

Institution: University of Edinburgh		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 21 Sociology		
Title of case study: Rethinking and democratising knowledge of the South African past, 1770s to 1970s and beyond.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 to 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Liz Stanley	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of Sociology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2007 to now
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact Stanley's <i>Rethinking</i> project with its three interconnected research initiatives challenges earlier dominant nationalist-orchestrated views of South Africa's past, has promoted debates about racial politics and Afrikaner nationalist knowledge-making, and evidenced the fractured nature of the racialising process. Its Olive Schreiner Letters Online (OSLO), Whites Writing Whiteness (WWW) and South African War Memorials (SAWM) research websites and underpinning digital databases of many thousands of letters, records and commemorative sites, have democratised access to previously little-known data by enabling a wide range and very large number of citizen-users to contribute to opening up knowledge-making of the South African past. Since 2013, many thousands of citizen-users from 170+ countries have used the research, which has informed family histories, school syllabi, a TV documentary, radio programmes, multiple books, archivists' work, commemoration activities, and civil society/commercial concerns.		
2. Underpinning research <i>The project:</i> How did an initially small and always minority number of white people come to dominate and to institutionalise, latterly in the form of apartheid, a system of exploitation and power over a large black majority? Stanley's interconnected <i>Rethinking</i> research projects investigated this and provided innovative ways of thinking about the complexities of the past, initiated by research on white liberals and black radicals in South Africa starting in 1990. The OSLO research started in 2008; WWW in 2013; and SAWM in 2000, with the Edinburgh element of the latter starting 2019. All continue, with impacts for consideration from August 2013 on. They have involved Stanley as PI in three levels of data collection, analysis and output production: (i) in researching many thousands of letters, diaries and organisational records and hundreds of commemoration sites, then curating, transcribing and digitising these; (ii) in publishing analyses in many academic outputs as well as in blogs and other popular and media outlets; and (iii) in constructing and publishing a set of interconnected research websites and digital databases – the OSLO, WWW, and SAWM websites – which provide citizen-user access to these data. The research has been acknowledged as internationally significant, and a high volume of publications evaluated as outstanding have been produced. <i>South Africa and its racialising process:</i> The research involves re-thinking knowledge of the South African past, which in earlier times was heavily shaped and orchestrated through nationalist policies and practices. WWW researches and analyses everyday representations of race and racism in everyday 'documents of life', particularly letters and diaries, from the 1770s to 1970s and continuing reverberations after this (3.1, 3.2). The research begins in the 1770s with the large-scale arrival of missionaries and other Europeans, and takes the 1970s as a marker of political changes occurring. It has identified a complex 'racialising process' in how white people depicted whiteness and its racialised Others, including over time extensions of racial profiling,		

classification and regulation, and changes in everyday racial terms and usages (3.3). This evidences a long-term complex context to the period of apartheid, with the focus on opening up everyday representational practices and encouraging fresh insights about race matters, public and historical memory, commemoration, and continuing challenges by black activists and white radicals (3.2, 3.6). The methodology involves an innovative use of the Qualitative Longitudinal Research approach in investigating and analysing complex changes over time. The framework involves theorisation of both everyday and state formation practices over time around this distinctive racialising process (3.3).

Racial fractures: Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) is one of South Africa's most renowned writers, internationally known as a major critic of imperialism and colonialism, and who published widely in both fictional and factual writings. OSLO and its publication of Schreiner's thousands of letters and manuscript transcriptions has become an internationally recognised benchmark for Schreiner scholarship (3.4, 3.5, 3.6). Among other findings, the underpinning research demonstrates the significance of Schreiner's letters and unpublished manuscripts for understanding her published work and for throwing new light on many links between white radicals and black activists (3.2, 3.3.). WWW research highlights the distinctive character of letter-writing by white South Africans, including Schreiner, describing its constrained emotion and affect regarding race matters, with changes across different contexts and time-periods importantly showing the fractured, emergent character of racial terms and usages (3.3, 3.4).

Memory and the past: SAWM research spotlights the important role of active memory-making and commemoration within the rise and perpetuation of racialised nationalism in South Africa, showing how this informs constructions of past and present (3.1). Starting in 2019, earlier data was prepared for publication as a database for research use by citizen-users, and new data was collected on the black counter-memorialisation project and its lengthy history, both in preparation for a planned new phase of research, suspended due to the coronavirus. The SAWM database and webpages were launched in June 2020.

As a body of work, *Rethinking* research reveals a complex South African racialising process marked by classification and regulation, and also fractures and disjunctures (3.2, 3.3). It shows how knowledge of its past has been deliberately shaped by nationalist concerns (3.6), albeit with many challenges from black activists and white radicals (3.2, 3.4, 3.6). It demonstrates that this racialising process is distinctive and has crucial differences from what happened in the European context (3.3).

