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ORAL HISTORY AS AN ENACTMENT OF CRITICAL COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

Mohamed Seedat
Institute for Social and Health Sciences, University of South Africa and Medical Research Council-University of South Africa Violence, Injury and Peace Research Unit

I describe an oral history project as an enactment of critical community psychology that was triggered by an academic and social impulse, stirred by a South African liberatory moment that legitimated recovery of marginalized voices and community knowledge as part of a process of affirming community self-identity. Oral history was positioned as a performance, a collection of historical materials, a transformative force linking the past to the present to interpret social conditions, and a generative modality for establishing community, evidence of the implicit shaping influences of Black Consciousness on enactments of psychosocial praxis at a particular South African moment. The description briefly draws attention to ambiguities arising from oppressive psychosocial scripts and the repressive authority of disciplinary power on the enactments of oral history, so as to offer a critical voice to forthcoming dialogues about how to place project materials, collected two decades ago, within the public realm.

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INTRODUCTION

Work focused on race, class, gender, displacement, dispossession, and marginalization (see Coimbra et al., 2012; Makkawi, 2009) as well as projects on memory and recovery (see Stevens, Duncan, & Hook, 2013) represents enactments of critical community psychology. Memory and recovery work, which give credence to subjugated knowledges, marginalized voices, and community-centered collective histories, resonant with social

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Please address correspondence to: University of South Africa, Institute for Social and Health Sciences, P.O. Box 1087, Lenasia, Johannesburg, South Africa, 1820. E-mail: seedama@unisa.ac.za

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justice ideals, embody a particular manifestation of critical community psychology's support for disparaged community's resistance to hegemonic identity constructions, claims to intellectual, cultural, and political independence, and a quest for generative collective formations (see Stevens et al., 2013).

Recovery work assumes particular significance in the situation of apartheid, colonial legacies, social upheaval, and transformatory development. Oppressive systems such as apartheid, a form of internal colonialism (Goldberg, 2008; Posel, 1991), invaded and disrupted the oppressed's psychological and collective identities, social and physical spaces, and movement and patterns of attachment, eroding their time, agency, independence, and energies (see Bulhan, 1985, Mudimbe, 1988).

Apartheid colonialism, marked by racialized and gendered inequalities, entailed the exploitation and occupation of the oppressed's physical spaces, denuding of psyches, and dislocation and disruption of indigenous cultural, economic, and political systems (see Cooper & Stoler, 1989; Coovadia, Jewkes, Barron, Sanders, & McIntyre, 2009; Goldberg, 2008; Horvath, 1972; Posel, 1991). The colonial apartheid system produced dichotomies to invent primitiveness and manufacture social amnesia and the marginalization of all those classified other-than-White, and so effected a dichotomous reality.

In the dichotomy, western thought and history meant civilization and modernity, whereas African and other-than-European knowledge and cultural formations denoted savagery, superstition, and darkness, a negation of humanity. Black[1] histories, cultures, and narrative systems were scorned, marginalized, silenced and, suppressed; western thought, ideas, and cultures were celebrated and entrenched through the machinations of disciplinary and repressive power (see Foucault, 1977, 1980; Mudimbe, 1988). In the apartheid structure and its attendant supremacist expansionism, the oppressed were forbidden their own biographies and histories and were instead bondaged to the histories and biographies of the dominant community (see Bulhan, 1985; Stevens et al., 2013).

Therefore, in the context of resistance to oppression and social transformation, critical community psychology-oriented work of recovery and memory, supporting the elicitation and articulation of individual and collective narratives, the assertion of inclusive collective agency, and the restoration of marginal communities' own stories of historical and contemporary realities, people, and places, obtains liberatory significance (see Olsen & Shapes, 1991; Smith, 1999; Stevens et al., 2013). I aim to critically describe a people's history project, namely, The Eldorado Park Oral History Project, as an enactment of critical community psychology that focused on facilitating expressions of individual and collective narratives, the affirmation of social agency, and the restitution of a marginal community's own generative narratives of past and contemporary realities.

