, popular research, *TYMS*. Professor Christina Landman, editor of the *OHJSA*, also got an opportunity to hand over copies of *OHJSA2016* to the Deputy Ministers and other honorary guests (Fourteenth National History Conference 2017, p. 2).

☐ Subthemes and papers

At this conference, 40 papers were read by 47 speakers of whom 22 were attached to universities and 25 were practitioners. Twelve speakers were from Zimbabwe and one was from Lesotho. Thirteen learners were from the Eastern Cape province.

Very few papers on Oliver Tambo himself or his direct influence were delivered. Exciting exceptions were: (1) 'OR Tambo's leadership and influence in the period of the African National Congress (ANC)'s illegality' (Mangashe); (2) 'The religious heritage of Oliver Tambo' (Landman); (3) 'The Fees Must Fall upheavals: Could the present generations learn lessons from Oliver Tambo's and Albert Luthuli's attitude to solving problems?' (Jaca & Shabalala); (4) 'The giant steering the ship: Seeking new leadership models through Oliver Tambo' (Marx); 'Oliver Reginald Tambo's prophecy on women leadership' (Sigauqwe); (5) 'Radio Freedom, Oliver Tambo and January 8th statements in the 1980s' (Lekgoathi); and (6) Jama Lonwabo Maka's very interesting:

> In the year of commemorating OR Tambo, there is a case to be made regarding that league of leaders who conformed to a system that sought to co-opt them and render them ineffective. (Fourteenth National History Conference 2017, pp. 3–7)

☐ Publications

In 2017, the *OHJSA* was still not accredited by the Department of Higher Education. There were also no funds to publish the papers as conference proceedings, in which case speakers would have been able to submit their papers without academic review. The consequences were that the first issue of *OHJSA2017* contains, apart from two Zimbabwean articles (Bhebhe & Khumalo 2021) and one from Kenya (Gathogo), the biographical papers on black leaders given at the 40-year celebrations of the Black

Methodist Consultation. As these papers were based on oral interviews, they applied to the editorship of the *OHJSA* for publication and submitted their papers for double-blind peer review.

A similar thing happened to the second issue. As there were no papers available from OHASA2016 to publish in the *OHJSA* (Volume 5[2]), articles on orality and narrative performance in the first century AD were accepted for publication on request.

However, it should be noted that two papers on Oliver Tambo were published in later volumes of the *OHJSA*. In 2018, Lauren Marx from the Freedom Park Heritage Site & Museum in Pretoria published her article, 'A giant steering the ship: The leadership style of Oliver Tambo and the lessons that can be drawn' in the *OHJSA*, Volume 6, no. 2, 2018 (12 pages). It was only in the second (and last) issue of the *OHJSA*, Volume 7, 2019 (13 pages) that Patrick Shylock Mangashe, a master's (MA) degree student from the Department of History at the University of Fort Hare, published his 'OR Tambo in the period of the ANC's illegality'. This again points to another problem experienced by the *OHJSA* to keep the journal afloat. To have the manuscripts submitted peer-reviewed was a difficult process that took a long time to complete as participants in the OHASA conferences who were practitioners and not academics did not feel themselves adequate to review academic manuscripts. Often, or rather usually, numerous reviewers had to be appointed before a manuscript was accepted. Often, also, those whose manuscripts had been reviewed and were not used to the rigid process of reviewing were offended and scared by the criticisms of the reviewers and decided to withdraw their manuscripts.

2018: Fifteenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

The year 2018 was the centenary celebration of the birth of Nelson Mandela. The theme of the fifteenth OHASA annual conference reflects this as 'Freedom and egalitarianism: Nelson Mandela, the symbol of democracy'. It was hosted by the Western Cape province in the Milnerton Library in Milnerton, Cape Town, from 09 to 12 October 2018. Tshepo Moloi was in his last year of the presidency of OHASA.

Honorary and guest speakers

This was a high-profile meeting with three deputy ministers giving welcome addresses. They were Makhotso Maggie Sotyu, Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture; Obed Bapela, Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; and Enver Surty, Deputy Minister of Basic Education. Another welcoming address was from the Western Cape Member of the

Executive Council (MEC) of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Anroux Marais. The guest speaker was Judge Albie Sachs. Learners from Cape Town recited clan names. The opening was indeed an illustrious occasion, fitting to the centenary celebrations of Nelson Mandela (Fifteenth National History Conference 2018, p. 2).

As it was also the centenary of Albertina Sisulu, Ms Ntisiki Sisula gave a presentation, 'The life and times of Mama Albertina Sisulu', during the gala dinner. On Day 2, the guest speaker was Dr Yvette Abrahams, an organic farmer, activist and feminist South African scholar. Another South African activist, Shirley Gunn, spoke on Day 3 (Fifteenth National History Conference 2018, pp. 10, 12).

☐ Subthemes and papers

At this conference, 38 papers were read by 44 speakers, 15 from universities and 29 practitioners, with 8 from outside South Africa. No papers were given on the legacy of Nelson Mandela *per se*, except perhaps for the author's paper, 'John de Gruchy, Nelson Mandela, reconciliation, and sacred history', which has not been submitted for publication. Because it was also the centenary celebration of Albertina Sisulu (21 October 1918–02 June 2011), there were quite a few papers on women's stories. Especially interesting was a grassroots paper by Humbulani Tshamano and Prof. Richard R Molape, 'The untold stories of women farmers' experiences with special reference to their socio-economic conditions: A case of Nwanedi farms in the Vhembe district, Limpopo province, South Africa' (Fifteenth National History Conference 2018, p. 4).

However, the conference was concluded by an excursion to Mandela House at the (then called) Drakenstein Correctional Service.

☐ Publications

In 2018, the first issue of the *OHJSA* was filled with papers from the 2017 conference by highly respected academics, researchers and practitioners from Zimbabwe and Zambia. The second issue contained papers from the Black Methodist Consultation, as well as from several Zimbabwean academics and researchers.

In 2018, the first volume of OHASA's coffee-table publication *TYMS* was published and launched in several centres in the country. The series editor, Dr Kogielam Archary, had planned and negotiated this publication since 2014, inviting, rewriting and seeking approval from various authors. It was handed over to dignitaries at OHASA2018. Initially, *TYMS* was published as a fundraiser for OHASA. Every author contributing a story paid R250 per

page for an article of two or three pages. Eighteen stories were published in this volume which yielded a substantial income. The author of this article also published the story of her mother, who, born and bred within Afrikaner nationalism, struggled to adapt to a transformed and multi-cultured South Africa but eventually succeeded.

2019: Sixteenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

The theme of the sixteenth OHASA annual conference was 'Collective memories, active citizenship and alternative voices: Reflections on democracy in Africa'. It was hosted by the Mpumalanga province in the Steve Tshwete Banquet Hall in Middelburg from 07 to 11 October 2019. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was again chosen as President of OHASA.

Honorary and guest speakers

As in 2018, the opening of OHASA2019 was star-studded with Deputy Ministers: Hon. Dr MR Mhaule as Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Hon. O. Bapela as Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, and Hon. NN Mafu as Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture. The programme director was Mr Puleng Kekana, Chief Director of National Archives and Libraries. Mpumalanga learners recited clan names, and other cultural performances were executed (Sixteenth National History Conference 2019, p. 1).

During the conference, Prof. Rothney Tshaka of Unisa was a guest speaker on the meaning of traditional proverbs, and Ms S Mahlangu kept the audience captivated as organic intellectuals (Sixteenth National History Conference 2019, p. 6).

Subthemes and papers

At this conference, 37 papers were delivered by 14 academics and 23 practitioners, with one speaker from Zambia and four speakers from Zimbabwe.

Two papers by independent researchers caught the eye. Janet Smith gave a paper, 'Crimes of disgust: Interviews with white men who went to war and gave back their rifles'. Goodenough Mashego spoke on 'Why our ancestors never invented telescopes'. This was followed by an exciting paper from a young, upcoming researcher, Lesiba Tumi Leta on 'Deconstructing the dominant narrative of Sophiatown: An Indian perspective, 1950s'. Eunice Malatji presented 'An exploratory study of the

cultural and traditional impact of forced removals on scattered residents of surrounding areas of Pilgrim's Rest'. Under the subtheme 'Indigenous knowledge, leadership and chieftaincy', Prince Jongisilo Pokwana ka Menziwa gave a resourceful paper, 'From the mountain to the mortuary: Investigating the troubles engulfing customary male initiation practices in the Eastern Cape' (Sixteenth National History Conference 2019, pp. 3–7).

Apart from these and other presentations retrieving grassroots voices on issues that are lately of public interest, many papers focused on methodological, teaching and heritage issues. Tlou Setumu, for instance, gave a fascinating paper, 'Using Oral History in heritage preservation, tourism development and environment conservation in the Blouberg-Makgabeng-Senwabarwana area by among other things, building libraries and museums' (Sixteenth National History Conference 2019, p. 3).

Publications

In 2019, the publication of the *OHJSA*, after seven volumes and 7 years (2013–2019), came to an end. The papers published in the *OHJSA* were of a high academic standard and underwent a double-blind peer-review process. However, when the *OHJSA* applied for accreditation, it was already during a time that the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) afforded very few new accreditations. From the hundreds of applications for accreditation, that year only saw the acceptance of two new journals. As Unisa Press, by means of its own rules, could no longer financially support the publication of the *OHJSA*, it meant the end of the *OHJSA*. Oral History Association of South Africa itself could not afford its ongoing publication. The seven volumes of *OHJSA* can still be accessed on the website of Unisa Journals: https://unisapressjournals.co.za.

The two 2019 issues of *OHJSA* contained papers from OHASA2015, OHASA2017 and OHASA2018. It was well underway to become a reputable journal on oral history, of which the world has only a few. It was acknowledged by the IOHA as filling an important gap in the world market. If it were accredited, it would have filled this gap with dignity. At every OHASA conference, copies of the *OHJSA* were handed over to the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture and other honoured guests, who expressed their excitement over its publication.

There was indeed excitement amongst the 21 people who told their mother's story in Volume Two of *TYMS*. Of interest to the author was Prince Jongisilo Pokwana ka Menziwa telling the story of his grandmother, 'Fond memories of Mavumalo – my granny (1916–1998)'. She was a literate woman from the rural Eastern Cape province and an advocate of black consciousness. Prince Jongisilo, a member of the OHASA executive from 2019 to 2022, refers to her 'personality of resilience, wisdom and love for education'

(*TYMS* 2019, p. 42). Thus, *TYMS* provides one with some of the history even of those with whom you sit on executive boards. This volume of *TYMS* also contained seven stories for which the authors could not pay. This was done to have a more equal distribution between races where a majority of Indian women's stories were originally submitted. From the next issue onwards, *TYMS* would no longer fall under *fundraising* and under *publications* and authors did not pay to publish their mothers' stories anymore.

2020: Seventeenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

The theme of the seventeenth OHASA conference was, 'The future of oral traditions/histories in times of technological revolution and pandemic in society'. It was hosted by the North West province in Thaba Legae in Rustenburg, South Africa, on 18 and 19 November 2020. Because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, it was a virtual meeting of two days with only eight speakers. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was in his second year of presidency.

Honorary and guest speakers

Ms NN Mafu, Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, opened the conference after having been introduced by the MEC of Arts and Culture of the North West province, Mr Tlhapi. This all happened virtually. There was one (international) guest speaker, Dr Tshepho Mosweu, from the University of Botswana, who spoke on 'International and regional experiences on the future of oral traditions/histories in times of technological revolution and pandemics in society' (Seventeenth National History Conference 2020, p. 2).

Papers and book launch

Oral History Association of South Africa 2020 was severely affected by the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. It was eventually arranged as a two-day virtual meeting, more than a month later than the ordinary conference that was usually scheduled for the second week of October. Eight speakers were invited of which six were academics. One was from outside South Africa.

It was particularly brave of the executive committee of OHASA to arrange a meeting like this during a time when South Africa was in lockdown, and people had not yet come to terms with attending conferences virtually. About 50 people linked to the conference, but eventually, it was impossible to hold a valid annual general meeting (AGM).

There was a book launch during this virtual meeting that was well attended online. It was introduced by Prof. Sekibakiba Lekgoathi and Dr Tshepo Moloi. They are the editors of the book *Guerrilla radios in Southern Africa: Broadcasters, technology, propaganda wars, and the armed struggle*. The OHASA executive committee was thrilled to be associated with this book, which is a product of two former executive committee members.

The Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA 2020) was different, but as exciting as usual. There was a flow of knowledge on methodology, oral history's role in the healing of memories, as well as on the role of oral history in social cohesion and the peaceful coexistence of South Africans and beyond. It was a conference to remember.

Publications

Volume Three of *TYMS* was launched at this conference by the series editor, Dr Kogielam Archary (Seventeenth National History Conference 2020, p. 3). She resiliently realised this publication despite COVID-19 barriers. A total of 31 stories of mothers are told in this volume, ten more than in Volume Two. Although Archary invited contributions on the open platform of OHASA, she also approached prominent members of society to write about their mothers. Particularly touching in this volume is the story of the president of OHASA, Prof. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana, of his mother, who bravely kept the family together and the children educated whilst his father was an activist. Moramadi, her praise name, suffered a facial stroke in 2020, the year of COVID-19, at the age of 95 years. The story of her values, her parenting abilities and her suffering is passionately told by her son as 'Vignettes of memory: My mother Moramadi in the year of COVID-19' (*Tell Your Mother's Story* 2020 Volume Three, pp. 87–90).

As the *OHJSA* ceased to be published after 2019, a contract was signed with *HTS Theological Studies* to publish the papers – and other manuscripts received on oral history – in a subsection titled 'Special collection: Social memory studies' under the sub-editorship of Prof. Christina Landman and Sekgothe Mokgoatšana. *HTS Theological Studies* is an accredited open access journal that has expanded its scope from multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary religious research to include social studies, especially those with a narrative and oral (history) focus as indicated under 'Journal information' (*HTS Theological Studies* 2023). With *HTS* being accredited, the special collection 'Social memory studies' (SMS) draws academic papers from oral historians, especially from those who have presented papers at OHASA conferences.

'Social memory studies' (SMS 2020) therefore contained several papers presented at the OHASA2019 conference. Goodenough Mashego's 'Why our ancestors never invented telescopes' (SMS 2020, pp. 1–6) was published after rigorous peer-reviewing, as was that of Tumi Leta, 'Deconstructing the dominant narrative of Sophiatown: An Indian perspective of the 1950s' (SMS 2020, pp. 1–6). Interestingly, too, is the publication of Sekgothe Mokgoatšana's '(W)riting and (de)scribing martyrdom: The church's construction of Manche Masemota'. Mokgoatšana is a cultural expert writing here about a Christian, a research situation created and encouraged by OHASA.

2021: Eighteenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

The theme of the eighteenth OHASA conference was 'The world in troubled times. Oral history: Challenges and opportunities'. It was hosted by the Free State province in the Protea Hotel in Clarens, South Africa, from 13 to 15 October 2021. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana was in his third and last year of the presidency but was elected for another three years at the AGM of this conference.

Honorary and guest speakers

At the opening of the conference, the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms N Mafu, gave the keynote address. The mayor of the Thabo Mofutsanyana district, Ms M Vilakazi, delivered a message of support. The new OHASA logo was unveiled, and copies of the academic special collection *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 'Social memory studies' and the coffee-table publication *TYMS* Volume Four were handed over to the honorary speakers. Later, during the opening day, Morena Paulos Moloi spoke as an organic intellectual. On Day 2, the organic intellectual was Mr David Ambrose (Eighteenth National History Conference 2021, pp. 3–7).

Subthemes and papers

This conference, which was mainly virtual, was held to recover from COVID-19. Because of the isolated location of the venue and the failure to adequately facilitate the virtual papers, it is difficult to determine how many papers were actually read. According to the programme, 44 speakers were to deliver 34 papers, of which 29 were academics and 15 practitioners, three of whom were from outside South Africa.

The conference presented a potpourri of the unlocking of hidden stories. A few examples are (1) archiving Bram Fischer (Challa); (2) women in the customary male initiation practices within the AmaZizi ka Dlamini (Manganye & Pokwana ka Menziwa); (3) black 'servants' at Zwartkoppies farm preserved in the Sammy Marks House/Museum (Seabela); (4) Inna Mashile and Ditebogo Mashego as anti-homeland activists (Mashego); (5) spiritual experiences of women victims in the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Centre (Landman & Mudimeli); (6) the Christian Women Ministry in QwaQwa encouraging survival (Mtshengu); (7) research ethics in the Kruger National Park (Schnellnack-Kelly); (8) a conversation with Phili Troy on conflicting biographical memories expressed when Charlotte Maxeke's gravesite was proclaimed a National Heritage Site (Ndlovu); (9) gender activists in Langa (Guma); (10) witchcraft as a political tool (Mthethwa); (11) the AmaBhaca in the former Cape and Natal colonies; and many others.

☐ Publications

HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies, vol. 77, no. 2 (Landman & Mokgoatšana 2021a) was published in 2021 and was supposed to contain the papers of OHASA2020. However, OHASA2020 was virtual and only eight papers were delivered, of which none were published in the SMS 2021. The fact that SMS 2021 nevertheless contained 13 articles that survived the rigid review process indicates that SMS was attracting the attention of academic oral historians in South Africa and in other African countries. The author herself published an article in SMS 2021, 'Nana Sita and the *Group Areas Act*', which was delivered as a paper two years before, during OHASA2019.

However, the conference proceedings of OHASA2021 ('The world in troubled time') were published in two volumes, with the collection editors being Christina Landman and Sekgothe Mokgoatšana (2021b). The conference proceedings were peer reviewed and could be submitted for research output subsidy. For some authors, this has been a first publication. One example is the secretary of the OHASA executive committee, Viwe Sibanga-Reya, who teaches in a village in the Eastern Cape province, publishing her first article as 'Teaching oral history: Strategies and methods used in teaching oral history' (Landman & Mokgoatšana 2022, pp. 31–38).

The fourth volume of *TYMS* (Archary 2021) was published in 2021 and launched at OHASA2021 as well as other places across South Africa. It contains 27 fascinating stories of black, white and Indian women as well as three women outside Africa who left a remarkable legacy to their children.

2022: Nineteenth National Oral History Conference

Theme, host and venue

The theme of the nineteenth OHASA conference was 'COVID-19 narratives and memories: Emerging oral histories and methodologies in South Africa'. It was hosted by the Northern Cape province in Kuruman at the Thabo Moorosi Multi-Purpose Centre from 10 to 14 October 2022, with Prof. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana as Chairperson.

Honorary and guest speakers

For the first time in the almost 20-year history of OHASA, the national conference was not opened by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture because of over-engagement. The keynote address and official opening were done by the energetic and committed MEC of Sport, Arts and Culture of the Northern Cape province, Hon. Desery Fienies, who stayed throughout most of the conference. The opening was a colourful affair with clan names recitals by learners and messages of support from the South African Society of Archivists (Inkosi Jongisilo Pokwana ka Menziwa), the National Archives Advisory Council (Dr Mphalane Makhura), the House of Traditional Leaders (Kgosi Pelonomi Toto) and Social Cohesion Advocates (Dr Rajendran Govender) whereby OHASA yet again confirmed its associations.

Nozipho Mutwa, daughter of Credo Mutwa, addressed the meeting as an organic intellectual, also representing the local Credo Mutwa Foundation (Nineteenth National History Conference 2022, p. 3).

Printed copies of the 'Special collection: Social memory studies' (*HTS Theological Studies* journal) and the coffee-table publication were handed over to officials by the respective editors, Christina Landman and Kogielam Archary (Nineteenth National History Conference 2022, pp. 2–3).

Subthemes and papers

Whilst the world and southern Africa were recovering from COVID-19, the overall theme of OHASA2022 invited COVID-19 stories. Thirty-one speakers read 30 papers, half of them academic (15) and the other practitioners (16). Six speakers were from Lesotho.

Two subthemes were of special significance in terms of OHASA's aim to bring new knowledge on tradition and gender to the table through oral history. The first is the subtheme 'Cultural and religious interpretations of COVID-19'. Semela Doris Sebogodi delivered a paper entitled 'The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the traditional practices and cultural rituals

pertaining to burial and bereavement in rural communities: A case study of the Bahurutshe nation in the Ramotshere Moiloa Local Municipality (Zeerust), Ngaka Modiri Molema District, North West Province'.

Wonke Buqa spoke about the 'Meaning of life and death during COVID-19: A cultural and religious narrative reflection'. Bambuhlanga Jama Lonwabo Maka reflected through oral interviewing upon the following theme: 'From many prayers per death to many deaths per prayer: Has humanity reached the door leading to the end of time?'

The other subtheme was 'Gendered COVID narratives', with papers on 'Coronavirus: A catalyst to success and failure with the boundaries of longstanding relationships in South Africa' (Shoeshoe Mofokeng), 'Did COVID-19 cause a dramatic increase in domestic violence?' (Anitha Mnqayi) and 'Women's sexuality during COVID-19' (Christina Landman) (Nineteenth National History Conference 2022, pp. 7, 9).

□ Publications

Two OHASA publications were published and distributed to honorary guests and representatives from provincial archives at this conference. The one was Conference Proceedings Volume 1 (Landman & Mokgoatšana 2021b). It contained papers from OHASA2021 (*The world in troubled times: Oral history challenges and opportunities*) that were published online[5] and in open access in the 'Special collection: Social memory studies' (*HTS Theological Studies* journal).

The other was *TYMS,* Volume Five, OHASA's coffee-table publication (Archary 2022). It contains the stories of 18 mothers in two or three pages each. This includes the story of Fatima Meer and Prof. Sarasvathie Reddy. Many of the stories are written by women who 'made' it in life to a high level of education, telling the stories of their mothers who were illiterate or half-literate, but were the force behind their own success. Volume Five of *TYMS* has now become an even more illustrious book with a striking cover and good layout with numerous colour photos.

■ Evaluation

This short evaluation of the past seven years of OHASA's history, that is from OHASA2016 to OHASA2022, is solely that of the author who attended all OHASA conferences from 2006 and was the editor of its publications since 2010, as said before.

5. Online publications at OHASA 2021, *Publications*, viewed https://ohasa.org.za/conference-proceedings/

1. Throughout the past seven years, OHASA remained connected with high-level government officials, and except for one, all conferences were opened by the Deputy Minister of Arts and Culture, whilst the Deputy Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and that of Basic Education were often in attendance. Local and other MECs of Sport, Arts and Culture were present, as well as the mayors of the local municipalities where the conferences were held.
2. Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) remained financially dependent on the national and provincial departments of Sport, Arts and Culture; although the author has never experienced that, it impacted OHASA's activities negatively. It rather shows a high regard for OHASA by DSACs.
3. Prominent local organic intellectuals and academic guest speakers were invited to give talks, and local learners were trained to come and present papers. Amongst the conference speakers, there was more or less an equal number of academic speakers and practitioners. Both these groups presented research on the grassroots level and did not primarily give voice to the elite.
4. The themes of the conferences were wide and allowed participants to bring all their research to this forum. However, sometimes the theme was attached to a commemoration, like the centenary of Oliver Tambo in 2017 and that of Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu in 2018. Exciting oral history projects were introduced at the conferences, such as time travel methodologies.
5. The integration of the oral history programmes and the indigenous music programmes as originally anticipated was continued in that there were papers on both, but also in the indigenous music performed at the opening and the gala dinner of each conference, as well as the reciting of clan names by the learners.
6. The publication of papers delivered at these conferences grew over time. The *OHJSA* came to an end in 2018 because it was mainly non-South Africans publishing in it and because it was not accredited. Academic papers were henceforth published in the 'Special collection: Social memory studies' (*HTS Theological Studies* journal). This journal has been receiving good support from both South African and other academics because it is indeed accredited. An OHASA coffee-table publication with popular stories, *TYMS*, has been published since 2018 and is growing in popularity both nationally and internationally. More funds should be made available to publish conference proceedings which will include all un-refereed papers as well as the papers of learners.

Conclusion

Oral History Association of South Africa showed resilience and growth during the almost 20 years of its existence. It integrates academic and practitioner, organic and academic, mature studies and learners' contributions.

However, when the National Oral History Project (NOHP) started off with OHASA2004, there was excitement in recovering and reconstructing apartheid voices. This excitement is gone and OHASA will have to work hard to keep itself vibrant.

Chapter 4

Conversational: Critical insights of decolonising oral history methodologies

Stewart L Kugara
Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana
Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa

Pfarelo E Matshidze
Department of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Heritage Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, Social Science and Education, University of Venda,
Thohoyandou, South Africa

Abstract

Protagonists may quiz if oral history is an indispensable instrument to decolonise the oral history methodology discipline. Arguments could be that based on the long and strong historical association of oral history with thorny issues of inequality and authority, it could be a subtle and viable instrument. A conversation of insights into decolonising oral history methodologies is critical to a long-standing conundrum that 'research can

How to cite: Kugara, SL, Mokgoatšana, S & Matshidze, PE 2025, 'Conversational: Critical insights of decolonising oral history methodologies', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 53–66. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.04

never be objectively observed from an outsider's perspective'. Without any shadow of a doubt, researchers face serious open and hidden resistance from African indigenous communities if they adopt Western-centred methodologies to understand African indigenous issues. This is a deplorable application and constitutes a miscarriage of justice as sacrosanct African Indigenous ethics are violated. Nevertheless, one should not be quick to zombify and demonise Western methodologies as they provide the much-needed underlying rationale of research. Doing away with them will lead to reinventing the wheel. As such, this chapter contributes to the conversation to demystify social realities through the eyes of an indigenous African person. In summation, the chapter wishes to persuade academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners that reality ought to be interpreted through the meanings that people give to their life world.

Introduction

Given the exponential decay of the moral fibre of the current research methodologies when researching about African indigenous communities, this chapter illuminates insightful alternative methods deemed culturally appropriate. Adding to this, the chapter intends to disseminate ideas that earn respect and lead to honourable research norms and practices. The authors argue that research methods and approaches which embrace individuals and communities ought to be participatory and transformative. Key in the decolonising of the pursuit of methodologies is the desire to meet the priorities of indigenous communities and the activity of research being transformed to ensure unadulterated outcomes.

Background

It was in the renowned writing of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986, p. 437) that the writer showed that African indigenous people's lands are still directly and indirectly subjected under 'military conquest and political dictatorship'. Consequently, this paved the way for mental slavery and continued even after independence. Arguably, this is said to be the reason why Euro-Western academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners keep conducting and/or have been conducting research in a random and ad hoc way. As such, Wa Thiong'o's literature partly unveils 'research fatigue' on the participants (African indigenous peoples) and questions the credibility and dependability of such research. Wilson, Mikahere-Hall and Sherwood (2021) described the Euro-Western research traditions as follows:

> The Euro-Western tradition or knowledge is grounded in positivism, the notion that research is an objective and value-free activity that can make sense of human and natural realities. (p. 8)

Extrapolating from the above, a research methodology is generally an indispensable component in research which sets out rules on the collection, codification and analysis of knowledge. Based on this, it is worth noting that in African indigenous communities, there were no systematically documented ways of collecting, codifying and analysing knowledge (Kugara et al. 2021, p. 87). As such, the Euro-Western methods were employed to study African issues by early academics and researchers. Some argue that the usage of these methods was made in good faith and in pursuit of gathering knowledge. An honest and objective analysis of the usage of the Euro-Western methodologies to research African indigenous issues was justified because African methodologies were unknown in the sense that they were not systematically documented. However, besides the flaws that are raised against Euro-Western methodologies which make them fail to satisfy African indigenous ethics and norms, they uphold the general human dignity of everyone. On Euro-Western research, Keane, Khupe and Seehawer (2017) argue that:

> We concede that this has worked well in attaining conventional knowledge credibility and raising awareness of IK. Without pioneering IK academics, activists, and intellectual elders (such as Professors Odora Hoppers, Ogunniyi, Shiza-to name just a few) the appeal for decolonised knowledge would probably not have reached the policy levels that it has. (p. 17)

The Euro-Western methodologies are criticised as 'have[ing] centred around the theory of knowledge known as empiricism and the scientific paradigm of positivism which is derived from empiricism' (Hjørland 2005, p. 24). In this regard, positivism opines 'how the natural world can be examined and understood to the social world of human beings and human societies' (Gardner 2021, p. 43). In this way, understanding is seen as the same as measuring. This becomes problematic mainly because one is made to comprehend the world through measurements which are prone to procedural challenges. Kugara (2017) writes the following about witchcraft:

> Regrettably, with the issue of witchcraft and *muti*-murder, scientists tend to shun engagement when confronted by mysticism and metaphysical tendencies as they maintain that such practices contradict systematic, scientific and technological developments. The failure of scientists to engage in such practices has seen millions of people around the globe being negatively affected by these supernatural phenomena. (p. 67)

Based on the aforementioned quote by Kugara, trying to understand the world and African indigenous peoples by using positivism only results in the paralysis of analysis. It is because of this that the authors argue that there is a need to decolonise the methodologies.

The current authors opine that even though the usage of Euro-Western methodologies in conducting research on African indigenous issues was said to uphold human rights, continued use of the same methodologies in

this era is dehumanising and toxic. It is dehumanising and toxic in the sense that the persistent usage of Euro-Western methodologies adversely changes the identities of African indigenous communities that are known, and the entire aim of the research is lost. In other words, the outside researcher may bring their position of seeing African indigenous communities which has causal effects on the position of the researcher.

To understand African indigenous communities and use appropriate methodologies, the authors contend that it is key for one to be well placed to understand the African society to be studied and the underlying cultural behaviours and norms of the specific cultural group. In addition, it should be known that before the advent of colonialism, African indigenous communities had their own knowledge (Mdhluli et al. 2021). Mdhluli et al. (2021) showed that this knowledge, even though not systematically documented, was spread by word of mouth from one generation to the other through diverse means. Other academics and practitioners argue that some colonisers ignored and disregarded indigenous knowledge (IK) as something fruitful because of its nature (Risiro 2021).

From the foregoing analysis, it is now clear that for everyone (both outsider and insider researchers) intending to study African indigenous issues, a meticulous comprehension of African indigenous people's culture and history should be understood from an African perspective (Iguisi & Igbinomwanhia 2019). In evaluating African indigenous peoples' lifestyle, past and culture, the authors make it clear that cultures differ, are not static and should be accurately represented by their knowledge holders. It has also emerged that in cases where a community's culture and ethical protocols are not met, the chances are high that the communities in question will distort the information and/or frustrate the data collection process (Kugara et al. 2021). Having noted this, the usage of Euro-Western ethics when conducting a study on African IK will not give trustworthy information. As such, this chapter intends to decolonise the oral history methodologies through creating a novel conversation, correcting the wrongs and suggesting an all-embracing adaptive system that respects and upholds the African indigenous value systems.

Decolonise oral history methodologies

Writing about oral history, Shopes (2005) notes:

> 'Oral History' is a maddeningly imprecise term: it is used to refer to formal, rehearsed accounts of the past presented by culturally sanctioned tradition-bearers; to informal conversations about 'the old days' among family members, neighbors, or co-workers; to printed compilations of stories told about past times and present experiences; and to recorded interviews with individuals deemed to have an important story to tell. (p. 1)

Shopes (2005) clearly shows what oral history depicts. Without deviating from the given definition, the authors proposed the decolonising of oral history methodologies by harnessing a novel conversation that is not adulterated but auditing oneself to uphold and respect African indigenous value systems. Such a mammoth task calls upon militating against entrenched colonial legacies, power dynamics and foreign narratives. In other words, this places African indigenous epistemologies as the focal point in fostering the agency of past side-lined societies. The authors, in this respect, respectfully call all oral history practitioners to meticulously check some inherent partiality and biases in compiling archives. Furthermore, the call is extended to ethical issues adopted in research that demands reflexivity. Equitability and inclusiveness are attained, and silenced voices are heard through unveiling hegemonic structures and welcoming pluralistic ways of narrating stories.

Understanding Afrocentricity and Sankofaism and their application in studies

Many academics and researchers are at loggerheads about the precise date of the origin and emergence of the idea and philosophy of Afrocentricity. Marcus Garvey and Molefe Asante are viewed as the most influential propagators of the Afrocentric ideology. What is not in contestation is that Afrocentricity arose to challenge the Euro-Western perspective of explaining things in the world. It is argued that since colonial times, African history and African IK have been obtained and presented from a purely Euro-Western perspective, without incorporating anything African. It is established that African views were seen as archaic and anti-progress, which has been the justification for the colonisation and enslavement of Africans (Bulhan 2015).

It is critical to comprehend how slavery and colonialism colonised the minds of many Africans. According to Chawane (2016):

> [*T*]he first move adopted by the coloniser and slave masters was the condemnation and destruction of the culture of the colonised and slaves and by so doing, laying the grounds for their 'civilising mission'. (p. 81)

As can be noted from the aforementioned quote, African culture had to be denounced to pave the way to impose imperial powers. To further perpetuate their stronghold, education was introduced. To add, the type of education that was made accessible to some Africans was meant 'to create a class of capitalists to serve as a link between colonisers and the ruled' (Ranger 2010, p. 601). This type of education conditioned Africans not to be critical thinkers but merely interpreters of policies. The ultimate result was the demeaning of Africans' education system, norms, values and methodologies and replacing them with theirs.

Afrocentricity is defined by Asante as the 'manner of thought and action in which the centrality of African interests, values, and perspectives predominate' (Asante 2003, p. 22). It is believed that Asante popularised the Afrocentricity ideology in the 1970s 'when he developed epistemological and methodological foundations for an Afrocentric curriculum based on an African perspective but aiming at global understanding' (Early et al. 1994). Methodologically, Afrocentricity is intended as an answer to the intellectual colonialism that underpins and aids to authorise economic and political colonialism. In theory, it puts the actions, behaviours and phenomena of Africans under scrutiny (Sewpaul, Kreitzer & Raniga 2021). The aim of this chapter is to employ an Afrocentric approach to encourage researchers to search for African IK from African indigenous communities using African methodologies that give an African perspective. According to this view, the authors argue that there is a high probability of misrepresentation and distortion of information if foreign and/or outsider viewpoints, lenses and terms are used to study African issues. Chawane (2016) posits that:

> When Africans view themselves as centred and central in their own history, they see themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than as marginal and on the periphery of political or economic experience. (p. 82)

The Akan people of Ghana coined the term Sankofaism as a paradigm which they use to adopt and emulate African ways, knowledge and skills in their day-to-day lives (Dei 2012). Worth mentioning is the creative application of this paradigm to the usual things that they identify with, in this case a bird. The Sankofa bird which is said to fly in one direction and at the same time have the ability to turn its head backwards and look where it is coming from creates the basis for their reasoning. In breaking down the picture that is usually drawn of the Sankofa bird looking backwards with an egg in its mouth, Madima (2021) argues as follows:

> The egg in its mouth represents the 'gems', or knowledge of the past upon which wisdom is based. It also signifies the generations which are to come in that that they stand to benefit from that wisdom. The Sankofa bird's stance is interpreted to mean that it is not shameful for people to revert back to something that they had previously forgotten, or even neglected. (p. 67)

In the same vein, the authors argue that there is a need to go back to the neglected African methodologies so that some wisdom is derived to benefit future research that is done in African communities. In other words, the Sankofa paradigm stands to counter the foreign methodologies that seem to be gatekeepers in the field of research, by submitting that it can offer better perspectives than the universal methods and protocols that are pontificated to researchers with no due regard for the communities where research is being conducted (Martin & West 2018). Sankofaism, therefore, serves as a tool for the recovery and renewal of African indigenous

methodologies to safeguard the erosion of African values, norms and knowledge. In that way, there is a call to plumb all indispensable knowledge from the past and bring it into the present to forge a better future of research.

Numerous research studies have been conducted, emulating the Sankofaism style. A critical evaluation of many such studies shows the burning desire to ground the value and importance of African IK in addressing real problems in African communities. Despite having research propagating Sankofaism, using the same paradigm to push the decolonisation agenda is neglected. Against this background, the authors cast light on past research to find better avenues of reinforcing Sankofaism when decolonising research methodologies.

Mdhluli (2022) explores the role of traditional medicine in primary health care. In grounding the current status of health care in Mpumalanga, Mdhluli notes the challenges of poor health infrastructure, shortage of medicine and long distances that patients travel to access health care. These challenges have made primary health care inaccessible to most indigenous communities who used to rely on the assistance of traditional health care practitioners (diviners, herbalists, traditional birth attendants and traditional surgeons). By adopting a Sankofa paradigm *vis-à-vis* the Afrocentricity paradigm used by the current authors, there is room for adopting the African health care system that has been there since time immemorial to remedy the health challenges. Mdhluli (2022) advocates for the development of African traditional medicine health centres or ecosystems in villages by African indigenous people. The latter vividly highlights the development of an African entity through indigenous ways to meet indigenous matters; thus, the same approach can be utilised to adopt African indigenous methodologies to conduct research.

The basis of Sankofaism is looking back to the origin of African ways and employing all useful issues that are left. This move to go to the genesis of the African ways is ignited by future, unseen calamities that await. In pursuit of this, Madima (2021) explores how traditional children's games could be preserved through digitisation. Because of modernisation and other factors, Madima (2021) alleges that children (especially African indigenous children) no longer have time for indigenous games that are central to their physical and psychological development. As a best palliative, Madima proposes the usage of Sankofaism in digitalising African indigenous games for the benefit of children. In critical view of this, the current authors propose that the methodology to create such games needs to be decolonised. African knowledge holders should be involved in collecting the knowledge of these games and the process to avoid adulterating them. There is no doubt that if Sankofaism is relegated to the

dustbin, there will be methodological challenges and what will be preserved is not African. It is because of this that restoring it through African methods gives birth to intergenerational learning and helps to preserve proper values and norms.

Sankofaism, which buttresses the idea of 'go back and fetch it', suggests the reflection of past historical events and placing them in the present and future for usage. By adopting Sankofaism, the authors encourage oral history practitioners to also acknowledge and uphold continuity in adhering to IK systems in gathering historical events. Fundamentally, underpinning IK systems, Afrocentrism and Sankofaism provide indispensable bases for decolonising oral history methodologies. This is done by using these to confront dominant narratives and incorporating the voice of the voiceless in research approaches to understanding the past.

Decolonising methodologies

Having established the need to decolonise oral history methodologies, this section focuses on decolonisation. Since slave trade times, Africans have been confined and subjugated to Euro-Western life through colonialism and imperialism. This has ignited the quest to rejuvenate the African ways of doing things. As such, a decolonisation movement was given birth and is not ascribed to one individual. According to Mbembe (2016):

> So, today the consensus is that part of what is wrong with our institutions of higher learning is that they are 'Westernized'. What does it mean 'they are Westernized'? They are 'Westernized' in the sense that they are local instances of a dominant academic model based on a Eurocentric epistemic canon. (p. 32)

The situation presented in the aforementioned quote shows that Africans depend solely on Western education that was not engineered by their progenitors. This is critiqued as absurd, madness and ridiculous. In the area of research, numerous African indigenous studies are done, processed and guarded through 'white, outsider and academic research' (Muhammad et al. 2015, p. 1051). To correct this anomaly, the decolonisation movement was formed. Decolonisation denotes 'the undoing of colonial governance when colonial countries attain independence' (Babou 2010, p. 52). Nevertheless, it is vehemently argued that the removal of political decolonisation does not entail the removal of colonisation in all its forms. Kwame Nkrumah (1965) introduced the term neo-colonialism to show the persistence of former colonial influences after the attainment of independence. At the end of the Algerian war, Fanon (2008) contended that decolonisation never took place, but Africanisation. Furthermore, the call by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1986) after the attainment of independence to decolonise the mind was a sure sign that political decolonisation was never a free activity for cognitive decolonisation.