3. References to the research

3.1 Stanley, L., (2020) 'Ordinary letter-writing and the "actual course of things": white colonial settlers doing the business' in eds. A. Chappell & J. Parsons, *Handbook of Auto/Biography* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.165-83. (Can be supplied by HEI on request)

3.2 Stanley, L. (2015) "The scriptural economy, the Forbes figuration and the racial order" *Sociology* 49:5, 837-852. DOI: [10.1177/0038038515570146](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038515570146)

3.3 Stanley, L. (2017) *The Racialising Process: Whites Writing Whiteness in Letters, South Africa 1770s-1970s* Edinburgh: X Press. ISBN 1521403643. (Can be supplied by HEI on request)

3.4 Stanley, L., & Salter A., (2014) *The World's Great Question: Olive Schreiner's South African Letters* Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society. ISBN 978-0-9814264-5-7. (Can be supplied by HEI on request)

3.5 Stanley, L., Salter, A. and Dampier, H. (2013) "Olive Schreiner, epistolary practices and microhistories: A cultural entrepreneur" *Cultural & Social History* 10:4, 577-597. DOI: [10.2752/147800413X13727009732245](https://doi.org/10.2752/147800413X13727009732245)

3.6 Stanley, L. (2018) 'Protest and the Lovedale Riot of 1946: "largely a rebellion against authority"?' *Journal of Southern African Studies* 44:6, 1039-1055. DOI: [10.1080/03057070.2018.1533301](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2018.1533301)

A high-volume of publications of international standing have been produced, including 7 monographs and 35+ articles. Significance and quality of outputs is confirmed by continued prestigious funding: three ESRC grants (Senior Research Fellowship, Large Research Grant, Professorial Research Fellowship), three British Academy grants, a Hugh Le May Fellowship in South Africa, a Faculty of Arts Senior Research Fellowship at the University of Auckland, New Zealand; two Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellowships in the US and South Africa, and a Visiting Fellowship at St John's College, Oxford. Stanley's research has been evaluated as 'outstanding' by funding bodies including the British Academy and ESRC.

4. Details of the impact

Rethinking's impact is multifaceted, including extensive public engagement with the research, re-use of the data, and new projects building upon its foundations. It is used by educationalists at all levels, and has democratised access to sources for rethinking South Africa's past, both now and in the future.

The OSLO, WWW and SAWM research sites produced by Stanley give access to online databases providing research capabilities both for academic use and for citizen-users (5.1, 5.2, 5.3). These are free and internationally available, and designed and delivered in searchable formats appropriate for non-specialised users with varied levels of experience. Together, they provide access to previously sequestered information about the South African past, enable users to pose and research their own questions, and facilitate new knowledge-production by citizen-users including journalists, film-makers, teachers, genealogists, family historians, archivists, and the wider public. To support and enhance this wide user take-up, a 'Lives and Letters' mailing list of 900+ subscribers, together with outreach events in North America, UK, and South Africa, have been developed.

The extensive international use of the databases is evidenced by world-wide take-up and in-depth use of the most research-intensive pages, as measured by an independent source, Google Analytics data (5.1, 5.2, 5.3). The analytics demonstrate the reach, depth and intensiveness of use by many users internationally over concentrated periods, with page preferences and duration of use indicative of 'serious' own-research investigations. Thus, from January 2014 to June 2018, OSLO was visited by 22,095 users from over 118 countries, who visited OSLO 29,921 times with 152,150 page views (5.1). From July 2015 to June 2020, WWW was visited over 18,090 times by 19,025 users from 101 countries, with 43,387 page views (5.2). SAWM was launched more recently on 1 June 2020; up to the end of November 2020 visits by users from a range of countries have been increasing, displaying a clear preference for its black counter-memorialisation pages (5.3).

The Analytics reports demonstrate high numbers of citizen-users carrying out their own enquiries, whether for curiosity, family history, business, political, environmental or other purposes, including researching a notorious historical racial murder. User-initiated contacts and exit polls show impact groups include school and other students, teachers, journalists, genealogists, archivists, family historians, popular researchers, organisations seeking specialist information, as well as leading scholars in the field (5.2, 5.3, 5.4).

Impacts from WWW demonstrating reach and significance include:

- WWW website facilities and the wider research are used extensively in citizen-users' own projects, demonstrated in unsolicited information in exit poll responses (5.2, 5.4). One user commented that *"This site is a goldmine for researchers, teachers, as well as wider audiences. It really visualized research as process, simply brilliant!"*

Impacts from SAWM demonstrating reach and significance include:

The SAWM database was publicly launched in June 2020. While part of the research dates from an earlier period (and is therefore not being submitted in this ICS), its 2019-onwards Edinburgh-based component adds new research on black counter-memorialisation sites. Its Analytics

reports show it is developing a usage pattern with a strong emphasis on the counter-memorialisation aspect (5.3).