The Eldorado Park Oral History Project (henceforth project), dedicated to recovering the history of Eldorado Park, was located within the Centre for Peace Action (CPA), a community-based violence prevention agency that was established as a program of the University of South Africa's Health Psychology Unit (HPU).[2] Eldorado Park is situated approximately 20 kms southwest of the city center of Johannesburg and was historically reserved for those classified as "colored" in the apartheid taxonomy. The Centre, first known as the Eldorado Park Violence Prevention Programme (EPVPP), was started by a nucleus of social actors as a strategic prevention initiative focused on the high levels of interpersonal violence, including child abuse, intimate partner violence, and gang-related assault (see Seedat, Terre Blanche, Butchart, & Nell, 1992), at a time when collective violence attracted inordinate public attention (see Nolutshungu, 1982).

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[1] The term Black is used to refer to all those classified other-than-White in the apartheid-generated racial terminology.

[2] The Health Psychology Unit was amalgamated with the Institute for Behavioural Sciences to form the Institute for Social and Health Sciences in 1996.

The nucleus of social actors, who embodied varied ideologies and epistemologies, adopted critical psychology principles, Black feminist thought, public health methodology, and epidemiology to articulate empirical, social, and political authorization for the establishment of the Centre. While the findings of a hospital-based epidemiological study provided the empirical justification for the violence focus (Butchart & Brown, 1991), a survey that assessed community priorities (see Dangor & Seedat, 1992), the creation of community representative structures and committees and written affirmations from anti-apartheid organizations and local civic associations, positioned the Centre as a community initiative dedicated to the prevention of violence through participatory community enactments.

Following the multiple ideological and epistemological streams, the Centre housed both public health projects, which deal with the magnitude and risks for violence, and social science work, which deals with society and representation. In 2004, the Centre was reorganized as a virtual entity and all its research-focused prevention work was incorporated into the mother body, namely, the Institute for Social and Health Sciences (ISHS; see Seedat, 2012).

The initial impulse for the Oral History Project was triggered during an academic conversation at the British Institute for Commonwealth Studies Seminar, in February 1991, where the then director of the HPU, Victor Nell, was presenting a paper on violence prevention. Members of the audience, including social historian Shula Marks, suggested that violence prevention may obtain optimal relevance and criticality when it approaches the entire community as a gestalt and speak to its social history. Notwithstanding the obvious irony surrounding the first academic and social impulse of the project, which was triggered by a conversation at a Northern-based institution[3], subsequent discussions with historians affiliated with the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and residents of Eldorado Park provided local support for the commencement and development of the Oral History Project.

These discussions, which resonate with more recent work, including that of the Apartheid Archive Project (see Stevens et al., 2013) and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission that deals with recovery of truth, reparations, and restoration (see Henrard, 2002; Stanley, 2001), represented a case for contextualizing explanations of violence and its prevention within the structural, political, psychological, material, and historical dimensions of apartheid–colonialism.

The project started in 1992, 2 years before the formal demise of institutional apartheid, and was led and coordinated by a full-time staff member of the CPA, Martin Terre Blanche, and senior high school teachers and volunteers (Eugene Bezuidenhout, Cleodene Daniels, Moses Desmond, Lance Ferreira, Sandra Huntley, Badrunisha Khan, Martin Louis, and Gail Smith[4]) from Eldorado Park. Gerald Williamson and Derek Smith, also members of the CPA, assumed project leadership in 1994 when Martin Terre Blanche moved to another institution.

They co-led the project alongside the teachers and volunteers until 2000, when the project was prematurely terminated because of funding constraints, and refocused donor and stakeholder priorities. The psychologists, who supported the cohort of social actors as the primary generative force that drove the project, were inspired by the tenets of critical theory and nonorthodox ways of enacting psychology. The closure of the project was in part reflective of the exit of a critical voice and the related ascendency and growing dominance of the public health logic in the Centre as the ISHS entered a formal cooperation agreement with the Medical Research Council (MRC) to assume co-directorship of the National Presidential Lead Programme on Crime, Violence and Injury, which was renamed the Safety and Peace Promotion Research Unit in 2010. The partnership with the MRC gradually introduced a positivist and public health-oriented research agenda, which did not easily accommodate social science-oriented work dealing with culture, ideolog,y and representation.