Following the submissions mentioned, one can argue that the replacement of a colonial government does not entail decolonisation. Chilisa (2012) posits that:

> It is also invoked by indigenous scholars or communities to represent a broader process whereby colonised peoples correct the deficient ways in which they have come to be defined, seek self-determination, discover and recover their IK and sense of self, mourn the pain inflicted upon them by colonisation, etc. (p. 105)

According to Smith (2021, p. 23), decolonising methodologies elucidate 'a research approach that recognises the exclusive nature of the knowledge that has emerged from western scientific research codified within ideologies such as imperialism and colonialism'. Considering the view of Smith, the authors contend that decolonising African oral history methodologies replies to positivist ways through recovering, recognising, recreating and researching back by employing African indigenous methods. To buttress the latter, Lee (2009) opines that:

> Given the diversity of Indigenous experience and varied attempts to resist colonization, such an approach cannot be reduced to a singular, one-dimensional solution, theory, or methodology. (p. 10)

The authors concur that there are indeed multiple African indigenous groups that deserve respect, ethics and honour when research is conducted with and by African indigenous researchers. In that regard, it should be made crystal clear that this endeavour calls for careful attention to develop such a framework as it will need to adapt to numerous African indigenous settings. Smith (2021) critically made the following comment:

> Looking through the eyes of the colonized, cautionary tales are told from an indigenous perspective, tales designed not just to voice the voiceless but to prevent the dying – of people, of culture, of ecosystems. (p. 24)

In this chapter, therefore, decolonisation entails a process of examining and challenging the Euro-Western methodologies that were introduced by the early settlers in the African space and persist to be used to study African indigenous communities to this day. This will also refer to the educational and institutional practices that still instil Euro-Western ethics, values and norms into African indigenous scholarship. To decolonise is to challenge, resist and subvert any form of inferiorisation, cultural imperialism, cultural epistemicide and attempts at deracination of indigenous communities. The decolonisation project in methodology should recognise that there are indigenous forms of engagements and ways in which knowledge is constructed and interpreted in these communities such that collection, transmission and interpretation are dependent on the community's internal systems that require insider view and interpretation. These indigenous modes depend largely on the spoken word as a means to explain and describe reality. In other words, the act of interviewing should be seen as a

conversational space where the interviewer is not an all-knowing researcher, but someone who interacts with a knowledge holder who is keen to share their own understanding of the world. In this interaction, the interviewer does not hold back with a view of 'draining' knowledge from a source, but engages in a dialogue, a dialogic space of equals.

African indigenous conversational method

African indigenous academics and researchers take advantage of qualitative storytelling designs to ensure that they capture and report modern-day realities and experiences. Life history is one of the methods that is still popularly used, and traditional modes of storytelling have been revived and are gaining fame and reception in recent years. This is because culturally oriented designs give sincere and unadulterated pathways for collecting, analysing and reporting African indigenous peoples' stories and phenomena. Based on this, there is a need to have researchers use simple language that is honest and respectful and is used and shared by African IK holders.

The authors encourage the usage of an African indigenous conversational method to research African indigenous issues. We define it as the usage of African indigenous storytelling as the means to approach, talk about, collect and analyse African issues. This dialogue should embrace an African indigenous paradigm. According to Kovach (2010):

> The conversational method aligns with an indigenous worldview that honours orality as means of transmitting knowledge and upholds the relational which is necessary to maintain a collectivist tradition. (p. 44)

Furthermore, Kovach (2021) adduces that such a conversational method always goes hand in hand with peculiar ethnical protocols. It is because it embraces the underlying African indigenous aspects, and thus, it is hailed as a 'culturally organic means to gather knowledge within research' (Tagicakiverata & Nilan 2018, p. 547). Reflecting on this method, the current authors maintain that it considers the invisible bond that develops when narrating a story and paying attention to the story. In a mysterious way, this breeds a very strong relationship. As the researcher and the participant(s) engage in a collaborative process through storytelling, their relationship grows and deepens. In most cases, it can be noted that stories passed on orally shaped the core being of African indigenous communities as they are spiritual, traditional, educational, cultural and political. To buttress the latter, Kovach (2010, p. 46) opines that 'storytelling has a holistic nature that provides a means for sharing remembrances that evoke the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental'. Despite having the conversational method

within the Euro-Western methodologies, when used with African indigenous methodologies (Kovach 2010):

> [...] a conversational method invokes several distinctive characteristics: a) it is linked to a particular tribal epistemology (or knowledge) and situated within an Indigenous paradigm; b) it is relational; c) it is purposeful (most often involving a decolonising aim); d) it involves particular protocol as determined by the epistemology and/or place; e) it involves an informality and flexibility; f) it is collaborative and dialogic; and g) it is reflexive. (p. 48)

Euro-Western research: Overlooking participants' cultural protocols

The authors submit that one leading issue that needs to be decolonised is the way Euro-Western research methods overlook African indigenous cultural protocols. In most institutions, the authors submit that they have observed the way research processes favour the Euro-Western academic research protocol over African indigenous protocols. Even the lecturers and/or teachers are more inclined to teach Euro-Western qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods at the exclusion of African indigenous research methodologies. Very interesting is how researchers (who seek to publish African indigenous issues in accredited African journals) who embrace African indigenous methodologies are rigorously subjected to Euro-Western methodologies lenses and ultimately have their work thrown into the academic garbage. This needs to be critically reviewed.

Most researchers, in our observations, are hindered by institutions' research protocols to follow African indigenous peoples' culture-based protocols of research (Chanda-Kapata, Campbell & Zarowsky 2012). For example, consider the issue of anonymity of African IK holders. In most communities, they need to be known and documented, just like Euro-Western academics and researchers who are cited as authorities. Even though the research protocols of these communities allow them to be known, researchers and practitioners are forbidden to follow this to adhere to their academic protocols at the expense of the African indigenous communities' norms and value systems. In most cases, researchers cite guilty conscience as they failed to respect the indigenous communities' culture, end up overlooking the respondents' views and distort the collected data in a bid to meet their rigid research questions as prescribed by research guides (Lawrence & Dua 2005).

The reality of the matter is that IK researchers in South Africa are subjected to employing Euro-Western paradigms and methodologies in

their studies. The authors of this chapter argue that this has the potential of making Euro-Western methodologies superior to African indigenous methodologies. As such, this chapter seeks to redress Western knowledge hegemony which is now taking precedence in publishing African indigenous research. Whilst we advocate for the appreciation of both knowledge systems, the appropriate usage of these should be done to allow a golden thread. This will allow the adoption of research methodologies and results that resonate with and benefit African indigenous communities. In this vein, African indigenous communities should be seen as co-contributors and co-researchers if African methodologies are to be viewed and accepted to yield genuine palliatives (Kadi-Hanifi & Keenan 2022).

It is disheartening to note that much African indigenous research is coerced to conform to the restraints and prescriptions of academic (Euro-Western) gatekeeping. In so doing, it overlooks the participants' cultural protocols, thus compromising the trust issue. The current authors argue that trust is an indispensable ingredient that scaffolds good research practice. Furthermore, trust is noted to be a key indicator for good relationships in conducting a study, especially amongst African indigenous communities. In this vein, Sanoff (1999) succinctly contends that:

> [...] there is a need for a cultural revolution in health research which can be achieved through prioritising community engagement as a strategy to build trust in the research process. (p. 32)

Deducing from the aforementioned quote, it is imperative that in a decolonising research pursuit, trust between the researcher and the participant(s) ought to be cemented upon respect values, co-operation and collaboration (Powell 2013, p. 2177). A more concerning matter related to trust is that it cannot be divorced from 'vulnerability because the establishment of trust goes hand in hand with protecting the vulnerable against exploitation' (Parkhe 1998, p. 221). The authors wonder if one can avoid exploitation of the participants in a case where researchers have the audacity to overlook the cultural protocols of the same participants.

Respectful and legitimate research: Conversational methodology

The authors maintain that one special way of decolonising oral history methodologies is through engaging in respectful and legitimate research. In other words, there is a need to adopt an African way of establishing a conversation as opposed to the cross-examination style used in today's research. In this way, the researcher ought to approach the participant(s) through the recognised cultural protocols and initiate a conversation about the subject matter which they wish to research. In this way, the participant

is the most informed person on the matter being researched and should be given all the necessary time to explain before questions can be asked. Keikelame and Swartz (2019) argue that:

> Indigenous research practices need to be scrutinised to ensure that they are culturally appropriate and ethical for research conducted with and among indigenous people. (p. 15)

This issue concerns power dynamics. Some academics and practitioners suggest that there is a need to put the researchers and the participant(s) on an equal footing when conducting a study. Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane and Muhamad (2001, p. 409) are of the view that 'a feminist lens may be useful to examine issues of power that are characterised by race, education and class'. In other words, the researcher should not be seen as an epitome of wisdom and viewed as the only producer of knowledge as both parties make equal and treasured contributions. To achieve the latter, researchers should partner with the participant(s) through a memorandum of understanding (MoU). The use of MoUs can protect African IK from exploitation and benefits sharing in a research study. According to Keikelame and Swartz (2019):

> MOUs are vital for engaging in legitimate and respectful research practice and assert that such a step is a form of empowerment of research partners and can also enhance sound collaboration through transparency of roles, expectations and actions. (p. 18)

The aforementioned quote makes it clear that MoUs are indeed good tools through which African indigenous communities can fight the exploitation of resources, gross human rights and be used as pawns for personal aggrandisement. To this, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the *Protection, Promotion, Development and Management of Indigenous Knowledge Act 6 of 2019* (hereafter referred to as the IKS Act) recognise and protect IK from being expropriated for financial gain which excludes the indigenous communities. Keikelame and Swartz (2019, p. 16) propose that 'the design of MOU's can be enabled by using strategies such as mediation and setting up formal partnerships that recognise the role of indigenous people from being "participants" to "researchers"'.

A critical, thorny issue reported in the San Code of Research is the usage of scientific language within African indigenous communities. The authors argue that this has the potential to hinder access to information. The information given might be inappropriate, and this can lead the African indigenous people to deny giving informed consent and refuse to be part of the study. The same goes for the interpretation that is done by professional African indigenous interpreters. Their translation is in most cases reported not to reflect the day-to-day indigenous language spoken in communities.

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis shows that researchers face serious open and hidden resistance from African indigenous communities if they adopt Western-centred methodologies to understand African indigenous issues. As such, it is indispensable for researchers to reflect critically on the methodologies that they employ if they are to have an impact on the lives of African indigenous communities. However, it should also be noted that an open and transparent conversation on decolonising methodologies is likely to unsettle core underpinnings and assumptions. Therefore, there is a need to be prepared and flexible to unlearn some aspects that are regarded as authoritative. All in all, because of the diverse African communities, no single design can be made to fit all African communities, but the framework and/or methodology should meticulously be grounded in the African value systems.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful for the funding offered to the postdoctoral fellow, Dr (Adv) Stewart L Kugara, by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF). This work is based on the research supported wholly by the National Research Foundation of South Africa (grant number: 129634). The grant holder acknowledges that opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in any publication generated by the NRF-supported research are that of the author(s) and that the NRF accepts no liability whatsoever in this regard.

Also, the reviewers and editors are thanked for devoting their precious time and efforts in giving comments which highly contributed to improving the chapter for publication.

Chapter 5

Methodological and ethical quandaries in oral historical research in southern Africa: Experiences from Lesotho and South Africa

Munyaradzi Mushonga
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies,
Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa

Motlatsi Thabane
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies,
Faculty of the Humanities, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa

Abstract

Orality is a hallmark of human society, and as such, both oral communication and historical sensitivities have been present in all human societies, African and non-African, throughout human history. In their turn, these sensitivities have compelled academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners to carefully consider questions of why and how oral history research should be conducted. However, as in other fields of research, several theoretical and epistemological approaches influence oral history

How to cite: Mushonga, M & Thabane, M 2025, 'Methodological and ethical quandaries in oral historical research in southern Africa: Experiences from Lesotho and South Africa', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 67–83. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.05

research methodology and the ethical considerations to be mindful of when interviewing people. Oral research is not done from a prescriptive point of view that suggests there is only one way to do it: Situations differ, and each situation requires responses that may be unique to it. Specifically, the personalities of the people we interview differ, and each may require being approached differently. In many cases, it is difficult to suggest clear ways of proceeding. In such cases, perhaps, the most useful suggestion would be that challenges need to be borne in mind, and their impact on the nature and quality of the evidence we collect should be recognised regarding making appropriate analyses and interpretations of the oral evidence we have collected. In this chapter, much of the views expressed have their basis in the variety of social history described as 'history from below'.[6]

Introduction

Oral history refers to both information, or evidence, used to study and write history on the one hand and ways or methods of collecting such evidence on the other. Specifically, oral history takes the form of evidence given orally by those who experienced or saw events under study. When oral evidence takes this form, it is also referred to as eyewitness accounts or personal testimony. Oral history is therefore 'a method of qualitative interview that emphasizes participants' perspectives, and generally involves multiple open ended interview sessions with each participant' (Leavy 2011, p. 3). Oral accounts of those who heard from eyewitnesses or those who experienced events are also classified as oral history. In these ways, oral history is distinct from oral traditions that are accounts '[...] in which stories are passed down through the generations' (Leavy 2011, p. 4). Although the content of oral traditions may include history, oral traditions tend to be more useful as sources of information on ritual and culture.

The exercise of obtaining information by interviewing people with the purpose of studying and writing history goes back to classical times and earlier. In societies where writing was unknown, interviewing those who knew about or experienced events was one of the ways by which information, or evidence, could be collected as the subject of study and source of knowledge. People stored information about events and about their experiences in their memories and provided it on demand, or when the need for it arose. As societies developed, or acquired writing skills and

6. See Hitchcock, T 2004 'A new history from below', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 57, pp. 294–298; Lynd, S 1993, 'Oral history from below', *The Oral History Review*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 1–8; Hamilton, CA 1987, 'Ideology and oral traditions: Listening to the voices "from below"', *History in Africa*, no. 14, pp. 67–86; Pitcher, MA 2006, 'Forgetting from above and memory from below: Strategies of legitimation and struggle in postsocialist Mozambique', *Africa*, vol. 76, no. 1, pp. 88–112.

produced written texts, oral history was relegated to an inferior status when measured against documentary evidence. Unlike information obtained from documents, oral evidence began to be seen as capable of being contaminated by forgetfulness, subjectivity and emotions of interviewees, and therefore as unreliable sources for studying and writing history. It was not a long journey from this to a point where the written word of the literate carried more weight than the spoken word of the illiterate. In social terms, in institutions of the state (such as courts of law) and in studying and writing about society, the written and even the spoken word of the educated middle and upper classes came to carry more weight than the spoken word of the illiterate, and social experiences of the middle classes communicated in writing became more important than experiences of lower classes conveyed orally.

This chapter looks at reasons why oral history continues to be relevant to the study and writing of history today and raises methodological and ethical issues that need to be kept in mind with a view to ensure evidence collected is credible and forms a sound basis for credible analysis, interpretations, and the creation of credible knowledge. Where necessary, it deploys examples of interviews collected under particular circumstances and raises or poses important methodological and ethical questions. Some interviews referred to in this chapter were covered by an official ethical clearance certificate issued by the responsible institution and the certificate number is cited.

It should be noted that we refer to 'credible' evidence and not 'objective' evidence or 'the truth'. Oral history looks for information and evidence whose reliability emanates from the fact that methods for collecting it, the evidence itself and the interpretation thereof can stand for scrutiny. In this way, we do not privilege the objectivity of oral information. At times, study and writing of history may attach value to subjective views and interpretations of those we interview. Even such subjective evidence, however, must be collected using credible methods so that it can be trusted to form a sound basis for credible analyses and interpretations.

Historians' interest in oral history

Historians adopted oral history as a way of collecting information, or evidence, to address various concerns that they had regarding reliance on documentary evidence. In some societies, what was regarded as history or social experiences of society were really experiences, views and interpretations of dominant groups. At times, these groups were even regarded as authorities on the experiences and views of dominated groups. Historians became concerned that what was being accepted as the history of a society lacked experiences and interpretations of the marginalised

groups themselves – that is to say, history lacked the views and interpretations of those who have first-hand knowledge of the events and experiences under study and in which dominated groups were involved as actors or victims.

Considerations that researchers follow in their decisions to collect oral evidence are both quantitative and qualitative. From a quantitative point of view, it becomes necessary to collect oral evidence when the information sought for the study and writing of history cannot be found in documentary and other forms. We may also be driven to look for oral evidence with the purpose of supplementing or challenging evidence contained in documents and other formats. Quantitatively, also, interviews are regarded as capable of yielding more evidence than documentary evidence in that, as opposed to sources of information such as documents, during interviews, interviewees can display emotions, gestures and subjectivities that might be useful in understanding the subject being studied.

From a qualitative point of view, oral evidence can be collected with the aim to seek and present views, experiences, analysis and interpretations that constitute an *alternative* to ruling and dominant views and interpretations of history and social experience. Such alternative views and interpretations can come from interviews with members of dominated social groups, or views, experiences and interpretations of groups that constitute marginalised minorities in society. As qualitative evidence, oral evidence has great potential in not only providing new, non-mainstream knowledge and interpretations, thereby adding to and enriching knowledge, but it has the potential to supplant existing and sometimes conventional interpretations and offer different ones. As Coullie (2011) states, oral history can be:

> […] fundamentally anti-elitist. Instead of conceiving of history as the gift of knowledge bestowed on the ignorant masses by wise academics, oral history [*can see*] ordinary people as knowing subjects. (p. 458)

None of this, however, is to say that others have not criticised attempts at collecting historical and other information through interviews and using such information to write history. Criticisms against this approach have included questions about the fallibility of human memory and the possibility that information obtained from oral sources might be unhelpful in writing history. As explained by Thomson (2007):

> At the core of criticisms of oral history in the early 1970s was the assertion that memory was distorted by physical deterioration and nostalgia in old age, by the personal bias of both interviewer and interviewee, and by the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past. For example, the Australian historian Patrick O'Farrell wrote in 1979 that oral history was moving into 'the world of image, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity […] And where will it lead us? Not into history, but into myth'. (pp. 53–54)

Notwithstanding criticisms that were levelled against it, oral history remains the best vehicle and essential source for the 'history from below'. It can break through the boundaries between 'the educational institution and the world, between the professional and the ordinary public' (Thomson 2007, p. 52). Regarding criticisms about the fallibility of human memory, oral historians have argued convincingly that the unreliability of memory and its subjectivity are also its strengths, and those ways in which human memory functions also provide clues not only about the meanings of historical experience but also about 'the relationships between past and present, between memory and personal identity, and between individual and collective memory' (Thomson 2007, p. 54). Understood this way, oral history becomes a powerful tool for not only discovering, exploring and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory but also as Thomson (2007) explains, for:

> [...] how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them. (p. 55)

Critics who see orality as unreliable need to be reminded that the peculiarities of oral history – namely, orality, narrative form, subjectivity, credibility of memory and the relationship between interviewer and informant – are strengths rather than weaknesses and are a resource rather than a problem.

Besides, problems of memory – how and what we remember – affect many other sources, including written sources, and are not unique to oral sources. All forms of academic research have to recognise their presence and deal with them and, when necessary, mitigate their influence on the nature of information used to write history.

Contexts of oral history research

The contexts in which we carry out oral history research are important because contexts influence the nature of the information, we are likely to obtain, and they go a long way to dictate methods that need to be adopted. Accordingly, understanding contexts begins with having as much background information as possible about persons we wish to interview, social environments in which they have lived or live, and how experiences of such environments might have shaped what interviewees know, and their thoughts, views and interpretations of their experiences.

Oral history research of the 1970s and 1980s in southern Africa proceeded from at least two premises. We discuss them briefly below because they continue to be important in the study and understanding of the history of southern Africa through oral history.

Firstly, the oral history of that period recognised that research and writing of the history of the region had been dominated by concerns that can be described as elitist, liberal and middle class in nature – namely, to replace liberal, Eurocentric history of the colonial period with an elitist and middle-class African history that presented an African, mainly male, view and agency in African history (Thompson 1975). By its nature, this new, liberal African history excluded experiences, views and interpretations of African history held by groups such as women (Grosfoguel 2013, pp. 85–86), African workers, the illiterate, the uneducated and others. On the understanding that different social groups see, experience and interpret the world differently, oral history research and writing of this earlier period sought to correct this bias towards African middle-class history with the aim not only to add information available on African history but also to seek and present interpretations of African history held by these groups. This approach fits in with what is known by social historians across the world as history from below.

A second premise was that an overwhelming majority amongst groups from which historians sought information to correct African middle-class biases in African history consisted of the educated and the uneducated. It could, therefore, be assumed that they had not read and had not been influenced by views and interpretations contained in Eurocentric and African middle-class writing of African history. The few amongst them who might have been literate and familiar with Eurocentric and African middle-class interpretations of African history might have internalised the impression contained in elitist history that experiences and interpretations of non-elite groups have no contribution to make in the study, writing and understanding of southern African history. All this meant that an oral historian's preparations had to include being ready to explain and convince non-elite groups of the importance of their experiences, views and interpretations in the study and writing of African history. For example, between 1991 and 1993, Terence Ranger carried out extensive interviews on the Samkange family in Zimbabwe, research which culminated in the book *Are we not also men: The Samkange family and African politics in Zimbabwe, 1920–64*. One informant told Terence Ranger in 1992 in Bulawayo, 'We feel useless because we carry around in our heads all this stuff that nobody needs. Now you have shown us that is useful after all' (Ranger 1995, p. ix). This is what colonial and post-colonial elitist understandings of history managed to do – to reduce other social groups' senses of worth and being by refusing to acknowledge the relevance of their experiences in the making of history of societies in which they live and marginalising their views and interpretations of their own and society's history. As Mbembe (2001) has shown:

> [/]n the colonial era the native was removed from the 'historically existing' when the coloniser chose 'to not to look at, see, or hear him/her', thus making him or her 'a thing denied'. (p. 187)

This attitude persisted after the end of colonial rule, as African elites removed colonial elitist approaches to history and replaced them with African elitist approaches.

Thus, as recently as 2017, in their attempt to bring to the fore, through the voices of rural and urban women from the former 'homeland' of Qwaqwa, South Africa, and to gather these groups' experiences and perceptions of both the apartheid and post-apartheid 'regimes', Mushonga and Seloma (2018, p. 210) found that, even though South Africa's sexed subaltern subjects may speak today, their voices continued not to be heard.

In the current context in which we carry out oral history research, some of the issues entailed in the premises and dilemmas discussed persist, but some have changed. Today, we live in a world where much information is available in large quantities and around the clock. Sources include radio, television, visuals, books, newspapers and other publications, the Internet and many others. People are now more mobile and interact in situations where exchanges of information take place. In short, the people we interview these days are exposed to a lot of information. It might be difficult to determine with any certainty how this exposure to information shapes interviewees' thoughts, views and interpretations in general, and their thoughts and interpretations of experiences and events which we may interview them about. What is important is to bear this context in mind and be aware that some of the information, views and interpretations we receive from interviews may not be original to the people we interview and that, at the very least, such views and interpretations may be influenced by information from other sources, and at most, they may be a repetition of information from other sources. It might also be difficult to determine with any certainty how this exposure to information might affect marginalised groups' confidence in their own views and interpretations and how it affects their struggles for getting their own history and experiences as well as their perceptions and interpretations thereof to be heard.

Two experiences – one of contract oral history research and the other of family oral history – might provide useful ways to illustrate the point about how contexts influence the information we receive in interviews. In the late 2000s, the government of Lesotho started a project to build a dam to supply various lowlands urban centres with water. The project was going to affect communities that lived close to the dam site in several ways, including inundating resources on which communities depended for their livelihoods. Donors and advocacy groups forced the government to carry out an environmental impact study. A major component of this was oral history research to interview communities about losses of cultural and economic resources that would result from the construction of a dam. One of us (the authors of this chapter) and a colleague were contracted to carry out this research.

In interviews with members of the communities that followed, it quickly became clear that advocacy groups had worked intensively amongst communities, advising them about what demands they should make to the government and construction companies. Responses to questions asked were standard and suggested a significant amount of coaching. The same list of resources to be lost was given to researchers as was a similar narration of ways in which communities would lose culturally. We were faced with the difficult questions:

- Should the work continue and ignore the fact that the answers we received were regurgitations of advocacy groups' coaching?
- Or should we find ways that would guarantee we get communities' own views and interpretations that were not influenced by their interactions with advocacy groups?
- Regarding the last possibility: To what extent could this be done?

There were also clear ethical questions about whether the information we received ought to be rejected because it was influenced by advocacy groups' coaching or accepted because advocacy groups had empowered communities in their dealings with government and international construction companies.

Interviews with members of the community had to stop because of reasons that had little to do with these methodological and ethical questions. Had it continued to the finish, this context would have greatly influenced the information we received, and all analyses and interpretations of the information would have needed to bear this context in mind.

Recently, in Lesotho, one of us interviewed an old, fellow clansman in an attempt to get more information about an ancestor common to both. The interviewee had been recommended by another clansman who is knowledgeable about the history of the clan and possibly about the common ancestor. The interview revealed that the interviewee knew very little about the common ancestor. He repeated common accounts about the clan's history and associated events with dates that were not only practical but also quite out of tune with dates recorded at the time of the events.

In another case, in 1960, in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Stanlake Samkange, whilst gathering material for a series of articles on the history of Chipata, was advised by several people to consult a certain kinsman. He obliged and the kinsman readily told him many things. Towards the end of their conversation, Samkange (1975, p. i) was surprised when his kinsman put into his hands 'a thick, well-bound exercise book in which he said, was written, in his own hand, most the things he had told me'. If it

were you, what would you do? Would you proceed to translate the text and pass it on as 'authentic' (oral) history? Or would you throw it away as one of those contaminated stories? Most researchers are least prepared for these unexpected ethical quandaries. Samkange was confronted with a rare fieldwork dilemma about which he had many questions, but few answers.

On the one hand, oral history research has made significant strides in southern Africa in the last 40 years. Examples of such work include the oral history archive of those who bore arms during the Zimbabwean liberation struggle (Bhebhe 2015, pp. 43–56; Dombo 2019, pp. 55–73; Zimbabwe National Archives 2018), oral history archives of farm workers in South Africa (Van Onselen 1997) and an oral history archive of experiences of migrant workers in Lesotho (Institute of Southern African Studies, National University of Lesotho, 1982–1985). Experiences from this work remain available to serve as a store of knowledge about qualitative, quantitative and methodological issues in oral history research.

On the other hand, much oral history research that can benefit from discussions above and below remains outstanding. Specifically, in southern Africa, this work includes oral history research amongst those who bore arms during the liberation struggle in South Africa and the Lesotho Liberation Army in Lesotho.

A particular group whose experiences, interpretations and perceptions have fallen victim to this omission across the African continent are women and their contribution to the liberation struggle which has tended to be relegated to the periphery. Vahed (2015, p. 129) argues that even though women's stories tended to be occluded to the periphery, women were in fact at the centre of the struggle to overthrow apartheid. Women's stories therefore require centring. Armitage and Gluck (1998, p. 53) argue that 'oral history retains an urgent political importance in many parts of the world where women's oppression is reinforced by the silencing of women's voices and histories'.

In general, ordinary people, the poor and many rural folks are contributors of knowledge, and the exclusion of their experiences, interpretations and views from research and the writing of history means that the history of the continent remains only partly known. In the case of South Africa, according to Landman (2013, p. 1), oral history research plays another important role of 'constructing contra-cultures and deconstructing the discourses that keep interviewees captive in the dominant discourses of ageism, sexism, racism and oppression'.

Methods and methodology of oral history: Lessons from research experiences

The centrality of the problem of methodology in historical enquiry, whether oral or written, is perhaps the most difficult and complex problem or challenge to handle. Methods generally refer to a way, or ways, of doing things, whilst methodology refers to 'a system of principles and general ways of organising and structuring theoretical and practical activity and the theory of that system' (Spirkin 1983, p. 83). Thus, as a method of studying and writing history, oral history refers to ways adopted to ensure the credibility of information or evidence collected orally through interviews. This is done on the understanding that only credible evidence can form a basis for credible analysis, description, interpretation and narrative of events and experiences. In this realm of oral history as a method, we ask and confront questions including the following. We comment on each briefly.

Firstly, what are the theoretical and empirical considerations that have influenced the decision to make oral evidence the basis, wholly or partly, of the history we want to study and write? A major theoretical query of social history regarding the study and writing of history is that the exercise is dominated by liberal and elitist concerns. The practice of oral history that emanates from this query must be consistent with meaningful attempts to address the query. On the one hand, from an empirical point of view, oral history practice intended to address this query has to be an exercise to bring information and evidence to the fore that is additional to, and *different* from, information sought from liberal, middle-class and elitist perspectives. On the other hand, from a theoretical point of view, oral history research methods have to aim at securing information and evidence that enable interpretations of history that constitute an *alternative* to liberal or elitist interpretations. It means that questions asked of interviewees cannot be ones aimed at confirming or only adding to liberal interpretations of history. Instead, they must be deeper questions aimed at securing non-elites' own views, interpretations and experiences of the world with a view to present them as alternative history and as part of what De Sousa Santos (2007, 2018) and other decolonial academics call ecologies of knowledge whose total is an epistemological shift that guarantees cognitive justice.

Secondly, what qualifies an interviewee as a source of information about the events or experiences being studied? It was characteristic of liberal history that experiences, views and interpretations of African elites were regarded as the history of African societies, and elites were even entrusted with relating experiences of non-elites. Just as non-elites cannot be entrusted with relating the experiences of the elites, elites cannot be

entrusted with relating the experiences of non-elites. The locus of enunciation, or the geo-political and body-political location of he or she who speaks (Grosfoguel 2007), is very important in knowledge production. Experiences of a social group must be sought from the members of the social group itself. If circumstances force us to seek an individual's experiences from others, the limitations and strengths of such information must be acknowledged together with the limitations and strengths of interpretations and analyses based on such information.

Thirdly, how do we ensure that questions asked during the interview will solicit credible evidence or information? An answer to this important question is difficult. Indeed, considerations that should go into the exercise of setting questions should not be limited to whether they will be understood and secure credible information; they must include considerations of whether they are clearly written and asked and whether those who are interviewed do not find the questions offensive, one way or the other. Most of this cannot be known in advance and requires keeping constant vigilance of what works and what does not and adjusting accordingly. Yet, it is important to know that 'silly' questions beget 'silly' answers.

Fourthly, what etiquette and conduct should be adopted in the relationship established between interviewer and interviewee to ensure the evidence given is sound and solid, whether objective or subjective? Neither should familiarity and friendship with informants be rejected for fear that it might lead to some form of 'contamination' of evidence nor should informants be forced to remain business-like and professional in some hope that the evidence they give will remain 'objective'. We need to be ready to follow the direction in which relationships with informants develop. Based on that, we may make decisions on such practical issues as how to conduct ourselves during interviews, for example: (1) Can we argue against what informants are telling us and their interpretations of the world? (2) Can we press informants to think a little more deeply about their answers to our questions? (3) Can we correct informants when they make mistakes, say, of dates? Whichever way a relationship with an informant develops, we need to accept the limitations and strengths of the evidence that such a relationship will impart to the evidence and to interpretations we may be able to make.

Fifthly, in transcribing, translating and presenting oral evidence, what ethical, practical and linguistic considerations should be observed in order to ensure that transcribed and translated oral texts will assist credible knowledge, analyses and interpretations? A short answer to this could be appreciation that the translation process is fraught with numerous problems, for example, translator bias; distortions occasioned by differences

in the meaning of words, syntactical and cultural contexts; absence of equivalent words in the target language; and ambiguity in the original language (Mushonga 2017, p. 25). In most cases in southern Africa, interviews with non-elites are conducted, say, in Sesotho and later translated into English, either directly from a recording device or after being transcribed in the original language first. A cardinal consideration in both transcribing and translating interviews is that these exercises must be conducted ethically. Transcribed and translated texts have to consist of the words that interviewees spoke, not what they intended to say and not what we think they intended to say. At times, this needs to be done at the expense of clarity and the syntactic sense of what the interviewee wanted to say. However, it might be necessary when quoting from these unclear and syntactically difficult transcriptions and translations to edit the quotations for purposes of clarity and communicating with readers. The ethical importance of editing cannot be overemphasised. Verbatim translations and translations cannot be edited in such a manner that distorts oral texts in order to make them suit our analyses and interpretations.

The last question of the oral history method that we wish to comment on has to do with the practical issue of storage as well as the ethical issue of access. In other words, what are the best ways to archive oral evidence to ensure that oral texts remain in the form in which they were collected as long as possible, and what considerations should influence decisions on who should be granted access to oral interviews and the terms of granting such access? Until recently, devices, such as tape recorders and video cameras, were employed to carry out interviews using magnetic or analogue tapes. The sound quality of these media tended to deteriorate over time, leading to audio problems, including inaudibility. It was always necessary, therefore, that interviews should be stored in this magnetic form as well as in transcribed form. Oral history is not the rejection of the printed word but the questioning of the content of the written word.

Currently, researchers use devices that enable them to store information digitally. The technology is too recent to know what happens to the quality of recordings over time. However, archivists have already established that digital recordings are more prone to interference and manipulation than magnetic tapes, resulting in changes that '[…] may affect the authenticity and integrity of [*interview*] content' (British Museum n.d., n.p.). Also, '[t]he integrity of storage media for digital materials diminishes at a more rapid pace than analogue archival storage' (British Museum n.d.). These challenges, archivists say:

> […] require preservation actions to be taken much earlier in the lifecycle than for traditional collections, and at a much greater frequency. A lifecycle management approach is needed to ensure appropriate actions are taken in good time.

By making analogue devices obsolete as quickly as it has been done, digital technology has shown us just how quickly recording devices can become obsolete. For example, we constantly face the danger that the production of certain devices for the playback of interviews, say, tape recorders, may cease, leaving us unable to access information recorded and stored in media such as cassettes for which such playback devices were designed. It is a danger that even digital technology itself is not immune from (Leh 2000, pp. 3–8). Again, it makes the point that interviews must be archived in both digital and transcribed forms. Transcriptions remain the preferred choice for researchers because reading is much faster than listening to audio recordings.

The terms of access to interviews are normally agreed upon between researcher, informants and the institution at which interview material in all its formats – audio, visual, transcribed, translated – is to be kept. These terms should protect informants and their information in ways that have been agreed upon, including the length of the period that is to elapse before material can be made accessible to the public. Further, agreed-upon terms should spell out the rights and obligations of the researcher as well as the rights and obligations of other researchers.

Ethics in oral historical research and the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic

According to Denis (2007, p. 1), ethics of oral history refers to the 'moral obligations a practitioner has in the conduct of an oral history project', requirements which are seen differently 'from those of cognate disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, or journalism'. Denis (2007) gives us four broad principles which he thinks:

> [*S*]hould guide oral historians in the practice of their discipline [*-namely,*] autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons, non-malfeasance, beneficence [*,and*] justice. In oral history these principles primarily apply to the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee [*where*] each stage of the interviewing process has specific ethical requirements. (p. 1)

One aspect of an ethical dilemma revolves around whether oral historians, during emotional moments of the interviewing process, should provide psychotherapy and whether they should learn from the experiences of psychotherapists. Sean Field (2012, p. 160) posits that oral historians 'are primarily researchers recording and analyzing information and processes, and they are not trained to attend to the psychological problems of patients as are counselors and psychotherapists'. In Field's view, the oral historian only interacts with the interviewee in only one or two interview sessions, as opposed to a therapist who develops a long-term relationship

of psychotherapy, sometimes extending over into years. Thus, in a dispute over whether an oral history researcher should intervene and provide counselling to an interviewee who breaks down during an interview, Field rejects the idea of the oral researcher assuming the role of a psychotherapist. Denis, Houser and Ntsimane (2011) weigh in on this matter by demonstrating how, without necessarily reducing the oral historian to the role of a psychotherapist, stories of people in KwaZulu-Natal 'with multiple woundedness' were deconstructed towards healing in an oral history process. Thus, Field, Denis, Houser and Ntsimane all recognise and appreciate that whilst oral historians require basic counselling skills to navigate sensitive situations, they should also recognise their limitations and refer interviewees to qualified counsellors or psychologists if emotional distress or re-traumatisation occurs. These serious ethical dilemmas pertaining to the health and welfare of interviewees require further thought and interrogation.

Today, it is not unusual to talk about how coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has changed the world, leaving a lasting effect on all areas of our life, including work and research. In the academics and research fraterntity, national and institutional confinement policies 'have implied a sudden switch to homework, a transition to online teaching and mentoring, and an adjustment of research activities' (Corbera et al. 2020, p. 191). Oral history research methods and ethics have not been immune to the effects of COVID-19, including questions of authenticity. Accordingly, the impact of COVID-19 on oral historical research and fieldwork in general cannot be underestimated. From the way it has affected societies worldwide, COVID-19 has forced us to ask the following questions: (1) How does an oral historian collect data during COVID-19 when human interaction is limited? (2) What is COVID-19-sensitive methodology and ethics? (3) When doing fieldwork research during COVID-19, how do we protect both researcher and researched? (4) Is it possible to conduct oral historical research online and, if so, how can this be done? (5) What lessons for oral historical research can be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic?

To try and understand some of these questions, we draw on our field experiences of conducting research during the times of COVID-19. We also share challenges occasioned by national and institutional policy processes, procedures and protocols governing fieldwork during the prevalence of COVID-19 and the extent to which they facilitated, or constrained, oral fieldwork research. We should state that these national and institutional protocols, as well as what institutions established to enforce compliance, should be welcomed and be respected because they are intended to protect the welfare and rights of participants. History has taught us the dangers of allowing ethical considerations to be the sole responsibility of individual researchers. In one word, we have to accept that when it comes

to ethical issues in research, it is crucial that, in consultations with academics, authorities establish rules by which all of us have to abide.

Abiding by ethical standards and rules intended to protect society from disease may seem cumbersome and might leave some researchers frustrated. However, these 'accounting' procedures can help researchers to prepare thoroughly for some complexities in the field. Thus, ethical quandaries in research do not start in the field, but well before the field, through its regulation by institutional bodies and committees.

In South Africa, applications for ethical research clearance certificates might seem an onerous task intended more to protect universities from reputational damage and litigation that might arise from research than to add value to the research agenda. Getting a research clearance certificate might seem like a mountain to climb. Yet, being armed with such a certificate does not mean the end of ethical quandaries. Many more will be waiting in the field, and circumstances on the ground dictate that we change our approach and radically modify or throw away the original strategies. The field is an unpredictable environment, and from both ethical and practical points of view, there is always tension between what is desirable and what is possible.

In one oral history project in which one of us was involved as a principal investigator, experience shows that delayed ethical clearance and unforeseen pandemics can cause serious practical and ethical dilemmas. Researchers applied for an ethical clearance certificate to the university's General/Human Research Ethics Committee on 12 May 2021. The certificate was only granted on 17 August 2021, more than three months later. The contract with the funders of the project was 12 months. The delay in securing clearance meant that three months were lost waiting for the certificate. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic did not make fieldwork possible until only lockdown levels 1 and 2, which the institution enforced to the letter. As a result, the research had to wait until October 2021.

Once in the field, a plethora of other ethical dilemmas followed. In the Eastern Cape province, we interviewed a self-confessed cattle thief who did not have a problem if we were to publicise his name in our write-up.[7] However, the urge on our side not to do so remained very high, reinforcing what Thomson (2007, p. 60) calls the trauma of silence or misrecognition.