- The current research component comprises SAWM's black memorials and counter-commemoration research, which includes the key Liberation Heritage Project and earlier sites. This has swiftly become the most used part of the database and website, promoting awareness of black activism and its commemoration (5.3).

Impacts from OSLO demonstrating reach and significance are:

- Numerous user requests, including from auction-houses, to provide evaluations of letters. Notably, this led to the discovery of c230 previously unknown important Schreiner letters (5.3).
- Schreiner research impact led to Stanley's invitation from the renowned Van Riebeeck Society to produce a popular edition of Schreiner letters on South African race issues, *The World's Great Question*. The VRS Chair stated that, *The VRS – and through it, its members and the general public – are deeply indebted to Professor Stanley and her collaborator... for undertaking this second Olive Schreiner letters project as assiduously as the first. Olive Schreiner's distinctive epistolary art has been well and truly served by them*" (5.5).
- Walters and Fogg 2015 extensively reviewed *The World's Great Question* and described it as a "*brilliant*" contribution to popular readership of the Schreiner oeuvre (5.6).
- Driver's edition of Schreiner's novel *From Man to Man* uses OSLO transcriptions throughout and describes OSLO research as "*in the process of transforming Schreiner scholarship*" (5.7).
- OSLO transcribed letters were the authoritative source when providing Schreiner letter extracts in the Pearson Education *English Today* grade 9 reader, which is used in *all schools* in South Africa (5.8).
- OSLO research was used to prepare a 2020 popular edition of Schreiner's *Dreams* collection of stories, informing its editorial apparatus, supplying much of its evidential base, and being used as a source for authoritative information on Schreiner and her associates leading the editor to state that "*Liz Stanley's work on Schreiner... has influenced a generation*" (5.9).
- OSLO transcribed letters were seen as the authoritative source and led to the Tongaat Hulett Sugar Foundation from 2019 requesting permission to feature OSLO letter extracts on its South African sugar sachets, used in all cafés, bars and restaurants (5.10).

Across all three aspects of the *Rethinking* project, in recognition of the impact of Stanley's contributions to citizen capacity-building, in widening access to new forms of knowledge-making, and to recovery work on black and radical history, she has received 'extraordinary professor' awards from the Universities of Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Free State. Stanley has also been awarded the BSA 2020 Distinguished Service Award (5.11).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Research & Analytics reports, *Olive Schreiner Letters Online* (OSLO).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20200923100708/https://www.oliveschreiner.org/vre?page=370>

5.2 Research & Analytics reports, *Whites Writing Whiteness* (WWW).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20201204143311/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/thehub/google-analytics/>

5.3 Research & Analytics reports, *South African War Memorials* (SAWM).

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115121730/https://www.sawarmemorials.ed.ac.uk/google-analytics/>

5.4 Whites Writing Whiteness – Anonymized independent exit poll responses with use and impact corroborative comments.

- <https://web.archive.org/web/20210115121952/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/exit-poll-responses/>
- <https://web.archive.org/web/20210115122130/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/questionnaire-2018/>

- 5.5** Van Riebeeck Society – Howard Phillips, VRS Chair: in L. Stanley & A. Salter (2014) *The World's Great Question: Olive Schreiner's South African Letters* Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society, p.ix.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115135428/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/forward/>
- 5.6** Paul Walters and Jeremy Fogg, 2015 – Independent review article, 'A great Olive Schreiner question – brilliantly answered' *English in Africa*, 42, 1, pp. 131–138.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115140034/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/files/2020/07/Walters-Fogg.pdf>
- 5.7** Dorothy Driver, editor of new edition of Schreiner's novel *From Man to Man*, which uses OSLO transcriptions throughout (Driver 2015 pp.x-xi)
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115135913/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/files/2020/07/Driver2015ppx-xi.pdf>
- 5.8** OSLO letters – Permissions contract to use letter extracts in the Pearson Education ZA, *English Today* grade 9 reader, used in all South African schools – Joan Yarnold, Editor, Pearson ZA, legal contract.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115140128/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/files/2020/07/PearsonEd-permissions-schreiner-letters.pdf>
- 5.9** Senior *Dreams* editor – Use of OSLO and Schreiner research in a 2020 popular Broadview Press edition of Schreiner's *Dreams*.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115140514/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/files/2020/11/BarbaraBlackTestimony4nov20.pdf>
- 5.10** Tongaat Hulett Sugar Ltd ZA – PMR Law, legal contract to use Schreiner letter extracts on all South African sugar sachets.
<https://web.archive.org/web/20210115140606/https://www.whiteswritingwhiteness.ed.ac.uk/files/2020/07/Tongaathulettlettercontract.pdf>
- 5.11** BSA Distinguished Service Award
<https://web.archive.org/web/20201022123558/https://www.britsoc.co.uk/opportunities/distinguished-service-award/>