

Oral History and Living Memory in Cyprus: Performance and Curricular Considerations

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Introduction

Oral history has gained significant interest in the past few decades in the social sciences and humanities, including education. Established toward the end of the 1940's, today it is undertaken by many qualitatively inclined researchers who work with human subjects. Also, many oral history projects are being implemented in schools, as scientists and teachers recognize the direct educational benefits of oral history.

The mid-twentieth century is considered to be a landmark for oral history (Perks & Thomson, 1997; Counce, 1994; Yow, 1994), especially with the work of the American historian and journalist at Columbia University, Alan Nevins, in 1948. Nevins was established for his extensive work on the history of the Civil War and his biographies of politicians and industrialists (North American Oral History Association, as quoted by Thomson, 1998, p. 581).

Oral history is a way of collecting and interpreting human memories to foster knowledge and human dignity. “[It] is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events” (Oral History Association, 2012). “[It] collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews” (Ritchie, 2003, p. 19). An oral history interview normally consists of a well-prepared interviewer questioning an interviewee and recording their exchange in audio or video format. Recordings of the interview are transcribed, summarized, or indexed and then placed in a library or archives. Clearly, oral history refers both to the method of recording and preserving oral testimony and to the product of that process (Oral History Association, 2009). A critical approach to the oral testimony and a variety of interpretations are necessary for the practice of oral history.

The Cyprus Oral History and Living Memory Project²

The Cyprus Oral History Project (COHP) took place between 2010 and 2012 and is the first of its kind in Cyprus. Its aim was to audio or video- record the voices and words of Cypriots of all communities, to capture their memories and to understand their individual meanings and perspectives regarding the 1960 - 1974 events, thus shedding light on their lives. The project sought to record first-hand or vicarious experiences of Greek-Cypriots, Turkish-Cypriots, Maronites, Armenians and Latins. The opening statement was: “Tell me your experience and memories of the events of 1960-1974.” Each interview aimed at creating an open-ended conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee, and at following the lead of the interviewee in describing and discussing events.



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Fifty interviews were recorded, with a wide range of people of different capacities who experienced the events from varying perspectives: inhabitants, soldiers, refugees, students, relatives, friends who experienced the events vicariously, adults—women and men—and youngsters—girls and boys back in the 1960's—as well as people from the younger generation who experienced the events and their aftermath through the memories and stories of others. The interviews were conducted in a single year, each lasting for one to one-and-a-half hours, each transcribed and minimally edited using the Q and A model, each posted on the project's website³.

The Context

Cyprus, one of the smallest countries in the European Union, is also the last divided country in Europe and Nicosia its last divided city. Winning its independence from Great Britain in 1960, Cyprus has been roiled in ethnic conflict, violence, and division almost from the start; everyone of a certain age remembers the troubles of 1963-1967. The 1974 Turkish invasion and subsequent occupation sealed the fate of Cyprus for decades. The troubles of the last 50 years are not unrelated to Cyprus' strategic location at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean Sea, a place that has long attracted and continues to draw the great world powers. Rome ruled, as did Istanbul and England. Richard the Lion Hearted took a piece of the island on his way to the Crusades, Paul the Apostle was given 39 strokes with a lash by the Romans for preaching the Gospel, Othello's Castle is on the southern coast, and Lazarus died on the island. Cyprus has always been a storied jewel of the Mediterranean.

Today UN peace keepers patrol the buffer zone between north and south, and England maintains a massive presence, tens of thousands of military personnel, and two air bases constituting 10% of the land mass. Some Cypriots complain that the great powers see Cyprus as little more than a huge, unsinkable aircraft carrier. While there has not been a shot fired since 1999, and while the border between the north and the south opened in 2003, for the generation now in its sixties, memories of the early days are both vivid and raw, and, indeed, for most Cypriots of every age, Cyprus still bleeds. For Turkish Cypriots the bleeding started with the events of 1963 and ended with the "peace operation" of Turkey on the island in 1974. For Greek Cypriots the bleeding started with the events of 1974 when Turkey invaded the island, and still occupies the northern third of the island. That bleeding—its interpretative meaning and its pervasive imaginative power today—was the focus of COHP.