Another ethical dilemma we confronted because of delays in being granted an ethical clearance certificate was that, on initial familiarisation

7. An application for full ethical approval was made to University of the Free State and ethics consent was received on 17 August 2021. The ethics approval number is UFS-HSD2020/2195/21.

tours of communities amongst whom research was to be conducted, in June 2021, to introduce ourselves and the project, we came across three informants who, after understanding the purpose of our visit, started sharing their stories right on the spot. At the time, we had not yet received ethical clearance, and our attempts to explain to informants that we were not yet ready to collect information seemed not to make sense to them. On our return for actual interviews in October 2021, we learned that one of them, an elderly man who had given us much useful and fascinating information, had died because of COVID-19. To add to this, we could not locate the other two informants who had initially shared their stories. Because of the delay in the ethical clearance certificate and the enforcement of national regulations governing COVID-19, we found ourselves sitting with information given to us before we received ethical clearance. Our ethical dilemma was whether to use the information or not.

Conclusion

The rise of approaches that emphasised the primacy of archived research sources and documentary evidence led to the marginalisation of oral evidence. This excluded the experiences, perceptions, views and interpretations of those who are more likely to depend on oral history to communicate their views – namely, the uneducated, illiterate and other marginalised groups – from the writing of history. In the main, oral history as 'history-from-below' seeks to correct this. To succeed in this, this approach must develop methods and methodologies, and adopt ethical standards, that enable researchers to collect credible information based on which credible interpretations and analyses can be made. In these and other related ways, we can come as close as possible to creating credible knowledge of the history of societies of southern Africa.

The Oral History Association of South Africa and oral historians in South Africa, Lesotho, the African continent and around the globe are challenged to establish projects aimed at retrieving, through oral testimonies, the memories of those who not only lost their beloved ones but also of those who fought, survived, lived and worked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dira Sengwe's Oral History Project in which he retrieved the memories of individuals and people who lived and worked to fight the HIV and AIDS pandemic during South Africa's 'lost decade' (1994–2004) should inspire us to do the same with the COVID-19 pandemic. More oral research in South Africa and Lesotho is needed to foreground the experiences of marginalised groups such as women and those living on the margins of society and can be described as subalterns.[8]

8. See Spivak, GC 2023, 'Can the subaltern speak?', *Imperialism*, pp. 171–219; Bhabha, HK 1994, *The location of culture*, Routledge, Abingdon-on-Thames. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003101536-9

Whilst we cannot run away from the future role of technology in oral historical research, we caution against entertaining notions that oral history can be conducted online with elitist virtual platforms that tend to exclude the majority of those whom oral history should target. The strength and uniqueness of oral history research lie precisely in enabling researchers and informants to interact and converse face to face. Technology is important in research as it is in other areas, but the question is: Who says orality, verbalisation, memory, storytelling, etc., are *not* constitutive of 'technology'?

Chapter 6

Objectivity and subjectivity: Twin evils in oral history research

Sekgothe Mokgoatšana
Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa

Stewart L Kugara
Department of Cultural Studies and Political Studies,
Faculty of Humanities, School of Social Sciences,
University of Limpopo,
Sovenga, South Africa

Abstract

It is heart tearing to note that some students from other social sciences disciplines face serious challenges telling their own experiences in courses presented on human rights. This difficulty emanates from the students' background and training in other disciplines where they are taught to eliminate their biases and remain neutral in telling their stories. To some, it is nearly impossible to think of their story and to remove themselves from it. In some instances, some of these students end up resorting to autoethnography to find a way to be in the centre of their own narrative. In this chapter, we shall explore the polemic debate in historical writing that demands that writers should be objective in their pursuit of truthfulness.

How to cite: Mokgoatšana, S & Kugara, SL 2025, 'Objectivity and subjectivity: Twin evils in oral history research', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 85–98. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.06

The pursuit of objectivity is an age-old debate in history. It is a subject drawn from naturalists who wanted to set rules and criteria for ensuring that the truth is not contaminated but presented as it is. The chapter argues that the search for objectivity in oral history is a complex task that is very difficult to achieve because it is not easy to distance the storyteller from the narrative, narrative events and contexts. This chapter will propose ways to eliminate bias and increase validity and reliability.

Introduction

One of the leading, indispensable parts of oral history is the thorny issue of balancing objectivity and subjectivity in an attempt to eliminate biases and remain neutral in storytelling. Looking at oral history, one should remember that this is a formidable tool for recording and keeping people's experiences, personal encounters, narratives and events that are likely to get lost or being forgotten (Ritchie 2014). Also, oral history gives a platform to receive first-hand information, thus plumbing priceless gems of knowledge and understanding. Against this backdrop, we are usually confronted with the thorny issue of objectivity and subjectivity.

On the one hand, objectivity is construed as adducing facts in the absence of distorted views and bias (Gaukroger 2012). Relying on objectivity, historians must maintain unadulterated facts and give proof-based narratives to record an accurate past that is not exaggerated. On the other hand, subjectivity entails the incorporation of the individual's inclination to their views, deductions and standpoint (Allison 1990). It is public knowledge that whenever an individual narrates a historical event, individual biases that emanate from their encounters and particular contexts are bound to influence their narrative. Without a doubt, such subjective elements supplement hidden treasures, thereby unveiling the human face (emotions) encountered in the events of history (Barrett 2017), which should not be ignored.

Faced with these two distinct aspects of oral history, one ought to be careful in historical writing, which demands that writers be objective in their pursuit of truthfulness. Subjective views can sometimes cloud one's judgement as they incline one to be emotionally involved and miss the truth (Medin & Shoben 1988). At the same time, objective views can downplay and ignore pertinent issues hidden in people's unique contexts leading to truthfulness (Erickson 1995). With this in mind, the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity plays a critical role in shaping the reliability and validity of a historical event. Even though being objective is plausible, one should not cast a blind eye to the possibility that total objectivity may not yield accurate reflections. In the end, we have a concoction of narratives made up of different interviewees' narratives and understanding.

From the preceding analysis, researchers should meticulously engage oral history narratives bearing in mind the subjectivity flaws and interviewees' biases. Key to assessing the reliability of interviewees' versions and narratives, the following must be factored in:

- Socio-cultural underpinnings
- Historical background of the interviewees
- Context of the settings where data are collected
- Relationship of interviewer and interviewee.

It is critical that the above be considered to capture the subjectivity of the matter. Key to this is that subjectivity does not downplay the importance of oral history but aids in giving information in the blind spots that might be omitted to make the full view clearer (Boyd 2008). In other words, subjectivity captures a holistic comprehension of a historical event by supplementing people's emotions and minute intimate information.

Therefore, in this chapter, we explore the polemic debate in historical writing that demands that writers be objective in their pursuit of truthfulness. Whilst the demand is placed on objective interpretation, we argue that acknowledgement ought to be given to subjectivity. Giving notice and consideration to subjectivity helps unearth numerous scopes of history and introduces ignored voices that generate an appreciation of diverse encounters of experiences. Furthermore, subjectivity allows the storyteller to own the narrative and take responsibility for its consequences.

Theoretical framework

This chapter is guided by the implicit bias theory. This theory was coined by psychologists Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald in 1995. According to Epley and Gilovich (2005, p. 201), implicit bias is defined as 'a form of bias that occurs automatically and unintentionally, that nevertheless affects judgements, decisions, and behaviours'. Implicit biases are people's unconscious manners and stereotypes that disturb their rulings and accompanying actions. In this chapter, the theory is used to explore the role of associations and the 'implicit attitudes' in introducing bias (especially regarding age, gender and social context) in oral history. This theory entails that people may carry biases unknowingly, which impacts their narratives. Furthermore, this theory points to the shortcoming of objectivity and subjectivity in the manner humans perceive things and make conclusions.

Subjectivity and perception

Implicit biases invariably mould interviewees' subjective views of other people, which, in turn, disturbs the way they deduce and understand things.

Despite the interviewee's struggle to attain objectivity, such biases influence them unconsciously, thus distorting their perception of things.

Objectivity as an ideal

Scientific studies and giving overall judgements often demand the usage of objectivity to satisfy all concerned parties (MacCormick 1998). Nevertheless, the implicit bias theory opines that total objectivity brings paralyses in analysis because of peoples' underlying unconscious bias. These biases must be acknowledged and addressed to eliminate distortion and uphold fairness and accuracy.

Bias in research

It is not a secret that implicit biases have the potential to dictate which research design to opt for, the way it is implemented and the interpretation of the findings. In oral history, it can influence the way the narrative is given by an interviewee (Beard 2017). Thus, researchers can unconsciously exercise bias through the selection of the study area, study participants, methods of data collection and the method of interpreting data (Mehra 2002). Producing reliable, undistorted and unbiased narratives becomes possible when people acknowledge the biases they have and work on mitigating them.

Self-reflection and awareness

Implicit bias theory emphasises the value of self-introspection and different means of awareness to eliminate unconscious biases. Researchers ought to participate in numerous activities to diminish the influence of implicit biases, such as diversity training, introspection training and exposing researchers to counter-stereotypical things (Baumeister 1987).

Context and intersectionality

It is interesting to note that implicit biases differ from one context to another and may interconnect with different social groups (gender, age, race, etc.). In this way, capturing the contexts and interconnections of the interviewer and interviewee helps to master the interplay of objectivity and subjectivity in different forms (Roulston 2010).

Ethical considerations

Implicit biases can lead to discrimination and discrepancies in numerous settings. Thus, recognising the availability of implicit biases conscientises

the researcher of the proper ethical considerations to consider allowing justice for all (Omodan 2021). In addition, implicit bias theory continues to evolve and thus demands one to be up to date. In this way, continuous exploration of implicit biases by researchers helps attain objectivity whilst cultivating subjectivity, ensuring that the truth is not contaminated but presented as is.

Literature review

Positivism in history

To start with, the issues surrounding objectivity in research have been widely explored by Michel Foucault (historian and philosopher) through the issue of construction of knowledge and power dynamics. Foucault argued that power dynamics, interests and partialities cannot be exempted from influencing objectivity in historical narratives (Seals 1998). Without a doubt, these dictate the production of knowledge within a community.

One of the leading American historians, Peter Novick, brought to the fore and critiqued rigorously the issue of the 'myth of objectivity'. Objectivity was argued by Novick as an illusion that is perpetuated by one's cultural subscription, personal beliefs and formulated ideologies, amongst other things (Novick 1988). As a remedy, Novick suggested how historians ought to be open by disclosing their known biases and things that shape their varied assumptions, which negatively impacts objectivity.

A careful analysis of these writers' work attests to the honesty needed by researchers and historians to unleash their subjective traits that influence their views in a bid to attain objectivity. In the case of oral history, these authors' work ought not to be omitted in this write-up as they greatly influenced shaping interpretations, styles and methodologies that eliminated challenges encountered in documenting oral history.

From the aforementioned analysis, the issue of objectivity in oral history is not a new phenomenon. Those who have written on the subject matter have shaped the way of attaining objectivity by outlining some subjective aspects of oral history and historical knowledge. Having such a precedent, the current authors engaged the same issue of subjectivity *vis-à-vis* objectivity to coin out other novel issues that may emerge within African oral history. The authors argue that the search for objectivity in oral history, and in particular African oral history, is a complex task that is very difficult to achieve because it is not easy to distance the storyteller from the narrative, narrative events and contexts. As such, numerous oral historians still struggle with biases, interpretation and giving reflexivity.

Reflexivity

One key aspect of ensuring that truth is not contaminated is self-reflexivity. Reflexivity is thus construed as taking stock of one's views, background and context that disturbs one's worldview and how the way an individual construes the world (Finlay 2012). Reflexivity looks at the interconnection between the interviewer and the interviewee and takes note that their worldview and explanations are devoid of objectivity but conceived of subjective experiences and understandings. In order to proceed without hindrance, the two terms ought to be clarified.

Objectivity

Objectivity denotes impartiality and a position of not being biased in the manner one observes and interprets things (Begg & Berlin 1988). In other words, one's interpretation lacks personal emotions and predispositions. Objectivity seeks to give a disconnected view that seeks to give a narrative or conclusion grounded on facts, logic and proof. Nevertheless, giving a detached perspective, a wholly objective view, is a mammoth task, considering that researchers are inclined to their personal views and attachments that dictate how they see and interpret things.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity stipulates the personal views, emotions and beliefs that control the way researchers see and interpret things (Philipp 2007). Subjectivity speaks of the sociocultural underpinnings of an individual researcher, their encounters and the way they were bred in considering their worldview. This directly and/or indirectly influences their understanding of things and the way they interpret things. Against this backdrop, subjectivity teaches us that diverse people have different views and interpretations of an identical phenomenon. A similar event can have two or more perspectives and meanings because different people interpret it from different viewpoints and experiences.

Deducing from the aforementioned assessment of reflexivity, it is germane to adumbrate that different people will always have their subjective views cloud their thinking, consciously or unconsciously, and make it difficult to attain objectivity. The advantage of reflexivity is that it challenges researchers to examine the issues that influence their biases and interpretations, thereby allowing them to critique their perspectives. The ability to reflect gives birth to self-awareness of personal traits that cloud reasoning and judgements. That conceived self-awareness, however, illuminates a light in the dark blind spots and makes researchers flexible to entertain other differing views and enhance meaningful introspection and dialogue.

Reasonable man(?)

The phrase 'reasonable man' is employed within the legal fraternity as a legal test that is applied to validate behavioural standards that are deemed good or bad for an individual. This legal test is frequently used in cases of negligence to check if an individual's conduct can be deemed reasonable (Smith 1911). What is also interesting is that the issue of objectivity and subjectivity takes the central stage.

When using the reasonable man test in law, it places attention on the 'objective standard of behaviour'. The objectivity test introduces a hypothetical case of a reasonable man (one who is regarded as sane and carries an average intelligence of reasoning) and asks if they can do what the person in question would do if placed in their shoes. In this way, the objectivity test checks the conduct (action and/or inaction) of the individual against the set standard in the hypothetical case. In this way, the objectivity test checks the following in such an incident:

1. The individual's state of mind
2. The individual's circumstances
3. The individual's knowledge and expertise in general
4. Whether the individual could have foreseen the risk.

Despite having the primary consideration being the objective test, the subjective test also carries weight and guides the presiding officers well in determining the reasonable person test. The subjective test considers the available knowledge and context of the person that could have influenced their conduct. The latter, subjective elements are considered in the same circumstances as others if they are reasonably foreseeable. Forth and McNabb (2008) cite this illustration: A reasonable person is used as a standard in cases where an individual has a medical situation that impairs their performance of a task. In this way, the question is posed: Would a person with a similar medical situation as the person in question act in a different way or would have been more cautious?

Besides being a good indicator, merely what is known and foreseeable by third parties falls within the subjective element. Unique and personal knowledge and/or traits of an individual do not form part of the subjective test elements. In conclusion, it can be argued that in legal matters, both the objective and subjective test elements are put together to determine negligence. In principle, the reasonable man captures the objective test in a hypothetical case first, before giving judicial notice to the subjective elements that are in the public domain and/or reasonably foreseen.

Discussion

Contrary to known and established approaches in oral history regarding objectivity and subjectivity, the authors opted for the dichotomic approach in discussing the two. The two ought not to be opposed but elucidated. However, the current authors discussed the two separately because oral history incorporates objectivity as a rubric to underscore reliability, impartiality and subjectivity in capturing historical insights of the past. In this way, the authors opine that the two terms are not 'mutually exclusive' in any way but complement one another in oral history processes. The separation allowed one to see their distinction and how they marry one another.

The concept of objectivity

Objectivity entails presenting facts without prejudice. To speak of objectivity is to call for the historian's neutrality, distancing from the subject matter under discussion. This boils down to is the assumption of a value-free presentation of facts, and factual truth can be arrived at without the writer's involvement with the subject matter. Writing on objectivity, Oyewale (2014) explains that:

> Historically, facts are meaningless without interpretation or judgment. Objectivity means a state of having a comprehensive, systematic record of past events as they happened. Objectivity holds the belief that historical writing should be based on solid facts alone (Henige 1986). These facts should be devoid of sentiments, emotions, biases, and prejudices. It could also refer to the ability of historian to look at nature not as part of himself but the ability to detach himself from nature through reasoning and thereby act as a rational being. (p. 20)

What this means is that facts should speak for themselves. It further means that researchers should dissociate from the subject matter, eliminating biases, prejudices and all other aspects of the selves brought into the interpretation role. This, acting away, standing aloof and outside the text, implies that historical interpretation is a task of pursuing and respecting the truth. It further points to the assumption that the past can be laid bare, as formalists would argue that texts may be interpreted without context. Oyewale (2014, p. 20) goes further to suggest that the researcher's absolute detachment is inapplicable in history, especially oral history. This is so because historical interpretation brings with it baggage from the researcher's past, often being connected with the stories they interpret.

Advocates for positivism promote detachment as the core of historical research. Objectivity emanates from the positivist school that dominated the early development of history as a subject. Positivists developed laws that governed science and any effort in pursuit of the scientific project. The scientific project was considered a normative, rigorous activity that

should not be spoiled by involvement, attachment and the writer's sentimental relationship with the truth. In this view, the truth can be arrived at following natural laws and rational thinking.

What this discourse of historical 'objectivity' fails to acknowledge is that history itself is a strategically deployed narrative made up of, in Lyotard's (1993) evocative phrase, 'clouds of stories'.

Objectivity assumes that the historian should be distanced from the facts as presented. This implies a total elimination of personal involvement, bias, prejudice and sentiments on the subject investigated. Objectivity in science pursues neutrality, assuming the presence of a value-free reality. Boldt (2014) 'opposed the notion of "enlightenment history" or "educational history," and the use of history by older historians' (Chen 2020) in elucidating a story and emphasises the use of objectivity. In this way, 'objectivity requires historians to eliminate personal bias and take a neutral attitude to describe history' (Chen 2020).

Anbalakan (2016) confidently declared the truth that history was objective and achievable. In his view, the role of history is to present the past as it happened and allow the facts to speak for themselves. To achieve this, a historian must remove all personal judgements and biases from facts. His concept, '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*', speaks to arriving at the historical truth as it happened, as it was presented in records such as memoirs, diaries and other personal narratives reduced to writing. His persistence was evidential proof. This is something that has fixed the past into objective reality, something to be observed without contamination. Anbalakan (2016) promoted historical methods that accentuated the writing of objective history.

Many historians were trained in critical methodology that privileged objectivity. In other words, they are trained to eliminate subjectivity in historical writing and research. Wirtz (2016, p. 344) argued that the task of history was not to judge the past, but 'merely to show what really happened'. Von Ranke's concept of '*wie es eigentlich gewesen*' [what is past] defines history as a domain of ontological claims of 'how it really was'. This view emphasised the importance of primary evidence as it was left, the source should show what happened. However, it should *essentially ('Eigentlich')* [own emphasis] show how the truth unfolded by embracing the subjective view.

The notion of objectivity is traceable to the concept of an object as observable reality, something tangible and free from bias. In this sense, historical objectivity implies standing for the truth and the real.

Objects are real and observable and remain what they are irrespective of who sees them.

This entails that the truth, as part of the objective reality, is shown and presented as it is and that whoever observes it would arrive at the same answer, notwithstanding who studied it. This view, as expressed in various ways in this chapter, entails that what historians present as historical truth is unchanging, fixed and trapped in the records as it happened.

Challenging objective history

Relativists argued that there was no absolute truth in history. Instead:

> [*W*]hat was presented by historians was their version of the actual event, and that could at best, be true only relative to the prevailing needs of the time of the historians. (Anbalakan 2016, p. 23)

Anbalakan (2016, p. 23) cites Becker who argues that historians cannot reproduce the past, choose what they prefer based on their experience and knowledge and the need of their time, and present that as history. Contrary to the objectivists' expectation that different researchers investigating the same phenomenon should arrive at the same conclusion, relativists propounded that given relatively different conditions producing history, divergent versions will emerge from different historians investigating the same phenomenon. Hence:

> Vansina (1965) asserted that by absolute objectivity, we mean a body of knowledge in which there is [*a*] separation between the investigator and the object of investigation [*enabling*] all investigators of the same object to arrive at the same conclusion. (Oyewale 2014, p. 23)

Many academics argue that objectivity in historical research is like holding a mirage. Scepticism grew amongst historians and philosophers about the accuracy of historical accounts by historians. They argued that historical evidence is not obtained empirically but selected in terms of the historian's preferences and values applicable to specific historical epochs. The choice of the topic for research is based on the researcher's preferences. The researcher goes on to select interviewees and decide when the research process is complete. In addition, researchers have a particular manner in which they relate to the subject under investigation. In this way, the interviewees, the narrative and sometimes the context of the narratives play a critical role in how the researchers relate to the subject under investigation. Anbalakan (2016, p. 24) further argues that historical truth is relative to the values of each generation. He believed that history is the presentation and interpretation of the past. What this means is that each generation of historians will have its interpretation of the past, dramatically different from that of other generations. Because historians use relics and traces of the past to reconstruct the past, no objective reality exists.

Oyewale (2014) aptly posits that:

> [The] idea of complete and absolute dissociation from the object in the investigation is inapplicable in historical research. In an actual sense, there is always an element of human factor involved in historical inquiries. (p. 20)

Positivism and objective truth

According to Bevir (1994), objective interpretation of history should meet rational criteria of accuracy, comprehensiveness, consistency, progressiveness, fruitfulness and openness. The question we pose is: Is objectivity achievable in oral history? That is:

> [*A*] historian ought to be exact, sincere, and impartial; free from passion; unbiased by interest, fear, resentment, or affection; and faithful to the truth, which is the mother of history, the preserver of [*significant*] actions, the enemy of oblivion, the witness of the past, [*and*] the director of the future. In short, he must have an open mind, though it may not be an empty mind, and readiness to examine all evidence even though it [*is*] spurious. (p. 272)

One of the major challenges to the understanding of objective history is the relationship between the historian and the facts. A historian is a social agent connected to time and space. These two variables are likely to influence the historian's interpretation of facts (Bevir 1994, p. 334). Von Ranke's notion of history as a representation of facts falls short of placing the historian in a historical context shaped by political views, religion, literature and any other sources at his disposal. History is not only a past remembered, but a product of multiple interpretations.

In oral history, objectivity is one of the complex concepts that needs analysis. It is prudent that we define oral history first to place the concept into proper perspective. Summerfield (2016) defines it as the gathering and construing of eyewitness narratives of things that have transpired in the past. A careful look at this shows that oral history 'relies on the memories, perceptions, and interpretations of individuals'; thus, it is a tough stance to maintain objectivity and/or to have it at all (Neyzi 2010, p. 447). Building on the latter, below are some guiding insights that buttress the view that objectivity is not easy to attain in oral history.

Subjectivity of memory

Being human entails imperfection, and thus, the memory of a human being is subject to be frail, biased and full of distortions. It is human nature that different people will recall the same occurrences of events differently. To add, the way they recall events is highly influenced by their encounters, views and personal emotions. It is because of this that subjectivity tampers with the exactness and trustworthiness of the given account.

Interpretation and context

The interviewee's experience and interpretation of events are probed by the interviewer in oral history. This entails that the interviewer probes into the given account for clarity, which is done by bringing their own understanding and interpretation into play, thus allowing biases into the process. The questions that are likely to be posed and the general interpretation thereof are hinged more on the historical place of the event.

Missing perspectives

What should be emphasised about oral history is that available and willing interviewees are the ones who are recruited to give their narratives. This shows that there is a likelihood of bias in gathering information as some perspectives are not included and/or are underrepresented by interviewees. The interviewer is not left out in this matrix of influencing biases and distortions in the manner they sample their participants and ask questions.

Reliability and validity

Hoffman (1974, p. 109) defines the two concepts of reliability and validity in this manner:

> [*R*]eliability can be defined as the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same event on several different occasions. Validity on the other hand, refers to the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as reported by other primary source material, such as documents, diaries, letters, or other oral reports. (p. 109)

Given Hoffman's (1974) submission, it is indispensable that researchers of oral history ensure that reliability and validity are maintained in oral history. The foregoing analysis cites that it is a mammoth task to maintain objectivity in oral history, and thus, we will discuss few ideas on how to eliminate bias and prejudice.

Eliminating bias and prejudice from oral history

To totally do away with bias and prejudice in the collection and presentation of oral history is a very difficult task but a key endeavour. As was shown, 'oral history is a valuable method for preserving and understanding different perspectives, experiences, and cultural narratives' (Neyzi 2010, p. 449). In this process, distortions, prejudices and biases unconsciously find their way in multiple ways as shown above. The authors suggest the following strategies to eliminate bias, distortions and prejudice in preserving and understanding oral history.

☐ Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of different methods, tools and sources to enable the researcher to access information that would not have been otherwise accessed had only one method or source been used. Where there are other possible sources of data, oral history should be used to provide another window of seeing, a lens to look and observe reality. The use of triangulation should be accompanied by critical analysis and verification of facts (Cho & Trent 2006). Whilst relying on one source can lead to biases and prejudices, the combination of many sources cures this by joining the puzzle and clearing discrepancies. In this way, cross-referencing with other sources (including primary and secondary sources) sets the record straight by indicating areas of contention. Such an activity aids in validating and corroborating data to ensure reliability.

☐ Interviewer training

A critical way to guard jealously against biases, misrepresentation and prejudice is to ensure that interviewers receive proper training before going into the field (Yuille, Marxsen & Cooper 1999). Another aspect of the interviewer's bias is by allowing the interviewee to speak freely without leading questions. Key themes we recommend in such training cover the issue of respect, empathy and neutrality in conducting interview processes. Such training, from the authors' experience, instils the requisite skills to place open-ended questions, cultivate a hostile-free environment for interviews and develop listening skills that enable interviewees to give the right information.

☐ Diverse representation

The current authors argue that 'diversity is the spice of life'. In this manner, there is a need to ensure that the representation of the interviewees and interviewers is diverse to ensure that a broad range of views and encounters is well documented to eliminate bias and prejudice (Watts & Ebbutt 1987). Having diversity amongst the interviewers smooths the establishment of rapport with interviewees from different walks of life. In this way, carrying out numerous interviews with diverse interviewees who carry different perspectives on a similar subject eliminates bias and prejudice. Moreover, cross-referencing the different narratives adds flesh to a historical encounter.

In addition, acquiring informed consent and transparency are key aspects of the process. Before starting interviews with participants, the researchers must ensure that the participants are made fully aware of their oral history project. This must cover what these stories will be used for and the likely

risks that may emerge. All this cements trust amongst participants who will in turn furnish the researchers with the needed information willingly.

Documenting context

To eliminate bias and prejudice in oral history, the current authors opine that documenting context is crucial. In this way, the historical background surrounding the people and place is given to unveil the sociocultural factors that influence bias (Bickerstaff 2004). This historical background ought to cover the people's personal encounters and the social and political environment in the place that influences them and their thinking. Such information places the researchers and readers at a better platform to follow the nuances and likely misrepresentations of the interviewees.

Ongoing review and reflection

Every oral history researcher who wishes to give information that is devoid of bias strives to have reviews and reflections on their work (Marsh & Roche 1997). Such an exercise is profitable in picking and remedying grey areas. Roundtable discussions with other oral history researchers or experts who do not agree with your views shape appreciated insights and make the project stupendous and less biased. Reviews and reflections make researchers of oral history see their biases and rework their subjectivities to enhance methodologies that are transparent.

Even though it is very difficult to eliminate bias and prejudice in oral history, the aforementioned strategies help diminish it. The aim of employing all the strategies is to fight tooth and nail to ensure that an inclusive and accurate narrative is given.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the polemic debate in history writing that demands that writers should be objective in their pursuit of truthfulness. Whilst demand is placed on objective interpretation, acknowledgement ought to be given to subjectivity. Giving notice and consideration to subjectivity helps unearth numerous scopes of history and introduces ignored voices that generate an appreciation of diverse encounters of experiences. More critical is that attaining total objectivity is difficult. Nevertheless, oral history researchers can attempt to establish accuracy, fairness and balance in their narratives by adhering to certain strategies: Employing diverse methodologies for triangulation, adopting critical thinking, ongoing reviews and reflections, and documenting context. Implementing these strategies creates a high probability that valuable insights can be given in understanding the past.

Chapter 7

Ethical considerations in the oral history interviewing and publications processes

Radikobo Ntsimane
School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics,
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Pietermaritzburg,
South Africa

Abstract

This chapter attempts to prepare new and seasoned oral history practitioners for possible pitfalls that may derail a good oral history project or lead to expensive lawsuits. The chapter acknowledges the value of previous publications that helped in the past, but since then new situations arose which are necessary to point out to oral historians. As much as cellular phones with multiple social media platforms have the potential to assist in audio and visual recordings, it is crucial for users to be cautious about how they are used in oral history encounters lest they damage relationships. After showing the roles of the interviewer and interviewee in the oral history processes, the chapter will conclude with the three steps in the sequence of oral history evidence production. No persons will be contacted in the process of writing this chapter.

How to cite: Ntsimane, R 2025, 'Ethical considerations in the oral history interviewing and publications processes', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 99–114. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.07

Introduction

When thinking about ethics, the starting point is always, *primum non nocere*, which is Latin for 'first cause no harm'. Ethicists advise that practitioners working with people should determine how harmful their intervention is going to be before embarking on it or to discontinue it if they had already started and it becomes clear that the intervention was or will be harmful to the person(s). In our case, it is incumbent upon the interviewers to determine if their interaction with the interviewee will be so beneficial to them that the risk of possible harm is so miniscule that it can be ignored. 'In other words', writes Denis, 'the decision to go ahead with an oral history project should only be made if the project is thought to present a favorable risk-benefit ratio' (Denis 2008a, p. 71).

The method of oral history research in South Africa gives a voice to the previously muted stories; however, the oral history interview process is prone to causing harm to those who were silenced but now choose to speak (Dominy 2023, p. 94). It is incumbent upon oral historians and their project managers to always seek ethical ways for collecting oral testimonies and in using them cautiously in storytelling or academic reporting. Even those embarking on oral history projects for schools or organisations must engage with interviewees or informants in a harmless manner. It is a tall order, but it is critically important that practitioners adhere to ethical conduct out of respect for their clients or informants and for their discipline. Unless one is aware of where to draw the line, the chances of crossing it through unethical practices are many, hence the need for this chapter.

This chapter will focus on those involved in an oral history interview before discussing how their roles can be attended to with minimum harm to any of them. As there is no story without interviewees, we shall firstly determine the different types of interviewees; secondly, who the interviewers are and their obligations; and finally, look at the ethical considerations of their encounters in oral processes.

The interviewees

Stories of interest are not limited to a certain type of people; all people can have a story to tell. This author brought to the attention of oral historians that persons with disabilities have experiences and opinions and can provide valuable oral evidence just like people who are supposed to be without disabilities. The caution is for researchers to be initiated into the world of people with disabilities, especially their vocabulary:

> Oral history practitioners who have to interact with people with disability have a responsibility to learn how to speak respectfully with them. For mutual understanding, oral historians have to find and learn ways and means

> of communication. If they assume that the interviewees have to conform to their jargon, there will be a communication breakdown. (Ntsimane 2012, pp. 253–265)

An interview is not about the correct sequence, accurate dates and names that the interviewee can place in the narration. Oral historians are interested in the story as told or reconstructed by the narrator. All historians use evidence to reconstruct the story, and oral historians depend on oral evidence of the interviewee. For one to qualify as a narrator, one needs to have experienced the event as an eyewitness or as someone who had heard about it and tell it as hearsay. Beyond what is told, oral history is interested in the observation of emotions and other non-verbal communication of the interviewee during the interview encounter.

Oral historians have argued that one story could be told in many ways depending on what the narrator wants the listeners to know. We understand though that a formal interview setting is when questions are asked to seek information on a chosen theme and narrators respond to those questions based on their knowledge or experience. The onus to ensure the encounter in a formal interview is conducted ethically rests with the interviewer and not the interviewee, and therefore, we cannot put any blame on the narrator who has an agenda in the encounter. Firstly, the interview is about the value the interviewees feel their contribution must have, as Carton and Vis wrote (2008, p. 59), '[a]bove all, project participants should feel their contributions hold value and will not become the sole property of an interviewer whom they may never see again'. This is unlike a builder who uses poor quality material for a house that they know they will not live in. Secondly, if interviewees were considered insignificant in the past and not given an opportunity to share what they saw or heard, they will tell their story in a manner that at least corrects the master narrative or at most disrupts it.

Telling the story

To protect themselves, interviewees choose to mute out some parts of their stories. They fear the repercussions on their safety should other people hear or read about what they narrated. But they also want to protect the people who may be hurt in case the information is divulged to undesirable people. Whilst they choose silence in some parts of their narratives, they also use the opportunity to subtly mute the voices that were respected as representing the main story.

It is not the duty of the interviewer to contradict and disturb the flow of the narrative trajectory chosen by the narrator. It is possible that narrators have what is called the press release where they only tell of what has been told again and again before or that they protect the mega narrative

advanced by their superiors. Interviewers, especially the beginners, must recognise that the method they choose is not the same as someone extending an arm to retrieve a book from a shelf. The interview encounter grants an opportunity to the interviewees to shape the story they tell of their experiences: 'The use of the oral history method aims to uncover the meanings that social actors give to their experiences' (Patel 2002, p. 1971). Some things that do not put the narrator in a good light will be left out of the narration.

To gain entry into a close-knit community, one needs to be introduced by a person already known in that community. In any community, there are powerful people who control freedom of speech and can gag some community members from speaking to strangers. It is also possible that the superiors or the powerful have decided what can and what cannot be told to outsiders. They are the gatekeepers. In 2003 and 2007, the Sinomlando Centre gained entry in KwaNxamalala in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, to conduct interviews for the political violence project that took place between 1987 and 1993 through the facilitation of the Sinani Programme of Survivors of Violence (Denis, Ntsimane & Canell 2010, p. 11). In such cases the interviewers should know they have hit a brick wall and count their losses. However, they can note that there is a presence of fear in that community or in the narrators' circle and use that in the analyses to emphasise the volatility of the research topic.

There are subtle power relationships around interviewees because they do not exist in a vacuum. During an interview with a retired nursing sister (identity withheld) in her house, a younger man came in, I was introduced and my purpose was over-explained. I understood, from the way I was introduced, that this son may have the power of deciding who can come into the house and who can speak to his mother. One must respect such a relationship and how it can influence the direction of the interview.

The interviewers

In the formal interview, the interviewer is obliged to protect the interviewee and make sure that no harm is caused through an unacceptable way of conducting the interview or using the information shared during the encounter incorrectly. The interviewers are driven by curiosity like all historians. Their point of departure is ignorance. They embark on a research project using oral history interviews because they believe that there are people out there who have information they do not have. They are in every sense of the word researchers who are thirsty for information or in some cases missing parts of information they already have. People in their position do not have reasons to exalt themselves above their potential interviewees. Field cautions the researcher thus, '[w]hile researchers are

often more academically qualified and have various other power relations in their favour, never forget that the interviewees are the "experts" on their life stories' (2002, p. 19).

Whilst it is crucial for the information seeker to be as prepared as possible for every individual interviewee regarding the cultural expectations of each community, they themselves must be of a certain kind of people. For instance, it is imperative for a fruitful interview encounter for an interviewer not to be discriminatory about race, gender and religion. There should at no point from beginning to exit be an expectation by the interviewer that the interviewee will hold similar beliefs about race, gender or religion. It must be clear that the purpose is to learn from and not convert interviewees. Bigotry is not helpful in a learning encounter. People, whoever they may be, are free to hold onto whatever positions they choose to hold. The interviewers, as much as they wish to be respected for being different, should be oriented towards accepting people who are different and giving them due respect as people.

Oral historians develop relationships with their interviewees. Denis (2008b) explains the concept of relationship in oral history as follows:

> Oral history, as we understand it, is a complex interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee about events of the past, which requires questioning, as well as listening, on the part of the interviewer. (p. 3)

Field (2002) explains the importance of the relationship of trust as he as a white person was trusted by black interviewees in the Western Cape province:

> The reasons for this are complicated, but it has to do with the dynamic created by the following impulses: on the one hand for many interviewees, the desire to tell their story is painfully intense, and on the other hand, the moments when I have succeeded to listen in an emotionally attuned fashion, despite all the forms of differences at play, the interviewee opens up. (p. 23)

In at least two hours that the interviewer spends with the interviewee, in person or virtually, a relationship of trust is developed. When such a relationship which may have started through a phone call or email exists, the interviewee depends on the interviewer to protect their dignity in the encounter. By agreeing to the interview, the interviewee may harbour without expressing it, the hope that their social standing may be enhanced by the interview encounter. That relationship of trust between the two, however short it may be, is a vehicle that makes the encounter priceless. Field, probably because of coming from a different socio-racial side than his informants, concluded about the value of trust that may also be felt between the interviewers and interviewees, 'And if oral historians can play a small role in helping people to trust themselves as confident decision-makers we are making meaningful contribution to empowerment and development' (Field 2002, p. 28).

When the two roles meet

Oral historians prefer to get the stories from eyewitnesses or those who report what they heard from eyewitnesses. The assumption is that the closer one is to the event, the richer the recollection and reporting about the event. The stories that have captured the interest of oral historians in democratic South Africa, as has been the case with former Soviet Union countries and ex-communist countries, are stories seeking healing, development and reconstruction. The researchers want to know how people survived under oppressive regimes and violent and traumatic situations. Of the four volumes of the 2002 conference proceedings edited by Denis and Worthington – XII International Oral History Association Conference – the first volume is dedicated to healing and development and looks specifically at post-war and post-conflict memories. In the first volume of the *Oral History Journal of South Africa (OHJSA)*, five of the nine articles directly deal with issues of loss, trauma, conflict, pandemics and sorrows, to show how pervasive this theme is represented in articles by Denis, Longwe and Zitha (2013); Tshamano and Mahosi (2013); Muoki (2013); Mücke (2013) and Klaebe (2013). Until one interviews the informants, it is not possible to know how deep they have been hurt and what effort was put in their journey towards healing.

Regarding the development of people using an oral history agenda, Field (2002) acknowledges the value of interviewers:

> However, oral history can work as a strategy for development work, if it is guided and shaped by sustained dialogues between, on one hand, interviewees and communities and, on the other, interviewers and development workers. (p. 15)

Despite their goal of seeking information, the interviewers should assume that it is their responsibility to make sure the interviewee feels better and not worse after their interview encounter.

Who do oral historians answer to?

Like all historians, oral historians answer to their peers and to the informants. They must be ethical and their peers will point it out if they are not. For that reason, in the case of being part of an oral history project of an institution, ethical clearance must be sought before a study using human subjects is embarked upon. Until clearance from the funders or institutional superiors is given, there will be no oral interviews. Where researchers go out to conduct interviews, it is advisable that a letter of introduction stating the purpose of the interviews and permission should be sent in advance and signed for consent by the interviewee.

Conferences and peer-reviewed publications are two other platforms where peers interrogate each other's work to see if it adheres to

ethical practices. The peers are gatekeepers who do not allow low-standard or unethical work to be published. It is important to have a committee or association of oral historians who will develop their method and defend its credibility in a town or province. One major blunder causing court cases or embarrassment may turn the whole community against possible future interviews. It is, therefore, prudent for researchers to heed formal requirements but also to exercise moral responsibility when dealing with each sensitive matter. A researcher can never depend on the 'dos and don'ts' when faced with a situation never experienced before in working with human subjects:

> There is nothing particularly revolutionary or new in the argument that ethics is obliged to take each situation seriously, accepting that abstract claims about what is right or wrong do not always adequately address the complexities of life. The ability to adapt, to show flexibility and to be thoughtful in ethical decisions is surely a commendable feature in any moral agent. (Villa-Vicencio 1994, p. 75)

Oral historians are professionals; they should protect the honour of their discipline at all costs by being transparent in all their dealings in gathering data and in using it. Whilst research centres of institutions of learning insist on ethical clearances before embarking on any research that involves human beings, they do so to avoid litigation and expensive lawsuits that may taint their reputation.