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[3] Northern refers to the United States, Canada, and Europe.

[4] The key social actors who coordinated the project are identified and named, consistent with the spirit and principles of oral history.

This article, an analytical description of the project as an enactment of critical community psychology, is integral to a second recovery aimed at bringing substance to the original intentions of the project that remained unfulfilled and to re-engaging the social actors involved in the project two decades ago. The re-engagement is meant to stir conversations about how best to bring meaningful closure to the project's original objectives and place the materials held in the ISHS's archives into the public space. It is an attempt to reassert the significance of research dealing with society, marginalization, voice, and representation within a space in which the current cohort of academic social actors in the ISHS, informed by transdisciplinary research orientations, represent a small yet important resistance to the hegemony of health sciences (see Suffla et al., this issue; Suffla, Kaminer, & Bawa, 2012; Vetten, & Ratele, 2013).

The project aimed to arrange regular local exhibitions, publish a newsletter and a book, and produce a "youth map." The newsletter, also called *Eldos Bekgeskiedenis*, was developed as an instrument for the production, distribution, and consumption of written, visual, and oral communications about the prevailing and historical social fabric of Eldorado Park. Some of the early issues of the newsletter were sponsored by local businesses.[5] *Bekgeskiedenis* contained articles written in English, Afrikaans, and Tsotsitaal,[6] photographs, and news of community events. Features focused on the elderly, the mentally challenged, unemployment, the school system, community pioneers, and churches, and the meaning and influences of the label "colored" as an invention of apartheid inspired separate development.

The planned book, provisionally titled *On the Ashes of Apartheid: The Group Areas Act to Community Pride. A History of Eldorado Park*, was envisaged as a collection of materials obtained for the newsletter. The "youth map" was to be a cheerful illustration of places, recreational sites, and training facilities frequented by youth. According to project documentation, the map was an attempt to legitimize Eldorado Park and the surrounding areas as "geographically well-defined and proud communities" (November 4, 1994). The project did not succeed in producing the book and youth map. It did, however, yield materials in the form of personal narratives, including those that were published in the newsletter, *Bekgeskiedenis*, photographs, narratives, interviews, essays, and personal effects, for a local archive that may serve as a source of information for the envisaged second recovery.

Unpublished analysis of the project penned two decades ago raised questions about several troubling issues: power, the meaning of history, subjectivity, and the

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[5] These included *Foster's Service Station* and *Shaheed's Fast Food Take Aways*.

[6] Tsotsitaal is a form of street language containing elements of several languages, including English, Afrikaans, Zulu, and Xhosa.

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speaking subject (see Parker, 1989; Ross, 1994); discourses underlying the reinvention of community identity; narrative contestation; and authentic voice in this particular critically oriented enactment of community psychology (see Terre Blanche, 1994).

This article, in concurrence with Shuman's (2007) idea that "recovery comes in different forms and utilizes different modes of speaking for others, speaking for oneself, and not speaking" (2007, p. 87), draws on issues highlighted by the earlier unpublished analyses (Terre Blanche, 1994), as part of the second recovery process. In an attempt to offer an analytical voice to the recovery processes, I situate the commencement of the project within a specific South African moment that ignited thought and social and intellectual spaces for oral history work. I then offer an analysis of the project objectives–guiding principles and assumptions that frame oral history as a specific enactment of community psychology–embracing praxis containing several dimensions: memory and narrative recovery, interpretation, intellectual independence, and restoration and assertion of community.

THE ELDORADO PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Situational Moment and Liberatory Trigger

The academic and community impulse supportive for the Oral History Project gains interpretive significance when situated within a specific South Africa liberatory moment. Just as liberation and postindependence movements offered a sociopolitical climate for African historians across the continent to produce nationalist narratives dealing with their respective countries and the continent's pre- and postcolonial encounters and resistance struggles (see Falola & Jennings, 2004), support for the project, described here, was triggered and legitimated by the South African moment of resistance to apartheid and sociopolitical transformation. African anticolonial struggles and postindependent African nationalist movements valued the inherent Africa-centeredness of oral history projects. Many African historians reasoned that oral tradition offered a counterpoint to written colonial documentation, including archives, memoirs, and ethnographical studies that were ideologically influenced by racism and ethnographic biases (see Cordell, 2004).