Although tensions between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot side are low because of the partition, both sides remain pervaded by antagonistic biases, histories, and myths. Each community represents the other as the villain, and descriptions regarding the events surrounding the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 differ. In reality both communities have suffered losses in human lives and property. Currently, different political opinions exist as to what an "ideal" solution to the Cyprus situation would be, with strong disagreements emerging amongst the opposing parties on the island. In addition, there are different interpretations based primarily on personal experiences, upbringing, schooling and socio-political assumptions, about how the Cyprus problem began, the history of 1963-1974, and the events that led to the 1974 Turkish invasion.

Inclusion, Democratic Practices, Trust, and Authority

Two alterations were made to the initial COHP plan; the first regarded the inclusion of known political persons, instead of just collecting stories randomly from "ordinary" people who had an interesting story to share. Following the nature of oral history and the needs of the project,



we used snowball sampling (Atkinson & Flint, 2004), combined with selection based on individuals' experiential backgrounds and capacities in order to ensure diversity of opinions and experiences. In this way participants often referred us to other potential interviewees. Thus, we included people who expressed their interest, and who consented, to share their story even if they were political persons. Every single story was important and valuable, and the contribution of each one, the known and the unknown, mattered. The stories of the known participants, their perceptions and interpretations of the events were as important and interesting as those of the "common people", the poor and the marginal. Additionally, people's different responses and oral performances regarding a particular question allowed us to compare, contrast and better examine a wide range of stories, thus refining historical knowledge. The inclusion and diversity of personal stories, social and political, were vital, especially in the case of the 1960-1974 events in Cyprus, which changed the course of a whole country and the lives of its people.

Oral history is an epitome of inclusion, voice and democratic practice. It values the life and story of all people, promoting "the equal rights and importance of every individual" (Portelli, 1997, p. 58). "Each interview is important, because each interview is different from all the others" (p. 58). Oral history also champions "everybody's right to autobiography", which coincides with many contemporary societies' struggle for democracy as well as with the shift toward subjectivity. It is an "opportunity to narrate oneself, to give a meaning to one's life and one's narrative" (Passerini as cited in Portelli, 1997, p. 58). It can work with elites, and also with "those who had gone unheard" (Portelli, 1997, p. 58). It concerns both the art of listening that results to the "awareness that we gain something of importance from virtually every person we meet" (p. 58), and the art of reciting owned by the individual that leads to the acknowledgement of difference and equality.

The second alteration was that we broadened our initial question to include a longer time span; instead of focusing solely on the events of 1974, we also asked about the period before 1960, during 1960-1974, and after 1974. The whole of that period, after the establishment of the Cyprus Republic in 1960 up to the Turkish invasion in 1974, is considered critical in the contemporary history of Cyprus. The decision to broaden the time span was related to "power and attitude" (Portelli, 1997, p. 62). Focusing on one year alone would mean that we perceived as a single, isolated event what many participants saw as a sequence, an interconnection of events that took place across many years. Hence, we broadened the time span in order to prevent confining the performative reaction of the participants to the events of 1960-1974. Additionally, that the interviewer did not prescribe the time span of the narration moderated her power over the interviewee, allowing the narrator to discuss what was important to him/her. As Portelli (1997) argues, people are helpful, friendly and approachable when the interviewer is "not from where power comes from" (p. 63). The interviewee's sense of freedom was crucial in the COHP since our aim was not to seek the historical truth but rather to learn what was important to whom and why during that period on the island.