But what about oral history?

This chapter does not pretend to be the very first attempt to give a background to ethics in oral history. Although sourcing historical evidence through word of mouth has been practised for centuries, it has played second fiddle to archival, photographic, archaeological and literary sources. Today, oral sources are acknowledged globally as vital and undergo the same rigorous scrutiny to evaluate their credibility. It is imperative, therefore, for practitioners of oral history to be ethical in their discipline. From the USA, a country inclined to litigations, the author Charlton, writing about Texas, dedicated two sub-sections, 'A Few Legal Considerations' and 'Ethical Considerations' (Charlton 1985). He advises:

> For those who venture into oral history for the first time, particularly for community organisations interested in local oral history, the planning (goal setting) stage of the project should include at least one consultation with a licensed attorney. (p. 53)

The Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) has a page on the ethics of oral history on its website to guide those embarking on oral history projects, particularly in South Africa. Denis has a whole chapter on ethics in the seminal 2008 oral history book *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*. Because of changing conditions

and laws, ethics need to be revisited to keep abreast with new demands. Dominy in the past remains the same but the present changes.

I am going to simplify the ethics in oral history so that the practitioners may comprehend and adhere to their applications in interacting with their informants and that such informants are not embarrassed or even disowned and isolated because of their participation in the oral history project. In South Africa, since 1994, there has been a rise in oral history projects to try and understand what happened under apartheid that survived on banning and silencing progressive people and publications. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) sessions played a significant role in empowering victims of apartheid – these interviews left people tearful and angry. Soon thereafter, HIV and AIDS left families and individuals stigmatised and unsure of how to move forward. Some disclosed their positive status and lost their lives or livelihoods, whilst others chose to die without confiding in anyone about their illness. Edwin Cameron (2005), an AIDS activist, wrote about those who did not even want to be diagnosed:

> I hear of friends and acquaintances who, too fearful to be diagnosed and treated, withdraw wastingly, wastefully, from help and health because we have not invested them with enough belief in their own power to live and to be loved. (p. 214)

This is because people in South Africa, especially amongst black people, are never unconnected; what one does has connections with their relatives. Because of issues of disclosures a young woman committed suicide after her sister disclosed her human immunodeficiency viruses (HIV)-positive status (Ntsimane 2006, pp. 8–9).

In oral history, people agree to be interviewed for various reasons and purposes. The fact that these interviewees were identified as having good stories to tell affirms their importance as oral sources. The interviewer showing respect from the beginning allows the interview encounter to be memorable. The interviewer gets information for the project and the interviewee gets affirmation of their importance and tells the story that was probably never told in a non-judgemental space.

Ethical considerations

The reason ethics is necessary in the practice of oral history is because of the possibility that interviewees may be hurt during the interview encounter. The interviewers have a subtle hegemony that may unintentionally weigh against the interviewees, especially those who had traumatic experiences. It is seldom the case that oral history projects focus on the rich and powerful. The middle class and the elite have access to media, and they have the power to speak up or challenge possible threats. Oral history has sometimes been referred to as history from below because it gives voice to the voiceless. The voiceless in the South African context are the marginalised

like the rural poor, those in informal settlements, those from minority groups like refugees and people from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (LGBTI+) communities. The Sinomlando Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, did several research projects with people who have been traumatised in different ways. The Sinomlando Centre interviewed people who survived the violence of the Seven Days War in KwaNxamlala near Sweetwaters in Pietermaritzburg in 2010, published as *Indians versus Russians: An oral history of political violence in Nxamalala (1987–1993)*. In 2011, the Sinomlando Centre together with the KwaZulu-Natal Christian Council worked with people who experienced hurt in multiple different ways (*A journey towards healing: Stories of people with multiple woundedness*). This book can help readers to understand how people with multiple emotional and physical traumas tell their stories (Denis, Houser & Ntsimane 2011).

The interviewers are either from universities or higher education institutions sent by lecturers who carry some authority. The visits of such people irrespective of their age in relation to their interviewees may be intimidating. Their immaculate appearance, their sophisticated recording tools and sometimes just the way they speak can be an unintentional manifestation of their power. As the government and its institutions like universities are seen to hold authority and superior knowledge, interviewees may reluctantly agree to be interviewed. Such unpronounced power between the poor or less-educated people is explained as hegemony by Gerald West, 'Hegemony is made when control is so sustained that it becomes deeply inscribed in the signs and practices of everyday life, becoming to all intents and purposes, invisible' (West 1998). Interviewers need to guard against quick agreements with people who are vulnerable because of their education or special standing. It is imperative, therefore, that interviewers and oral history project leaders must be ethical in interacting with interviewees.

Instead of providing a list of the don'ts which will require interviewers and their project leaders to keep as reference whenever they begin a new project or go out to conduct an interview, this chapter will attempt to immerse practitioners into the ethical sphere so that they can be ethical in various situations they face. The following three steps will help oral historians to decide how to act and how not to act so that the interview encounter can bear the desired results: Entry, finding footing and exit.

Entry

When a group or an individual is identified for an interview for a research project, the interviewer must learn as much as possible about the culture of the targeted person or persons so as not to embarrass or insult them.

Etiquette-related issues like dress code, handshakes, or hugs need to be confirmed with someone who knows the culture of that community. Gender, age and racial sensitivities need to be observed lest unintended actions be blown out of proportion and cause failure or cancellation of the interview appointment.

Before the interview appointment is confirmed, the interviewer needs to inform the possible interviewees of the intention of the interview project: What groups are interviewed, whether the purpose is educational or commercial, the duration of the project, if the envisaged product is a book or a documentary and what will eventually happen to the recorded and transcribed interviews (Dominy 2023, pp. 93–94). The interviewer must be transparent to the possible interviewees that they are free to refuse interviews or even choose to opt out at any time during the process should they feel uncomfortable. This author interviewed someone whose siblings were absent, although they had promised to participate. Later, when the siblings were told how the interview went, they asked the interviewee to withdraw the interview and write down the story as agreed upon and submit it instead. This is known in oral history as a press release. It was never disclosed to several biographers of prominent academics how the arrest of his daughter devastated him and his family. The family had muted out that part of its history (Dominy 2023, p. 101).

When interviewees consent to be interviewed, a consent form needs to be signed to have evidence of agreement to share the story and use it for the purpose as explained. The consent form will have the conditions under which the interview will happen – for instance, the date, the venue, the interviewee and interviewer's names, and any other person present during the interview and the tools to be used.

A major issue to consider in the protection of the interviewees and their community is the use of pseudonyms in such a way that it is difficult for readers to determine the interviewee, or the people referred to. The oral history project leader and the interviewer need to ensure that it must be impossible to trace the source of the information by providing a fictitious place name and fictitious names of interviewees and people in the narrative.

In ensuring that his informants are not exposed to danger or ridicule because of what they disclosed, Phil Bonner chose to refer to them as Mr S or Mr T. In some instances, he even named one informant from Kliptown near Soweto, Billy Ocean, the name of a famous musician from the USA (Bonner 2013, p. 26). Denis et al. (2010, pp. 39–87) chose to refer to their interviewees as a man from such a place or a woman from such a place.

Whilst protecting vulnerable interviewees with a fictitious name, it is important also to ensure that they understand and consent to the unintended dissemination of their interviews. From the beginning when negotiations for

the interview are underway, the interviewer should consider explaining the technology, especially the cellular phone and its use in social media. Writing about misinformation and rapid dissemination of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic news, oral historians can learn when Lauren Marx elaborates on the power of social media of YouTube and WhatsApp used by over one billion people the world over, relating to roughly one in three people. The dissemination is made possible by the popularity of cellular phones, making information, fact or fiction easily accessible:

> With those rapidly changing and highly accessible platforms available, it has changed the way in which humans interact, create, disseminate, and consume information. It is also making it increasingly difficult for users to accurately identify misinformation and fake news and stay accurately informed. At the best of time, there is an information overload, and it is overwhelming to disseminate fact from fiction when information is shared so rapidly across multiple platforms, but when a global pandemic like COVID-19 becomes a reality, the spread of inaccurate information is far faster as it is fuelled by panic and confusion, intermingled with one's own personal bias and belief systems. (Marx 2022, p. 37)

Whilst it has become a common tool of communication, there are still many people, especially older and rural, who are yet to know what a cellular phone is and what it does exactly. When using one, the interviewer can be so kind and explain its use beyond recording voice and taking photographs and disseminating them out of control. But also, that such technology can be hacked and someone unkind may modify the voice and photoshop the images to use for unintended purposes and cause hurt or to benefit unfairly.

The trust developed between the interviewer and the interviewee and the undertaking by the interviewer, that all efforts will be made to protect the interviewee, may encourage the interviewee to continue with the interview process. Fortunately, there are laws in South Africa that protect citizens against the malicious use of cellular phones to damage the reputation of people.

Any benefits to the interview should be spelled out clearly in oral and written form lest the relatives of the interviewee later make claims. If the interviews are conducted for an academic purpose, that must be made known. The KwaZulu-Natal province's Department of Sports, Arts and Culture Archival Services has a standard stipend for anyone interviewed to show appreciation for their time given to the project. Although such stipend is not disclosed upfront, it is disclosed to candidates agreeing to be interviewed even when they have no valuable substance to share. It is not easy to hide the possibility of monetary benefit, real or assumed, when interviewers and project leaders arrive in personal, luxurious or government-branded vehicles.

Poor potential interviewees may agree to participate even when it was made clear that the project was not meant to make profit. Some potential

interviewees in the Nxamalala's survivors of violence project of the Sinomlando Centre insisted on getting their names and identity numbers written down with the hope that they will be counted in should government reparations be paid out to those who suffered losses during the political violence in their area (Denis et al. 2010, p. 90).

In a project that involved a commercial sex worker, a homeless child and a jobseeker, this author used pseudonyms and paid for the time rather than the content of their stories which legally and ethically one cannot buy as it belongs to their owner. The interviewees and the interviewer may not benefit equally as Ntsimane (2015, p. 34) wrote, considering that the publication derived from the interviews may lead to promotion at work and subsequently more income, 'The benefits to the parties may therefore be disproportionate. One may even suggest that the interviewees were short-changed. They sought both financial gratification and affirmation from interacting with me'. The three interviewees were always looking for a chance to make money when they were on the streets.

Finding footing

Punctuality is key in case the interviewee has other chores or appointments to attend to after the 2 hours reserved for the interview. The setting up of equipment should be done in agreement with the owner of the house as a rearranged space may disturb the interviewee because it has been turned into a new, unfamiliar space. If possible, a different venue like an office may be agreed upon should the interviewee prefer it so that possible gatekeepers cannot disturb. On two different occasions, Sinomlando Centre chose two types of venues to record stories of victims of violence, 'Sinomlando staff recorded, transcribed, translated and compiled into a book the stories told or written during two recordings', one in Mariannhill in October 2009 and another in Vryheid in May 2010 (Denis, Houser & Ntsimane 2011, p. 1).

This step is the most crucial as the interviewees are vulnerable. They may have to explain to the relatives the presence of strangers and recording equipment, so that other family members around are not suspicious of the interview encounter as being an intrusion, and undermining of the dignity of the home, acceptable manner of dress like headcovers for women and no shorts for men, should be observed. Remaining in the designated spaces will be seen as respectable rather than using loud voices and loitering on the premises or in the house.

It is a good technique to use open-ended questions with less interruptions in the flow of the interview. Asking for clarity rather than pointing out historical inconsistencies and anachronisms may be seen as the manifestation of superior intelligence that may intimidate the narrator.

Jotting such inconsistencies in a notepad for later confirmation is respectable. Out of respect for someone who offered their time to narrate their stories, interviewers must make it a point that they listen and pay attention to the narrator. It is a sign of rudeness to be doing something else when the interviewee is sharing what they deem important. It is attentive listening that will help the researcher to find information, unlike in the case of a researcher who ended with a huge amount of oral data recording of himself and very little from the interviewee (Dominy 2023, p. 102).

As the interviewer and the interviewee are a team in a good space producing a narrative, it is possible that the interviewee may be overcome by emotions and cry. It is respectable to offer water, a tissue paper or even a short break should the interviewee require it. For a detailed discussion on such a situation, one may read Sean Field's proposal that the oral historian takes time to do practises with friends long before the real interviewing takes place (Field 2008). Field offers the following as a guideline in cases of crying:

> If interviewees show signs of crying, but continue talking, it is best for interviewers to keep listening and to stay attuned to their emotions. Interrupting or changing the topic at this moment is very inappropriate. When an interviewee stops talking and there is a natural pause, it is imperative that an interviewer do two things. First, sensitively acknowledge the interviewee's sadness and/or tears. Simple words such as 'I notice you have been crying or had tears in your eyes while telling that story' are most effective. Second, the interviewer should offer the interviewee the option to pause or temporarily withdraw from the interview. (p. 157)

Should an interviewee cry non-stop and uncontrollably, it is possible that a story of extreme trauma that may need external intervention may have found a valve to come out (Field 2008, p. 157). It is correct that oral historians are not counsellors or psychologists or even police officers and should not pretend to be. However, the interviewer could propose that the interviewee speaks to someone in authority or a religious leader to advise on the way forward.

Sometimes researchers ask to photograph the interviewees for project purposes. Interviewers need to request permission to shoot and use such photographs. All people want to look acceptable in public and when they agree, interviewees should choose which photo to be used. In the same manner, the videographer or photographer may consider it wise to set up the camera at the beginning rather than during the interview process, moving around and standing in comical positions that may cause disturbance. Today, one of the most unethical and inconsiderate pastimes is the use of cell phones. They not only disturb when ringing at inappropriate moments but are also used to take photos of unsuspecting people which end up in circulation to unknown recipients. As mentioned earlier, some

interviewees may not be comfortable finding their stories and photographs in places they did not authorise circulation to.

Senior citizens who are often asked to give interviews sometimes feel an obligation to tell more than is asked for. They are both encyclopaedias of knowledge and walking libraries always in the ready to speak long. There are times when they forget or mix up details, but that does not diminish the value of what they tell. Some of them have their children working or living away from them, and so, they use any opportunity they get to speak to younger people. It is incumbent upon the interviewer to keep a balance between listening to unimportant parts of the narrative for too long and attempting to get to the initial theme of the encounter. Without sounding disrespectful one can request by saying: 'May we move a little backwards where you were saying …'.

Exit

It is important to be sensitive to when the interviewee might be exhausted and propose another appointment. Continuing with the interview may have negative health consequences later if the interviewer is in an advanced age.

At the completion of the interview process, a release form may be signed where the story as narrated (by this individual) is released to the interviewer or his/her research group for the use as agreed. The names and other details of the interviewee are confirmed so that the labelling of the interview is accurate. It is a sign of sloppiness on the part of the interviewer not to be able to identify the interview or not to locate it amongst many at a later stage. At this time the interviewee is informed about the date when the transcribed copy, audio copy, book, or whatever is agreed upon will be delivered. As in the case of the Sinomlando projects, all the interviewees received a copy of their transcribed interview, an audio cassette of the interview and a published copy of a book should the project end in a book.

In a project where researchers will be presenting their findings, it may be good to invite the interviewees to sit in. Researchers may find it empowering to share their findings of the interview project to their interviewees so they can feel that they have been of help in someone's development. Sharing the time when the project may likely be completed will help the interviewee not to ask the interviewer about the project unnecessarily. Despite written documentation, some people feel comfortable to hear from the interviewer that the story will not be distorted, that the interviewee will be protected and that no harm will befall them because they shared their story.

Conclusion

This chapter has chosen an unconventional way of writing about ethics. To introduce newcomers to the method of oral history research, the author has mainly discussed the relationship of the interviewer and the interviewee in a space of knowledge creation. The emphasis is on the interviewer and the project leaders as the onus rests on them as information seekers. Whilst the ethical considerations are for oral history practitioners, readers will be aware that in fact, these requirements fit every situation where people come together in a project that requires mutual respect to succeed. Of all things to consider as valuable in conducting research that involves people, respect for individuals will help interviewers not to cause any harm to their interviewees, both whilst interviewing and publishing the material from such interviewing.

Chapter 8

The importance of oral interviews in framing histories of the South African liberation struggle

Chitja Twala
Department of Cultural and Political Studies,
University of Limpopo,
Polokwane, South Africa

> [...] it is not the meaning attributed to the facts that makes them significant or not? After all, history or society does not exist outside human consciousness. History is what the people who lived it make of it and what the others who observe the participants or listen to them or study their records make of it. And present society is what we make of it. (Raleigh 2005, p. 21)

Abstract

The use of oral history in South Africa's liberation historiography is increasingly applied as a methodology in academic research and filling the gaps in the study of oral history. The transmission of information from one generation to the next by word of mouth, however, poses challenges for the sustainable preservation of liberation history. However, when using oral interviews to write South African liberation history, several factors must be considered. This chapter acknowledges the significance of oral narratives

How to cite: Twala, C 2025, 'The importance of oral interviews in framing histories of the South African liberation struggle', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 115–133. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.08

in showcasing peoples' humanising potential regarding the reconstruction of history and the shifts in academic and practical interests amongst others. These aspects are explored in an attempt to answer the following questions: How can oral testimonies emanating from liberation histories be used in filling the gaps created by secondary sources in attempts to document liberation history using oral narratives? Methodologically, how can the challenges of facing liberation historians be addressed by using oral testimonies?

To answer these questions, the author uses sources of historical significance to address the topic. This chapter presents that the influence of oral histories determines what is studied about the past and, consequently, its historical significance, and discusses the positives in using oral interviews to write South African liberation history. Upon analysis of the data gathered the author determines the importance of considering the following, as oral historians should: Firstly, be gender sensitive in conducting and using oral interviews in their writing. Secondly, they should be conscious of the stereotypical attitudes in writing whereby their emotions and those of the interviewees taint the content to be presented. Thirdly, oral historians should guard against the potential manipulation of information gathered because in some cases interviewees tend to exaggerate about their involvement in certain historical events, especially when they were participants or eyewitnesses. Lastly, oral historians should conscientiously interpret and interrogate all data presented to them during the interviews.

Introduction

Many academics and researchers of history and historians agree that the discipline itself is the lifeline of every human being and human society. Some see it as an integral element which is intertwined with the processes of development and civilisation. These processes have the potential to influence human cultures, politics, beliefs, and, to a certain extent, perception. In its entirety, whether oral or written, history promotes data collection that helps put past trends in perspective. In applying this role of history to the South African context, particularly when dealing with oral history and the country's struggle for liberation, it has been proven that oral history can play a significant role in shedding more light on perceived trends. Those who have been studying and writing about the country's liberation history for some time have come to rely on oral history as a source, given its value and the emphasis placed on the spoken word from time immemorial.

However, despite the aforementioned, this chapter shows that oral history and the transmission of information from one generation to the next by word of mouth has its downsides; it could hamper the sustainable

preservation of liberation history or, for that matter, any other history. The examples provided in this chapter amply show that oral historiography has always been beset by the incremental loss of its credibility and the regrettable loss of large sets of oral historical data and stories because of a lack of documentation. Thus, the more historians, particularly from the West, transmitted stories orally, the less reliable they tended to become. However, oral testimonies delivered through oral history as a subfield of the academic field of history greatly benefitted the liberation history in South Africa. Through this approach in the writing of a liberation history in South Africa, there is now less danger of not preserving this kind of history. Whilst the chapter acknowledges the significance of oral narratives in bringing forth the peoples' humanising potential regarding the reconstruction of history, the shifts in academic and practical interests amongst others call for answers to the following question: How can oral testimonies emanating from liberation histories be used in filling the gaps created by secondary sources in attempts to document liberation history using oral narratives? Methodologically, how can the challenges of facing liberation historians be addressed by using oral testimonies?

Embarking on the historical methodologies of oral history allows 'historians to collect oral historical data and [*to*] transform them into written form' (H-Women n.d.). Whereas 'the rest of the world has largely transitioned to written history and documentation, African historians are yet to achieve [*complete*] documentation of histories that were formerly oral' (H-Women n.d.). This chapter also cautions that written history, albeit through collected oral data, cannot replace oral sources which should continuously be preserved. 'Thus, it should be noted that oral history and studies in oral history form an integral and indispensable part of history as an academic discipline' (H-Women n.d.). It should however be noted that in this chapter, no oral interviews were conducted, and thus, no human participation was involved. The author uses other sources of historical significance to tackle the topic under investigation.

A brief historicisation of oral history

Oral history is as old as history itself. It:

> [*C*]an be seen as the earliest form of historical inquiry: it predates even the written word. However, as a specific [*endeavour*] of the [*recognised*] historical profession, oral history finds its place [*as*] a more recent approach to historical methodology, specifically [*to*] the new social history. Although oral traditions existed long before organised writing methods, oral inquiries did not begin until the twentieth century. (Mariner 2005, p. 59)

One of the leading academics having explicitly articulated this was Vansina (1961). To date, his book *Oral Tradition as History* was hailed internationally as a pioneering work in the field of ethno-history. When one considers the

description of the oral history process, it is important to view the entire process contributing to the reconstruction of history, augmenting secondary sources. Generally, oral history focuses on a method of conducting historical research through recorded interviews between a narrator with personal experience of historically significant event(s) and a well-informed interviewer. The aim is to add this kind of information to the historical record, leading to what became known as 'written history' for academic purposes.

In summarising the aforementioned, Baum (1977, pp. 7–8) observed: 'Oral history makes use of the relatively painless medium of relaxed conversations based on well-planned question to get information regarding why, how and through what things came to pass'. The fact that it is by nature a primary source indicates that an oral history project is not intended to present a final, verified, or rather absolute 'objective' narrative of an event or events or a comprehensive narrative of these. In his academic works, Thomson (1999, pp. 291–301) aptly deals with what he refers to as the subjective nature of oral history. He contends that as it remains a spoken account, a narrative reflects an opinion offered by the narrator and as such it is 'subjective'. Therefore, it is important to combine oral histories with other primary sources as well as secondary sources to gain understanding and insight into history.

In the past, progressive historians always viewed the use of oral sources as a means of supporting written sources. However, as Mariner (2005) maintained, 'their use of those documents was heavily anecdotal: it lacked standardisation to guide the use of such sources as a legitimate historical endeavour'. Furthermore, Mariner noted:

> Oral history as a historical methodology can generally be traced back to the first oral history centre in the United States coming out of Columbia University in 1948. It was in this post-war context that oral history began and evolved into the serious and widely accepted process that it is today. Since its inception as a craft, oral history changed its focus several times in order to reapply itself to new criticisms and concerns over its usefulness and effectiveness, changing from a 'fact-finding' to a 'history-shaping' process. (p. 59)

Dunaway and Baum (1984) offer another dimension to the origins of the development of oral history. They suggest that, technically, there are four generations of oral historians. According to Dunaway and Baum (1984, p. 8):

> [*T*]he first generation, pioneered by [*historians*] such as Nevins and Starr, [*views the role*] of oral history as 'a means to collect otherwise unwritten recollections of prominent individuals for future historians, for research, and as a tool for orally based biography'. The second generation emerged after the establishment of basic archives [*in*] the mid-1960s. These historians [*did*] not only [*want*] to account for important historical figures, but [*they wanted*] to [*use*] oral history techniques to describe and empower the non-literate and the historically disenfranchised. (Cited in Mariner 2005, p. 59)

The study of the South African liberation struggle in a broader sense

In November 2015, Greg Houston of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) presented a paper at the African Studies Association (ASA) meeting in San Diego titled *The state of research on and study of the history of the South African liberation struggle*. In this paper, Houston's (2015) hypothesis is as follows:

> While there has been a significant explosion in research on the history of the liberation struggle by South African scholars since 1990, a large proportion of research outputs on the history of the liberation struggle is being produced by non-South Africans. (p. 1)

He further explains:

> Although there are various reasons for the relatively poor research capacity and achievements in this area, including underfunding of research, South African academics are in some ways responsible for this situation. (Houston 2015, p. 1)

These academics of South African descent, particularly the African majority, have failed to grab the opportunity after 1994 when the content of South Africa's history was revisited.

The above candid observation by Houston has subsequently led to a co-authored article with me and Nkululeko Majozi titled *The Emphasis given to the History of the South African Liberation Struggle in the Nation's Universities* (Houston, Twala & Majozi 2018, pp. 67–93). Here, the authors provide a sense of understanding the challenges of teaching these kinds of histories at South African universities. The findings were that many of the country's universities and the departments of history and political sciences devoted less time to these histories or they were sometimes not taught at all. The missed opportunity to correct these past imbalances by including the history of the liberation struggle in the school curricula was also observed by Bertram (2009) who noted:

> While the history curriculum during apartheid advocated Afrikaner nationalism and a Eurocentric perspective on the world, the history curriculum developed immediately after the first democratic elections advocated an understanding and appreciation of Constitutional values. (p. 52)

Whilst backtracking a bit from the aforementioned, it is important to highlight one of the reasons that motivated me to write this chapter on the prospects and challenges of writing about the history of the liberation struggle. I attended a workshop at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, in September 2008 which was organised by the Centre for African Studies. The theme of this workshop was, 'Liberation struggles in southern Africa', where I had the opportunity to present a paper. Firstly, the presenters at this workshop lamented the quiescence on issues pertaining to imprisonment, torture and deaths in exile and in South Africa during the oppressive apartheid era. Information of which, I argue could be obtained through oral

history to fill in the gap. Secondly, as Saunders (2010, p. 1) echoed, most of the writings about the liberation struggle were characterised by romanticisation and triumphalism. Following this workshop, I realised that there are enormous challenges facing historians who work in this field of history and that the use of oral testimonies should be sorted out to bridge the lacuna in these studies.

Another motivation for this chapter was that the paper resonates with my presentation at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)-International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) seminar in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 23 November 2017. In this presentation, titled *Researching and documenting the history of the liberation struggle in South Africa*, I highlighted the challenges that historians are faced with in documenting the history of the liberation struggle in the post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, in this chapter, I contend that the historiography pertaining to South Africa's liberation struggle has for some time been a contested terrain by historians who have been working on liberation studies. Firstly, the contestation stems from the interpretation of what constitutes liberation history. Secondly, the political narratives imposed by those who command the political space at any given time in the country's history dictate what is recorded as history. The latter approach compromises, in one way or another, the nature of 'history as the truth' and 'history as propaganda'. Thirdly, with further contestation of historical facts, the ideological underpinnings of those documenting history following this approach take precedence over the interpretation of 'historical truth'. This leads to the romanticisation of history. Fourthly, the evident lack of sources to justify historical events that highlight the struggle for liberation contributes immensely to the underscoring of this kind of history.

Therefore, following the line of argument in the previous paragraph, the central questions posed in this chapter are: Is there anything like liberation history? How can oral testimonies augment this kind of history? In framing the answers to these questions, the narrative of historical inclusion using oral interviews is proposed to address the aforementioned lacuna in documenting the history of the country's liberation struggle. This chapter attempts to provide compelling evidence that using oral interviews to address this dearth in the historiography of the liberation struggle is a novel way of thinking about and approaching the interlinked histories of the liberation movements. Furthermore, I argue that oral interviews potentially produce significant shifts in our understanding of the liberation movements' histories and their legacies. I tend to agree with Gleijeses (2003) with his generalised thesis that the liberation historians mainly challenge the 'nation' to the histories of 'national' liberation movements because this refers to the geographical location of such movements and questions the patronage of the Western countries.

However, Gleijeses fails to engage in researching how the aforementioned could be achieved. Alexander, McGregor and Tendi (2017, pp. 1–12) and Alexander et al. (2020, p. 822) explain that the aforementioned dynamics in documenting the history of the liberation struggle gave precedence over the fragile hegemony of a victor's history with less engagement in the experiences of 'losers' and their stories. The latter are referred to as those who fought on the 'wrong side' of history without any historical identities.

History as a discipline and the impact of historiography on the South African liberation history are by nature contested terrains. Firstly, these terrains are imposed on by those who command the political space and power at the time. Secondly, as mentioned before, the facts could be contested based on the ideological underpinnings of those who are documenting them. Thirdly, the possibility of self-aggrandisement could pose a challenge to those writing this kind of history. Fourthly, and lastly, the lack of documentary evidence to justify the historical events of liberation history contributes to the contestation of facts. To address the aforementioned lacunae, the chapter explores the relevance of oral history as a long-standing, inclusive and to a certain extent 'development-focused' approach in the writing of history. It portrays the prospects and challenges in elucidating the impact that oral history or histories can play. Furthermore, the chapter seeks to unveil some of the liberation historiography's changing and repeated patterns of institutionalising this kind of history within the political ambits of those who are in power, or the ruling parties' attempts to 'romanticise' history. I argue in this chapter that liberation history is a developing focus area in South African historiography, and thus, it should not be treated as the old mainstream history itself. However, political as well as oral historians tend to conspicuously neglect using oral testimonies as central features in connecting the past, through the present, into understanding the future. The chapter contributes to understanding history 'from below' by using oral testimonies to document liberation struggle history.

Understanding history 'from below' through 'oral voices'

The question of writing history 'from below' has been a practical domain in the country's historiography since the usage of oral interviews. The following quotation attests to that approach in writing history. Denis and Ntsimane (2008) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, write:

> Since oral history was established as an academic discipline in the late 1940s, its methodology has been constantly refined and its theoretical assumptions questioned in South Africa as well as in the rest of the world [...] Textbooks such as Paul Thompson's *The Voice of the Past* or Donald Ritchie's *Doing Oral History* inspired generations of oral history practitioners around the world, but because

> they are written for a Western audience, they do not answer all the questions asked by students, community activists and heritage workers when they collect, engage with and reflect upon oral testimonies in South Africa. (p. 1)

Denis and Ntsimane's (2008) observation shows that oral interviews can play a significant role in filling the gaps in a country's historiography if this is contextualised to the South African situation, provided it has been made clear what is envisaged with such interviews.

South Africa's liberation historiography came to the fore and became a serious focus of study after the unbanning of the liberation movements in 1990. This period expressed multiple levels of mutually reinforcing 'oral voices' and liberation stalwarts' experiences and knowledge as significant drivers of transformation and nation-building. This was done by conducting oral interviews to tap into these experiences to fill the gap that existed in the history of South Africa. History from below seeks to take as its subjects' ordinary people and to concentrate on their experiences and perspectives by contrasting these with the stereotype of traditional political history and its focus on the actions of 'great men'. Therefore, in the context of this chapter, 'history from below' should be understood as a type of historical narrative that attempts to account for historical events viewed from the perspectives of common people rather than leaders. There is an emphasis on the disenfranchised, the oppressed, the poor, the nonconformists and otherwise marginalised groups.

Despite the emergence of incorporating the writing of history with the use of 'history from below', Bahl (2003, p. 135) argues against its potential ramifications. Making an important statement and providing many examples to justify this, he contends that political resistance itself is a progressive act and that those supporting any type of resistance movement and writing about it should not confuse it with a critical political consciousness. In the subsequent sections of the chapter, I try to highlight some of these pitfalls that should be considered when documenting the history of the liberation struggle.

The return of the exiles and the oral history projects

Houston (2015, p. 3) further noted that the return of thousands of the liberation stalwarts and activists from exile and the advent of democracy in South Africa have provided the researchers with a rich source of informants to talk about many historical events that were 'hidden' to avoid any persecution by the apartheid regime at the time. The aforementioned situation led to the initiation of oral history projects by different institutions across the country. Informants targeted were those who came from exile, the 'inziles' who played significant roles in the struggle for liberation – namely, the Bantustans' defenders of apartheid and those against it.

Some of the projects which were then initiated included the following: The Wits History Workshop Project in the early 1990s led by Peter Delius and Philip Bonner became important in highlighting the stories of those coming from exile from an oral history perspective (to date the Wits History Workshop still continues with this kind of research); the Oral History of Exiles Project between 1992 and 1995 led by Wolfie Kodesh[9]; another project was carried out by KwaZulu-Natal's Alan Paton Centre; in Bloemfontein there were two projects – namely, the National Museum's Oral History Project and the Provincial Archives Project led by Derek du Bruyn, Martha Mokoena and Tshitso Challa. The national oral history project under the auspices of the South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET), which took place under the editorship of Ben Magubane, followed later. As explained by Houston who later became the editor of some of the publications by SADET, this project gave rise to more than 900 interviews conducted nationally (Houston 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, he explained that the SADET Project was the brainchild of former president Thabo Mbeki; its mission was to conduct a major study of South Africa's political history between 1960 and 1994 by tapping into oral interviews as a resource to achieve the academic writing of the liberation histories (Houston 2010, pp. 3–26).

Another project, which was almost like the SADET Project, was the Hashim Mbita Project[10] on southern African liberation struggles. Limb (2018, pp. 270–280) wrote an informative review of these volumes which added value to understanding the nuances of the southern African liberation struggles from 1960 to 1994. Other liberation history projects, which enforced the digitisation of information, included but were not limited to:

> [...] the African Studies Centre at Michigan State University; the Aluka Project; the Digital Innovation in South Africa (DISA) [*Project*]; the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) Project; the Southern African Development Cooperation (SADC) Project; the South African Research and Archival Project (SARAP); the Liberation

9. The 'oral history interviews with the South African political exiles were conducted for the Mayibuye Centre between 1992 and 1995 by Wolfie Kodesh, Farid Stemmet, Sazi Veldtman, Rachidi Molapo, and Les Switzer. Some of the interviews [included: interview with Phyllis Altman (19 September 1993), a] veteran trade unionist and former Director of International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF) in London; [Dr Max Bennun's (15 February 1992) interview includes] the description of his exile [life] in Eastern Europe, Zambia, and Kenya; [Sipho Binda (alias Mandla Jwara, 24 March 1993), whose interview includes descriptions] of his experiences as an MK Commander in Angola and Mozambique and his imprisonment in Protea Prison in Johannesburg, Bophuthatswana, and on Robben Island from 1984; and with Eddie Sonwabi Funde (31 March 1993) who worked as African National Congress (ANC) representative in Australia, New Zealand and Zambia' (McCue & McDonald 2018).

10. The Hashim Mbita Project on the Southern African liberation struggles from 1960 to 1994 is also one of the most comprehensive historical records of the liberation struggles in southern Africa. With 5,394 pages in nine volumes published, the project recorded many chapters based on the experiences of those who took part in the struggle for liberation in southern Africa. The project was named after the last Executive Secretary of the Organisation of African Union (the African Union [AU] replaced the Organisation of African Unity [OAU] in 2002) African Liberation Committee, Lieutenant General Hashim Mbita to research liberation movements in the frontline states. The project was launched in 2005 and it aimed to present African perspectives published in Africa, by Africans, and for Africans.

> Struggle Living Archive Project; and the partnership between the University of Connecticut and the African National Congress (Garaba & Ngulube 2010, p. 166).

Many research reports and publications which emanated from these projects came to the fore. For example, Houston et al. (2015) published a 1,173-page report of the HSRC that delved into the transcripts of interviews conducted with those who played a role in the country's liberation struggle. In this project, 58 interviews were conducted and are available for use by researchers. The project's sponsor, the National Heritage Council (NHC), envisaged the development and management of the legacy of the liberation struggle as an important aspect of heritage preservation in the country. To achieve the aforementioned, the NHC initiated the Liberation Heritage Route (LHR) Project. This research, which was undertaken by the researchers at the HSRC under the leadership of Houston:

> [*A*]imed at identifying heritage sites based on the history of the liberation struggle in each of the provinces. Key historical events and the significant activities of communities, organisations, and individuals [*were*] highlighted to draw attention to key moments in the country's liberation history that [*deserved*] memorialisation. (Houston 2013, p. 1; Mancotywa 2011; Mati 2013; Pieres & Webb 2013; Pophiwa & Maaba 2013)

Although the focus of this chapter is on South Africa, it is clear from the aforementioned literature that the influence of the southern African countries was huge on the country's liberation struggle; lessons could also be learned on how to document such kinds of histories. In his chapter titled 'The role of liberation movements in the struggle for southern Africa, 1955–77' Mashangaidze (1981, pp. 24–31) pens about how the African countries assisted one another in a quest for total liberation, not only for the achievement of decolonisation. Moreover:

> In March 1999, the ANC and the University of Connecticut signed a Memorandum of Understanding [*(MoU) to establish*] a partnership [*which fosters*] training, assistance, and cooperation based on the principle of reciprocal learning and consultation. One of the projects [*that resulted*] from the collaboration between the University of Connecticut and the ANC was the ANC Oral History Project; [*it*] conducted and transcribed 133 oral histories of ANC leaders in South Africa between 2000 and 2006. (University of Connecticut [*UCONN*] Library 2000–2006, n.p.)

The project aimed at addressing the historical gaps in literature and further preserving accounts of the lives and struggles of those who fought apartheid in South Africa. This culminated when Bruce Stave, a prominent historian, dedicated advocate for oral history and Director of the Centre for Oral History at the University of Connecticut, travelled with three assistants to Cape Town, South Africa, in October 2000 where he:

> [*C*]onducted an intensive oral history training workshop over four weeks. The first two weeks of the program consisted of a training seminar on oral

> history procedure. During the final two weeks of the program, the participants conducted 40 interviews followed by an evaluation workshop on the oral histories. Narissa Ramdhani, archivist [*of*] the [*ANC*] and an alumna of the University of Connecticut, oversaw the interviews in South Africa. The initial participants of the oral history training program included Loyiso Pulumani, Portia Matalala, Lungelwa Madyibi, Moses Hadebe, and Zanele Riba. The interviews continued [*during*] the next six years. As part of the partnership, 133 interview transcripts arrived at the University of Connecticut in March of 2007. The original transcripts and cassette tapes are held at the University of Fort Hare in South Africa. (UCONN Library 2000–2006, n.p.)

The interviews conducted during South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process assisted in filling in the gaps in the history of this country. Through oral testimonies, the TRC provided opportunities to the victims of the apartheid atrocities, their immediate relatives and the perpetrators of such to tell their stories. Indeed, such voices added another dimension in broadly understanding the country's liberation struggle. The interviews conducted with the liberation activists also highlighted their psychological impact on those involved and their families (Boraine, Levy & Scheffer 1994; Mamber, Nageng & O'Malley 2000, pp. 18–41). For example, in one of the testimonies, Hawa Timol gave a moving testimony of the circumstances surrounding her son Ahmed Timol's death. She responded to the one-sided explanation given to her by the Security Branch members that her son had died because he had jumped from the 10th floor of the John Vorster Square Police Station, Johannesburg, South Africa. Although this was the information that the apartheid regime had provided in the public domain to cleanse itself from atrocities committed, this was, according to Hawa, devoid of the truth; she suspected the police of foul play (video on Hawa Timol's testimony on the TRC).

Although the TRC had to facilitate healing through oral testimonies and ultimately map the way forward for any possible reparations, criticisms levelled against this process were that it had achieved limited success in this regard because few perpetrators from the apartheid regime came forward to tell the truth about the atrocities conducted during that era. On the positive side, the victims exposed these atrocities through their testimonies. This proved to be significant in documenting the country's liberation history. In their extensive work on the gaps filled by the oral testimonies from the TRC, Oelofse and Barnard (2009, p. 111) interrogated some of these testimonies and concluded that their truth-seeking purpose lay in the official confrontation of past human rights abuses to foster individual and national reconciliation. Thus, the process opened possibilities for public acknowledgement of past atrocities. The hope was that it would lead to victims' and their families' healing, forgiveness and, ultimately, reconciliation throughout the post-apartheid society of South Africa. With the victims' and perpetrators' stories told

in the TRC, the country managed, to a certain extent, to transcend the 'culture of silence'.