Such ideas about methodological creativity and recovery reverberated with the dynamism and aspirations of South Africa's National People's History Movement focused on writing history from below (see Witz, 1998). During the 1970s, in the wake of worker strikes and the Soweto student uprisings, many social historians shifted their gaze towards the history from below, namely the history of those other than the elite: factory workers, domestic helpers, small traders, and the unemployed. Much of this work was supported by oral testimonies and translated into materials accessible to the broad public. This work conducted, under the purview of the People's History Movement, gained further currency in the mid-1980s when the struggle against apartheid intensified and students boycotted schools as a form of resistance against apartheid education; People's History was framed as a weighty space to encourage critical readings of South Africa's past through erudition and collective narrative recovery processes (Witz, 1988).

The People's History Movement contributed to the animation of the corrective national project that aimed to (a) speak to the silences and distortions produced by colonialism and apartheid knowledge systems, (b) transform the manner in which history was taught, (c) and place people in the interior of producing historical narratives. In these respects, the People's History Movement's accent on including the disenfranchised

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into the process of making history, telling stories, and knowledge creation (see Witz, 1988) mirrored the tenets and emphases of 1980s critical community psychology in South Africa, which emerged as a form of protest against mainstream psychology's elitist exclusionary, ethnocentric, classist, and sexist biases (Berger & Lazarus, 1987; Dawes, 1986; Foster, 2008).

Critical psychology critiqued psychology for its role in reproducing racism and exclusionary discourses, highlighting the silencing of Blacks and women in research and knowledge creation (see Dawes, 1986; Duncan, Seedat, de la Rey, van Niekerk, & Gobodo-Madikizela, 1999; Seedat, 1993). Both the People's History Movement and critical community psychology focused on how dominant establishments and forms and organization of knowledge produced structural conditions to marginalize other-than-White communities (see Seedat & Lazarus, 2011; Fryer, 2008).

Within this nationally invented space, a space invented by liberatory movements (see Cornwall, 2002; Miraftab, 2006), the Oral History Project was integral to the CPA's enactment of violence prevention. Following the accent on community engagement and the multiple drivers of violence, the project was located alongside counselling and other psychosocial services for women, youth, families, and schools, small business development, and training in community policing modalities, as well as shelter services for abused women and children. As an attempted, comprehensive critically oriented enactment of community psychology, the violence prevention intervention sought to address the psychological, economic, social, and historical dimensions of violence; considered vulnerable groups and environments; and stressed the idea of empowerment, referring to the creation of capacities and spaces for community control and ownership (see Seedat et al., 1992; Terre Blanche & Seseli, 1992).

These comprehensive services emphasized individual agency through, for instance, encouraging residents towards self-sufficient entrepreneurship, by way of small business development, and women in particular to assert their voice and "break the silence" surrounding intimate partner violence. The community policing training was intended to encourage the development of a demilitarized police service that could offer transparent, accountable, and rapid responses to violent crime in particular. So, the violence prevention intervention located change mechanisms within ideology, individuals, and social systems.

Although the partial focus on individual agency may be read as problematic, in so far as it may have inadvertently obscured the dynamic relation between power and violence (see Terre Blanche et al., 1994), the comprehensive intervention was developed and implemented within a moment in the CPA; it was marked by a conscious attempt at praxis and a shift away from an earlier moment that was punctuated by the inadvertent exclusion of community voices in decision making related to resource mobilization and program planning and implementation (see Seedat, 2012). It was a moment when the community-centered violence prevention embraced both process and outcomes-directed actions.

As a developmental engaged process, violence prevention incorporated achieving visibility and anchorage in Eldorado Park, trailed by community involvement, community development, ideological change, and eventually a reduction in the rates of violence (see Terre Blanche & Seseli, 1992; Seedat, 2012). At a process level, violence prevention was contingent on community awareness, involvement, engagement, and participation. Locating violence prevention within a long-term development-oriented community engagement approach, the Oral History Project was inherent to a moment of praxis that embraced reflection, imagination, performance, and development of interpersonal connections.