The two cases below show how the broadening, or lack of it, reflected power relations between the interviewer and the narrator and affected the narrators' performance. In the first case, when the interviewer allowed a broader time span, Sophia, the interviewee, felt that she could go further back, earlier than 1960, to talk about the 1958 events in Cyprus. She talked about the injustice she felt because people who were forced out of their properties and villages by the Turks in 1958 were not considered refugees and accordingly were not granted the refugee status, unlike people in 1974:



Sophia: I am not considered a refugee, but Turkish-inflicted. Since 1958... That's how they called us ... and it was somewhat "contagious", [the idea] that we were Turkish-inflicted. Other people did not want us...

[Her husband, Costas, intervenes]

Costas: Yes, Turkish-inflicted... Because they were chased away by Turks in 1958.

Sophia: About 6-7 years ago...or maybe more[?]. . .we had written a letter to the government saying that... Because we, as Turkish-inflicted, although we were only few families, we received no help whereas the others—although those of 1963 I cannot argue that anyone helped them either—but those of 1974 received help. They offered help...foreign countries and everyone. Whereas us, then, nobody. Nothing.

Interviewer: Even though you had also lost everything.

Sophia: Of course we had lost everything; we abandoned our homes at 10 o'clock at night. The young man to whom we were renting the house [a neighbor] was a policeman and he left the station and he came at night driving the Turkish police Land Rover. He was Turkish Cypriot and he drove us from our area to the area where my uncle, my mother's brother was, so that we could stay there at night. We stayed there for a few days, then we [went] to my mother's village... We stayed there for a few years, eight years... But our first night there...when we found a house to stay... I will never forget it. My mother went to the convenience store. She bought three plates—because our father had passed away—three forks, three knives and a small pot. She cooked pilaf on a petrol engine and we sat on the ground, on the carpet, to eat. I will never forget that. We had that pot until recently [laughs] as a memento.

The freedom Sophia was given to talk about an expanded time span was important to her, as it enabled her to talk about the events of 1958, which was the period that concerned her the most, and of which she had strong memories. Viewing the interviewer as a person of power—as researchers and academics may be perceived—Sophia wanted to express the injustice and pain she felt about the event. Although the interviewer could not really do anything about the situation, she still needed to share her story knowing that it was her chance to be heard.

In the second case, the interviewer visited her mother's house, which had been abandoned in 1974 during the bombing of the village, in order to interview the Turkish Cypriot woman who now lives there. The interviewer posed the question "What do you know about 1974?" which offended the potential interviewee since to her, the most important era of the modern history of Cyprus was 1963. The following quote is from the interviewer's field notes:

We arrived at the village and then at my mother's house... I started calling to see if someone was in... We rang [the bell]... 'Welcome,' the woman said with a smile. She seemed as if she was waiting for us. We greeted her in Greek. 'I am the daughter of the woman who owns the house,' I said. 'Yes, I know,' she said... She wanted to show us the house... She talked to us about her family... about the parts of the house she fixed because there were damages... [She said] she was given the house legally... after the invasion... I said I am conducting this research and I am collecting people's stories about 1974. I immediately noticed the change in her look. 'What do you mean?' she said. I said, 'I want to find out what people know about 1974 and

how they experienced it and I collect stories from a wide range of people, different ages, Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots...' 'But you are illegal,' she said... 'You are asking about a politically sensitive issue.' 'I am ... doing research,' I said... 'And from whom did you get permission?' she asked... She picked up the phone ostentatiously saying, 'I can call the police right now and put you in jail... [T]his is just a warning to stop'... The daughter, Tülin, said, 'How do we know that you will write the stories the way we narrated them?' I said, 'I can send them to you to take a look before I publish them.' 'No,' she said, 'I do not trust you.' 'No, no,' the mother, Şenay, said, "Do you want to know the truth? I will tell you the truth. Greeks were very bad and they were killing and torturing Turkish Cypriots. They were more and [they were] the strong ones. Then Turkey came to save us. Now we are the strong and more [in numbers]"... I emphasized that it is not the truth that I want to know, but rather I am interested in the story itself. Tülin said, 'I like things the way they are now. Before I wasn't safe. I had to go through three security checks to go from one point to the other'... [Şenay] told me she is a politician. Tülin asked me why I only gather stories about 1974...