There were allegations that the State Security Council had ordered gross human violations in South Africa such as assassinations, torture and massacres. Was the State Security Council aware of the atrocities conducted by units such as Vlakplaas? Despite the denial of the apartheid regime that the aforementioned atrocities were known, the TRC's oral testimonies provided different results whereby the apartheid regime leaders were fingered to have had a hand in these atrocities. These findings of the TRC were important to fill the void on many historical questions posed on the role of the State Security Council to counteract all attempts on the advancement of the liberation struggle in South Africa (Binckes 2018; Dlamini 2014; Taylor 2023, pp. 304–320). For example, the Council's document dated 24 January 1987 stated, '*Identifiseer en elimineer die rewolusionêre leiers en veral die met charisma*' (Identify and eliminate the revolutionary leaders, especially those with charisma). Apartheid leaders and politicians denied that to 'eliminate' meant to kill. Another document from the same Council dated 18 February 1987 read, '*Die implikasie van eliminasie van politieke figure in Rhodesië moet voortdurend onder oë gehou word*' (The implication of eliminating political figures in Rhodesia must be constantly monitored).

The value of oral interviews in filling the gaps in history writing

Oral history academics and practitioners advance other arguments that this discipline was 'borne out of a mid-20th century ambition to rewrite "history from below"'. This is a very important part of how oral history could assist the historians in reconstructing the past. This section of the chapter warns historians who are working in this field to guard against the temptation of thinking that oral history can replace written history. Therefore, it should be noted that the history written from documents is at the mercy of those who create or compile the archival records. Most importantly, oral history became the great vanguard of social historians who attempted to rewrite history from the position of those previously downtrodden and ignored by historical academics, not out of spite but owing to a paucity of resources.

Historical research has shown that oral interviews are significant in studying history. Long ago, oral historians have proven that oral interviews can first add value to understanding the subtle nuances of historical consciousness and second that they can address the existing gaps in historiography. To prove the aforementioned assertions, Cutler III wrote about the importance of oral interviews in studying American history in the

early 1970s. Delineating the role of oral historians in achieving the aforementioned, he explained:

> Dozens of scholars had begun to experiment with how tape-recorded interviewing might change the nature of their work, yet by today's standards, its potential contributions were still quite modest. (1971, p. 186)

In support of the aforementioned, Dougherty (1999, p. 712) agrees that oral history is also viewed as fulfilling an important ideological mission – namely, to include the voices of marginalised or underrepresented groups in the historical record. I tend to agree with Dougherty that there is no clear evidence provided by Cutler (1971) to justify whether the use of tape-recorded interviews could change how historians have interpreted the past. Then, if this is the argument advanced by Cutler, his analysis can be regarded as flawed.

Gendered history of the liberation struggle and the omission of women's voices

Apart from being Africans, one section of the population that has been neglected in the liberation struggle historiography is women and female cadres. This section of the chapter first tries to find out why there was such 'invisibility' of women in academic literature until recent decades. It then attempts to discover how the oral testimonies about their role have contributed to this historiography. Finally, this section aims to investigate whether their 'voices' are elevated in such writings or not and the reasons behind this 'invisibility' of women in academic works. Judging from what has been produced in academic literature on women and on their role, there is a clear attempt by historians and by political scientists who are doing research in this field to address this historical gap. For example, Vahed of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, published an article in 2015 that addressed the quiescence of women's voices in the liberation struggle. Despite the mushrooming of biographies and autobiographies of female political activists, less 'voice' is given to them in the country's historiography on the liberation struggles. Vahed (2015) contends that the historiography of the national liberation struggle is dominated by what he terms the 'feats of heroic male activists' with female activism and the impact of the anti-apartheid struggle on women and families largely hidden. In appreciation of women's roles in the struggle, Zungu et al. (1999) explain:

> Writing women into history does not only include narrowing the gaps and giving them a voice, but it also involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of their historical significance. Scholars have over the past centuries focused on men as players and writers of history. This state of affairs has to a large extent neglected and silenced the voice of woman and their role, yet women have played a profound role in shaping the country's history. (p. 7)

The writings about women's involvement in the struggle can be dated as far back as the pre-colonial period. Shamase (2014, pp. 15–22, 2017,

pp. 10390–10401) of the University of Zululand, South Africa, laments the chauvinistic way in which history is being written in South Africa in his publication on Princess Mkabayi kaJama. Women are considered as inferior role players. The same sentiments are also echoed by Ndlovu (2008, pp. 111–121) and by Moagi and Mtombeni (2020, p. 1). These authors' analyses academically challenge the stereotypical thinking that precolonial southern African women leaders were confined to the domestic space that has little to do with politics. They argue that it is incorrect to view women as minors who need protection and guidance from their male counterparts. Moagi and Mtombeni (2020) explore women's roles in the struggle and provide examples which justify that these women have resisted all forms of oppression.

The latest SADET publication edited by Ndlovu (2021)[11] provides a platform to highlight the role of women in history with a focus on the precolonial era. The emphasis is on African women in southern Africa and the African diaspora, particularly those who exercised significant power and authority in precolonial and colonial times. The chapters are appropriated to women's liberation struggle. Although the authors have found it rather difficult to use oral testimonies extensively, these chapters present a good sense of the importance and relevance of women's struggles. Here, the contributors focused on women leaders such as Warrior Queen Mmanthatisi of the Batlokoa, Queen Mother Sutu of the Rharhabe, Queen Regent Mkabayi kaJama of AmaZulu, Queen Labotsibeni of the AmaSwazi Kingdom and Modjadji, the Rain Queen.

Corroborating or discrediting other sources of information

Henige (1974) makes an important observation that the 'real value of oral history is its power to lead us towards a truer understanding of the past on

11. The chapters by different contributors in the book included: Ndlovu, SM & Genge, M, 'African Women, Power and Authority in Pre-colonial and Colonial Times: Some thoughts'; Augusto, G, 'Textile Techno-Tales of the African Diaspora: History of Textile Technology from the Optic of Enslaved Women'; Ndlovu, SM, 'Using oral traditions and izaga/proverbs to unpack the gender oppression theory on "pre-colonial" history in south-eastern Africa'; Lekgoathi, SP, 'Women and political and ritual leadership in Africa since 1800: The Modjadji Rain Queen of Bolobedu'; Lekgoathi, SP, 'Gender relations, women and politics amongst the "Transvaal Ndebele," ca. 1500s to the early 1900s'; Twala, C, 'Warrior Queen Mmanthatisi of the Batlokoa in Pre-colonial southern Africa: A Re-appraisal of her power, dominance and leadership qualities'; Tisani, N, 'Queen Mother Sutu MaMthembu Rharhabe and her rise to power'; Tisani, N, 'Queen Regent Sutu: Women and the anti-colonial struggle for land and independence'; Genge, M, 'Queen Mother Labotsibeni Gwamile Mdluli and the shifting roles in Swazi power relations in colonial times'; Genge, M, 'Queen Regent Labotsibeni in colonial politics, c1904–1921'; Ndlovu, SM, 'Queen Regent Mkabayi ka Jama of the Zulu Kingdom: Recording "pre-colonial history through twentieth-century historical novels, fiction, epics, stage and radio drama"'.

distortions and gaps in official records'. There are areas in which oral histories provide a more complete version of history than a documentary source ever could and vice versa. To maximise the full potential use of oral histories because of their specific nature and specialisation, these resources require specific analytical methods. Implementation of this would assist in avoiding 'unreliability' through their usage. I agree that the embedded subjective or collective meaning of oral histories is far from being an unacademic hindrance; rather, they are excellent sources of historical data. An engagement with oral interviews allows historians to not only interrogate the past but also to validate the importance of the information provided in line with past events and their interpretation over time. With this approach, the institutionalised academic snobbery towards oral history will be discontinued. Instead, its possibilities will be fully embraced.

Professional oral historians are conversant with what is expected of them. Therefore, in conducting interviews and then reconstructing history from what they have collected, they are to ensure the reliability of their oral sources and to have developed techniques to answer some of the challenges put to them. They know that the first and most important technique is simply using the documentary evidence to supplement the knowledge in oral sources. In doing so, they should be equally able to determine whether the information provided to them is credible or not and whether it is not tainted with misinformation. Weighing information is also important in assessing the possible similarities and differences with what is at the oral historian's disposal. Emphasising the importance of the aforementioned requirements, Du Bruyn and Oelofse used the third-year level history module at the University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa, to inculcate the skills on conducting oral interviews at the undergraduate level. This approach proved to have been successful for students who graduated with history as a major from this institution, and they possessed the much-needed skills in the field (Du Bruyn & Oelofse 2012).

Incorporating the emotions of the interviewee in history writing

Some academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners, for example, Hadfield (2015, pp. 239–263) explain that there are many limitations associated with the use of oral interviews in writing history. The author suggests that the question of emotions be addressed 'to effectively pursue both the actual past and the contemporary meaning of oral history in a balanced way' to avoid tainting the content of the interview (Hadfield 2015). Thus, 'in doing so, historians should respectfully, yet critically, incorporate emotions expressed in these interviews into their analyses to provide a richer and more accurate history' (Hadfield 2015). Although Hadfield (2015) makes

an important point, the involvement of the interviewees' emotions can indeed blur the accuracy of history writing. Hadfield does not provide conclusive examples to justify the relevance of this in history writing. Writers will not only be tampering with the historical narrative provided when they incorporate the interviewees' emotions in their writing, but they could also be swamped with the interviewees' undertones. This, I argue, has the potential to change the content of the interview. On this matter, one tends to agree with Grele's (1975) assertion that:

> [*T*]here is some kind of dialectical process that occurs in which you are working jointly on something, and you come in to share the creation itself. In my mind, there's always the problem of detachment because, as a historian, I have to stand back. (p. 2)

Responding to the aforementioned, Harris (cited by Grele 1975) notes:

> I'm not sure that that's not an asset, in some sense. I think to become emotionally involved, while it's true that it violates the first canon of the historian, which is objectivity, nevertheless, puts you intimately into a situation and thus enables you to understand it in a way, I think, you can't understand it if you remain outside the situation. (pp. 81–82)

The challenges of oral histories

Historians working on oral history as a field of research are aware of its limitations. However, I contend in this section of the chapter that although there are limitations, incorporating oral testimonies in the writing of history outweighs such limitations. Therefore, the inclusion of oral testimonies should be encouraged, particularly in documenting the country's liberation struggle. A few challenges are highlighted below; these should not be viewed as inhibitors to the pursuit of documenting this kind of history.

Influencing the interviewee's responses

I tend to agree with Kirby's (2008) analysis of oral history whereby he complains that 'there seems to be a broad consensus about the problems involved in gathering reliable data from oral history interviews'. He asks questions such as (Kirby 2008):

1. How can the interviewer ask relevant, informed questions, yet still provide an atmosphere that will not improperly influence the informant's responses?
2. How can the historian evaluate the responses of the informant, which can be tainted in various ways? Related to these two critical questions is the larger issue of the objectivity and subjectivity of the collected historical data despite the historian's shortfalls as a human being.

Perhaps, in a nuanced way of addressing Kirby's critical questions posed above, it is critical for the historian to treat any information provided with

equal scepticism towards other historical sources. Thus, the interviewer's questions related to class, gender, age and race can sometimes elicit responses which may be subjective and unreliable. Ritchie (1995) opines that, in most cases, the interviewer has a potential bias because the questions are based on a certain agenda to source out information. He further alludes that:

> [*A*]n individual researcher usually approaches an interview with a thesis to prove and may assume that anything contradicting that thesis is wrong [...] Interviewees may see things entirely differently from the researcher, [...] and although interviewees might be biased or just plain wrong, so might the researcher's thesis. The best information to emerge from an oral history is often completely unexpected [...]. (p. 96)

Selective remembering or the possible fading memory of the interviewee

Remembering and the interviewee's 'sharp' memory play a critical role in reflecting the subjective nature of the content to be used in oral history. There are multiple reasons why an interviewee might remember some facts in a selective way. These, amongst others, include the deliberate and conscious selection of facts when interviewed or the distance (time gap) between the event and the interview. Concerning the former, the interviewee attempts deliberately not to talk about other aspects of events because they trigger emotions or might implicate other people. It should be kept in mind that in writing about the liberation history of South Africa, the past histories of some people who occupy leadership positions are questionable. For example, some might have spied on others, tortured others during their struggle years, etc. Although Norrick (2005) acknowledged the importance of collaborative remembering between the interviewer and the interviewee, this approach could pose challenges when the former frames questions concerning what is deemed significant and to be remembered.

Though it is not advisable to withhold some key and critical information in pursuit of the truth, it is equally important to be sensitive when writing this kind of history, especially when using oral interviewees as sources. Sometimes a memory lapse contributes to missing out on critical information. It should be noted in the liberation struggle history that some key events happened five to six decades ago, thus, retrieving information through memory might be a daunting task. Oral historians should be cognisant of the fact that on different occasions their informants' memories of the same event, place, or person may vary regarding specific details, the precise feelings or impressions that come to mind, or in other things. 'Each memory may be prompted by different things, resulting in these variations' (Kirby 2008, p. 32). In justifying this, Kirby (2008, p. 32) writes that 'any knowledge of a historical subject is limited by human subjectivity'.

Therefore, 'the historian should search for the perspectives that result from that very subjectivity' (Kirby 2008). It is expected of the historian to interpret the data by considering aspects of space, memory and remembrance. This, Kirby argues, will assist in separating fact from fable.

The traditional argument of history writing attests that because memory changes it is inherently subjective. Other oral historians claim that memory changes add increased depth to the source, allowing a further level of understanding. This argument, I explain, is misleading and far from exhibiting the truth. It is also not true that memories change because of a dynamic relationship between the informant and their subjective paradigm and bias. If this argument were relatively true, then historical writing and consciousness would be highly compromised, and it could lead to the generation of a one-sided kind of history. I view this as a weakness rather than a strength in history writing.

Oral testimonies and their vulnerability to manipulation

A leading academic on oral history, Thompson (2006, pp. 26–27) observed to allay the fears of using oral testimonies in the writing of history. He states that until the 20th century, the study of history was mainly approached from a political dimension with little attention given to economic and social histories. He argues that this was because the historians themselves concentrated more on political history and saw themselves belonging to what he refers to as 'administering and governing classes'. This subtle subjugation by oral historians to the politics of the day is also a cause for concern to those dealing with oral history and its emanating raw materials.

Some interviewees tend to recall false information because it was narrated to them as such; they pretend to be knowledgeable about some of those historical events. Thus, it is important for the oral historian to be alert and not to fall prey to the manipulation of facts or for facts to serve a particular distorted viewpoint. At some point in writing history that depends on oral testimonies, researchers find themselves interpreting the compromised collected data which has already been tampered with through manipulation. Despite the interpretation of this kind of data, this could also lead to further manipulation of information and data provided.

Conclusion

The use of oral history in the writing of South Africa's liberation history has become one of the important avenues to be established whilst this kind of history was being turned into a discipline of academic significance. Indeed, it became as easily acceptable as the truism that historians have rarely

stopped to consider its implications, much less to attempt practising it. In South Africa, the strength of oral history and oral interviews has been viewed as an important aspect to fill the academic gaps in the study of history. This is evidenced in projects that have come to the fore and in seminars as well as conferences organised to weigh their relevance and importance to date. These projects and meetings have proved to be ideal platforms for the claims of oral history in the mainstream of liberation historiography.

This chapter has shown that the influence of oral histories determines what is studied about the past and, consequently, its historical significance. It shows that there are positives in using oral interviews to write South African liberation history. However, I have observed that to achieve this, the following needs to be considered. Firstly, oral historians should be gender sensitive in conducting and using oral interviews in their writing. Secondly, they should be conscious of the stereotypical attitudes in writing whereby their emotions and those of the interviewees taint the content to be presented. Thirdly, historians should guard against the potential manipulation of information gathered because in some cases interviewees tend to exaggerate about their involvement in certain historical events, especially when they were participants or eyewitnesses. Last, oral historians should carefully interpret and interrogate all data presented to them during the interviews.

Chapter 9

Interviewing and authoring for *Tell Your Mother's Story*

Kogielam K Archary
Research Institute for Theology and Religion
College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

To research and write up matriarch stories by focusing on their experiences in areas such as childhood, youth, politics, economics, social development, health, culture, gender, religion, identities and other issues a participatory interview schedule was drawn up by the author in 2014. At the opening of the 2016 Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) conference, the author was requested to introduce the *Tell Your Mother's Story* (*TYMS*) project and invite attendants to contribute to an envisaged OHASA publication. The call for the submission of mother's stories inclusive of the interviewing schedule was finalised at a consequent meeting by the executive committee in 2017. This schedule relied on the application of an autobiographical method which was designed to write up mothers' stories on the basis of reflective memories. Volume One was initially launched in KwaZulu-Natal and later nationally launched at the National Oral History Association Conference in 2018 in Cape Town. The author has attended all launches and book handovers. She has every story which enables her to describe the history of the *TYMS* coffee-table publication from an autobiographical point of view. Between 2018 and 2024, several book

How to cite: Archary, KK 2025, 'Interviewing and authoring for *Tell Your Mother's Story*', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 135–159. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.09

launches were organised regionally and nationally, and book handover events took place provincially at various cities based in KwaZulu-Natal. The cardinal aim of this interview approach was to encourage reflexivity as it offered a variety of options for the matriarchs to narrate their life stories. This article tells the story of *TYMS* and a brief report of *TYMS* in terms of the background, challenges, demographics, titles and subthemes will be provided. Data gathering for this study consists of secondary sources of stories already published, and no additional sources or participants were used. The main part of the chapter contains a narrative on the interviewing and authoring of future stories. The first five volumes are presented in part via their table of contents. The chapter closes with noting the role of OHASA in empowering individuals nationwide, under the African continent and within the African diaspora to engage in oral history thereby adding to women's stories and reshaping their histories. The chapter wishes to encourage potential writers to note that past truths ought to be shared through reflective memories so that the future generations are able through stories to glimpse what has transpired over the years.

Introduction

Since 2016, the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA), an agency of the National Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture (DSAC), invited members of the public to write for its coffee-table publication (CTP) series *Tell Your Mother's Story (TYMS)*. A series refers to publications which independently and together 'contribute to a shared, defined conversation' (University of Arizona 2022), which can be disciplinary, formal, thematic and/or methodological. It also aims at re-energising a field or discipline of study, providing a platform for 'underrepresented voices' (University of Arizona 2022). Initially, there was much scepticism, reluctance and resistance to the *TYMS* writing project from the various stakeholders as such a project had not been undertaken previously by OHASA. It can only be assumed that the then standing executive committee of OHASA DSAC was not aware of the responsibilities and other logistics involved in such a project. Furthermore, it may be postulated that potential submitters were not sure about the value add of the project. There may also have been an absence of trust in the entire process as the project was mainly targeted to non-authors: In fact, it was targeted to ordinary people to write their mothers' stories in a version that would be reproduced and made available to libraries, bookshelves, coffee tables and to give as personal gifts and event tokens placed in goodie bags. The brief was to include all women's stories, not just biological mothers. Following a decision taken at the OHASA DSAC Executive Committee meeting in Pretoria in early 2018, it was full throttle ahead to collect, collate, compile and launch the series.

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to share and describe the history of *TYMS*, a popular CTP of OHASA since its launch in 2018. The author will reflect on the first five volumes as this CTP is one of OHASA's flagship programmes and a well-received publication. This will then be followed by a narrative on interviewing and authoring mother's stories for this series as OHASA's contribution to the field of oral history in Southern Africa and the African diaspora. The author has been a member of OHASA since 2012 and is now in her fifth three-year term on the executive of OHASA after having been appointed as Editor of *TYMS* (2018–2020) and Series Editor (2021–2025). Further to this, one of the aims is to focus on the value-add of the interviewing schedule to be used as a manual for the fieldworkers participating in the *TYMS* project.

Literary review

The history of the *TYMS* has not been written yet; however, the interviewing and authoring aspects of researching and writing up of mothers' stories have been provided in full by OHASA. In 2023, on the 20th anniversary of OHASA, the author presented an article entitled 'Researching, reporting and reflecting on the journey of *TYMS*, a flagship publication in the making since 2013 and at Volume Six in 2023' at the OHASA conference held in the Gauteng province.

For purposes of this chapter, secondary sources were used of stories already published in volumes of the *TYMS*. Please see the following text for further information.

Background to the *Tell Your Mother's Story* project[12]

The author was tasked with fundraising for OHASA, which proved to be an extremely thought-provoking task. She tried to be as innovative as possible by promoting the OHASA brand in terms of sourcing T-shirts, mugs and other items. This proved rather challenging. Thereafter, a gala dinner was hosted, followed by fundraising business breakfasts which were graced by leading and prominent individuals from society. After much deliberation, she got the nod to go ahead with *TYMS*, the coffee-table publication. This has been an interesting project as she received stories from various locations; however, between 2018 and 2019, there was a strong presence

12. The following section is drawn from the following published material: Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) 2018, *A tribute to women of the world: Telling your mother's stories, Limited debut edition, Volume One*, viewed 28 February 2025. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Vol-1-TYMS-2018.pdf>

from KwaZulu-Natal. The advertorial below is taken directly from the OHASA website.

> **Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA)**
> **Coffee table publication (CTP)**
> **Stories of South African Women**
> **2017, A Tribute to Women of Africa…. sharing their stories**
> **Volume One**
>
> Dear Colleagues, I make an earnest appeal to you to please write for our publication. Your participation will ensure that South African Women of all races, places and spaces will be applauded, appreciated and acknowledged because of your engagement, enlightenment and empowerment. You are encouraged to please write an article that Tells your Story (if you are a woman) OR Your Mother's (or any other female that has influenced you) Story. It should be Arial size 10, single line spacing. You could write in paragraphs, using sub-headings. Pictures also make for interesting reading and capture the moment. The following information or format could be used in your write up. However, there is ample room for creativity. Please note that you are not restricted to sticking to this format. You may even use a combination of the options.
>
> Regards
> Dr Kogielam Archary

Launches

Volume One was initially launched in July 2018 at the Glen Ashley Library, Durban North, KwaZulu-Natal in honour of 67 minutes for Tata Nelson Mandela (Archary 2019). Volume Two followed in July 2019, also in honour of 67 minutes for Tata Nelson Mandela (Archary 2020). During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the global coronavirus outbreak, Volume Three was launched virtually in July 2020 where the Deputy Minister of Sport, Arts, and Culture Hon Ms NN Mafu was the keynote speaker (Archary 2021). In 2021, Volume Four, utilising the hybrid format of physical and virtual platforms was internationally launched by Prof. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana in Clarens, Free State province. As a result of the choice to launch the book virtually as well, international attendees were able to log in and be a part of the launches in 2020 and 2021 (Archary 2022). Post these successful launches, the CTP series was perceived by the DSAC chief director Mr Puleng Kekana as 'a tangible product to have come out of OHASA since its inception', as was stated by him during the Clarens launch in 2021. In 2022, at a book launch evening, Volume Five was launched in the Northern Cape province. Volume Six was launched at the 2023 conference in the Gauteng province, and Volume Seven in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Against this background of the various launches, there is now an academic need to stimulate thought and discussion on how prospective writers should conduct interviews when there is the intention to write or tell a story for inclusion in the *TYMS* series.

The following points are crucial to understand the need to write stories about South African women, the African diaspora, nonagenarians, and especially those who are referred to as organic intellectuals:

> In South Africa, as a result of colonialism and apartheid, there are major gaps in the public records and public knowledge which [*were*] caused by [*the*] deliberate omission of African knowledge, technologies, stories, and philosophies from the mainstream of South Africa's body of knowledge. (OHASA 2022, p. 10)

By authoring stories about the nonagenarians, we are able to receive first-hand knowledge about occurrences before the 1940s, and this will attempt to address the issues of the gaps in public records and private knowledge. This word-of-mouth transmission, utilising the oral history methodology with a focus on qualitative research lends itself to primary sources leading the way to assist in remediating the gaps that are still prevalent.

Autobiographical narratives as research methodology

This chapter reports on issues relating to autobiographical narratives using the interview approach regarding transitions in a life course. The main aim of this interview approach was to encourage reflexivity as it offered a variety of options for the matriarchs to narrate their life stories. There were open-ended interviews, collection of the mothers' own photographs and other artefacts. The data consist of 194 matriarchs (subject of the stories) recollections of childhood, school, teenage years, working life, young adult life, childbearing, economic challenges, 'disadvantaged experiences in areas such as politics, economics, social development, health, culture, gender issues and religion' (OHASA 2022). These aspects have been captured across the stories. These stories shared as life narratives are significant and are part of the women's history in South Africa, the African continent and the African diaspora. It is an ongoing story impacting the intergenerational existence. These stories are combinations of memories about childhood experiences, stories told in the family, photographs and other artefacts which are invariably influenced by times and places. Links across life events within individual and family contexts and how the various recollections of transitions become part of each mother's life story are noted. The matriarch's life course may have an intergenerational impact (Turunen, Dockett & Perry 2015, pp. 635–644). This open structure allowed the matriarchs to guide the story write-ups in the directions they wanted, being sensitive to their own preferred ways of self-expression and what they wanted to share. Using written and visual methods 'meaningfully broadened the area of interviewing and gaining

access to data that might have lost forever to been difficult to gather otherwise' (Bagnoli 2004, pp. 1–15).

Rationale[13]

The past holds the key to our greatness. The past is also a pivotal part of our sadness as a nation. The meandering past weaves us along the tributary of life that sets us free as we welcome the future, whilst embracing the present. Orality as a source of primary history, the recording of stories, the capturing of past truths as experienced in art, song, dance, music, culture, traditions, mores, values and other expressions are rich sources of value to humankind as lessons are learnt and espoused in ways that encourage ethical nationhood. The difficulties, challenges and experiences endured by many before us enable us to add to the literary tapestry of a rich and vibrant South Africa. We can tell our stories and enjoy a kaleidoscope of tales unearthed throughout the length and breadth of South Africa and across borders (Archary 2018).

Previous volumes of the CTP series include unique stories which add to the body of knowledge that sheds light on our past. Authors have been sourced from different communities across South Africa and abroad. Based on the theoretical framework of intersectionality, representative writers across race, gender, age, religious background, etc., have positively impacted previous volumes of this publication. Women are at the focal point in relationships as relationships grow, terminate or remain static. Women keep culture, tradition, family values and folklore alive in the telling and retelling of tales and stories. Women's stories need to be told, their struggles need to be embraced, their successes need to be cherished, their attempts at improving society need to be known and their value add to families need to be emphasised at every point in time. Future volumes in the CTP series will attempt to address the need to close the gap that exists in terms of women's stories. It is ordinary women who have catapulted their countries to greatness when one considers the role, value and function of women during the two world wars, the Great Depression, through the holocaust, apartheid, decolonisation, economic and social revolutions, racism, COVID-19 and through various other traumatising episodes that have shaped world history. The future will never be the same as we know and understand it. The present deals with futuristic technology, artificial intelligence, the fourth and fifth industrial revolutions and much more. As the lockdown continued

13. The following section is drawn from the following published material: Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) 2022, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Five, Department of Arts & Culture: National Archives, Pretoria, viewed 28 February 2025. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Vol-5-TYMS-2022.pdf>

through 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire global population. The world of work changed, families were forced to self-quarantine and nature reigned supreme. Women – mothers, nurses and mainly female caregivers – have provided the support, care and love required by the sick, the elderly and the vulnerable. The national lockdown period, which was imposed by the national government, was reported as being one of the severest and most traumatising of episodes experienced by millions of women and society in general regarding gender-based violence, alcohol abuse and depression. However, the positives to emerge from the COVID-19 lockdown are the importance of nature, the need for spirituality, the activation of proper hygiene, diet and an appreciation of life. The importance of family and friends was highlighted, and women have kept the home fires burning, who have been champions to her (and other's) children and amazingly been that ray of hope to all when she quietly said 'this too shall pass'.

Previous volumes have invited writers to tell stories about ordinary women who led their families and who drove communities which thereafter impacted society. It can be justifiably implied that volumes from this series belong on every bookshelf, on every coffee table and in every library, and should take pride of place in your personal collection as it tells the story of women who came from different backgrounds, from diverse educational and cultural spheres and from divergent economic situations (Archary 2019). Women growing up during South Africa's apartheid regime hold close to their heart a unique part of the country's historical experience as they witnessed this harsh oppression in its most brutal forms. In previous volumes, women may have chosen not to write about this aspect of their lives (Archary 2020). Writers may have chosen not to highlight the lived and ideological difficulty – that of a South African woman of colour during apartheid – especially a black African female who was triply oppressed. So there still exists a need to further expose the nuances of South African women's stories (Archary 2021). Previous volumes have been written with love and care to carefully portray aspects of life in South Africa and the African diaspora over time. The warmth and depth in the writing suggest a need to continue with follow-up editions, hence this research chapter on interviewing people to tell their mothers' stories. Home after home, community after community, country after country and continent after continent are facing so many interruptions and disruptions to life and living. Everything is changing. People are lost. Families are broken. Friends are afraid (Archary 2022).

Partners are disappearing, love is questioned, hope is challenged and faith is losing an elusive battle. In the many confrontations of life, survival is now writing a new history. Currently, mental fragility is tested alongside economic survival and normal healthy living standards (Archary 2020). Despite the interruptions, disruptions and challenges, the executive

committee of OHASA has soldiered on with its mandate to continue with the *TYMS* series under the leadership of President Sekgothe Mokgoatšana and the guidance of the Editor and Head: OHASA Publications, Prof. Christina Landman. Previous volumes highlighted a myriad of stories that are reflective of the South African demographics and African diaspora. In as much as the past is remembered and the value adds enshrined in today's older generation, it must be remembered that the future is in the hands of the youth.

The series is a dedication to all women who have borne the brunt of hardship and yet survived. It is a testimony of one of the generations that have suffered but voiced their opinion when they decided on liberation before education. These are the stalwarts that are celebrated amidst the difficulties of daily living in an economy that is continuously challenged. Previous volumes contain stories that reflect on unity, renewal and reconstruction.

As the stories unfold, what becomes clear is that women have been the backbone of society, and the strength of communities comes from the strength of the women who keep that community alive. The paradigmatic shift in expectations from previous generations is clearly visible as the volumes progress where we read stories where young women, after being married and having children, still return to formal education despite their challenges.

Scope of the study

This chapter focuses on interviews, interviewees, interviewers and interviewing guidelines for the *TYMS* series. Sub-headings with further relevant discussions and suitable examples are provided to assist an interviewer, author or researcher irrespective of their level of competence. This chapter is divided into various sub-headings: Introduction, rationale, focus, concepts and definitions, research approach, data collection and the interview guide which constitutes the initial major discussion on interviewing. The latter and minor part of this chapter considers aspects under family history, earlier calls for submission of mother's stories, formatting requirements and room for creativity as some authors may choose to write their own story and this provides a background on how they may proceed. This chapter concludes with aspects relating to ethical clearance.

Concepts and definitions

Certain concepts and definitions are presented here as they form the basic thread-centric pillars upon which this chapter was stitched.

Coffee-table publication

A coffee-table book is generally a large and expensive book with many pictures. It is designed to be perused or looked at rather than to be read properly. These books are usually placed where people can see it easily, for example, in library tables, waiting rooms, etc. (Collins 2024). Volume Six in the series, once published, will emphatically consider three of the four points in the definition. It will contain lots of pictures and is designed for people to look at. The previous volumes have been placed strategically where people can see it easily. The definition states that the concept of a coffee-table book does not include that readers will 'read properly'; however, this version of the series does require reading as there is a wealth of information: Information of women, their trials, their tribulations, their challenges and their successes out of Africa.

Interviews

Lawrence (2022, p. 155) and Holt (2010, p. 110) are of the opinion that 'traditional social science research dictates that face-to-face interviews are the ideal qualitative interview methodology, whilst other modes can be described as "second best"'. This mindset assumes that all researchers can work within comparable timeframes, budgets and access points, which is seldom the case in reality. However, technological progress, such as the availability of online video conferencing platforms, has opened up new and valuable opportunities for qualitative research (Deakin & Wakefield 2014; James & Busher 2006; Lawrence 2022; Lo Iacono, Symonds & Brown 2016; O'Connor et al. 2008). As technology weaves itself swiftly and concretely into everyday life and living, interviewing, documenting, researching and writing are evidently becoming more reliant on the assistance of information technology (IT) and related platforms. In terms of *TYMS*, the series editor, reporting to the editorial board, will impress upon the executive committee of OHASA and DSAC that virtual, online and other technology-related platforms should now be encouraged to accommodate the change in how the world operates currently. Technology is at the forefront of every action, occurrence, event, transaction and collaboration. Therefore, the permeating factor of virtual communication must become embedded in the oral history interviews that are necessary in order to write up, research, document and present women's stories.

People of colour

The term 'people of colour' has subsisted since the late 1700s.

> It became a common term in the 1990s and has since been a recommended term to use when referring to people who are not white or from European descent. It has become more common lately and the term is often shortened to 'PoC'. (Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 4)

As South Africa, Africa and indeed the African diaspora earnestly move forward post-2022 in terms of decolonisation, decolonising the literary landscape and reshaping history to reflect herstory appropriately, there is a requisite need to include a greater ratio of stories that are reflective of people of colour. The *TYMS* CTP series must reflect her story, as essentially a pedantic deliberation and contemplation of stories that give preference to people of colour.

The terms of reference for the *TYMS* CTP series, its scope and limitations, as well as the key issues and expectations of the book must focus on people of colour in order to redress the imbalances of the past and provide a clear non-biased perception of past happenings.

Intersectionality[14]

> Intersectionality identifies multiple factors of advantage. Examples of these factors include gender, caste, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, disability, weight, physical appearance, and height. These intersecting and overlapping social identities may be both empowering and oppressing.[15]

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term 'intersectionality' to express and explain the oppression of African American women (Columbia Law School 2017; Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 12). Intersectionality refers to the overall and coherent aspects such as gender, class, age, ethnicity and race. It furthermore refers to having 'multiple identities and social locations, and the possibility of facing oppression or discrimination for more than just one of these aspects' (Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 7). This concept 'promotes the idea that some groups of people are exposed to and experience discrimination in multiple ways and that these are connected to each other' (Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 7; Steans 2013, p. 36). Compared to other theories, which typically concentrate on a single aspect like gender, race or class, regarding other aspects as subordinate to the primary one differs from intersectionality. With intersectionality, all aspects of identity are considered fundamental, they all influence each other and collectively shape an individual's perception of the world (Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018; Smooth 2010, p. 34).

14. Parts of this section are based on the following published material: Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, 'I am not defined by how I look or where I am from': An intersectional qualitative analysis about young women with immigrant background in Sweden and their views on identities, BA thesis in Global Studies, School of Education and Communication International Work, Jönköping University, Sweden.