Table 1. The Eldorado Park Oral History Group

Guiding Principles

- Aim: Our aim is to gather informal knowledge on Eldos past and present and to make it visible inside and outside Eldos.
- Objectivity: We do not wish to produce a reflection of one group. We want to become more representative of people in Eldos, e.g., by including more women in the group. The things we publish should be authentic and come from the community. The style should not be accusatory. If the little gangster on a street corner reads it, he should not feel that he is being accused. There must be space for conflicting points of view. If somebody complains, it should be possible to reply: "I was only saying."
- Accessibility: We wish people to be able to identify with what we publish. We want to capture the language of the people, e.g., by publishing interviews and sections of interviews verbatim. By using many photographs and illustrations, we want to avoid isolating the nonliterate. We do not want to convert everyday problems into academic jargon. As an academic, it is all too easy to take the knowledge and to make it disappear–never returning to be developed among the people.
- Politics: We do not wish to reproduce apartheid structures by focusing specifically on Eldos. We do not consider Eldos to be divorced from the rest of South Africa. Our history is inextricably linked with that of the rest of the country–we are part of Alex, Sophiatown, and Soweto, and much of what happens here also happens elsewhere.
- Authorship: We wish to collaborate with as many people as possible. All contributions should be acknowledged, unless individuals wish to remain anonymous. Material may be used only with permission.

Whereas reflection was a consideration of how to coherently perform engagement, imagination entailed visions of safe communities. The reflective process enabled the development of a model to perform engagement, a model that stressed the establishment of open and affirming relationships with diverse groups and individuals living in the community of Eldorado Park (see Seedat, 2012). In this articulation of praxis, akin to Stevens and his colleagues' (2013) notion of psychosocial praxis that draws on Gramsci (1971) and Freire (1972), reflection and reflexivity as self-critique, imagination, narrative recovery as knowledge creation, and social action (violence prevention in this case) as performance all coalesced in an enactment of critical community psychology. Below I turn to examining the Oral History Projects' enactment of psychosocial praxis–at least at a conceptual level.

Critical Enactments in Project Conceptualizations

The slogan "reclaim our past, rebuild our future" and aim "to gather informal knowledge on Eldos past and present and to make it visible inside and outside Eldos," as reflected in the project's documentation mission (see Table 1), was defined at a particular national moment. It was defined when the movements of transformation along with critically oriented scholars, including psychologists and social historians, confronted the silences effected by apartheid knowledge systems that tended to deny, distort, and subjugate the narratives of communities classified other-than-White. In resonance with the larger liberatory moment, for the project the gathering of "informal knowledge," as an objective, was to be an affirmative performance involving the (a) elicitation and collection of contemporary and historically silenced and subjugated stories, (b) reclaiming of "our past," an assertion of authenticity, and "rebuilding our future," a restoration of historical continuity, linking the silenced past, troubled present, and imagined future.

The intention "to make it visible inside and outside Eldos" defined restoration of lost stories as an engaged process of reflection, interpretation, and conscientization across geographical spaces. Storytelling was viewed as a dynamic process embracing interpretation, reflection, and interrogation. The elicitation, authentication, and composing of submerged narratives was imbued with multiple meanings. In the unpublished analysis, Terre Blanche and colleagues (1993, 1994) highlighted how the project's aims juxtaposed positivist images of the elicitor of stories as a "collector of objects" and discoverer of "hidden truths" alongside characterizations of history; that is, the recovery process as a social force that contains the capacity to transform ("making visible") how individuals and communities view themselves, their past, and existing circumstances. In Terre Blanche et al.'s readings (1993, 1994), there was a tension between history as a passive exercise involving the discovery of hidden truths on the one hand and restoration of hidden stories as a process of resistance against exclusion and alienation and social liberation on the other hand.