Issues of trust and authority arise here. Firstly, the potential interviewee felt threatened because she perceived the interviewer to be a person of power who came from the Greek Cypriot side, possibly to gather information to reclaim her mother's house and property. When the interviewer mentioned 1974 the potential interviewee perceived power to be favoring the interviewer. She then attempted to reverse the power relation through the warning "you should stop your research immediately", a threat of imprisonment and by announcing that she is a politician, a person of power. Secondly, the woman perceived the current situation in Cyprus to be ideal, because she now feels safe.

Storytelling as a Performance

Storytelling in oral history is a "spoken performance" (Portelli, 2011). How things are told and what is told adds to the meaning of the narrative. The performance of the narrator—enabled by the interviewer's listening and the narrator's talking—and the transferring of the performance on paper—the scholarly practice of oral history—are of critical importance. Exemplifying ignorance on the matter and the desire to learn on behalf of the interviewer are also important, as the interviewer is not there to study the narrators, but "to learn from and about them" (Portelli, 2011, p. 7). In order to obtain meaning from the interviewees' perspective, "we must become nonjudgmental and open listeners" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 161).

The statuses and capacities of the COHP narrators varied: refugees, soldiers, captives, mothers, activists, students, to name a few, each with a different story and performance, and a unique narrative style (how they told things and what they chose to tell); each performance and style bore its own importance; each fashioned by both the listening and the talking. In COHP the idea was to attain meaning from the narrator's viewpoint; thus, we listened for the interviewee's "moral language" (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 19), for "metastatements" (p. 21), for the "logic of the narrative," paying particular attention to consistencies, contradictions and "recurring" themes (p. 22). We also listened for patterns: whether people used a unified, a segmented, a conversational (Etter-Lewis, 1991) or an episodic (Kohler-Reissman, 1987) narrative style to tell their stories.

In regard to the transferring of the spoken performance on paper we followed two general rules of thumb: “never putting into people’s mouths words they did not actually say... and striving to retain on the written page some of the impact of the spoken performance” (Portelli, 2011, p. 10). Proper punctuation was used to structure the sentences and suggest the rhythm of speech: each comma was viewed as “an act of interpretation” (p. 10).

The Performance of a Soldier

Socrates Menelaou: The Turkish airplanes...were bombing... And I was afraid of airplanes[!] since I was young. I tried...to fit into an opening between the rocks while attacking...and...[while] only my hand fit inside [laughs]...I was trying to squeeze my whole body [laughs]... In 1964...my father went to the morgue because they showed on TV that they were throwing napalm... They knew that...commandos were killed. And he went to the hospital alone to see... [Most of the soldiers] were burnt... He looked if anyone was hairy [laughs] [and] looked at their finger [laughs]...like this [laughs]. I broke it when I was young... In '77...I asked permission to go to England. ‘You don’t exist,’ they said. They noted that I was buried...

The Performance of a Wife

Maria Menelaou: ...On the street where we lived...there were many Greek officers. The night before the invasion, around 11-12 at night, we were sitting on the porch... We saw them...loading their cars with electrical items, radios, hi-fi, televisions...one could tell they were leaving... I called a colleague who was...renting a house to a British Commission diplomat...and she told me that ‘he is packing, he is leaving. And he said nothing. He will leave us here for the Turks to get us’... I had many calls from the [British] Embassy [as a British citizen] to go to the Hilton... There would be a bus [to] take us to Dhekelia [British overseas territory in Cyprus]... And I said, ‘but my husband will be here, why should I go?’