15. Refer to Bauer et al. (2021) for further information.

A schedule of the volumes published, titles and authors

Volume One of 2018

	Title	Author
	Tribute	
	Mama Winnie Madikizela Mandela	Marcelle Abrahams
	Stories	
1	Motshidisi Herminah Ntsimane	Dr Radikobo Ntsimane
2	My mother, Mme Harriet Dichabe	Ruth Wallis (finalised by her niece Puseletso Phumo after her death in April 2017)
3	Mama Emily MaMbatha Myeza	Dr Radikobo Ntsimane
4	My aunt, Saras Sahadew (1948–2007)	Aneesha Constant
5	Rosy Govender, my mum toiled …	Pam Naidu
6	Rachel Nel Landman – loyal to the family	Prof. Christina Landman
7	The mom-empowered factor	Marcelle Abrahams
8	My story, the 2nd generation of Indians that came to Natal …	Sumanthra Folly
9	Tante Karin Weber (née Ziegenhagen)	Dr Radikobo Ntsimane
10	29 July 1956, Tea Estate, Inanda: My story	Devi Munien
11	A tribute to my mother, Bafiti 'Pakis' Barbara Tselayakgosi [née Mapogo] and other women in my family	Mandy Gilder [née Tselayakgosi]
12	My aji, (paternal grandmother) Mrs Sarres Bugwanthee Harinarrain	Deshaj Dharamduth Parthab
13	My Amma, Devagi Gounden	Dr Dhana Sagree Govender
14	Mrs Takurine M Singh (1872–1959)	Jaisingh S Singh
15	Maria MaSibiya Mtshali	Kholisile MaMtshali Ntsimane
16	My grandmother, Maggie Achary, a leader in the Verulam community	Keshvir Prushotam Parthab
17	My sister Yesavani Aveyan	Kogie Archary-Parthab
18	My mum, Kogie born on 11th August 1965	Haren Archary-Parthab
	Reviewers	Dr Claudine Hingston; Adv. Zandile Qono Reddy

Volume Two of 2019

	Title	Author
	Stories	
1	My grandma, Vasanthie Naidu	Abigail Sienna Govender
2	Maleshane Johanna Ratshefola	Mmathapelo Mpanza
3	Latchmee's story	Daya Naidoo
4	Our mother – in – love	Marcelle Abrahams
5.1	Batali Bami Tihlabani Tami	Cynthia Ndlovu
5.2	My parents my heroes	Cynthia Ndlovu
6	My mum, Nona Wallis	Prof. Malcolm Wallis
7	An eternal love letter	Kavasha Kander
8	My mother's story, Mum	Nirosh Naidoo
9	Mrs Naomi Modupeh Dinah Beckley	Dr Claudine Hingston

10	My mother, my friend, my inspiration	Hazel Latchman
11	Being the outsider	Prof. Christina Landman
12	Meganthri, The Pearl	Dr Kogielam Archary
13	My grandmother, my amma	Dr Kogielam Archary
14	Fond memories of Mavumalo – my granny	Prince Jongisilo Pokwana ka Menziwa
15	Letter to iSwazi that shaped me, my Gogo MaShabalala	Ayanda Melansi
16	Rise and rise of the matriarch	Mnoza ka Melane
17	My mum conquered cancer	Joyce Gugu
18	A mother does NOT always know	Samu Ngwenya
19	Beyond heterosexuality: A journey of self discovery	Malerato Elsi Mrabula
20	My morning star – my mom	Asanda Mazizi Pokwana
21	My mother conquered cancer	Gugu Msomi
	Book review	
22	*Stay with me* by Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀	Boitsheko Thwane
	Presentation	
23	Mothers are an inextricable part of our heritage	Dr Radikobo Ntsimane
	Reviewers	Zandile Dladla; Luthando Ngema

Volume Three of 2020

	Title	Author
1	Rose among thorns …	Olwami Princess Shangase
2	From horse carts to space travel: My mother at 104	Dr Devi Rajab
3	My journey in life	Mrs Gugu Theodora Mtshali
4	Doing small things with great love – The story of my mother Wanda Oelofsen	Elrica Henning
5	Ode to our mother	Deirdre Prins – Solani
6	Shantil Govender _ My mother's story	Tervin Govender
7	A tie of an invisible thread ordained my coming of age	Rebecca Phala
8	My beloved mother, Mrs Thunpathy Ramsuran Sitaram	Mr Johnny KR Sitaram
9	My mum, Beatrice	Munyerenkana Gorette Morisho
10	My mothers' stories	Lisle Jacobs
11	Aunt Zotshi: The mother, nurse and mayor	Dr Andile M-Afrika
12	Manthi Kumarie Latchman – Our icon and beacon of love	Hazel Latchman
13	I survived, always	Zama Mbonambi
14	My grandmother's story	Farah Amod
15	Rejoice Zondi was born on the 22nd of December 1973	Abigail Govender
16	Lisa and Jolie – A wild life!	Lisa Reed
17	On the 27th of March 1973 Nomfundiso Mtshulana, my Mom, was born	Babalwa Makaziwe Tamar Mtshulana

18	My mother, Vasagie Reddy, was a woman of great determination in life	Karusha Ganga
19	I am Maritsa and this is my story	Maritsa Gouws
20	My journey is not unique to that of most black kids in the townships	Lungile Dlamini
21	Classified as freight – Working at the International Atomic Energy Agency in a wheelchair	Dr Kasturi Varley
22	Ningi Mthembu is a 53-year-old South African woman	Nokuphiwa Ethel Mthembu
23	Una Jacobs – our mom, way ahead of her time	Geoffrey, Lester, Darryl and Ashley Jacobs
24	My mum, Mrs Seemuth Kussial a beautiful lady at 74	Reshma Bhadree
25	Mma Tshireletso of Botswana – her journey – a self-made politician	Prof. Maitseo Bolaane
26	A bouquet of lingering love and care	Marcelle Abrahams
27	I was born with an identical twin on 29 July 1948	Mrs Thandiwe Nonhlanhla Marjorie Dladla
28	Our lighthouse … Nishla Kander	Kavasha Kander
29	A dementia tale	Malcolm Wallis
30	Vignettes of memory: My mother Moramadi in the year of COVID 19	Prof. Sekgothe Mokgoatšana
31	Keerthi, the eternal flame, a blessed Leo	Dr Kogielam Archary
	Reviewers	Lindiwe Kunene; Nokubonga Mazibuko-Ngidi; Thandeka Dlamini

Volume Four of 2021

	Title	Author
	Poem: 'Political dynamics'	Dr Kogielam Archary
	Stories and authors	
1	Mathabo Rachel Kunene – unveiling the secrets of a woman entrepreneur challenging gender barriers	Dr Devi Moodley Rajab
2	My amazing mother, Nagamall Pillay, qualified as a teacher in 1938	Dr Kasturi Varley
3	My mother was well ahead of her time	Adelaide Joseph
4	Devotion and service to family, community and the freedom struggle	Sally Ceathema Iyer (née Pillay)
5	Pundit Prabhawathi Nanackchand – political activist and scriptural guru	Ami Nanackchand
6	**Article:** 'Culture and spirituality'	Prof. Malcolm Wallis
	Stories and authors	
7	A hard nut to crack!	Phumzile Joyce Biyela
8	As a child I did not have a voice …	Lutchmee (Premie) Krom-Govender
9	**Article:** 'Charlotte Maxeke laid the foundation for later generation success stories'	Maite Manganye
	Stories and authors	
10	My mother was born into a Lebanese family in South Africa	Susan Parker

11	My parents were moved to Umlazi Township in 1963	Busisiwe Maureen Mkhize
12	At 55 Mum got her driver's license	Chris Matthews
13	House No. 344 Nkone Avenue, Kagiso 1	Mapeu Matabane
14	My source of inspiration	Cheryl Hlabane
15	Mma, our mother Matlhodi Hilda Mahalefa	Nkitseng, Sekibela, Mabuse and Thabang Mahalefa
16	Dr Mom, a priceless chart of a distinguished academic mom	Masindi Sikgomo
	Mothers, the heartfelt centrepieces of who we are	**Centrepiece**
	Poems	
17	ODE to a mother so divine (26 June 2014)	Rayanta Rana
18	To my mother, MaKhuluse	Anonymous
19	**Newspaper article**	
	From indenture, akin to modern day slavery to democracy	**Sub-title**
20	2020 KwaZulu-Natal media report	Article
	Stories and authors	
21	Some heroines wear a white sari …	Desiree Priya Perumal
22	My grandparents went back to India	Govindamma Moodley
23	A huge 3-legged pot sizzled over the open fire	Nalini Pancham
24	Basmathi Biseswar (née Jeebodh) was born on Zeeilager Farm	Roxana Kishun and Romola Maharaj
25	My mother's journey Premilla Gokul Sitaram	Varsha Singh
26	21st January 2013 was a day of reflection and sudden realisation	Shereen Singh
27	My future mother-in-law with the present title: Saviour	Kaminee Moonsamy
28	My daddy was orphaned at 9	Abigail Sienna Govender
29	**Poem:** 'International stories: Across the continents … breaking down barriers'	Dr Kogielam Archary
	Stories and authors	
30	My journey from Sierra Leone to South Africa	Dr Claudine Hingston
31	My mother's Australian childhood in the bush	Prof. Malcolm Wallis
32	Marina Audrey Brownridge-Brinkhuis Betwixt & Between. What's in a name? 'Call'd Marina, for I was born at sea' and am a haven for many … Call'd Audrey for I am of noble strength	Marcelle Abrahams
33	**Article:** 'The mothers that shape African youth'	Boitsheko Thwane

Volume Five of 2022

	Title	Author
1	I am a true South African – Benedicta Bajabulile Johnson	Zoe Johnson
2	My mother and her harsh battle with Covid-19	Chief Jongisilo Pokwana ka Menziwa
3	Fatima Meer (1928–2010) The voice of the dispossessed	Dr Devi Rajab
4	Dreamcubators and dreamcatchers	Marcelle Abrahams
5	Mimosa Avenue	Dr Kellie Steinke
6	How my mother met Sidney Poitier	Prof. Malcolm Wallis

7	Maverick farmer's wife: From British India to apartheid-era South Africa	Dr Mark Coghlan
8	The things she carried	Dr Kellie Steinke
9	Gladys Eunice Sibiya (née Bhengu), my super Mom!	Phumzile Biyela
10	Her elegance and angelic grace … The story of my mother, Raihnu Saikoolal	Leshna A Saikoolal
11	Poem – a mother's love	Leshna A Saikoolal
12	My mother's journey from paramedic to professor	Nikita Reddy and Prof. Sarasvathie Reddy
13	My mother; my hero	Danita Hingston
14	Humble beginnings – my life *herstory* (or history)	Annamore Zimunya
15	Tribute to my amma (mother), Patchiamma Govender (née Pillay)	Dr Rajendran Govender
16	A woman of substance: Mrs Nalini Mungal	Pt. Shobana Singh
17	My best friend's life's journey – my mum	Kubashnee Perumal
18	A 'forced' to be	Lucinda Bronwyn Arulappan
	Invited guest writers	
19	Thinking out aloud: The journey isn't so much about BECOMING anything BUT about UNBECOMING everything you are not	Maite Manganye
20	Outreach – saving the girl child: Female in Africa	Dr Claudine Hingston
21	Outpouring of family pain: A precious son, the dedicated doctor – Dr Lashal Athal Sadhabariss	Pt. Shobana Singh
22	Some African traditional medicines/healing methods	Lungile Dlamini
23	Just a few basic things that the older women would suggest around this time of Covid	Rebecca Phala
24	For South Africans, storytelling is an integral part of preserving history	Thandi Jumo
25	Introduction and conclusion: Beyond borders from Swaraj to Swaziland – Rajes Pillay's journey from exile to freedom	Dr Sinthi Qono
26	Children of sugar cane	Joanne Joseph
27	The Free State archives	Tshitso Challa
28	Dulcie September	Dr Kogielam Archary
29	Volume Four … A writer's review	Phumzile Biyela
	Poems	
30	In a virtual world	Dr Kogielam Archary
31	Political crescendos … past to the present	Dr Kogielam Archary
32	Creating and developing … youth writers	Dr Kogielam Archary
33	COVID 19, the global pandemic in South Africa – the CORONA virus	Dr Kogielam Archary
34	South African liberation politics – political tenacity	Dr Kogielam Archary
35	Tales of the land – the land so precious	Dr Kogielam Archary
36	Everywoman – amid the alien corn	Dr Devarakshanam (Betty) Govinden
37	Poem – a mother's heart aches	Anonymous
	Reviewers	Dr Maseke Mabelane, Ms Siphumelele Ngwane

Interviewing and authoring for *Tell Your Mother's Story*

This section of the paper focuses on the interviewing and authoring aspects relating to the *TYMS*. The research approach, data collection and interviewing form the basis for this aspect.

Research approach[16]

The approach that interviewers should ideally engage is that of qualitative research. Qualitative research focuses on a 'deep understanding of a phenomenon and seeks to understand why and how individuals perceive the reality of issues' (Bryman 2011, p. 341; Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 16). During the interviewing and subsequent write-up of the stories for the *TYMS*, the focus is to identify underlying factors about women's identity, challenges, successes and place in society by having intersectionality as the theoretical framework. Therefore, a qualitative interview is the most appropriate method to use. There are several definitions for qualitative research. Ekeroth and Ortiz (2018, p. 16) mention that examples of significant 'qualitative research methods are ethnographic content analysis, focus groups, discourse analysis, qualitative analysis of text and documents, as well as qualitative interviews' (Bryman 2011, p. 344). The qualitative research method is the most suitable, appropriate and relevant method to conduct research and consequently write up stories for submission to the *TYMS* series.

Data collection

Structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews

In a structured interview, the interviewer must follow the standardised interview sequence with questions set in a particular order. One typically does not deviate from the set pattern as there is subjective value that is exposed from the respondent. In an unstructured interview, the interviewer is free to ask any questions and if there are erratic nuances embedded in the questions, these unstructured interviews may yield negative results, especially with older respondents who may have a line of thought about a certain time frame or incident. The episode under discussion should be completed via semi-structured interviews rather than being disturbed via an unstructured interview methodology (Mashuri et al. 2022, p. 24).

16. Parts of this section are based on the following published material: Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, 'I am not defined by how I look or where I am from': An intersectional qualitative analysis about young women with immigrant background in Sweden and their views on identities, BA thesis in Global Studies, School of Education and Communication International Work, Jönköping University, Sweden.

Semi-structured interviews

For the purposes of this write up on the CTP series, semi-structured interviews included a short list of 'guiding' questions that are supplemented by follow-up and probing questions that are dependent on the interviewee's responses' (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019, p. 5). A prerequisite is that all questions should be 'open ended, neutral, clear and avoid leading language' (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019, p. 5). These types of questions will ensure that a wider and clearer all-inclusive response is received. Open-ended semi-structured interviews allow for greater depth in terms of responses. A common practice in semi-structured interviews is to lead with open-ended questions, which are questions that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no' (Mashuri et al. 2022, p. 28). Based on the answers, the interviewer will ask follow-up questions to draw out more specific evidence about the candidate's assets. This is advantageous when interviewing respondents for the CTP *TYMS* as there will always be some specific information that will be shared with the follow-up questions.

According to Bernard (cited in Cohen & Crabtree 2006), semi-structured interviewing is best used when one will not get more than one chance to interview someone and when several interviewers will be sent out into the field to collect data. With the respondents for the CTP *TYMS* series, there is the possibility that older persons will volunteer to be interviewed so that their mothers' life journeys can be written out in story format as well as digital saving for later generations to read. There is a great probability that the opportunity of face-to-face interviews with them may not always be possible for a variety of reasons. Ill health plagues older people, lack of mobility, transportation problems as they do not often drive, early to bed hours when the respondent is probably free after hours to conduct the interviews, family restrictions either because there are young children in the home, alcoholic challenges in family homesteads especially in the evenings, etcetera. As stated previously, the semi-structured interview guide provides a set of instructions for interviewers, providing 'reliable, comparable qualitative data'. Such interviews are often preceded by observation, and informal and unstructured interviewing, allowing researchers to develop an understanding of their research topic required to develop 'relevant and meaningful semi-structured questions' (Stuckey 2013, p. 57). By including open-ended questions and training of interviewers to follow relevant topics, guided by the interview schedule, offers 'the opportunity for identifying new ways of seeing and understanding' the research topic (Stuckey 2013, p. 57). Having a clear understanding of how to write semi-structured interview questions is crucial to the success of the interview and consequent write up of the story.

Writing out semi-structured interview questions

The following are guidelines to develop semi-structured interview questions (Creswell 2013):

1. Use open-ended questions so that you can get descriptive answers.
2. Use language that the participant can easily understand.
3. Keep questions as short as possible.
4. Do not phrase questions as negative.
5. Always ask important questions first.

Benefits of semi-structured interviews

The benefits of semi-structured interviews can be described as:

> Many researchers like to use semi-structured interviews because questions can be prepared ahead of time. This allows the interviewer to be prepared and appear competent during the interview. Semi-structured interviews also allow informants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. Semi-structure interviews can provide reliable, comparable qualitative data. (Mashuri et al. 2022, p. 24)

Preparing for and conducting a semi-structured interview

1. Prepare for the interview.
2. Write a guide that includes, amongst others the questions that you will ask.
3. Introduce yourself and build a rapport especially if the interviewee is not your mother, grandmother, aunt or someone that you know personally.
4. Start with the simple questions and move to the complex questions.
5. Be mindful of your questions: They should never intimidate, bully, threaten or interrogate the respondent.
6. Know when to end the interview. In your prepared guide, include the issue of time, intervals and breaks wherever possible. Generally, older people tend to tire easily, need bathroom breaks, take a short walk or get a cup of tea.
7. Write down your impressions. These feelings, thoughts, ideas and intuitions may not return to you at a later stage and may include valuable information, nuances and perceptions that were imparted at the first instance and may be reimpressed upon you as interviewer.
8. Record the interview. This should be discussed with the respondent, and in the ethical clearance letter, it should be clearly stated that the interview will be recorded. The respondent must be informed that the interview will be recorded for future purposes for a variety of reasons.

Interview guide

Whilst preparing for the semi-structured interviews, it is important to have some guidelines in terms of the video/audio (e.g. recording equipment, etc.) and the interview questions that are relevant for this study.

Video/audio recording

An interviewer will need a tape recorder, video camera or a mobile cell phone that is suitable to record the face-to-face interview or online interview. The necessary equipment and/or electronic items should be fully charged, in good working order, and have enough data, airtime or storage space for the recordings to occur and thereafter stored electronically.

Recording semi-structured interviews

The interviewing process can be described in the following way: Typically, the interviewer has a paper-based interview guide that he or she follows. Since semi-structured interviews often contain open-ended questions, and discussions may diverge from the interview guide, it is generally best to record interviews and later transcribe these recordings for analysis. Whilst it is possible to try to jot down notes to capture respondents' answers, it is difficult to focus on conducting an interview whilst jotting down notes simultaneously. This may result in incomplete notes and may also negatively influence the development of rapport between interviewer and interviewee (Zhang & Wildemuth 2020).

Developing rapport and dialogue is essential in unstructured interviews. If recording an interview is out of the question, consider having a note taker present during the interview (Zhang & Wildemuth 2020). However, one of the challenges that may be experienced is that the older respondents may be unsure as to why the note taker is there (Zhang & Wildemuth 2020).

Trust is an issue, therefore there must be a clear explanation in place as to the role and reason for every activity that takes place when the interview is in progress. Once the interview starts there must be a modus operandi wherein the respondent does not feel threatened, unsafe or vulnerable (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019). With this ethos in mind, the interviewer must ask questions in an even tone, steady pace and humble manner as he or she is asking questions to which he or she does not know the answer and may not have any knowledge of. The interviewer is indeed a beginner and should remember it whilst in communication with the respondent. Talking with respect and reverence will assist in the respondent being more favourable to provide more subjective information which the interviewer can digest as best as possible (DeJonckheere & Vaughn 2019).

Interview questions: Guidelines[17]

The following guide is included in the annual call for papers published on the OHASA website (2023). The interviewer should always be courteous in disposition when asking questions. After the basic introduction by the interviewer, proceed with the following questions:

1. Could you start by telling me more about yourself? Name, age, birth, occupation, parents' origin. Follow-up question: Where did your parents grow up?
2. How do you identify yourself? Follow-up question: As an African (e.g. country of origin: Zimbabwean, Mozambican), a mix of different cultures or none?
3. What is the reason that you identify yourself as …? Why not as …? Follow-up question: What factors affect how you identify yourself – for example, country of birth, family, friends, school/workplace, society, social class …?
4. What does it mean to you 'to be South African'? Follow-up question: Do you think there are certain criteria/characteristics that are needed to be South African? Follow-up question: Does this affect your identity? If so, how?
5. If of another heritage culture, what experiences do you have as a woman with that cultural background in the South African society? Follow-up question: Do you face difficulties in your everyday life? If so, what kind of difficulties?
6. Have you experienced hate, racism or exotification in your daily life? (Answer is optional.)
7. Do you want to change/add something that you think is relevant?

The interview guide was developed based on the recommendations of Alan Bryman (2011, p. 419). It is as crucial to align the interview questions with the research questions of the study to ensure that relevant information was obtained from the respondents. The interview guide aimed to facilitate the interviews and allowed for natural follow-up questions, enabling the respondents to freely express themselves. Prior to the interviews, the interviewers were mindful of the ethical considerations and provided the interviewees with an explanation of the study, ensuring them of the study's anonymity and the confidential treatment of their responses for research purposes (Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 15; Hjerm et al. 2014, p. 94).

17. Parts of this section are based on the following published material: Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, 'I am not defined by how I look or where I am from': An intersectional qualitative analysis about young women with immigrant background in Sweden and their views on identities, BA thesis in Global Studies, School of Education and Communication International Work, Jönköping University, Sweden.

Family history

When creating family history, start the interview process with either your mother, your grandmother, and your maternal aunts. Thereafter, you may continue with the male members of the family. Arrange a trusting, calm, and relaxing setup, most preferably at a home where you are confident that your grandmother, mother, or any other respondent is equally comfortable, willing, and available to converse.

After pleasant greetings about general health, the weather, and perhaps other common concerns, the interview *per se* should commence with the set of leading and open-ended questions (OHASA 2023). Table 9.1 has been designed as a guide with possible questions that may be used during interviews.

TABLE 9.1: Leading and open-ended questions.

	Leading and open-ended questions
1	Whom are you named after? Do you know the reasons why you were named after this person? If yes, explain the reasons. What do you remember most about your parents? How many brothers and sisters did you have? What is your birth order? What did you like most about your days growing up until the age of about ten?
2	Describe the things you did as a child? What did you eat? How did you dress? What games did you play? Who did you play with? Did you have lots of school friends? What do you remember about your school friends?
3	What was the house you grew up in like? Who lived with you? What was your neighbourhood like? How did you relate to neighbours who belonged to a different culture than you?
4	What languages were spoken in your home? By whom? To whom? What kinds of newspapers and books did you have in your home? Who read them?
5	What about your family felt South African? How was your South Africanness expressed?
6	How did you celebrate South African and other cultural holidays? What special roles did the women in your family play in holiday preparations and observance?
7	What type of school did you attend? Where did you attend school? What was it like? How meaningful did you find your education?
8	What special foods do you associate with your family and family celebrations?
9	Where did you go to school? Did you like it? What were your favourite subjects?
10	What did you want to be when you grew up? Why? What options seemed open or closed to you?
11	What did you do for fun as a teenager? As a young adult?
12	How did you spend your summer vacations? Did you go to summer camp? Did you like it? Did your family spend holidays together? Where did you go and what did you do?
13	If married, how did you meet your spouse? What were your courtship and wedding like? What were your expectations about roles and responsibilities within your marriage? If you did not marry, was this a conscious choice or did your life just take that turn? How do you feel about it in retrospect?
14	What volunteer or paid work have you done? How has it been important to you?
15	What has been important to you as a daughter, sister, life partner, mother, grandmother, friend and/or a member of the community?
16	Who have been your role models? What about them do you admire?
17	What words of wisdom did your mother/grandmothers/aunts and other female figures share with you?
18	Who are your favourite cultural heroines? What appeals to you about them?
19	What national and world events have significantly influenced your life?
20	Women's roles in society have changed dramatically over the past several decades. Have these changes had a personal impact on you? What do you think of them?
21	What in your life has brought or given you the greatest satisfaction or fulfilment?
22	Looking back, what would you have done differently? What would you do again?

Source: Author's own work.

Previous call for submissions of mothers' stories (OHASA 2024)

> Since the launch and release of Volume One, the series has progressed to Volume Seven in 2024. Previously, the call that went out to potential writers was posted along the following lines: MOVING ALONG. Thank you to the women, the grandmothers, the mothers, the daughters, the aunts, the sisters, the caregivers, the sisters-in-law, cousins, nieces, granddaughters, lovers, mistresses, and girlfriends who kept the home fires burning, carried the children on their backs, and took care of the elderly during the long dark nights and chilly summer days in the walk to freedom…may this read inspire more women to tell their stories, more sons to write their mother's stories, and more fathers to pay tribute to their daughters. (Archary 2022, p. 18)
>
> Herewith – this volume follows stories along thematic narratives of ordinary women who have a bond with South Africa, a country so alive with possibilities, so vibrant in its offerings and so steeped in traditional and cultural tapestries yet at the cusp of a new dawn with a magnificent future ahead in terms of growth, development, and prosperity! (Archary 2022, p. 18)

The content of this volume is as follows: An introductory, themed preface – a poem – is presented before each themed collection of stories. This volume has been set out thematically as follows: Introduction, political dynamics, culture and spirituality, Charlotte Maxeke who laid the foundation for later generations' success stories, mothers, the heartfelt centrepieces of who we are, from indenture that is akin to modern day slavery to democracy, international stories across the continents, breaking down barriers and conclusion. Volume Eight – due for release in October 2025 – will follow the national theme of the country with a focus on inspiring a nation of readers. What follows are the formatting requirements for future volumes.

Formatting requirements

Post the interviewing process, what follows are the writing up and editing processes.

The following formatting requirements are relevant:

- 900–1,100-word article
- Arial font
- Font sizes: title 14, author 13, sub-headings 13, text 12
- Line spacing: 1.15
- Write story in paragraphs using sub-headings
- Three or four pictures capture interesting moments.

Room for creativity

According to Archary (2018), 'If the choice is not to interview but rather write up one's own story, the following information or format could be used. However, there is ample room for creativity'. You may even combine different options, as represented in Table 9.2.

TABLE 9.2: Written in paragraphs by answering the following questions.

OPTION 1

	Stages in life		
	Stages in life	**Experiences**	**Content**
1	Birth to two years	Where were you born? Year?	Parents: Explain family background. Extended family
2	Early life	School, friends, family, life in general under apartheid	What was your life like whilst growing up? Who were the significant role players in your life? What did you enjoy most whilst growing up?
3	Teenage years	Difficulties/cultural disputes/ moral challenges. Did you face peer pressure?	What influence did your culture/belief system have on you? Any memory of superstition/superstitions/ folk tales/storytelling that shaped you?
4	Young adult life under apartheid	Trials/struggles/successes	Success to include family, influence of adult friends/civic groups, etc.
5	Marriage/children/ extended family life	What experiences can you share? Economic difficulties? Social issues? Political strife?	Did you work? Were you protected at the workplace? Remuneration? Uniforms? Travelling? The environment?
6	Mature adult	Changes in the country? Your contribution	Were you active in movements that led to change? Other experiences that you may have had
7	At present	Share your thoughts: Hope for the future? Sadness? etc.	If you could change anything, what would it be and why?

Source: OHASA 2023, 'Volume Seven – Invitation 2024', in *Tell Your Mother's Story theme: 30 Years in a democracy, before and beyond a mother's story*, viewed 28 February 2024. <https://ohasa.org.za/volume-7-invitation-2023/>

OPTION 2

Brief biography: This should cover birth, early childhood, schooling, and life after school. A memorable moment in your life (if you are a female) or your mother's (or any other female) life under apartheid. It is almost a given that when you request people to write about their lives under apartheid they would focus on the hardships and their resistance to apartheid – that is, political activism. This is true for many people, and for women whose histories regrettably remain 'hidden'. Contributors are urged to write about this. Colleagues are strongly urged to begin to document other aspects of their lives that remain dormant. Contributors are also encouraged to write about any aspect of their life or their mothers' life that they feel is pertinent and deserves to be documented. These could range from challenges unmarried women, especially black women, faced in acquiring accommodation in the urban areas; how they managed to survive and raise children, sometimes single-handedly through what the then government perceived as illegal means (e.g. beer brewing or street hawking); entertainment careers (contributors must write about their memories or that of their mothers who were aspiring musicians, artists, sport enthusiasts, etc., in their communities); community developers, but due to apartheid laws that restricted the advancement of black people they struggled to achieve their dreams. View about post-apartheid South Africa: Hope/dream for the future? Sadness? Achievements? (Archary 2018; OHASA 2023)

OPTION 3

Writers are also encouraged to tell community stories. These stories could revolve around the women that played a pivotal role during the formative years.

In conclusion, remember to be creative. You can write as a family or as a group. OHASA is looking for stories that cover the length and breadth of our country and the African diaspora. We are looking for women's tales from all provinces, the *plaas* (farm), the affluent neighbourhoods, townships, and the international space as women of Africa impact and are affected globally. Join us in telling women's stories. This is a great initiative. Should you require any further information, please email: ohasafundraising@gmail.com (Archary 2018; OHASA 2023).

Ethical considerations

Prior to the selection of participants, the author, researcher or interviewer must be cognisant of the ethical principles that apply. Firstly, a brief explanation of the interview goal must be explained to the respondents informing them of the details of the interview process. Secondly, the respondents must agree to be a part of the interview in order to write up the story that will be submitted to the series. Thirdly, the respondent's personal information must be used with the utmost caution and confidentiality. The respondents must be informed of 'their right to withdraw from the interview or choose not to answer certain questions if these make the respondent feel uncomfortable' (Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018, p. 15). In the last place, it is important to explain that the information gathered from the interviews and the resultant outcome(s) will be used as stories for submission to OHASA (Bryman 2011, pp. 131–132; Ekeroth & Ortiz 2018). Furthermore, the interviews may only be recorded upon consent by each participant and explaining that the recordings will only be used for the CTP series.

Conclusion

The chapter closes with concluding notes as to the role of OHASA in empowering writers nationwide to engage in oral history, in providing a platform for organic intellectuals, in sharing knowledge obtained through oral history projects and in developing oral history storytelling. The chapter concludes by evaluating the trajectory and the contribution to the orality – literary tapestry as the series *TYMS* was established as a popular, coffee-table publication.

By interviewing women, especially the nonagenarians, organic intellectuals and those who are not able to read and write in the English language, the issue of addressing the omissions may be addressed. In telling, researching, writing and documenting women's stories the retrieval and dissemination of oral history and oral tradition, which are vital to fill the gaps in the education system will be shared in a trusting relationship between respondent and interviewer.

Adding to this, oral interviews with the female respondents about the female members that they have encountered over the decades may provide alternative narratives, fresh information and new insights into our understanding of the past. The outcomes of these oral interviews – a coffee-table publication – could stimulate thought on the marginalised and distorted, social practices of the past.

The intention is to write these stories so that current and later generations will be able to understand what happened during colonisation and apartheid; to show how non-white men, women and children suffered grave indignity – the trauma of being born black. From these oral history interviews, a benefit to the literary landscape is guaranteed in three ways. Firstly, it would provide emotional support to the tellers of the stories through affirmation and healing. Secondly, it would transmit primary information about retrieving traditional support systems in matters such as food conservation, funeral procedures, natural medicine, money saving practices, non-monetary economic habits and much more. Indigenous knowledge accessed through oral history serves the interests of rewriting the history of our country and indeed changes the understanding of the African diaspora. In light of the aforementioned points, South Africans and in particular citizens of the African diaspora are encouraged to write for this publication. Female writers have been encouraged to tell their story, whilst members of the public are urged to write women's stories, especially about women who have influenced and impacted them. The aforementioned omissions concern:

> [*V*]arious aspects of African [*life*] and other disadvantaged experiences in areas such as politics, economics, social development, health, culture, gender issues, and religion. These aspects are inadequately represented and urgently need to be redressed. (OHASA 2022, p. 10)

Chapter 10

Using oral history in advancing feminist discourses and transformation through Charlotte Maxeke

Chitja Twala
Department of Cultural and Political Studies,
University of Limpopo,
Polokwane, South Africa

John R Phori
Department of Free State Basic Education,
Bloemfontein, South Africa

Abstract

This chapter aims to contextualise the relevance of Charlotte Maxeke in the discourses of feminist oral history in South Africa through methodologies and techniques. Through this chapter, Maxeke as an important historical figure in the South African liberation historiography and a feminist of note is used to empower historical enthusiasts to research her ideals, using contemporary feminist and political figures in their current social communities. This historical undertaking is deemed pivotal since the year 2021 marked her sesquicentennial. Internationally, Maxeke, as a political figure, is perceived as an epitome of religious leadership, political activism, doyen of women's emancipation and enfranchisement. The chapter

How to cite: Twala, C & Phori, JR 2025, 'Using oral history in advancing feminist discourses and transformation through Charlotte Maxeke', in S Mokgoatšana (ed.), *Oral history in South Africa: Autoethnography, methodologies and ethics*, ITUTA Books, AOSIS, Cape Town, pp. 161–177. https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2025.BK397.10

employs feminism as the theoretical lens to advance the ideals of social transformation through oral history and women's emancipation in all spheres of social engagements. It further challenges the stereotypical nature of feminist oral history discourse which for decades focused on the Global North with little emphasis on the Global South.

Using Maxeke as a case study for this chapter, the authors attempt to bridge this gap by bringing attention to oral narratives in a non-western context. With this approach, we argue that the limited available literature of Maxeke can be augmented using oral testimonies in attempts to reconstruct her holistic life history and, at the same time, mark a contribution to women's role in liberation studies. In the reconstruction of the above as suggested, for this chapter, firstly, data and information used were gathered through the consultation of the existing literature. Secondly, interviews that are in the public domain are also used and academically interpreted. Therefore, it should be noted that for this chapter, we did not conduct interviews but relied on the existing ones and applied all the relevant skills for academic scrutiny. The chapter concludes that the values Charlotte Maxeke stood for, can address the challenges of feminism in various societies through oral history.

Introduction

In the course of the 20th century, new African-focused disciplines formed, which include decolonial studies, feminism, African studies, and social history. Oral history is an approach to conducting people's history (Ndlovu & Twala 2024) or 'History from below'. The chapter seeks to profile Maxeke within the praxis of feminist oral history. She represents many South African women who, for a patriarchal way of documenting history, her life story has been forgotten by mainstream and feminist historians. In essence, the central focus of this chapter is the feminist and minority discourses and marginalised voices. In this chapter, the authors embrace the definition of Feminist Oral History as a basic tool in our efforts to incorporate the previously overlooked lives, activities, and feelings of women into our understanding of the past and of the present.

Anderson et al. (1987, p. 104) explain 'When women speak for themselves, they reveal hidden realities: new experiences and new perspectives emerge that challenge the "truths" of official accounts and cast doubt upon established theories'. This is an accurate description of Maxeke, as she is investigated through the lens of what she did for the liberation of the country and how the experts, through interviews and their shared narratives, tell her story.

As a doyen of the African feminist in the context of the South African historical discourse, Maxeke played an essential role in South Africa's liberation movement and received recognition as the Mother of Black Freedom in South Africa, with an African National Congress (ANC) nursery school dedicated after her in Tanzania (South African History Online [SAHO] 2011). Using Maxeke as a case in point, it is therefore in this context that the chapter seeks to leverage this kind of history from the periphery. Through the academic discourse of feminist oral history as a research methodology, the authors climax Maxeke's stature as a 'neglected' feminist icon. This is articulated from the following perspectives, namely, that she was a political icon of hope for many South Africans and the world's 'voiceless' women, highlighting her commitment to academic endeavours and showing that she was a religious-conscious human being. Although the focus of this chapter is on Maxeke, there are many such women, some celebrated and others not in the South African liberation space.

The chapter shows that the integration of feminism in history writing has been elusive, for some time, by history writers. As it will be exposed using Maxeke as a case in point, there are many contributory factors to this. The following are a few of these factors: The patriarchal tendencies of history writing, the lack of considerable interest in women's history, the unsettling interpretation of women's history, and the marginalisation of female historians from the broader territory and academic discipline of history. The approach of 'History from below' is crucial for this chapter because it allows academics, researchers, specialists and practitioners an opportunity to offer new theoretical understandings about life stories and memories and challenges the traditional way of writing history. Through this approach, the 'hidden histories' of women are uncovered. Such histories are destined to empower other researchers and practitioners to construct their own liberation history (Thomson, Frisch & Hamilton 1994, p. 36).

This chapter is grounded on qualitative research methodology because of the social imperatives it seeks to address. Qualitative research brand critically explores data informed by 'social reality through participants' views and observations (Mohajan 2018, p. 24). The chapter uses data and information gathered from secondary literature sources, including interviews, narratives, and discussions already in the public domain reflecting on Maxeke's life. Through the interrogation of the afore-mentioned available material, here we explore the ideas of an inclusive history of Maxeke's life story. In the section on the extrapolation and analysis of data in this chapter, findings will be discussed on how these sources provide narratives on issues of debates at the time of Maxeke's life. Interviews which are in the public domain and conducted by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA 2021) provided useful information and understanding the persona of Maxeke.

The chapter further probes into complex and critical questions for solutions and allows informed feedback to make well-considered decisions. The available sources and narratives shared express the importance of Maxeke's feminist values, her celebrated ethical principles, espousing critical aspects of her life and legacy, and highlight the challenges that confronted her as a feminist.

We contend that the sesquicentennial of Maxeke had the potential to advance the ramifications of oral methodologies and techniques. Of particular interest are the crucial human values of *Ubuntu* she unveiled in her lifetime. As a gender and political activist, Maxeke embraced *Ubuntu* embedded in the following ideals: Championed communication, taking responsibility of community and societal issues, showing solidarity, and compassion during times of human trouble, being vocal on matters of social justice; and unequivocal love to face human challenges (Himonga, Taylor & Pope 2013). The chapter attempts to answer the following questions on feminist history writing and Maxeke: Were there any feminist values espoused by Maxeke through oral history? What methodologies and techniques will be appropriate to tap into Maxeke's life history? Are there any indicators of success with respect to feminist values, directly or indirectly propagated by Maxeke through oral history? The above will also be scrutinised through the critical feminist lens advocating for the following: Expansion, or human freedom in women's choices beyond sex or gender definitions; stratification of humanity with gender orientations for life opportunities; rebuking human abuse and celebrating women's rights for a better society and co-existence.

Feminist framings of oral history

To understand issues pertaining to feminist oral history, the concept of *feminism*, as referred to in this chapter, regards the advocacy for women's rights and their struggle against sexual and gender prejudice. Thus, the battle to achieve the aforementioned is waged on social, religious, political, and economic platforms (Burkett & Brunel 2021). The advent of feminism also articulates human principles to combat gender stereotypes, empowerment to nurture human growth, passion for women's suffrage in a patriarchal society, undoing the exhibition of gender domination, and moral consciousness.

In this section of the chapter, the authors attempt to use Maxeke as a case in point to connect her feminist activist values with the critical procedural practice of conducting oral history, dubbed 'feminist oral history'. Feminist oral historians depart from the premise that, for them to succeed, they should first. To create a record of narrators' daily life,

interviewers must first position themselves subjectively within the research they are pursuing (Fobear 2016). Feminist oral history took centre stage as early as the 1960s. As investigated by Manuela Thurner (1997, pp. 122–146), during this period, researchers of feminist oral history forged connections between women and politics. There were also feminist movements that mushroomed in North America and Europe and created space for marginalised communities.

In further interrogating the aforementioned presupposition, Katherine Fobear (2016) explains that the approach of feminist oral history has a long and distinguished history of examining challenging issues of power in the interaction between the participant and the researcher. Fewer academic works go beyond examining the one-sided hierarchy connection between the oral historian and the study participants', even if multiple feminist oral historians have purposefully investigated issues related to power within their own research (Fobear 2016, p. 61). It was in the 1980s that scholars such as Joan Scott elevated the importance of women's everyday experiences to constitute history. Her starting point was first to theorise women as 'historical subjects', and not be viewed as less important in the construction of history. During this period the concept of 'her-story' was popularised aiming to unveil how ordinary women contributed to history (Scott 1988, pp. 18–19).

Since the 1980s, post-structuralists have maintained that power is a discursive process that arises from changing stances (Bornat & Diamond 2007, p. 27). Thus, feminist oral historians used a more contemplative approach to their studies, moving beyond merely examining women as a topic of history. From the notion that gathering women's texts is a common objective, feminist interpretations of oral history have evolved to recognise that research cooperation is a dynamic process. Prior to compiling a record of the narrators' lives, feminist oral historians need interviewers to assume a subjective stance inside the study (Kratz 2001, pp. 127–161). The oral history interview evolved into a hybrid discourse where the narrator and the interviewer's cultural understandings, ambitions, and positionings moulded the oral history as a communicative event. In this process, the focus falls on the sequence of lines of argument and the prevailing interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. In this instance, both parties could not be viewed as impartial parties throughout the interview process and that both were subjective factors that influenced the text. Consequently, critical feminism, in the context of this chapter, attests to the subjugation of women's voices as opposed to men's views about women in documenting history. Therefore, the critical feminist theory used in unpacking Maxeke's life history focuses on the dominant societal hierarchy that accords superior voices and power to men (Clarke 2007; Martin 2003).

In unpacking the methodology of feminist oral history, Susan Geiger (1990, p. 169) contends that the interest is in the employment of oral history as a method to make meaning of what the feminist historians are writing about. Subsequently, feminist historians also employ data from oral history, which transforms it into a methodology, but raises methodological issues. To achieve this, as suggested by Geiger, feminist goals for gathering the oral data are feminist and systematised in specific feminist ways. She alludes to the following traits for the advancement of feminist goals in using oral history: They develop their research problems from the study of women as embodying and generating historically and situationally particular economic, social, cultural, national, and racial realities; they assume gender as the primary analytical concept by creating a new body of knowledge for comprehending women's lives through genderising history, and they acknowledge and value women's own interpretations of their identities, experiences, and social environments as holding significant truths.

Concurring with the aforementioned, Sugandha Agarwal (2020, p. 7) concluded that the realisation that women's experiences have been omitted and underrepresented from conventional narratives of historical events led to the acceptance of oral history as a feminist technique. Alongside this thought was the insight that oral history may be a method to include women in history whilst challenging prevailing notions of what matters socially, politically, and economically in a culture that actively works to marginalise the experiences of women. According to Joana Sangster (1994):

> [*T*]he possibility of putting women's voices at the center of history and highlighting gender as a category of analysis; and the prospect that women interviewed will shape the research agenda by articulating what is of importance to them. (p. 27)

It is a feminist endeavour to identify and examine gender in African contexts, on the other hand, histories that only 'add women' and neglect gender must also address feminist issues. We emphasise that the relationship between (South) African feminism(s) and women's histories (Van der Spuy & Clowes 2000) is an area of relatively recent interest in South African historiography, and there is still an absence of academic coverage of this theme. In South Africa and elsewhere, feminist oral history has been a valuable tool for feminists in reclaiming marginalised voices and allowing women to share their lived experiences. This kind of oral history provides a deeper understanding of historical events and allows for diverse perspectives to be included in the historical record. In this country, feminist history has been greatly enriched by the contributions of researchers who have conducted oral history interviews with women from diverse backgrounds.

In South Africa, the 1980s ushered in an era of revisionist history, with the likes of Belinda Bozzoli (1983) taking debates of feminist history to the public domain. Her article entitled 'Feminism, Marxism and Southern African Studies' created a platform for looking at the classic struggle between Marxism and feminism. This article attained an iconic status within the South African feminist and revisionist history because it launched a feminist materialist critique of South African history. According to Cheryl Walker's (1990) publication, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, there is a great deal of debate, if not outright confusion, about the best ways to understand how women are oppressed in modern South Africa and how to examine the complex interactions between gender, race, and class and how these relationships affect women differently. Feminist historians have a long way to go before they can just map out women's historical positions and include their perspectives in the canonical historical narratives. Thus, a persistent problem in feminist history includes the voices of women.

