

Please reference as: Liz Stanley, *Documents of Life: Revisited: Narrative & Biographical Methods for a 21st Century Critical Humanism* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010).

here is a crucial

question to ask and a helpful way of responding to this:

« how has it come about such a small a number of whites has been able to impose itself on a far greater number of African peoples to achieve its present [1980] position of dominance, exploitation and power?, W L V K R Z H Y H U D T X H V W L R Q W K D W F D Q E H D Q V nineteenth century as it happened not as it turned out O D U N V D Q G \$ 2 Y P R U H

And as for the nineteenth, so the same question and responses also apply to the seventeenth, eighteenth and twentieth centuries. How did a tiny number of white people come to dominate and to institutionalise in the form of apartheid a system of exploitation and power over a large black majority? This chapter, and the wider Whites Writing Whiteness project, is part of, is concerned with how this has been researched and theorised including L Q U H O D W I L B R Q D W R and it does so by using documents of life

Letters and correspondence are everyday documents of life, strongly characterised by seriality and succession in their 'one thing after another' temporal aspect and consequently they provide, not only a humanly rich data source, but one particularly suitable for investigating changes over time. Certainly epistolary scholarship recognises the strongly performative features of letters (Decker 1998), but they also have

How then is social change in South Africa to be explored using the documents of life, the letters and correspondence that WWW is concerned with? The unfolding usages, variations and changes in white writing whiteness and its Others is the focus, analysing this around the fundamental V H U L D O L W i n g D a t e G a n d R e Q l n g i t u d i n a l c h a r a c t e r o f l e t t e r w r i t i n g i n i n s c r i b i n g t h e p r o c e s s e s o f s o c i a l b e c o m i n g o r s o c i o g e n e s i s T e m p o r a l i t y a n d s e r i a l i t y f u n d a m e n t a l l y m a r k t h e l o n g i t u d i n a l e x c h a n g e s o c c u r r i n g i n n e t w o r k s o f l e t t e r w r i t i n g ; i n a d d i t i o n , l e t t e r s a r e n o t s i m p l y r e p r e s e n t a t i o n s o f t h e s o c i a l w o r l d b u t a r e t h e m s e l v e s a f o r m o f s o c i a l e n g a g e m e n t a n d r e l a t i o n s h i p . C o n s e q u e n t l y , s o c i o g e n e s i s c a n b e t r a c k e d t h r o u g h c o m p a r i s o n s o f d i f f e r e n t l e t t e r w r i t e r s w i t h i n a f i g u r a t i o n a n d c h a n g e s i n t h e i r l e t t e r w r i t i n g p r a c t i c e s o v e r t i m e , c h a n g e s r e g a r d i n g a w h o l e f i g u r a t i o n o v e r t i m e a n d c o m p a r i s o n s a c r o s s f i g u r a t i o n a t d i f f e r e n t t e m p o r a l p o i n t s W W W t h e r e f o r e i n v e s t i g a t e s a s i t h a p p e n s ¶ D i s w a s k e w e d a n d w r i t t e n a b o u t i n a n u n f o l d i n g w a y b y p e o p l e i n a r a n g e o f n e t w o r k s u n f

examples from WWW research indicate

D J L Y H Q ~~W~~hen it was deemed war or not depending on how and where
 people were situated, and the relationship between what they saw as exceptional and what
 ordinary even if conflictual. Also who wrote to whom and why has to be taken into account
 for letters are perspectival and express points of view which are shaped by W K H Z U L W H U ¶ V Y L
 of their addresses and what could be expressed to them, not just about self

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forwardness, useful in providing goods and medicines and especially welcome as teachers of writing and reading. This is whiteness and those who represent it are successfully kept in their place, which was to provide what was wanted and not to make unwanted incursions on prevailing ways of life.

Overall regarding whites writing whiteness and its Others, the HVVLH 3 ULFH ¶ V O H W V indicate that the closer to the domestic figuration of the Prices and their children, adopted children and servants the more likely people are to be named and to be liked and disliked for their own particular behaviours and characters. The further from this the more that ethnic distinctions are made and ethnic and other homogenising descriptors (Bechuanas, Boers, traders) are used to characterise people in general terms. In addition, the way Price wrote was highly responsive to the situation and her then current state of knowledge about people and events, so that initial comments and assessments often give way to more nuanced ones. And while there are many changes over time, these are not linear or general but of an up and down and back and forth kind.

The sister Bessie Price mainly wrote to, Jeanie, did not keep any of her writings after March 1868. The letters to her children in Britain and in 1883. Her journals and reminiscences span a number of periods, including between 1868 and 1883 and thereafter. A small number of letters from 1899 exist written to the youngest Price daughter, Christian (Kirstie), and also a few around 1895. R J H U 3 ULFH ¶ V D G G U H V V H G W R ¶ Daughters all. There is, then, a hiatus between 1883 and 1900. This is a lengthy period in which much would have happened at local and interpersonal levels, while the broader context of the 19th century is also significant. cont 0 1 7 IoT BT 1 a-lv ET BT 1 0 0 1 110.06 5552 [(c)4 (ont ET BT 1 0 0 1 157.58 4685]

The few short later letters are from Kuruman, where the Prices had removed in 1885, and they contain comments unlike those of Bessie Price's previous writings by deploying colour rather than ethnic categories:

, F D Q ¶ W W H O O P R A S K Y E Z , Not impatiently I think, having plenty to do \$ O V R ,
 want to be especially busy for our poor darkies while I have time, having long felt it a bitter
 U H S U R D F K W K D W , G L G V R O L W W O H I R U W K H L P H Q ¶ W W H O X Q L G D H \ ,
 (9 May 1899, MS5971)

important- but need to be expanded. Did it happen for everyone, in the same way, and at the same time? Relatedly, different material and political circumstances, people and places to be taken into account for the letter-writing Bechuanaland missionary wives, Albany gentleman farmers, and impoverished Natal tradesmen turned farm prospectors discussed

changing views and representations of what was the unfolding present for the people who wrote them.

Many documents of life are research generated in interviews and similar encounters and are in a sense meta

should be the focus

women in their autobiographical testimonies and later use of these in memorialisation activities instituted by successive Nationalist governments. Its focus is on the

overtaken by the post-1994 political transition, but provides a still interesting and readable discussion of the historical construction of whiteness.

% D X U D Q (2011) Chapter 11 Towards a process-oriented methodology: modern social V F L H Q F H U H V H D U F K P H W K R G V D Q G 11 Provides a readable V I L J G L V F X V V L R Q R I K R Zar (2011) *Qualitative Research Practice* and discussions ignore Elias' emphasis on the processual and refusal to separate the substantive and the theoretical while their chapter returns to such root matters.

Julie McLeod and Rachel Thompson (2009) excellent *Researching Social Change: Qualitative Approaches* combines discussing case studies of research-based exemplars with setting out how qualitative researchers can think about and research change and inter-personal life. Memory, being, generation, affect and temporality are considered and the principles and practice of Qualitative Longitudinal Research (QLR) help is discussed. They H P S K D V L a qualitative approach to longitudinal research D U F K L V D E O H W R S U R Y L G I X S' V K R W R I U H D O O L Y H V Z L W K D I R F X V R Q S O R W V W R U and recognises W K H μ L Q K H U H Q W (61) U L D O L W I L W L Q Y R O Y H V

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