The Performance of Captives

Theodora Giorkadji: [While I] was talking to my grandfather he looked out...he got up and put his hands up... And immediately I saw two soldiers... In our house. We had not realized that they got in...no one had realized. Then these two soldiers began shouting, in Turkish, of course, ‘Out, out!’ They all began to cry and shout... They had the Turkish flag on them... When...we were released by the Turks...we were taken to an orphanage... [I thought my parents were dead and I was sad]...[until] my mother came... She thought she had heard the previous night...that they released prisoners, [and] a neighbor who had TV confirmed that...

Tony Liatsos: I was captured by the Turks in 1974 in Famagusta, and my experiences [of] that period were very intense. [I experienced]...the execution process, twice at execution row, where...they ended up executing the first four... I was imprisoned in various camps in Turkey...from August 14 until October 28, 1974. My personal experience was much worse than many others’, because the Turkish officers believed that I...was the brother of the ‘revolutionary’ President of the Republic of Cyprus... For a whole month I was questioned...I was badly beaten

by officers and finally...luckily, my name was in the UN files and that's why I got back unharmed...

The Performance of Those Experienced Death or Missing of Loved Ones

Giorgoula Pantechi-Pandouri: ...Every afternoon...[t]he buses...brought captives from the Turkish occupied area, based on some agreements of the government. And the agony was to 'go today to see if our loved ones will come.' And it was very heartbreaking...both for those coming and for those waiting. Some wept, others fainted, very...tragic. I was going every night, but the last time we went and we had no [news], not even in the last [bus]...the situation was...very bad. And then...you enter another process. Because every night you would think 'Okay, tomorrow.' Upon the last tomorrow, when there were no news...the climate became too heavy. And then you start experiencing another torment... It was that situation where...nobody could tell you for sure 'this is how things are,' so that you could start accepting it...

Huseyin Akansoy: ...My mother, two sisters, two brothers were sent to the villages. We were taken to...a military camp. And then on the day of the second invasion...August 14th, we were taken to Limassol. On that day, a big catastrophe was experienced in our village... I heard it in Limassol. Two people were talking to each other...and very soon...we learned that yes, some nasty things had happened. They killed people, children. How many? They killed everyone? Are there still people who are living? And I spent 72 days in the Limassol camp... I kept thinking who is living, who has died without knowing exactly what had happened... And when I got back here, of course my father hugged me. And he burst in cries, tears, and I understood that everything is gone...

The Performance of a Refugee

Canan Oztoprak: We left our home in 1963... So I spent the first seven years of my life in Paphos. And the very first memory I have was an [English policeman] knocking on the door... It was a curfew, and everybody had to be in their homes... So they were knocking, and, even now I can remember my heartbeat. I was so frightened until my mother opened the door. And later, there were troubles with Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in Paphos district... And, some of the Turkish Cypriot homes were burnt... I have a memory of all this, since some of my childhood photographs were burnt, and which we managed to keep. But they have the burnt edges...

The Performance of a Non-Refugee

Fatma Azgin: Nicosia was divided in the '50s... Most people think...that Nicosia was divided after 1974... And there used to be every year a [funfair] at Ae-Louca church, it was in the center of [the] Turkish part in the old city. And we used to go there, and suddenly they evacuated the houses and left, before '63 and '74. So I lived in that condition... In villages there were tragic things, you know. The Turkish Cypriots left their villages, most Greek Cypriots were not aware that Turkish Cypriots left their homes, they were always saying in '74 they lost their houses, but since I was in the conflict resolution group in the 1990's, 10 years I was there

working, and people started to know that in '63 there was a similar story for Turkish Cypriots...

The Performance of People Who Were Kids at the Time

George Demosthenous: So, what was memorable about the first invasion were the airplanes. And...one of the things that we were experiencing at the age of 10, [were the] bombings. One could hear from a distance...other weapons, too, but what was most prominent was the sound of airplanes crossing over Cyprus...and the bombs that were falling... It was such an intense noise. What was...causing more terror...was the deafening sound of airplanes when they crossed over... The other...memorable thing was when they were trying to teach us...some basic things, [such as] lying face down...[how] to hold our head under tables or...under trees...