In his MA thesis, Lato Frank Ntwape (2016) commends the work done by academics and researchers such as Shula Marks, Phil Bonner, Iris Berger, and a few authors discuss creating South African history and amplifying women's voices. According to Ntwape (2016), these authors established eight 'new concepts which confronted the traditionally male-dominated and Western orientated production of South African history', with a focus on feminist history. Their works highlight the way gender intersects with race, class, and other social categories to shape women's lives. In the same vein, Ntwape laments about the little assessment made in these publications on whether they accede to the interrogation of feminist history as an interconnected process or perhaps still viewed as a still based on women's struggle and nationalism without taking into consideration aspects of their lived experiences (Ntwape 2016, p. 8).

Maxeke: Oral history and the historicisation of the liberation struggle through gender sensitivity

This section of the chapter departs from the premise that there are memoirs reflecting Maxeke's life history, whether directly or indirectly, depending on the scope of the author. This led to academic controversies centred around her birthplace and year. There is also a debate about the exact orthography of her maiden name, Manya, Manye, or Mannya. In this chapter, the authors confirm that Maxeke is a Mannya/Mannye from Botlokwa and that she has multiple identities because her mother came from the Eastern Cape province. Her mother has Zulu origins or relations, as a result, Maxeke is claimed by many people. This triggered many debates about her

contribution to this country's liberation struggle. We argue that central to these differences, is the lack of oral history used to verify her life story. To add more controversy to the debate of her birthplace, a flyer entitled 'The Life and Legacy of Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke for the Memory Project Inaugural Lecture emphasises the following' (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2015) states:

> She was the daughter of Botlokoa village's ordinary man, John Kgope Mannya, who reported to Chief Mamafa Ramokgopa. John was the son of the headman, Modidima Mannya. Charlotte was born in 1871 in Fort Beaufort, which is now known as the Eastern Cape Province. Her father, John, married Anna Manci, who resided with both of her parents in Fort Beaufort. Charlotte and her younger sister Katie were born in Fort Beaufort, whereas the other children of John and Anna were born in Uitenhage. Charlotte and Katie attended school in both Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth. (p. 4)

This quotation highlights the ongoing debates about where she was born, which, in our opinion, historians and biographers should have addressed long ago. According to some biographers, she was born in the Eastern Cape province, Fort Beaufort, a place which gave birth to many other liberation stalwarts. Some claim that she is originally from the Northern Transvaal, Ga-Matlala/Ramokgopa, in the Polokwane district (formerly Pietersburg). Academically, one of the two contradictory claims in Maxeke's biographies has been supported by the aforementioned numerous arguments (Skota n.d.).

Few academic and research works made use of oral history in the narration of Maxeke's story. One example is a book by Margaret McCord entitled *The calling of Katie Makhanya* (1995). Although this work is not specifically about Maxeke, but about her sister, it makes a huge contribution to understanding her. Most importantly, McCord's work is backed up by oral testimonies. The notion that memories are still a debated phenomenon adds to the complications, the authors in this chapter complement McCord's diligence in developing both the social and political backdrop to reveal and shape Maxeke's life story.

Zubeida Jaffer, an anti-apartheid activist and journalist, provides another fascinating biography of Maxeke in her book *Beauty of the heart: The life and times of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke* (Jaffer 2016) The utilisation of Maxeke's voice in the archives of newspapers such as Umteteli wa Bantu and Abantu-Batho is significant both historically and politically. This is complemented by the works of Maxeke's fellow American graduate, Alfred Bitini (popularly referred to as AB) Xuma, and Sol Plaatje (Xuma 1930). Strong oral testimonies about Maxeke's life, such as her attendance at the 1936 All-African Convention Conference can be found in Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call me woman* (1985). Still unanswered are some details regarding her birth year, with other texts indicating that she was born in 1871 or

1872–1874. The contradictions on Maxeke's birth were complicated in the biography of Katie Makhanya written by McCord in 1995. Here the biographer wrote that Makhanya, the younger sister to Maxeke was born in 1893. This refutes Mweli Skota's date of 1874 (McCord 1995). Milard (1999) locates the date to 07 April 1872. Except for the work by Jaffer, Maxeke's voice is missing in many of the publications about her. This, we argue, justifies the importance of oral history in tracing her voice.

In her groundbreaking PhD thesis on Maxeke, Thozama April (2012) interestingly starts by highlighting the five crucial regions that require intervention in the advancement of women's studies and politics in Africa. She originally questions the formation and participation of women within narratives of South Africa's liberation struggle (April 2012). Her second observation was the identification of the spheres and platforms to hold intellectual debates and the construction of historical knowledge about the 'neglect' of women's contributions to the countries' and continents' liberation struggle. Of significance, as her third reflection, April attempts to trace the 'intellectual trajectory of Charlotte Maxeke as an embodiment of the academic of the intellectual contributions of women in the struggle for liberation in South Africa' (April 2012, p. iii). Furthermore, to intensify the aforementioned, she investigates the role of Maxeke in the different welfare organisations alongside other prominent women in advancing the plight of the African people in South Africa. Fourthly, April's work marks the beginning of a 'theoretical departure from the documentary norms that define contemporary study on women and European liberation movements' (April 2012). Ultimately, the paper examines how the Women Section of the ANC makes use of 'Maxeke's legacy of active intellectual involvement as a crucial component of gender politics' (April 2012, p. iii).

Another academic study on Maxeke was conducted by Kutlwano Cele (2018) at Stellenbosch University. In motivation for this research, Cele (2018) writes:

> The goal of this research was to commemorate, raise awareness of, and further educate Stellenbosch University students who took part in this study regarding Charlotte Maxeke. The study topic was chosen to investigate the many ways in which students reacted to Charlotte Maxeke's narrative, as well as whether knowing this history helped them to contribute to sociopolitical class debates. The study topic was also chosen to identify how students in South Africa comprehend and define race, gender, identity, and citizenship through an analysis of how visual arts might be used to reflect on these variables in the context of South African higher education. The project intended to investigate the story of Charlotte Maxeke, and to determine the extent that which the art-making process impacted reflective learning. (p. ii)

The aforementioned study by Cele contributes to feminist historiography. However, like many other studies conducted on Maxeke, her voice and that of others reflecting on her life story are omitted.

Although being a subject for contestation, on 07 April 1874, in the Polokwane (then Pietersburg) district, Charlotte Makgomo Mannye was born in Ramokgopa. Maxeke never let the harsh customs, that kept girls in the house and community, when she was a little child growing up in the Cape depress her. Regrettably, there is contradictory evidence about this birth year and place where she was born. This section of the chapter affords the readers to re-think the aforementioned impasse reflected on her memoirs. April laments about the quiescence of literature on this. However, she provides a reminder that Maxeke's surviving accounts are limited. Interestingly, she questions the fact that Maxeke has been generally restricted or eliminated from liberation historiography (April 2012, p. 7). Although April focuses on Maxeke's intellectual contributions to the struggle, the shortcoming of her birthplace seems not to have triggered any academic scrutiny. It is also surprising that no single academic work traces Maxeke's narration about this birthplace predicament.

Maxeke was South Africa's first woman to graduate from university (Botes 2020). The fact that she earned that degree overseas was historically significant. In addition to becoming 'the first black woman in South Africa to receive a graduate degree' (Botes 2020; SAHO 2011), Maxeke is renowned for her outstanding contributions to the fight for workers' and women's rights, something that was not fashionable at the time. During her lifetime, she showed an outstanding and unwavering commitment to the cause of peace and justice. In this chapter, the authors will describe how every action Maxeke took, manifested her remarkable intelligence, bravery, resolve, morality, and love for God. However, the authors of this chapter contend that her name was regrettably ignored in South African history.

With her burning desire to be educated and an ambition to tackle the issue of illiteracy in Ga-Ramokgopa, Maxeke focused on self-development and empowerment through education. The controversies about her birthplace and schooling activities caused confusion about her identity. For example, the authors agree in this chapter that her secondary education was obtained in the Eastern Cape province, which was fortunate to have had many mission schools, and laid roots of school education as opposed to the Northern Transvaal. Luckily for Maxeke, her mother came from such an area with a rich history of formal education, Adams College, Fort Hare, and many other schools.

After completing her education, she started working as a teacher in Kimberley. Alongside her sister Katie, she rose to fame as a talented vocalist in the renowned Presbyterian Church Choir. Later, the African Choir, which included Maxeke, her sister Katie, and other African vocalists, was chosen to visit England in 1891–1893. Being obsessed with furthering education, Maxeke wanted to enrol at Wilberforce University in the USA. She was obviously drawn to Wilberforce University because of its black-controlled

worldview, but because of financial limitations, she was unable to fulfil her desire at the time she had wanted. Following the choir's tour of England, the United States would be their next destination. She met Bishop Turner, who played a crucial role in helping her register and gain admission as an undergraduate student at the Wilberforce University, thus, realising her ambition. This was a significant achievement for her. As a student, she became fiercely vocal about colonial repressive laws and embraced human rights advocacy for women's identity. She viewed education as the platform for selflessness. Her educational achievements became an inspiration for other women and amplified the 'voices of the voiceless' women across the globe (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2015).

As early as 1913, African women organised rallies and passed legislation in towns like Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom of which she was instrumental in leading the campaigns against the carrying of passes by women. According to Athambile Masola (2018, pp. 93–111; see also Sol Plaatje 2007, pp. 92–101), Maxeke formed women's organisations, notably the Bantu Women's League (BWL) (SAHO 2011) in 1918 and the National Council of African Women in 1933. These were significant places for African women to become involved in social and political activities outside of the house (SAHO 2011). These clubs, along with several other groups established by other faiths, served as forums for women to congregate and discuss issues that felt relevant to their lives at the time. However, Masola highlighted Maxeke's voices in these campaigns despite having perused *The Bantu World* in conducting research. All this information, as highlighted above, indicates the relevance of oral history in closing such void in the historicisation of the roles played by the likes of Maxeke. The aforementioned examples of her involvement in politics, debunk the myth that men are by nature 'legitimate makers of history' and could pronounce the direction of history writing through masculine and patriarchal tendencies. She felt that 'women history' and the emancipation of women in South Africa could not be left in the hands of men. Evident of this was her leadership as exhibited during the campaigns for the abolition of pass laws.

To understand the aforementioned clearly, Goolam Vahed (2015) made the following observation:

> The historiography of the national liberation struggle in South Africa is dominated by the feats if heroic male activists, in which women's activities and the impact of the anti-apartheid struggle on women and families are largely occluded… Women's involvement in politics was subordinated to the political imperatives and agendas of men with the result that women's issues were neglected. (p. 129)

However, Advocate Modidima Mannya (2021) viewed Maxeke's legacy differently from what has been historically documented. From his analysis, published in *City Press* on 21 March 2021, he explains how the book by Zubeida Jaffer and the PhD thesis by Thozama April properly characterised the issues

of the matriarch. Mannya applauded the work done by these two writers. Conversely, he firstly laments about the narrow portrayal of Maxeke as the first black woman to obtain a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree. This, Mannya argues, waters down some of her achievements. Secondly, he challenges the one-sided claim of her belonging to the ANC. The honour bestowed on her of *Isithwalandwe* should not be misconstrued as meaning that her activism was only within the ANC. He contends that Maxeke's exposure and contribution transcend the ANC's politics. Thus, he views this as a distortion of her activism. For Mannya, it was problematic to view her within the confines of being a gender activist and an educated black woman. According to Mannya, Maxeke was a prolific activist, a notable Pan-Africanist, and a strong, well-liked person who was even respected by those who oppressed her. Her life history research demonstrates that she was a true trailblazer and astute leader. It is rare to see anything spoken about her position as a mother who practices Christianity, and her accurate assessment of what Christians need to be and do. In his final remarks, Mannya argues that the nation's history should be documented with the future generations in mind; thus, the misrepresentations of people like Maxeke in history sources should be frowned upon.

From the aforementioned, Mannya raises important questions of academic significance in dealing with the legacy of Maxeke and how she is portrayed in historical texts. The misconceptions of her involvement in politics and social strata open other debates on her life and provide another food for thought in looking at Maxeke's history and legacy. This calls for more research to be conducted on Maxeke to dispel the distortions highlighted by Mannya.

Extrapolation of data

Conducting feminist oral history in South Africa presents certain unique challenges, such as the need to navigate issues of memory, trauma, and power dynamics. The information used in this section is sources, narratives and discussions in public domain and aimed at further exposing the ideas of an inclusive history on Maxeke's life story. The data gathered serve as valuable historical sources, attempting to drive the historical debate forward. It complements the available literature on Maxeke's legacy and contains valuable accounts that support the discussions in this chapter.

In 2021, the South African government declared the year as 'The year of Charlotte Maxeke'. This coincided with 150 years of her birth if one considers the birth year as 1871. In an interview conducted by SAHRA (2021) with Thozama April (2021) in her capacity as a senior curator at the University of Fort Hare explained:

> To talk about Maxeke one should first understand the worldview of the time when she was born. Maxeke was born on the 7 April 1871 in Blinkwater which

> is situated 25 kilometers from Fort Beaufort here in the Eastern Cape. Her father did not own the land. They were labour tenants… She spent the first five years of her life here together with her younger sister Katie Mannye who later became Katie Makhanya… Her father had journeyed from then what was called Transvaal, Mr John Kgope Mannye would have arrived here in the Eastern Cape in the 1860s. This was the time of major rail construction. It was also the time of the construction of connecting roads that they were building in the Eastern Cape. So, there was deliberate plan on the part of the Cape government to enlist people from the north to work especially in the rail construction. That was when they were beginning to make the connecting railway lines between what was then Port Elizabeth and Kimberley. So, Maxeke was then born at the time when there was great migration and movement of the people… We are grateful on the archival material that shed light on Maxeke's birthplace. In an interview she did in 1891 when she was on a tour in England, she was asked about her birth. She sighted as having said she was born on the 7 April 1871 in Blinkwater. (SAHRA 2021, n.p.)

In the same interview to commemorate the 150 anniversaries of Maxeke's birth, Juliet Mannye, a granddaughter of Maxeke alluded:

> I am the fifth generation in the Mannye's family tree. She is my grandmother… She was one of the six siblings, there were three girls and three boys. She schooled in the Eastern Cape, and they subsequently moved to Kimberley because her father was actually en route to Kimberley… She and her other sister Katie joined what was called the Jubilee Choir which was fortunate to be recognised and to be sent to England. They subsequently visited America after the England trip. The America trip unfortunately didn't go well because apparently the organisers left them stranded in America. That is how she made contacts with the African Methodist Episcopal Bishop and landed up with a bursary and get her education at the Wilberforce. She then got the BSc that we talk about and that she was the first African woman to obtain. (SAHRA 2021, n.p.)

Juliet Mannya noted the following about Maxeke's educational influences:

> At Wilberforce, she met her husband Dr Marshall Maxeke. They continued the missionary work in Limpopo, Botlokoa were her father John Kgope originated. A Chief there assisted them to build a school but something that never materialised… In South Africa, the couple was instrumental in the founding of the Wilberforce Institute in Evaton. (SAHRA 2021)

According to April, Wilberforce had a great influence on Maxeke that could be translated to her political and educational legacy that reverberated within the country and elsewhere around the globe. April alludes that:

> She graduated from Wilberforce in 1901 and returned to South Africa in 1902. She was influential in advocating for the founding of the schools. She was also influential in the founding of the AME [*African Methodist Episcopal*] Church schools where she taught and worked with the wife of the bishop of the then AME in Southern Africa… By the way, schools were never something thought of that Africans should have. They were only encouraged to do manual labour. The likes of Maxeke and others had a different view of education. Her philosophy of education was based on the idea that it should allow people to think freely and be able to do things with their bare hands. Outside the circles of the institutions or the schools, she was also introduced to an amazing group of African American

> Women AME Church… Maxeke and others came from a movement amongst Americans who had defeated the odds rising from slavery, acquiring education, being teachers and leading in their various capacities in their communities. Such were various influences on Maxeke. (SAHRA 2021)

The aforementioned indicates that her role within the church could not be left unnoticed. This was confirmed by Joan Millard Jackson (2008) who wrote that one of Maxeke's mother's cousins, Mangela Mokone, was an ordained Methodist Minister and later left this church to establish the Ethiopian Church. There is evidence that Maxeke used to correspond with Mokone whilst she was still at Wilberforce. She wrote numerous letters to her family and such letters were read to the family by Mokone. Jackson (2008) further elaborates that:

> On 17 March 1896, Mokone and the leaders of the Ethiopian Church resolved at their Conference to invite the American church to amalgamate with them and begin a work in South Africa. The House of Bishops and the Missionary Board of the AMEC [*African Methodist Episcopal Church*] in America agreed, and this was followed by a visit by Bishop Turner in 1898. Among the members of the new church were men for whom Charlotte had arranged scholarships, namely, J.Z. Tantsi and Marshall (she married Marshall in 1903). Charlotte also joined the AMEC when she returned to South Africa in 1901. The South African branch of AMEC was formally established in 1898 during a visit by Bishop Turner, an American bishop. All the bishops for the new denomination were sent from America and Mokone was only recognised as a founder and elder. (pp. 4–5)

Highlighting the role Maxeke played in educational and other societal issues, Nhlanhla Noelette Nduna-Watson, former student at the Wilberforce Institute and later principal, highlighted:

> I was a student at the Wilberforce Institute in 1968–1969. As an alumnus, I am fortunate to be associated with the Wilberforce Institute and now reconstituted Wilberforce Community College. The Wilberforce Institute has contributed immensely to the Vaal at large and even beyond the boundaries of South Africa. We had students coming from the East Rand and the West Rand, Pretoria and as far as the then Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia (Malawi and Zimbabwe) as we know them today. We had people like Kamuzu Banda and Joshua Nkomo who also attended this great institution. I guess maybe the values of Charlotte Maxeke drove them to come to this great institution… I was sent to Wilberforce because my family belonged to the AME Church. The values of the AME Church were important. (SAHRA 2021)

She further added:

> Even our motto says, 'Only the Best is good enough'. Only the best was expected from us as students. I belonged to the National Council of African Women which was established by Maxeke in 1937 as she was the first president of the National Council of African Women… Because of the issue of patriarchy, women, and girls' issues until today are not given the necessary support. There was an oppression of women in our country. If you listen to some of the quotes that Maxeke used to say was: 'When you go up, lift other women up… As you engage with other women, give them skills also as your rise from them to rise too'.

> Here her legacy made some of us as young women to join the National Council of African Women because we wanted to be part of working with communities, working with young girls and women in particular. (SAHRA 2021)

As to the other influences on Maxeke political life, April explains:

> The question of land dispossession and that her father did not own land was also a major influence on her. Patterns of movements and labour recruitments, all these had a major influence on her. Another influence in Maxeke's life would have been a Christian background as both parents were Christians. Her first journey across the Atlantic when she was part of the African Choir that went to London, also had an influence on her. She met a British Women Lobby Group's advocate. That would have been an influence on her at the time when the families' movements in Britain received the first kind of recognition and women allowed to vote. (SAHRA 2021)

On the preservation of Maxeke's legacy, Thulasizwe Makhanya remembered:

> I am part of the team that created what we call Charlotte Mannya Maxeke Institute. This is an entity that was created by the three families that are connected in the name of Charlotte Maxeke. The first family being Maxeke, the second being Mannya and the last being the family of the Makhanyas. Charlotte Maxeke would be defined differently by different people in this country and the world. She was this fearless person who fought patriarchy head-on when it was not fashionable. In academia, she was a towering figure. When it was not fashionable, she had her own ideas on her own idealist society. When we started this journey, it was four years ago with the idea of starting an institute that would preserve her legacy. We need to preserve the legacy of this icon and highlight her achievements and history. We have what we call the Charlotte Maxeke's week on the 7 April. Other programs around Charlotte Maxeke's week include the visits to her last home in Kliptown. There is her famous quote, 'This work is not for yourselves – Kill that spirit of self, and do not live above your people but live with them. If you can rise, bring someone with you'... One of the things which will assist in preserving the legacy of this towering figure, we are converting her home in Kliptown to be a museum and an interpretation centre that will have a collection of material that will be linked to her. It will also be a resources centre for the community to learn more about their icon. (SAHRA 2021)

In her presentation as a guest speaker on *The Life Legacy of Charlotte Maxeke*, Getrude Shope on 30 September 2015, the-then Member of Parliament (MP) from the ANC stated (inaugural lecture 2015):

> She was a woman and a mother. We believed that women had a very big role to play by influencing people around us. They don't have to be your sisters but as long as they are women, we should always like to come together and discuss our issues which brings us together. Charlotte was such a person. She took note of the kind of life that she lived in South Africa. By that time our continent was very 'dark' as they put it. We were at the disadvantage. We needed somebody with courage to go through all these rough waters to start preparing things for the world at large. She fought and mixed with other women who were in the churches. She would meet with people in the communities to discuss issues. In that sense, she would bring people together. (Shope 2015)

The shared narratives above indicate how Maxeke was viewed by family members and those in the academic space. This information assists in capturing the essence of what is required in protecting Maxeke's legacy. It is imperative that this kind of women's history should be preserved and protected at all costs to avoid falling into a trap of perpetuation of patriarchal history and consciously silencing the voices of women.

Despite existing literature and narratives shared, some newspaper and magazine articles continue to interrogate the legacy and interpretation of Maxeke. At some point, these debates elicited somewhat 'harsh' contributions in attempts to position Maxeke in the appropriate space in the academia. However, these attempts result from some authors' public statements. One such example was what Panashe Chigumadzi published in the *Sunday Times* (2021) challenging Athambile Masola's article entitled 'ANC can't co-opt Maxeke'. In this article, Masola disputed the widely held theory in political circles and academia that the BWL (which was established by Maxeke) was a forerunner of today's ANC Women's League. Challenging Masola on this, Chigumadzi (2021) stated:

> To state outright, it is not clear exactly Dr Masola's understanding of the word 'forerunner' is nor her understanding of my use of it. As a literary scholar, the tools of basic textual analysis should have made it clear to Masola that where I referred to the ANC saying, 'then named the South African Native National Congress in 1912', I referred to the ANC Women's League(s) … forerunner, the Bantu Women's League. This was to make clear that the BWL was not simply renamed the ANCWL. The word 'forerunner' is used to index the complexity of historical processes that do not lend themselves to a neat teleology of nationalist progress. (p. 19).

The aforementioned is an indication of how robust debates could be about the legacy on Maxeke and what interpretations people have about her.

Conclusion

Maxeke was amongst the early intellectuals and leaders of note from the South African people. As an intellectual of her times, she was extensively involved in socio-political matters affecting the African majority in South Africa, which we argue was distinguished by opposing theoretical interpretations of the state, power, and oppression confronting the African population (April 2012). As shown with the interpretations provided in this chapter, contestations exist regarding the preservation of her legacy and how that can influence the current generation of African women leaders. Thus, robust debates about her legacy should be undertaken at the scholarly level including oral history as a methodological consideration and addressing the existing gaps in her legacy. Since embarking on the journey to complete this chapter, we have realised that Maxeke continues to have an afterlife, as if she were still alive in this country. This chapter highlighted

few such developments. Although Maxeke has been memorialised in other ways, from formal to informal, the chapter laments about the lack of her voice and those of others in the writings concluded about her. The chapter attempted to address that hiatus in her scholarship.

Oral history as a method should capture significant milestones in the evolution of her life history. Furthermore, using Maxeke as a case study, it ought to address feminist agitations such as social and economic contestations, lack of cultural identity, gender stereotypes, and class political consciousness. If these are successfully addressed, women's voices will be amplified with gender arguments being advanced and women's solidarity at all fronts.

References

Chapter 1

Bhebhe, S & Ngoepe, M 2021, 'A forgotten past is the past that is yet to be: Evaluation of oral history programme of the Oral History Association of South Africa', *Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 60–78. https://doi.org/10.4314/esarjo.v40i1.5

Denis, P & Ntsimane, R 2008, *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Doloriert, C & Sambrook, S 2012, 'Organisational autoethnography', *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 83–95. https://doi.org/10.1108/20466741211220688

Ellingson, LL & Ellis, C 2013, 'Autoethnography as constructionist project', in JA Holstein & JF Gubrium (eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research*, The Guilford Press, London, pp. 445–465.

Field, S 2008, 'Turning up the volume: dialogues about memory create oral histories', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 60, no. 2, pp. 175–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582470802416393

Field, S 2013, 'Through the limits: Trauma, memory and Rwandan refugees in post-apartheid Cape Town', in P Opondo & C Landman (eds.), *Culture, memory and trauma: Proceedings of the Third National Oral History Conference*, 07–10 November 2006, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C 2002, 'Journeying with stories', in P Denis & J Worthington (eds.), *The power of oral history: Memory, healing and development. XIIth International Oral History Conference*, 24–27 June, Pietermaritzburg, Sinomlando Project, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 1946–1960.

Landman, C (ed.) 2013a, *Oral history: Heritage and identity: Proceedings of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Annual National Oral History Conference, White River, Mpumalanga (2010), Mahikeng, North-West (2011), Mangaung, Free State (2012)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2013b, *Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled: Proceedings of the Fifth and Sixth Annual National Oral History Conference*, *East London, Eastern Cape (2008), Cape Town, Western Cape (2009)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2024, *Celebrating 20 years of OHASA: Reflecting on our oral history journey*, Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, Pretoria.

Magwaza, T 2013, 'Do women tell stories differently? Exploring the Zondi women 89–96 of Greytown', in P Opondo & C Landman (eds.), *Culture, memory and trauma: Proceedings of the Third National Oral History Conference*, 07–10 November, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Moloi, T 2013, 'Oral testimonies by former members of the Azanian National Youth Unity (AZANYU): The sayable and unsayable in an oral history interview', in C Landman (ed.), *Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled. Proceedings of the Fifth and Sixth Annual National Oral History Conference*, *East London, Eastern Cape (2008), Cape Town, Western Cape (2009)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria, pp. 1–17.

Opondo, P & Landman, C (eds.) 2013, *Culture, memory and trauma: Proceedings of the Third National Oral History Conference*, 07–10 November 2006, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Unpublished sources

Draft Report & Minutes of Oral History Conference held in Pretoria at the Manhattan Hotel on 25–28 October 2004.

Minutes of the Oral History Intérims Committee, 25 February 2005. Obtained from the private collection of Philippe Denis on 10 May 2022 via email.

National Archives and Records Service of South Africa 2004, 'Invitation to an Oral History Conference (25–28 October 2004)'. Signed Mandy Gilder, Deputy National Archivist.

National Oral History Programme (NOHP) 2001. Obtained from the private collection of Philippe Denis on 10 May 2022 via email.

Ndlovu, C 2003, 'Oral music programmes in South Africa', unpublished paper presented at the Citra Pre-Conference Workshop, 13–17 October 2003, Pretoria.

First National Oral History Conference 2004, 'Programme', Manhattan Hotel, Pretoria, Gauteng.

Second Annual National Oral History Conference 2005, 'Programme', Birchwood Executive Hotel, Boksburg, Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Third National Oral History Conference 2006, 'Programme', Akani Richards Hotel, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal.

Fourth National Oral History Conference, 2007, 'Programme', Ranch Hotel, Polokwane, Limpopo.

Fifth National Oral History Conference, 2008, 'Programme', Regent Hotel, East London, Eastern Cape.

Internet sources

https://ohasa.org.za, accessed on 10 May 2022.

Interviews

Denis, Philippe, e-mail interview, 8 May 2022, denis@ukzn.ac.za,

Magatama, Sekgothe, interview, 22 April 2022, Kimberley,

Ngcobo, Khanyi, interview, 10 May 2022, telephonic,

Ntsimane, Radikobo, interview, 22 April 2022, Kimberley.

Chapter 2

Bhebhe, S & Chirume, A 2014, 'The role of archives in the documentation of oral traditions, a case of the San people in Tsholotsho and Plumtree', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 56–69.

Bhebhe, S & Ngoepe, M 2021, 'A forgotten past is the past that is yet to be: Evaluation of oral history programme of the Oral History Association of South Africa', *Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 60–78. https://doi.org/10.4314/esarjo.v40i.5

Bredell, 2014, *The Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902): A historical overview*. (PowerPoint presentation), presented at the *Eleventh National History Conference*, 24–26 September, Dullstroom, Mpumalanga, South Africa.

Denis, P & Worthington, J (eds.) 2002, 'The power of oral history: Memory, healing and development', in *XIIth International Oral History Conference*, 24–27 June, Pietermaritzburg, Sinomlando Project, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Doloriert, C & Sambrook, S 2012, 'Organisational autoethnography', *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 83–95. https://doi.org/10.1108/20466741211220688

Ellingson, LL & Ellis, C 2013, 'Autoethnography as constructionist project', in JA Holstein & JF Gubrium (eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research*, The Guilford Press, London, pp. 445–465.

Ellis, C, Adams, TE & Bochner, AP 2011, 'Autoethnography: An overview', *Historical Social Research*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 273–290.

Landman, C 2012, 'Lindiwe Myeza: Unfreezing the walking voice', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 1–8.

Landman, C (ed.) 2013a, *Oral history: Heritage and identity: Proceedings of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Annual National Oral History Conference, White River, Mpumalanga (2010), Mahikeng, North-West province (2011), Mangaung, Free State (2012)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2013b, *Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled: Proceedings of the Fifth and Sixth Annual National Oral History Conference*, *East London, Eastern Cape (2008) & Cape Town, Western Cape (2009)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C 2015, 'Youth on the margins as agents of change? The call for the opening of mines in Dullstroom-Emnotweni based on the Freedom Charter (1955)', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 156–168. https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/237

Opondo, P & Landman, C (eds.) 2013, *Culture, memory and trauma: Proceedings of the Third National Oral History Conference*, 07–10 November 2006, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Oral History Journal of South Africa (OHJSA) 2013, C Landman (ed.), vol. 1, no. 1, viewed 28 February 2025, viewed 28 February 2024. <https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/OHJSA/issue/view/70>

Oral History Journal of South Africa (OHJSA) 2014, C Landman (ed.), vol. 2, no. 1, viewed 28 February 2025, viewed 28 February 2024. <https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/OHJSA/issue/view/69>

Oral History Journal of South Africa (OHJSA) 2016, C Landman (ed.), vol. 4, no. 1, viewed 28 February 2025. <https://unisapressjournals.co.za/index.php/OHJSA/issue/view/144>

Tshamano, HS & Mahosi, TN 2013, 'The influence of freedom songs on the escalation of witch-hunting and burning in the Venda homeland, 1989–1995', in *Proceedings of the Tenth National Oral History Conference*, 25–27 September, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, pp. 31–45.

Unpublished sources

National Oral History Programme (NOHP) 2001, Obtained from the private collection of Philippe Denis on 10 May 2022 via email.

First National History Conference 2004, 'Programme', Manhattan Hotel, Pretoria, Gauteng.

Second Annual National History Conference 2005, 'Programme', Birchwood Executive Hotel, Boksburg, Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Third National History Conference 2006, 'Programme', Akani Richards Hotel, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal.

Fourth National History Conference 2007, 'Programme', Ranch Hotel, Polokwane, Limpopo.

Fifth National History Conference 2008, 'Programme', Regent Hotel, East London, Eastern Cape.

Sixth National History Conference 2009, 'Programme', River Club, Observatory, Cape Town, Western Cape.

Seventh National History Conference 2010, 'Programme', Protea Hotel, The Winkler, White River, Mpumalanga.

Eighth National History Conference 2011, 'Programme', Mmabatho Palms Hotel, Mahikeng, North West.

Ninth National History Conference 2012, 'Programme', Black Mountain Hotel, Thaba Nchu, Free State.

Tenth National History Conference 2013, 'Programme', Horseshow Inn, Kimberley, Northern Cape.

Eleventh National History Conference 2014, 'Programme', Cedarwoods Park Hotel, Johannesburg, Gauteng.

Twelfth National History Conference 2015, 'Programme', KwaZulu-Natal.

Interview

Denis, Philippe, e-mail interview, 08 May 2022, denis@ukzn.ac.za.

Chapter 3

Archary, KK (ed.) 2018, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume One, Coffee Table Publication Series, OHASA, Pretoria.

Archary, KK (ed.) 2019, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Two, Coffee Table Publication Series, OHASA, Pretoria.

Archary, KK (ed.) 2020, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Three, Coffee Table Publication Series, OHASA, Pretoria.

Archary, KK (ed.) 2021, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Four, Coffee Table Publication Series, OHASA, Pretoria.

Archary, KK (ed.) 2022, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Five, Coffee Table Publication Series, OHASA, Pretoria.

Bhebhe, S & Ngoepe, M 2021, 'A forgotten past is the past that is yet to be: Evaluation of oral history programme of the Oral History Association of South Africa', *Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives*, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 60–78. https://doi.org/10.4314/esarjo.v40i.5

Denis, P & Ntsimane, R (eds.) 2008, *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottsville.

HTS Theological Studies 2023, *Journal information*, viewed 26 March 2023. <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/pages/view/journal-information>

Landman, C (ed.) 2013a, *Oral history: Heritage and identity: Proceedings of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Annual National Oral History Conference, White River, Mpumalanga (2010), Mahikeng, North-West province (2011), Mangaung, Free State (2012)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2013b, *Oral history: Representing the hidden, the untold and the veiled: Proceedings of the Fifth and Sixth Annual National Oral History Conference*, *East London, Eastern Cape (2008) & Cape Town, Western Cape (2009)*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2016a, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 4, no. 1, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2016b, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 4, no. 2, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2017a, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 5, no. 1, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2017b, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 5, no. 2, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2018a, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 6, no. 1, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2018b, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 6, no. 2, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2019a, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 7, no. 1, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C (ed.) 2019b, *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 7, no. 2, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Landman, C & Mokgoatšana, S (eds.) 2020, 'Special collection: Social memory studies', *HTS Theological Studies*, vol. 76, no. 4, p. 6116. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.6116

Landman, C & Mokgoatšana, S (eds.) 2021a, 'Special collection: Social memory studies', *HTS Theological Studies*, vol. 77, no. 2, p. 6323. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i2.6323

Landman, C & Mokgoatšana, S (eds.) 2021b, *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual National Oral History Conference: The world in troubled times: Oral history challenges and opportunities, vol. 2*, 13–15 October 2021, Clarens, Free State, South Africa, OHASA/NIHSS, Pretoria.

Landman, C & Mokgoatšana, S (eds.) 2022, 'Special collection: Social memory studies', *HTS Theological Studies*, vol. 78, no. 3, p. 7528. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i3.7528

Minutes of the Oral History Interim Committee, 25 February 2005, obtained from the private collection of Philippe Denis on 10 May 2022 via email.

Opondo, P & Landman, C (eds.) 2013, *Culture, memory and trauma: Proceedings of the Third National Oral History Conference*, 07–10 November, Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria.

Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) 2023, *1st Call for Papers 20th Annual National Oral History Conference 2023*, viewed 01 August 2023. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/1st-CALL-for-PAPERS-OHASA-Conference-2023-1-2.pdf>

Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) n.d., *We promote and facilitate the recording of oral history in South Africa*, viewed 10 May 2022. <https://ohasa.org.za>

Unpublished sources

Call for papers, 20th Annual National Oral History Conference 2023, author's private collection.

National Archives and Records Service of South Africa 2004, 'Invitation to an Oral History Conference (25–28 October 2004)'. Signed Mandy Gilder, Deputy National Archivist.

National Oral History Programme (NOHP) 2001, obtained from the private collection of Philippe Denis on 10 May 2022 via email.

Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) 2023, '1st Call for Papers: 20th Annual National Oral History Conference 2023', 30 March.

First National History Conference 2004, 'Programme', Manhattan Hotel, Pretoria, Gauteng.

Thirteenth National History Conference 2016, 'Programme', Thohoyandou Indoor Sports Centre, Thohoyandou, Limpopo.

Fourteenth National History Conference 2017, 'Programme', Dan's Country Lodge, Mthatha, Eastern Cape.

Fifteenth National History Conference 2018, 'Programme', Milnerton, Cape Town, Western Cape.

Sixteenth National History Conference 2019, 'Programme', Steve Tshwete Banquet Hall, Middelburg, Mpumalanga.

Seventeenth National History Conference 2020, 'Programme', Thaba Legae, Rustenburg, North-West.

Eighteenth National History Conference 2021, 'Programme', Protea Hotel, Clarens, Free State.

Nineteenth National History Conference 2022, 'Programme', Thabo Moorosi Multi-Purpose Centre, Kuruman, Northern Cape.

Chapter 4

Asante, MK 2003, *Afrocentricity, the theory of social change*, African American Images, Chicago, p. 3.

Babou, CA 2010, 'Decolonization or national liberation: Debating the end of British colonial rule in Africa', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 632, no. 1, pp. 41–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716210378647

Bulhan, HA 2015, 'Stages of colonialism in Africa: From occupation of land to occupation of being', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 239–256. https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v3i1.143

Chanda-Kapata, P, Campbell, S & Zarowsky, C 2012, 'Developing a national health research system: Participatory approaches to legislative, institutional and networking dimensions in Zambia', *Health Research Policy and Systems*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1186/1478-4505-10-17

Chawane, M 2016, 'The development of afrocentricity: A historical survey', *Yesterday and Today*, vol. 16, pp. 78–99. https://doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2016/n16a5

Chilisa, B 2012, 'Postcolonial indigenous research paradigms', in L Fargotstein, CL Production, G Mahindra & M Ponce (eds.), *Indigenous research methodologies*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, pp. 98–127.

Dei, GS 2012, 'Indigenous anti-colonial knowledge as "heritage knowledge" for promoting Black/African education in diasporic contexts', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 102–119.

Early, G, Moses, WJ, Wilson, L & Lefkowitz, MR 1994, 'Symposium: Historical roots of Afrocentrism', *Academic Questions*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 44–54. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02683155

Fanon, F 2008, *Black skin, white masks*, Grove Press, New York.

Gardner, H 2021, *Disciplined mind: What all students should understand*, Simon & Schuster, New York.

Hjørland, B 2005, 'Empiricism, rationalism and positivism in library and information science', *Journal of Documentation*, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 130–155. https://doi.org/10.1108/00220410510578050

Iguisi, O & Igbinomwanhia, OR 2019, 'Indigenous knowledge systems', in M Khosrow-Pour (ed.), *Advanced methodologies and technologies in library science, information management, and scholarly inquiry*, IGI Global, Hershey, pp. 344–355. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7659-4.ch027

Kadi-Hanifi, K & Keenan, J 2022, 'The professional doctorate as a mode and model of activism and resistance', in L Saunders & D Trotman (eds.), *The professional doctorate in education: Activism, transformation and practice*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, p. 183.

Keane, M, Khupe, C & Seehawer, M 2017, 'Decolonising methodology: Who benefits from indigenous knowledge research?', *Educational Research for Social Change*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 12–24. https://doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2017/v6i1a2

Keikelame, MJ & Swartz, L 2019, 'Decolonising research methodologies: Lessons from a qualitative research project, Cape Town, South Africa', *Global Health Action*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 1561175. https://doi.org/10.1080/16549716.2018.1561175

Kovach, M 2010, 'Conversation method in indigenous research', *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 40–48. https://doi.org/10.7202/1069060ar

Kovach, M 2021, *Indigenous methodologies: Characteristics, conversations, and contexts*, University of Toronto Press, Saskatchewan.

Kugara, SL 2017, Witchcraft belief and criminal responsibility: A case study of selected areas in South Africa and Zimbabwe, PhD thesis, University of Venda, Thohoyandou.