While such a tension may have created some degree of ambiguity in the meanings of oral history, the project intuitively and reflectively understood and embraced the multiple forms and interpretive aspects of recovery in resonance with Shuman (2007). Beneath the term "objectivity," a derivative of the language of empiricism, the coordinating group of the project recognized particular nuances reflective of critical thought ,namely, that memory work, elicitation of narrative, and recovery are personified by a multiplicity of stories and voices, as well a desire for inclusivity ("We do not wish to produce a reflection of one group. We want to become more representative of people in Eldos"). The project understood that recovery and narrative making are marked by contestation, conversation, and dialogue ("There must be space for conflicting points of view. If somebody complains it should be possible to reply: 'I was only saying'"). Recovery of lost narratives is an embracing process of authentication as much as it is imbued with debate and inclusivity ("The things we publish should be authentic and come from the community. The style should not be accusatory. If the little gangster on a street corner reads it, he should not feel that he is being accused").

Despite what Terre Blanche and colleagues (1993, 1994) detected to be a contradiction in the meaning of history, project documentation penned in 1997 and 1998 (see Tables 2 and 3) continued to accord the Oral History Project and the associated process of narrative elicitation with a democratic and critical authority, consistent with larger national attempts of both critical psychology and the People's History Movement to cultivate social action oriented spaces for critical thinking, intellectual independence, and community agency (see Callinicos, 1991).

A careful reading of Table 2, an articulation of the projects' assumptions, shows how oral history, as an integral part of a critically oriented violence prevention program, continued to be read as a transformative enterprise. Reflection and reflexivity ("by reflecting the experience of individuals and groups in a 'mirror-like' fashion") were seen as integral to the interpretation of social phenomena and the formation of historical continuity in the elicitation and reading of narratives related to past and contemporary events ("allow individuals to ponder and reflect on historical processes which has a link with the current experiences of people on this disadvantaged context"). The coordinating group assumed that the capacities for reflection and reflexivity, underpinned by intellectual and social independence and self-definition ("everyday experiences of people are best defined by themselves . . . allows expressions of their own biographics"), provided the basis to dialogue and debate about the pathways to social transformation ("the mirror will allow

Table 2. Oral History ‘97

Planning Injury Reduction and Violence Prevention

- The Eldorado Park Oral History Project implicitly operates on the following assumptions:
- Reflecting the experience of individuals and groups in a “mirror-like” fashion allows individuals to ponder and reflect on historical processes which have a link with the current experiences of people in this disadvantaged context.
- The everyday experiences of people are best defined by themselves in a fashion that allows expression of their own authentic biographies.
- This “mirror” will allow individuals and groups to initiate discussion and debate alternatives to negative social phenomena.
- The healing effect of a “story told” akin to confession has psychotherapeutic value, especially for the narrators and their version of past, present, and future.
- The mirror-image and reflective process allows for more than individual choice, but also involves a group process that seeks to challenge the supra-infrastructure and the historical issues that interweave and bind the individual and group to their current social and economic conditions.
- By recruiting local residents to investigate, record, and expose “hidden” truths, the process of healing, prevention, and intervention finds legitimacy in the face of challenge and denial.
- By engaging a larger context other than limited geographical boundaries from which the process is drawn, the past, present, and future of people are connected with the rest of the world.
- By connecting the larger frame of events with local development, there originates a context of “pride despite adversity” that does not seek to romanticize the experience of people, but instead challenges the current environment to accept the good and modify the negative.

Table 3. UNISA-CPA Oral History Project 1998

“Klipspruit-Wes, Sy Mense En Sy Dinge”

Description

A community-based project that will focus on two local exhibitions for the year. These exhibitions will be organized by a local team of residents, who will capture the life in their immediate surroundings through photographs, interviews, and community participation.

Objectives

- To build a sense of sharedness and closeness of a common experience
- To empower people to act upon their individual and group destinies
- To build upon a culture of respect for and around life in the community
- To improve upon the physical and emotional environment
- To mirror the community life
- To reach out to people through the recognition of their experiences
- To instil community pride and attempt to change people’s behaviour to the positive

individuals and groups to initiate discussion and debate alternatives to negative social phenomena”).

Another assumption (“the mirror-image and reflective process created allows for more than individual choices but involves a group which seeks to challenge the supra-infrastructure [a reference to the architecture of power] and the historical issues which interweave and bind the individual and group to their current social and economic conditions"), sensitive to social agency, seemed to be alert to the dangers of recasting and "fabricating the autonomous self" as the "object of expert knowledge" (see Ross, 1994, p. 254) and reproducing the individual–collective agency binary. Reading these assumptions together one may surmise that oral history was defined as an enactment of collective critical self-reflection, interpretation, and resistance to the repressive architecture of power, and an assertion of both group and individual agency shaped by common, objective, and dire material conditions.