Salih Oztoprak: Unfortunately...like everybody those days, I was influenced by the nationalist stories. And, uh, we all believed what our only radio station was saying. And we believed, unfortunately... So, I remember, for example, in '58, people gathering in the street. They were speaking about...what we would do if the Greeks attacked. And I remember they were preparing sticks and knives. Something like that... And, those days, the people who were admired were the ones who were doing more against Greeks. And I remember...in the beginning of '63... a taxi had brought an ill person to the doctor in our neighborhood. The doctor was Turkish, and the patient was Greek Cypriot... I must have been nine or ten, I think. And, while the taxi was waiting for the patient, I tried to...puncture the car tire... [T]he driver...saw me from the window... Of course he understood what I was doing. And thank God he was a very...calm man... He started telling me that that was 'not right. You shouldn't do this. I'm here for a patient.' And at that moment, I was actually really sorry for this event. And I said sorry to him. Not because I was afraid...since I was in my neighborhood... But I really felt sorry. When he spoke to me, I was embarrassed and I felt sorry...

The Performance of a Teacher

Stella Spyrou: ...We stayed about twelve months at Dome [hotel], trapped. A city...in a hotel... It functioned as a small community... Right before many left, two teachers...[started] a small school at Dome and taught the young students... Meanwhile we heard on the radio that there were thoughts to operate schools in Kyrenia, middle school, they said... I thought, since I was a teacher and I hadn't yet been appointed at a school, [and] I wrote a message and sent it via the Red Cross, that 'I intend to work...if schools operate in occupied Kyrenia.' And...at the end of September, I got...a message from the Ministry of Education saying, 'you are appointed at the Bellapais Gymnasium'...

The Performance of People of a Younger Generation

Nasia Avraam: My uncle, my father's brother... He was missing... He was 21... He received a call to join the army... Meanwhile...he was engaged and about to get married on August 14... He had left 4-5 days before [the wedding] and he was supposed to return. He was together with others...and...on their way back...we don't know what happened, but they disappeared. Since that day he did not contact



anyone...and he was missing for 33 years... Until one day in the summer they went to my father's family house and asked to take a DNA test to see if the bones that were found were my uncle's... They were in shock...

Ali Sahin: ...So, we grew up in a situation where everybody was telling us these stories about how the Greeks were bad, and how they did bad things relating to the Cyprus problem, that they were trying to kill all the Turkish Cypriots, and these kinds of things. And Turkey came here and saved us. This is the official story that everybody would tell us, in the schools, on the streets... Slowly, slowly, when you grow up you realize that the reality is a little bit different...especially the relationship between Turkey and Turkish Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots started questioning this...

Faika Deniz Pasha: The meaning of '74, both in my family and society, has changed over the years. When I was a little girl, it was the day that we were saved. As I became older, and as people became much more politicized and they could talk, and they could see what's really going on...

In the above narrations we witness the testimonies of people in relation to the manner in which they experienced the period between 1960 and 1974 in Cyprus. Sophia's testimony concentrates on 1958, while the people from the younger generation, Nasia, Ali and Faika, referred to dimensions that extend to their own era. Socrates' episodic storytelling is centered on the theme of life and death as experienced by the soldiers and the agony of their families about their fate. Maria and Salih used moral language. Maria focused on the fact that foreigners were leaving, not telling Cypriots that the Turks were coming to get them, and also on her decision to stay with her husband, ignoring the Embassy's phone calls to leave. Salih, who used an episodic frame to share his story, described his plan to puncture the car tires, that in the car there was a patient going to the doctor, and how bad he felt for his action. Salih recounted his experience as a thematically driven—rather than chronologically ordered—episode to talk about their naive actions against Greek Cypriots at the time, blindly following nationalistic leaders. Fatma, in a segmented narrative style, emphasized the events before 1974, which Greek Cypriots either do not acknowledge or are unaware of: that Nicosia was divided before 1974 and that Turkish Cypriots were forced out of their houses, too.