Kugara, SL, Mdhluli, TD, Daswa, TJ, Matshidze, PE & Ramavhunga, NE 2021, 'The significance of multicultural methodologies on African indigenous knowledge research', in N Mthembu (ed.), *Ethical research approaches to indigenous knowledge education*, IGI Global, Hershey, pp. 83–109. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-1249-4.ch004

Lawrence, B & Dua, E 2005, 'Decolonizing antiracism', *Social Justice*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 120–143.

Lee, J 2009, 'Decolonising Māori narratives: Pūrākau as a method', *MAI Review*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 1–12.

Madima, TJ 2021, Exploring the cultural heritage preservation through digitisation: A case study of traditional children's games in Limpopo Province, South Africa, PhD thesis, University of Venda, Thohoyandou.

Martin, KL & West, EJ 2018, 'Sankofa, or "go back and fetch it": Merging genealogy and Africana studies – An introduction', *Genealogy*, vol. 2, no. 46, pp. 1–4. https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy2040046

Mbembe, A 2016, 'The society of enmity', *Radical Philosophy*, vol. 200, no. 1, pp. 23–35.

Mdhluli, TD 2022, An examination of the role of traditional medicine in primary health care in Bushbuckridge Region, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, PhD thesis, University of Venda, Thohoyandou.

Mdhluli, TD, Mokgoatšana, S, Kugara, SL & Vuma, L 2021, 'Knowledge management: Preserving, managing and sharing indigenous knowledge through digital library', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, vol. 77, no. 2, p. 7. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i2.6795

Merriam, SB, Johnson-Bailey, J, Lee, MY, Kee, Y, Ntseane, G & Muhamad, M 2001, 'Power and positionality: Negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, vol. 20, no. 5, pp. 405–416. https://doi.org/10.1080/02601370110059537

Muhammad, M, Wallerstein, N, Sussman, AL, Avila, M, Belone, L & Duran, B 2015, 'Reflections on researcher identity and power: The impact of positionality on community based participatory research (CBPR) processes and outcomes', *Critical Sociology*, vol. 41, nos. 7–8, pp. 1045–1063. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920513516025

Nkrumah, K 1965, *Neo-colonialism*, Nelson, London.

Parkhe, A 1998, 'Understanding trust in international alliances', *Journal of World Business*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 219–240. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-9516(99)80072-8

Powell, I 2013, 'Can you see me? Experiences of nurses working night shift in Australian regional hospitals: A qualitative case study', *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, vol. 69, no. 10, pp. 2172–2184. https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12079

Ranger, T 2010, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in R Grinker, SC Lubkemann & CB Steiner (eds.), *Perspectives on Africa: A reader in culture, history, and representation*, 2nd edn., Wiley, Hoboken, pp. 450–461.

Risiro, J 2021, 'Integrating indigenous knowledge on environmental management practices in the teaching of geography in secondary schools: A case of Chimanimani Community in Zimbabwe', in C van der Merwe (ed.), *Sustainable development in Africa*, Springer, Cham, pp. 109–129. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-74693-3_7

Sanoff, H 1999, *Community participation methods in design and planning*, John Wiley & Sons, New York.

Sewpaul, V, Kreitzer, L & Raniga, T 2021, *The tensions between culture and human rights: Emancipatory social work and Afrocentricity in a global world*, University of Calgary Press, Calgary.

Shopes, L 2005, *What is oral history?* From the Making Sense of Evidence series on *History Matters: The US Survey* on the web, viewed 06 March 2024. <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/oral>

Smith, LT 2021, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York.

Tagicakiverata, IW & Nilan, P 2018, 'Veivosaki-yaga: A culturally appropriate indigenous research method in Fiji', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 545–556. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2017.1422293

Wa Thiong'o, N 1986, 'The language of African literature', in D Brydon (ed.), *Postcolonialism,* Routledge, Abingdon-on-Thames, pp. 514–540.

Wilson, D, Mikahere-Hall, A & Sherwood, J 2021, 'Using indigenous kaupapa Māori research methodology with constructivist grounded theory: Generating a theoretical explanation

of indigenous women's realities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, vol. 25, no. 3, pp. 375–390. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2021.1897756

Chapter 5

Armitage, S & Gluck, SB 1998, 'Reflections on women's oral history: An exchange', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 1–11. https://doi.org/10.2307/3347083

Bhebhe, S 2015, 'Overview of the oral history programme at the national archives of Zimbabwe: Implications for nation building and social cohesion', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 43–56. https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/343

British Museum n.d., *The challenges of digital preservation*, viewed 03 May 2023. <https://www.bl.uk/digital-preservationchallenges#>

Corbera, E, Anguelovski, I, Honey-Rosés, J & Ruiz-Mallén, I 2020, 'Academia in the time of COVID-19: Towards an ethics of care', *Planning Theory & Practice*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 191–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2020.1757891

Coullie, LJ 2011, 'Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa', *Life Writing*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 458–462. https://doi.org/10.1080/14484528.2011.619722

De Sousa Santos, B 2007, 'Beyond abyssal thinking: From global lines to ecologies of knowledges', *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, pp. 45–89.

De Sousa Santos, B 2018, *The end of the cognitive empire: The coming of age of epistemologies of the South*, Duke University Press, Durham.

Denis, P 2007, 'The ethics of oral history in South Africa', *ESARBICA Journal: Journal of the Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives*, vol. 26, no. 1, p. 31017. https://doi.org/10.4314/esarjo.v26i1.31017

Denis, P, Houser, S & Ntsimane, R 2011, *A journey towards healing: Stories of people with multiple woundedness in Kwa-Zulu Natal*, Cluster Publications, Dorpspruit.

Dombo, S 2019, 'Zimbabwe's "capturing a fading national memory project": An evaluation and reconsideration', *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 55–73. https://doi.org/10.18820/24150509/SJCH44.v2.3

Field, S 2012, *Oral history, community, and displacement: Imagining memories in post-apartheid South Africa*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Grosfoguel, R 2007, 'The epistemic decolonial turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, nos. 2–3, pp. 211–223. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162514

Grosfoguel, R 2013, 'The structure of knowledge in westernized universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century', *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 85–86.

Landman, C 2013, 'The (de) construction of religious identity in oral history research in South Africa', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 1–7.

Leavy, P 2011, *Oral history: Understanding qualitative research*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Leh, A 2000, 'Problems of archiving oral history interviews. The example of the archive "German Memory"', *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 1, no. 3, art. 8, n.p. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.3.1025

Mbembe, A 2001, *On the postcolony*, University of California Press, Berkley.

Mushonga, M 2017, Government, community and the university in Africa today: The case of the National University of Lesotho, PhD thesis, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein.

Mushonga, M & Seloma, TM 2018, 'Women's voices, women's lives: Qwaqwa women's experiences of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras', *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 196–214. https://doi.org/10.18820/24150509/JCH43.v1.10

Ranger, TO 1995, *Are we not also men? The Samkange family and African politics in Zimbabwe 1920–64*, Baobab, Harare.

Samkange, S 1975, *The mourned one*, Heinemann, London.

Spirkin, A 1983, 'Dialectical materialism', in TJ Blakeley (ed.), *Themes in Soviet Marxist philosophy*, Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 5–47.

Thompson, L 1975, *Survival in two worlds: Moshoeshoe of Lesotho 1786–1870*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Thomson, A 2007, 'Four paradigm transformations in oral history', *The Oral History Review*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 49–70. https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2007.34.1.49

Vahed, G 2015, 'Women and national liberation in South Africa: An oral history perspective', *South Asian Diaspora*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 129–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2015.1007635

Van Onselen, C 1997, *The seed is mine: The life of Kas Maine, a South African sharecropper, 1894–1985*, David Philip, Cape Town.

Zimbabwe National Archives 2018, *Oral History Programme,* viewed 28 February 2025. <https://www.archives.gov.zw/index.php/sections/2018-08-27-16-06-03/oral-history-programme>

Chapter 6

Allison, HE 1990, *Kant's theory of freedom*, Cambridge University Press, San Diego.

Anbalakan, K 2016, 'Objectivity in history: An analysis', *KEMANUSIAAN: The Asian Journal of Humanities*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 23–31.

Barrett, LF 2017, *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain*, Pan Macmillan, London.

Baumeister, RF 1987, 'How the self became a problem: A psychological review of historical research', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 52, no. 1, p. 163. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.52.1.163

Beard, MR 2017, 'Re-thinking oral history – A study of narrative performance', *Rethinking History*, vol. 21, no. 4, pp. 529–548. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2017.1333285

Begg, CB & Berlin, JA 1988, 'Publication bias: A problem in interpreting medical data', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)*, vol. 151, no. 3, pp. 419–445. https://doi.org/10.2307/2982993

Bevir, M 1994, 'Objectivity in history', *History and Theory*, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 328–344. https://doi.org/10.2307/2505477

Bickerstaff, K 2004, 'Risk perception research: Socio-cultural perspectives on the public experience of air pollution', *Environment International*, vol. 30, no. 6, pp. 827–840. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2003.12.001

Boldt, A 2014, 'Ranke: Objectivity and history', *Rethinking History*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 457–474. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2014.893658

Boyd, NA 2008, 'Who is the subject? Queer theory meets oral history', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 177–189. https://doi.org/10.1353/sex.0.0009

Chen, XC 2020, 'That noble dream: Analysis of the "objectivity" question of the historiography of ranke', *Advances in Historical Studies*, vol. 9, pp. 92–97. https://doi.org/10.4236/ahs.2020.93008

Cho, J & Trent, A 2006, 'Validity in qualitative research revisited', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 319–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106065006

Epley, N & Gilovich, T 2005, 'When effortful thinking influences judgmental anchoring: Differential effects of forewarning and incentives on self-generated and externally provided anchors', *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 199–212. https://doi.org/10.1002/bdm.495

Erickson, RJ 1995, 'The importance of authenticity for self and society', *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 121–144. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1995.18.2.121

Finlay, L 2012, 'Five lenses for the reflexive interviewer', in JF Gubrium, JA Holstein, AB Marvasti & KD McKinnery (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*, Sage, London, pp. 317–333. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218403

Forth, J & Mcnabb, R 2008, 'Workplace performance: A comparison of subjective and objective measures in the 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey', *Industrial Relations Journal*, vol. 39, pp. 104–123. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2338.2007.00480.x

Gaukroger, S 2012, *Objectivity: A very short introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Henige, D 1986, 'Where seldom is heard a discouraging word: Method in oral history', *The Oral History Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 35–42. https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/14.1.35

Hoffman, AM 1974, 'Reliability and validity in oral history', *Communication Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 23–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463377409369125

Lyotard, JF 1993, *Answering the question: What is postmodernism?*, Routledge, London, pp. 38–46. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315504612

MacCormick, N 1998, 'Reasonableness and objectivity', *Notre Dame Law Review*, vol. 74, p. 1575.

Marsh, HW & Roche, LA 1997, 'Making students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness effective: The critical issues of validity, bias, and utility', *American Psychologist*, vol. 52, no. 11, p. 1187. https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066X.52.11.1187

Medin, DL & Shoben, EJ 1988, 'Context and structure in conceptual combination', *Cognitive Psychology*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 158–190. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0285(88)90018-7

Mehra, B 2002, 'Bias in qualitative research: Voices from an online classroom', *The Qualitative Report*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1–19.

Neyzi, L 2010, 'Oral history and memory studies in Turkey', in C Kerslake, K Őktem & P Robins (eds.), *Turkey's engagement with modernity: Conflict and change in the twentieth century*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 443–459.

Novick, P 1988, *That noble dream: The 'objectivity question' and the American historical profession*, vol. 13, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Omodan, BI 2021, 'Enhancing children's critical and inquisitive skills in culturally informed communities of South Africa', *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*, vol. 12, nos. 1–2, pp. 57–66. https://doi.org/10.31901/24566764.2021/12.1-2.367

Oyewale, PO 2014, 'Objectivity: A subject of discourse in historical writing', *AFRREV IJAH: An International Journal of Arts and Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 18–30.

Philipp, RA 2007, 'Mathematics teachers' beliefs and affect', in FK Lester (ed.), *Second handbook of research on mathematics teaching and learning Volume 1*, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Reston, pp. 257–315.

Ritchie, DA 2014, *Doing oral history*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Roulston, K 2010, 'Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice', in K Roulston (ed.), *Reflective Interviewing*, Sage, London, pp. 1–216.

Seals, G 1998, 'Objectively yours, Michel Foucault', *Educational Theory*, vol. 48, no. 1, p. 59. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1998.00059.x

Smith, J 1911, 'Legal cause in actions of tort', *Harvard Law Review*, vol. 25, p. 303. https://doi.org/10.2307/1325245

Summerfield, P 2016, 'Oral history as an autobiographical practice', *Miranda*, vol. 12, no. 12, p. 8714. https://doi.org/10.4000/miranda.8714

Vansina, J 1965, *Oral tradition: A study in historical methodology*, Allen and Montel, Chicago.

Watts, M & Ebbutt, D 1987, 'More than the sum of the parts: Research methods in group interviewing', *British Educational Research Journal*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 25–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141192870130103

Wirtz, K 2016, 'The living, the dead and the immanent: Dialogue across chronotopes', *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 343–369. https://doi.org/10.14318/hau6.1.019

Yuille, JC Marxsen, D & Cooper, B 1999, 'Training investigative interviewers: Adherence to the spirit, as well as the letter', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, vol. 22, nos. 3–4, pp. 323–336. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-2527(99)00012-6

Chapter 7

Bonner, P 2013, 'Apartheid, memory and other occluded pasts', in P Opondo & C Landman (eds.), *Culture, memory and trauma: Proceedings of the Third National Oral History Conference*, *Richards Bay, 07–10 November 2006*, Oral History Association of South Africa, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, Unisa, Pretoria, pp. 11–33.

Cameron, E 2005, *Edwin Cameron: Witness to AIDS*, Tafelberg Publishers, Cape Town.

Carton, B & Vis, L 2008, 'Doing oral history', in P Denis & R Ntsimane (eds.), *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 43–62.

Charlton, LT 1985, *Oral history for texans*, 2nd edn., Texas Historical Commission, Austen.

Denis, P 2008a, 'The ethics of oral history', in P Denis & R Ntsimane (eds.), *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 1–21.

Denis, P 2008b, 'Introduction', in P Denis & R Ntsimane (eds.), *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 1–196.

Denis, P, Houser, S & Ntsimane, R 2011, *A journey towards healing: Stories of people with multiple-woundedness in KwaZulu-Natal*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.

Denis, P, Longwe, M & Zitha, N 2013, 'Is stigma receding? Stories of AIDS support group members in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3–16. https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/1589

Denis, P, Ntsimane, R & Cannell, T 2010, *Indians versus Russians: An oral history of political violence in Nxamalala (1987–1993)*, Cluster Publications, Pietermaritzburg.

Dominy, G 2022, 'Schreiner family narratives: Written and oral sources in biographical research', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, vol. 78, no. 3, pp. 1–12. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i3.7693

Dominy, GA 2023, 'Schreiner family narratives: Written and oral sources in biographical research', in C Landman (ed.), *Conference proceedings: Covid-19 narratives and memories: Emerging oral histories and methodologies in South Africa*, 11–15 October, Pretoria, pp. 92–103.

Field, S 2002, 'Dialogues of trust: The value of oral history in developing people', in P Denis & J Worthington (eds.), *The power of oral history: Memory, healing and development*, vol. 1, International Oral History Association and Oral History Project, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 15–29.

Field, S 2008, 'What can I do when the interviewee cries?', in P Denis & R Ntsimane (eds.), *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 144–168.

Klaebe, H 2013, 'Facilitating local stories in post-disaster regional communities: Evaluation in narrative-driven oral history projects', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 125–142.

Marx, L 2022, 'Pandemic panic in the time of mass social media (ab) use: Social media and misinformation during COVID-19 pandemic in south Africa', in C Landman (ed.), *Conference proceedings: COVID-19 narratives and memories: Emerging oral histories and methodologies in South Africa*, 11–15 October, Pretoria.

Mücke, P 2013, 'The pleasures and sorrows of Czech oral history (1990–2012)', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 111–130.

Muoki, SJ 2013, 'Aids prophets in a wounded country: A memoir of two Catholic clerics involved in responding to Aids in South Africa (1984–1990)', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 58–73. https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/1595

Ntsimane, R 2006, 'To disclose or not to disclose: An appraisal of the memory box project as a safe space for disclosures of HIV positive status', *Journal of Theology of Southern Africa*, vol. 125, no. Special Issue 1, pp. 7–20.

Ntsimane, R 2012, 'Do stories of people with disabilities matter? Exploration of a method to acknowledge the stories of people with disabilities as valuable resource in the writing of social history', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 1, pp. 253–265.

Ntsimane, R 2015, 'Places have meaning: Three streets, three hours and three stories of survival in one city', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 32–43. https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/330

Patel, R 2002, 'Social framework of memory in post – Apartheid South Africa', in P Denis & J Worthington (eds.), *The power of oral history: Memory, healing and development*, vol. 4, International Oral History Association in Collaboration with Sinomlando Project, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Tshamano, HS & Mahosi, TN 2013, 'The influence of freedom songs on escalations of witch-hunting and burning in the Venda homeland, 1989–1995', *Oral History Journal of South Africa*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 31–44. https://doi.org/10.25159/2309-5792/1593

Villa-Vicencio, C 1994, 'Ethics of responsibility', in C Villa-Vicencio & J de Gruchy (eds.), *Doing ethics in context: South African perspectives*, David Philip, Cape Town, pp. 75–88.

West, G 1998, 'Discerning the contours of domination and resistance in liberation hermeneutics: Do the poor and marginalized speak?', *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Southern Africa*, vol. 5, no. 1 and vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 28–35.

Chapter 8

Alexander, A, Israel, P, Larmer, M & De Oliveira, RS 2020, 'Liberation beyond the nation: An introduction', *Journal for Southern African Studies*, vol. 46, no. 5, pp. 821–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2020.1810912

Alexander, J, McGregor, J & Tendi, B-M 2017, 'The transnational connections of Southern African liberation movements: An introduction', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2017.1278982

Bahl, V 2003, 'What went wrong with "history from below"', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 135–146.

Baum, WK 1977, *Oral history for the local historical society*, American Association for State and Local History, Nashville.

Bertram, C 2009, 'Procedural and substantive knowledge: Some implications of an outcomes-based history curriculum in South Africa', *South African Review of Education*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 45–62.

Binckes, R 2018, *Vlakplaas: Apartheid death squad, 1979–1994*, Pen & Sword Military, Barnsley.

Boraine, A, Levy, J & Scheffer, R (eds.) 1994, *Dealing with the past: Truth and reconciliation in South Africa*, IDASA, Cape Town.

Cutler, W 1971, 'Oral history – Its nature and uses for educational history', *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 11, no. 2, pp. 184–194. https://doi.org/10.2307/367594

Denis, P & Ntsimane, R 2008, *Oral history in a wounded country: Interactive interviewing in South Africa*, UKZN Press, Pietermaritzburg.

Dlamini, J 2014, *Askari: A story of collaboration and betrayal in the anti-apartheid struggle*, Jacana, Johannesburg.

Dougherty, J 1999, 'From anecdote to analysis: Oral histories and new scholarship in educational history', *The Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 2, pp. 712–723. https://doi.org/10.2307/2567055

Du Bruyn, D & Oelofse, M 2012, 'The potential and possibilities of oral history for skills development at undergraduate level', *Yesterday and Today*, vol. 7, pp. 121–138.

Dunaway, D & Baum, W 1984, *Oral history: An interdisciplinary anthology*, Altamira Press, London.

Garaba, F & Ngulube, P 2010, 'Moving with the times in search of permanence: The digitisation of "liberation struggle" archives in southern Africa', *Historia*, vol. 55, no. 2, pp. 163–181.

Gleijeses, P 2003, *Conflicting missions: Havana, Washington and Pretoria, and the struggle for southern Africa, 1976–1991*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill.

Grele, R 1975, *Envelopes of sound: The art of oral history*, Precedent Publishing Company, Chicago.

H-Women n.d., *Call for papers: Conference in Honour of Professor Bolanle Awe @ 90*, viewed 24 October 2024. <https://networks.h-net.org/node/24029/discussions/10500263/call-papers-conference-honour-professor-bolanle-awe-90>

Hadfield, LA 2015, 'Can we believe the stories about Biko? Oral sources, meaning, and emotion in South African struggle history', *History in Africa: A Journal of Debates, Methods and Source Analysis*, vol. 42, pp. 239–263. https://doi.org/10.1017/hia.2014.24

Henige, D 1974, *The chronology of oral tradition*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

Houston, G 2010, 'The South African Education Democracy Trust's "road to democracy" project: Areas of focus and methodological issues', *African Historical Review*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 3–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/17532523.2010.517652

Houston, G 2013, 'The national liberation route', paper presented at the *Human Sciences Research Council's Social Sciences and Humanities Conference*, 26–27 September, Birchwood Conference Centre, Johannesburg.

Houston, G 2015, 'The state of research on, and study of, the history of the South African liberation struggle', paper presented at the *African Studies Association Meeting*, 19–21 November, San Diego.

Houston, G, Mati, S, Seabe, D, Sausi, K, Magidimisha, H, Mbenga, B, Manson, A, Saneka, M, Vivier, E & Pophiwa, N 2015, *Transcripts of interviews with unsung heroes and heroines of the South African liberation struggle*, vol. 1, Democracy, Governance, and Service Delivery (DGSD), Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Pretoria.

Houston, G, Twala, C & Majozi, N 2018, 'Emphasis to the history of the South African liberation struggle in the nation's universities', *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 67–93. https://doi.org/10.5070/F7402040943

Kirby, RK 2008, 'Phenomenology and the problems of oral history', *Oral History Review*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 22–38. https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohm001

Limb, P 2018, 'Southern African liberation struggle, 1960–1994: Contemporaneous documents', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 70, no. 1, pp. 270–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2017.1354060

Mamber, B, Nageng, D & O'Malley, G 2000, '"Telling it like is …": Understanding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission from the perspective of survivors', *Psychology in Society*, vol. 26, pp. 18–22.

Mancotywa, S 2011, 'Heritage is what we choose', *Mail & Guardian*, 23 September, viewed 21 April 2022. <https://mg.co.za/article/2011-09-23-heritage-is-what-we-choose/>

Mariner, N 2005, 'Oral history: From fact finding to history shaping', *Historia*, vol. 14, pp. 59–69.

Mashangaidze, EK 1981, 'The role of the liberation movements in the struggle for southern Africa, 1955–77', in Anon (ed.), *The decolonization of Africa: Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa, Working documents and report of the meeting of experts held in Warsaw, Poland*, 09–13 October 1978, UNESCO Press, Paris, pp. 24–31.

Mati, S 2013, 'Western Cape historical narrative: Khoi wars of resistance to 1960', draft paper prepared for the Unsung Heroes and Heroines Project, Human Sciences Research Council's Social Sciences and Humanities Conference, 26-27 September, Birchwood Conference Centre, Johannesburg.

McCue, H & McDonald, A 2018, 'African National Congress diplomat Eddie Funde made a powerful contribution', *The Sunday Morning Herald*, 31 May, viewed 28 February 2025. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/african-national-congress-diplomat-eddie-funde-made-a-powerful-contribution-20180531-p4zim3.html>

Moagi, AL & Mtombeni, B 2020, 'Women in pre-colonial Africa: Southern Africa', in O Yacob-Haliso & T Falola (eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of African women's studies*, Springer Nature, New York, pp. 1113–1132.

Ndlovu, SM 2008, 'A reassessment of women's power in the Zulu Kingdom', in B Carton, J Laband & J Sithole (eds.), *Zulu identities: Being Zulu, past and present*, UKZN Press, Pietermaritzburg, pp. 111–121.

Ndlovu, SM 2021, *The power and authority of African women in southern Africa and in the African Diaspora during 'precolonial and colonial times'*, Skotaville Publishing, Johannesburg.

Norrick, NR 2005, 'Talking about remembering and forgetfulness in oral interviews', *The Oral History Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1525/ohr.2005.32.2.1

Oelofse, M & Barnard, L 2009, 'The value of the victim hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa in sharing narratives', *Journal for Contemporary History*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 111–121.

Pieres, J & Webb, D 2013, 'National liberation route – Sites associated with unsung heroes and heroines in the Eastern Cape', draft paper prepared for the Unsung Heroes and Heroines Project.

Pophiwa, N & Maaba, B 2013, 'The liberation struggle: Limpopo', draft paper prepared for the Unsung Heroes and Heroines Project.

Raleigh, V 2005, *Yow, recording oral history: A guide for the humanities and social sciences*, 2nd edn., Alta Mira Press, Walnut Creek.

Ritchie, DA 1995, *Doing oral history*, Twayne's Oral History Series no. 15, Twayne Publishers, New York.

Saunders, C 2010, 'Liberation struggles in southern Africa: New perspectives', *Southern African Historical Journal*, vol. 62, no. 1, pp. 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582471003778094

Shamase, MZ 2014, 'The royal women of the Zulu Monarchy: Through the keyhole of oral history: Princess Mkabayi ka Jama (c.1750–c.1843)', *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 15–22. https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC155748

Shamase, MZ 2017, 'Women kingmakers: The case of Zulu Princess Mkabayi ka Jama (c.1750–c.1843)', *Gender and Behaviour*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 10390–10401.

Taylor, S 2023, 'Status quo terrorism: State-terrorism in South Africa during apartheid', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 304–320. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.1916478

Thompson, P 2006, 'The voice of the past: Oral history', in R Perks & A Thomson (eds.), *The oral history reader*, 2nd edn., Routledge, New York, pp. 21–28.

Thomson, A 1999, 'Making the most of memories: The empirical and subjective value of oral history', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 9, pp. 291–301. https://doi.org/10.2307/3679406

University of Connecticut (UCONN) Library 2000–2006, 'African National Congress Oral History Transcripts Collection Identifier 2007-0040', *Archives and Special Collections*, viewed 12 February 2025. <https://archivessearch.lib.uconn.edu/repositories/2/resources/106>

Vahed, G 2015, 'Women and national liberation in South Africa: An oral history perspective', *South African Diaspora*, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 129–147. https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2015.1007635

Vansina, J 1961, *Oral tradition as history*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Zungu, M, Manqele, N, De Vries, C, Molefe, T & Hadebe, M 1999, 'HERstory: Writing women into South African history', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equality*, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 7–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2014.871459

Chapter 9

Archary, KK (ed.) 2018, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume One, Coffee Table Publication Series, ZY Printers, Durban, viewed 23 March 2023. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Vol-1-TYMS-2018.pdf>

Archary, KK (ed.) 2019, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Two, Coffee Table Publication Series, ZY Printers, Durban, viewed 23 March 2023. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Vol-2-TYMS-2019.pdf>

Archary, KK (ed.) 2020, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Three, Coffee Table Publication Series, Impress Printers, Durban.

Archary, KK (ed.) 2021, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Four, Coffee Table Publication Series, Goatlhakanelwe Media and Communication, Gauteng, viewed 23 March 2023. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Vol-4-TYMS-2021.pdf>

Archary, KK (ed.) 2022, *Tell Your Mother's Story*, Volume Five, Coffee Table Publication Series, Classique Promotions, Gauteng, viewed 23 March 2023. <https://ohasa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Vol-5-TYMS-2022.pdf>

Bagnoli, A 2004, 'Researching identities with multi-method autobiographies', *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 1–15. https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.909

Bauer, GR, Churchill, SM, Mahendran, M, Walwyn, C, Lizotte, D & Villa-Rueda, AA 2021, 'Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods', *SSM Population Health*, vol. 14, p. 100798. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100798

Bryman, A 2011, *Social science methods*, Liber, Stockholm.

Cohen, D & Crabtree, B 2006, *Qualitative research guidelines project*, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, viewed 31 March 2023. <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>

Collins 2024, *Coffee table publication*, viewed 30 September 2024. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/coffee-table-book>

Columbia Law School 2017, *Kimberlé Crenshaw on intersectionality, more than two decades later*, viewed 31 March 2022. <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality-more-two-decades-later>

Creswell, JW 2013, *Qualitative inquiry & research design choosing among five approaches*, 3rd edn., Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Deakin, H & Wakefield, K 2014, 'Skype interviewing: Reflections of two PhD researchers', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 14, no. 5, pp. 603–616. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794113488126

DeJonckheere, M & Vaughn, LM 2019, 'Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigour', *Family Medicine and Community Health*, vol. 7, p. e000057. https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057

Ekeroth, U & Ortiz, M 2018, 'I am not defined by how I look or where I am from': An intersectional qualitative analysis about women with immigrant background in Sweden and their view on identity, Bachelor Thesis in Global Studies, School of Education and Communication International Work, Jönköping University, Sweden, viewed 31 March 2022. <http://www.diva-portal.se/smash/get/diva2:1219052/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

Hjerm, M, Lindgren, S & Nilsson, M 2014, *Introduction to social science analysis*, Gleerups, Malmö.

Holt, A 2010, 'Using the telephone for narrative interviewing: A research note', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 113–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794109348686

James, N & Busher, H 2006, 'Credibility, authenticity and voice: Dilemmas in online interviewing', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 403–420. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106065010

Lawrence, L 2022, 'Conducting cross-cultural qualitative interviews with mainland Chinese participants during COVID: Lessons from the field', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 154–165. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120974157

Lo Iacono, V, Symonds, P & Brown, DH 2016, 'Skype as a tool for qualitative research interviews', *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 103–117. https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3952

Mashuri, S, Sarib, M, Alhabsyi, F, Syam, H & Ruslin, R 2022, 'Semi-structured interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies', *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, vol. 1, no. 21, pp. 22–29.

O'Connor, H, Madge, C, Shaw, R & Wellens, J 2008, 'Internet-based interviewing', in N Fielding, R Lee & G Blank (eds.), *The Sage handbook of online research methods*, Sage, London, pp. 271–289.

Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) 2022, 'Volume Five – Invitation 2022', in *Tell Your Mother's Story*, viewed 06 September 2024. <https://ohasa.org.za/volume-5-invitation-2022/>

Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) 2023, 'Volume Seven – Invitation 2024', in *Tell Your Mother's Story theme: 30 Years in a democracy, before and beyond a mother's story*, viewed 06 September 2024. <https://ohasa.org.za/volume-7-invitation-2023/>

Smooth, WG 2010, 'Intersectionalities of race and gender and leadership', in K O'Connor (ed.), *Gender and women's leadership: A reference handbook*, SAGE Publications Inc, Thousand Oaks, pp. 31–40.

Steans, J 2013, *Gender & international relations*, 3rd edn., Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 1–288.

Stuckey, HL 2013, 'Three types of interviews: Qualitative research methods in social health heather', *Methodological Issues in Social Health and Diabetes Research*, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 56–59. https://doi.org/10.4103/2321-0656.115294

Turunen, J, Dockett, S & Perry, B 2015, 'Links across life events within individual and family contexts: How the various recollections of transitions become part of each mother's life story', *Journal of Family Studies*, vol. 21, no. 6, pp. 635–644.

University of Arizona Press 2022, *What is a book series?*, viewed 7 April 2025. <https://ask.up.hcommons.org/what-is-a-book-series/>

Zhang, Y & Wildemuth, BM 2020, 'Unstructured interviews', in BM Wildemuth (ed.), *Applications of social research methods to questions in information and library science*, Libraries Unlimited, Santa Barbara, pp. 239–247

Chapter 10

Agarwal, S 2020, 'Re-writing history: Oral history as a feminist methodology', *Stream: Interdisciplinary Journal of Communication*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 7. https://doi.org/10.21810/strm.v12i1.279

Anderson, K, Armitage, S, Dona, J & Wittner, J 1987, 'Beginning where we are: Feminist methodology in oral history', *The Oral History Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, p. 104. https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/15.1.103

April, T 2012, Theorizing women: The intellectual contribution of Charlotte Maxeke to the struggle for liberation in South Africa, PhD thesis, Department of History, University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

Bornat, J & Diamond, H 2007, 'Women's history and oral history', *Women's History Review*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612020601049652

Botes, M 2020, *Charlotte Maxeke (1872–1939): Mother of black freedom in South Africa*, National Museum Publications, viewed 23 June 2021. <https://nationalmuseumpublications.co.za/charlotte-maxeke-1872-1939-mother-of-black-freedom-in-south-africa/>

Bozzoli, B 1983, 'Marxism, feminism and Southern African studies', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 139–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057078308708055

Burkett, E & Brunell, L 2021, 'Feminism', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, viewed 23 June 2021. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminismUniversity>

Cele, K 2018, The story of Charlotte Maxeke: An analysis of how visual arts can be utilised to reflect on race, gender, identity and citizenship in South African higher education, PhD thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch.

Chigumadzi, P 2021, 'On the use and abuse of critique: The Maxeke-Congress Debate', *Sunday Times*, 23 May, viewed 02 April 2024. <https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/opinion-and-analysis/2021-05-23-on-the-use-and-abuse-of-critique-the-maxeke-congress-debate/>

Clarke, DS 2007, *Encyclopaedia of law & society: American and global perspectives*, Sage Publications, Inc., London.

Fobear, K 2016, 'Do you understand? Unsettling interpretative authority in feminist oral history', *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, vol. 10, no. 10, p. 61.

Geiger, S 1990, 'What's so feminist about women's oral history?', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 291, p. 169. https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2010.0273

Himonga, C, Taylor, M & Pope, A 2013, 'Reflections on judicial views of ubuntu', *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, vol. 16, no. 5, pp. 369–427. https://doi.org/10.4314/pelj.v16i5.8

Jackson, JM 2008, 'Charlotte Makgoma Manye Maxeke: Her legacy lives on', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, vol. XXXIV, no. Suppl., pp. 75–89.

Jaffer, Z 2016, *Beauty of the heart: The life and times of Charlotte Manya Maxeke*, SUN MeDia, Bloemfontein.

Kratz, C 2001, 'Conversations and lives', in SF Miescher & DW Cohen (eds.), *African words, African voices*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 127–161.

Kuzwayo, E 1985, *Call me woman*, Women's Press, London.

Mannya, M 2021, 'Dear Charlotte Maxeke: A legacy abused', *City Press*, 28 March, viewed 21 March 2022. <https://www.news24.com/citypress/columnists/modidimamannya/modidima-mannya-dear-charlotte-maxeke-a-legacy-abused-20210328>

Martin, J 2003, 'Feminist theory and critical theory: Unexplored synergies', *Studying Management Critically*, vol. 1, no. 3, p. 66. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446220030.n4

Masola, A 2018, '"Bantu women on the move": Black women and the politics of mobility in The Bantu World', *Historia*, vol. 63, no. 1, pp. 93–111. https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-8392/2018/v63n1a5

McCord, M 1995, *The calling for Kathy Makhanya*, David Philip, Cape Town.

Milard, JA 1999, *Maxeke Charlotte Manye (1872–1939): African methodist episcopal church of South Africa*, Unisa Press, Pretoria.

Mohajan, HK 2018, 'Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects', *Journal of Economic Development, Environmental and People*, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 24. https://doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v7i1.571

Ndlovu, AS & Twala, C 2024, 'Challenges of conflicting memories in oral history narratives: A conversation with Troy Phili on building Charlotte Maxeke's biography', *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 6, pp. 950–960. https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.20245612

Ntwape, LF 2016, A historiography of South African women's history from c. 1990: A survey of monographs, anthologies and journal articles, MA thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2015, *The life and legacy of Charlotte Mannya-Maxeke. The memory project inaugural lecture*, Freedom Park, 30 September, viewed 01 April 2024. <https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/ProjectsAndEvents/Inaugural_Memory_Lecture_the_Life_and_Legacy_of_Charlotte_Mannya_Maxeke/docs/programme_email2.pdf>

Plaatje, S 2007, *Native life in South Africa*, Picador Africa, Northlands, pp. 92–101.

Sangster, J 1994, 'Telling our stories: Feminist debates and the use of oral history', *Women's History Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, p. 27. https://doi.org/10.1080/09612029400200046

Scott, JW 1988, *Gender and the politics of history*, Columbia University Press, New York.

Shope, G 2015, 'Parliament of the Republic of South Africa', in *The Life Legacy of Charlotte Mannya Maxeke: The Memory Project Inaugural Lecture*, 30 September, Freedom Park, Parliament of the Republic, viewed 01 April 2024. <https://www.parliament.gov.za/storage/app/media/ProjectsAndEvents/Inaugural_Memory_Lecture_the_Life_and_Legacy_of_Charlotte_Mannya_Maxeke/docs/programme_email2.pdf>

Skota, MTD n.d., *The African who's who: An illustrated register and national bibliographical dictionary of the Africans in the Transvaal*, 3rd edn., Frier & Murno, Pty, Ltd, Johannesburg, p. 77.

South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) 2021, 'Charlotte Maxeke Memorial', online video, YouTube, 14 April, YouTube, viewed 28 February 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WthZQ5hx4jM>

South African History Online (SAHO) 2011, *Charlotte Maxeke*, viewed 21 March 2024. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/charlotte-maxeke>

South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) 2021, 'Charlotte Maxeke Memorial', online video, 14 April, viewed 28 February 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WthZQ5hx4jM

Thomson, A, Frisch, M & Hamilton, P 1994, 'The memory and history debates: Some international perspectives', *Oral History Society*, vol. 22, no. 2, p. 36.

Thurner, M 1997, 'Subject to change: Theories and paradigms of US feminist history', *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 122–146. https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.2010.0551

Vahed, G 2015, 'Women and national liberation in South Africa: An oral history perspective', *South Asian Diaspora*, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 129. https://doi.org/10.1080/19438192.2015.1007635

Van Der Spuy, P & Clowes, L 2000, 'Accidental feminists? Recent histories of South African women', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, pp. 453–465.

Walker, C 1990, *Women and gender in Southern Africa to 1945*, David Philip, Cape Town.

Xuma, AB 1930, *What an educated African girl can do*, Historical Papers, Johannesburg.

Index

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

This scholarly book examines the methodologies and ethics of oral history to address gaps in South Africa's historical narratives caused by the exclusion of oral testimonies. Bringing together ten chapters by leading researchers, it emphasises an Afrocentric approach to oral history, advocating for interviewees as knowledge holders rather than subjects of extraction. Spanning multiple disciplines, it highlights the need to protect oral archives and amplify marginalised voices. Through original research, the volume explores oral history's transformative potential, encouraging scholars to rethink conventional practices and bridge the divide between written and oral histories for more inclusive historical narratives.

Apartheid-supporting historiography dominated South African histories, ignoring the history of most of the country's people. They were also the marginalised victims of apartheid policies, which affected their human dignity and condemned them to poverty, illiteracy, poor infrastructure and medical care. The oral history of South Africa has been lost for many generations. Millions of narratives of people who suffered apartheid's abuses and degradation of their dignity died, and their voices have been lost forever. The Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA), since 2005, has provided a corrective with many such stories being retold and published. This book describes the journey that led to the critically essential histories of ordinary people being preserved for posterity, illustrating the significance and vitality of oral history writing. It discusses various approaches and methodologies and the complicated ethical issues accompanying oral history. It provides guidelines for the interpretation of reality through the meanings people give to their lifeworld, focusing on those voices usually silenced from communal discourse. It honestly admits that oral histories are necessarily subjective and personal, but it argues that historiography is decolonised from Euro-Western-centred approaches and methodologies to voice African indigenous communities. It is only subjective elements that will provide Africa's hidden treasures, which are found only in the human face encountered in historical events. To ignore such evidence will do a great disservice to the continent's history project.

Prof. Marius Nel, Unit for Reformational Theology and the Development of the South African Society, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

ITUTA
aosis.co.za

Open access at
https://doi.org/10.4102/
aosis.2025.BK397

ISBN: 978-1-990982-15-6