Continuing with the theme of social transformation and agency, the pronouncement of "accessibility" positioned recovery as a commitment to affirming multiple manners of speaking ("We want to capture the language of the people, e.g., by publishing interviews and sections of interviews verbatim") and an inclusive representational force ("By using many photographs and illustrations we want to avoid isolating the non-literate"; see Table 1).

The privileging of oral traditions and the use of a range of visual media were integral to addressing the marginalization of the vulnerable and silenced sectors of the community ("the non-literate") and resisting hegemonic reproductions of speaking texts ("We do not want to convert everyday problems into academic jargon. As an academic it is all too easy to take the knowledge and to make it disappear–never returning to be developed among the people"). Here the project alluded to how academic historian's instruments and approaches, which tend to locate major events at the macro-level or independent state, may deny local people the opportunity to speak meaningfully about their pasts and present (see Giblin, 2004; Monson 2004). The project coordinators connected to the idea that oral history methodology may help recover local voices, marginalized and distanced by the formalities of academic history (see Monson, 2004), by adopting an emic narrative style that refers to "life circumstances," "livelihood," and "life-cycles" (Cordell, 2004, p. 246).

Although attempts to solicit large-scale narratives of sociopolitical changes may elicit silence from informants, opportunities to talk about life circumstances produce a great deal of articulation and vociferousness, as was exemplified by a woman who was interviewed by the project coordinators ("I don't know about history but I can tell you about the queen"). In as much as the reference to the queen may be read as a marginalization of South African history, it is an indication of how the lives of celebrities are interwoven into talk about otherwise mundane events. Just like Griblin's observations in Tanzania (2004), it was assumed that people articulate and recall "events in the local context that they know about and that matter to them most" (p. 244). In situating their accounts in stories about family, friends, marriage, social events, neighbours, immediate surroundings, community, local and global personalities, and institutions, they present microhistories that are ignored by the dominant and state-sanctioned historiographies and academic historians reliant on official archives and documentary evidence. People tend to speak about events in their local contexts that they are familiar with and that contain meaning for them (see Cordell, 2004; Giblin, 2004).

Alongside their distinct preference for the emic narrative styles, the project coordinators recognized that narrative recovery is intrinsically connected to place as constructed by dominant ideologies. The coordinators therefore located the recovery process within a nonracial identity. As a rejection of the troubling racialized segregation of space in South Africa, the coordinators adopted a reflective and connective stance, as enunciated under the objective of politics ("We do not wish to reproduce apartheid structures by focusing specifically on Eldos. We do not consider Eldos to be divorced from the rest of South

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Africa. Our history is inextricably linked with that of the rest of the country–we are part of Alex, Sophiatown and Soweto township reserved for those classified Black in apartheid South Africa, and much of what happens here, also happens elsewhere").

Recognizing the dangers of reproducing racialized discourse in the recovery processes, subsequent documents, including a funding proposal submitted to a European donor, that refer to the project as "People's History: from Tsotsitaal to Community Pride" defined the initiative's primary aim in the following way: "To move beyond the apartheid history of the so-called 'coloured' townships Eldorado Park, Ennerdale and parts of Lenasia South to a new pride in the community and a commitment to community development." This was in part a normative decision to speak to the influences of racialized consciousness and discourses on the narrative recovery process. Some of the people who were interviewed as the "real knowers" of the area's history reproduced a racialized discourse and terminology when narrating their personal experiences of exploitation. Some interviewees celebrated the formalization of Eldorado Park as a victory for the formation and recognition of a specific racialized identity under the label colored.

In the spirit of nonracialism, democracy, and antisexism, the coordinating group decided not to print such racialized narratives in their newsletter. While the normatively informed decision to exclude racialized narratives may be read as a repressive exercise of disciplinary power (see Terre Blanche et al., 1994), the restated aim is also reflective of the project's explicit intention to examine the ways in which people are complicit (consciously or unconsciously) in their own subordination and acceptance of dominant discourse. Here there was an implied recognition of how psycho-emotive scripts from the apartheid legacy insidiously reinscribe themselves into the present (see Stevens et al., 2013; Terre Blanche et al., 1993).

The recovery as a transformative force animates resistance, interpretation agency, and community as an enactment of praxis that demands historical continuity, linking current conditions to socioeconomic legacies. The objectives of the 1998 photo exhibition, titled "Klipspruit-wes, sy mense en sy dinge" (loosely translated as the people and things of Klipspruit-West, which is a catchment area within Eldorado Park), is perhaps the most eloquent illustration of how oral history was conceptualized as an animator of community and hence communal solidarity, consistent with Black Consciousness, embodying a critical intellectualism (Ally & Ally, 2008).

Black Consciousness as critical intellectualism stressed that Blacks together as a group confront the dynamics of internalized oppression, define themselves as transformative agents, and assert a solidarity to form community, transcending the racialized entities and consciousness present among those other-than White (Ally & Ally, 2008). Even though there is no explicit reference to Black Consciousness, the idea of people's history as a space to "build a sense of sharedness and closeness of a common experience" and "instill a community pride" and "build upon a culture of respect for and around life in the community" (see Table 3) echoes with the discourse of Black Consciousness, which held up the formation of Black solidarity and community pride as part of the processes of psychological liberation and assertion of oppressed community's autonomy and self-identity (see Ally & Ally, 2008; Seedat, 2012).

Here the Oral History Project was to be enacted as resistance to the dehumanizing effect of the repressive power of apartheid–colonialism and as a process of reclaiming and reasserting lost collective biographies, agency, identity, and authenticity (see Seedat, 2012; Terre Blanche et al., 1992, 1993). Storytelling and elicitation of narratives were cast as "confession," which "has psychotherapeutic value, especially for narrators and their version of past, present, and future" (see Table 2), reflective of the influence of academic discourse on the language assumed by the project. Here confession was not simply a reformulation of the individual as the "speaking subject" who held some deep truth within herself (see Parker, 1989; Terre Blanche, 1992, 1993), instead individual agency and recovery were ensconced within the larger process of building communal and global solidarity ("by engaging a larger context other than limited geographical boundaries from which the process is drawn the past, present and future of people are connected with the rest of the world" (Table 3). Likewise, resistance transcends the individual–collective binary ("the supra-infrastructure and historical issues which interweave and bind the individual and group to their current social and economic conditions" (see Table 2).

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The Oral History Project, described in this article, was integral to a comprehensive violence prevention program that represented an attempt at a critical enactment of community psychology. Located within a critical enactment, the oral history component, which spoke to the psychosocial determinants of violence, was triggered by an academic and public impulse reflective of a liberatory moment that conferred legitimacy and space to memory and recovery work. The elicitation of narratives of past and contemporary events was imbued with (a) transformative meanings of performance involving the "collection" of stories, artefacts, and other visual materials, (b) interpretation linking past to the present, (c) reflection about the insidious reinscription of racialized discourse, and (d) social action animating community and solidarity as acts of collective self-definition.

History, an animating of community, was indicative of the implicit shaping influences of Black Consciousness as critical intellectualism (see Ally & Ally, 2008; Seedat, 2012). Closely linked to the idea of making community, the production of historical narratives was viewed as a public and inclusive endeavour; an endeavour within which community voices both control and drive the process of "making" narratives. As such, the community of Eldorado Park and its individual residents were defined as the real knowers (see Goldman, 2001, p. 8) and legitimate bearers of collective and individual narratives and memories, a reclamation of community intellectual and social agency. The process of recovery and reclaiming was intended to enable local voices, otherwise marginalized from the processes of knowledge creation, through the adoption of an emic narrative style, a style that allows people to speak meaningfully about their pasts and the social fabric of their immediate community and larger society.

The analysis, as part of a second recovery linked to the reassertion of a critical voice in the ISHS and involving the mobilization of the original social actors to critically consider how best to place archived project materials into the public space, shows the Oral History Project to have been positioned as an animator of performance, reflection, interpretation, and community within a specific moment of national liberatory affirmations.

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