In Theodora's and Tony's narrations we pay attention to the logic of the narrative. Both of them are consistent in telling their captivity story, how it happened, what they experienced and what they were thinking at those moments. Theodora was thinking that they would be killed and that her parents were dead, and Tony that he managed not to be executed and he was tortured more than others. Theodora used conversational elements to represent different speakers and emotions, and portray the happenings. Tony, like Giorgoula and Huseyin, used a unified style to narrate the devastating events in their lives in a slow, almost monotonous pace revealing deep pain and sadness, devastation and calmness, numbness and deep thought, providing in-depth examples to convey their experience. Canan, George and Stella combined a unified and episodic narrative style to narrate experiences with particular recurring themes: the bad things that happened to the Turkish Cypriots, the characteristic sound of the airplanes, and the efforts to teach the students in captivity, respectively.

Fourteen individuals performed in a distinct way, all of them in response to the same question, with a variety of voices and in differing narrative styles. Their stories illustrate the



performative aspects of storytelling, its diversity, the many capacities of individuals who participated, and the multitude of political perspectives. Aside from the personal dimension, the stories also provided us with a glimpse into the cultural and sociopolitical context of the era: an abundance of hate, excitement over guns and conflict; following naive, nationalist leaders, lack of education, political dogmatism and blindness; and that international involvement led to the worsening of the situation.

Oral History Research and Curriculum

The oral history method and the knowledge we gather through it are useful tools in school curriculum and in curriculum studies, a field that focuses on the study of the school curriculum and its various dimensions. Firstly, oral history is a research method particularly useful for gathering rich data from the point of view of the traditionally marginalized and the excluded from self-representation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Voice, the reclaiming of authority, empowerment, and the recognition of life experiences as an important source of knowledge are issues of ethical, methodological and epistemological concern in curriculum studies, both at a theoretical and a practical level.

Secondly, oral history allows us to situate life experiences within a cultural context. Collective memory, political culture, and social power are illuminated via the people's personal stories, which are narrated through "culturally available stories" (Jack in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 160). Studying the interplay between the individual and society is a tenet of curriculum studies. Thirdly, truth and objectivity may be problematic concepts in oral history research, yet this concern is eliminated by shifting the focus towards the performative aspect, rather than emphasizing on the truthfulness of the story. Having understood that in some cases we may never find out "what really happened," we accept that "even errors, inventions, or lies are in their own way forms of truth" (Portelli, 1997, p. 64) and an integral and important part of a performance, which only confirms that "a great deal happened inside people's minds in terms of feelings, emotions, beliefs, and interpretation" (p. 64). The field of curriculum studies sees oral history research as the art and science of producing a narrative and a performance, a form of aesthetic, arts-based inquiry, which portrays a view of reality. This is the reality that students and researchers are called to study and understand.

Given the shared characteristics of oral history and curriculum studies—i.e. the educational process and the notion of experience—the two fields can benefit each other through the interaction of their historical, social and methodological aspects. Oral history gives us "a little knowledge" (Portelli, 1997, p. 63) that can prove to be tremendously useful in the field of curriculum studies. It can be a useful source of information for curriculum studies theorists and researchers in the studying of the various dimensions of school curriculum, as it can inform their work; when thinking about what knowledge is of most worth, where it comes from and how to illuminate it; and the art of producing that knowledge itself.

Implications for Curriculum

This kind of research has several implications for curriculum memory, particularly in the way that memory could constitute curriculum. Memory and history are present in the work of many important curriculum studies scholars who have worked in fields such as autobiography (i.e. Pinar, 1994; Miller, 2006), biography (i.e. Kridel, 1998), narrative inquiry (i.e. Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), and in commemorating the journey of curriculum itself



(Marshal, Sears, Allen, Roberts, & Schubert, 2006; Schubert, Lopez-Schubert, & Thomas, 2002). Studies such as these bring into focus the idea of memory as curriculum, illustrating the way the various differing perceptions of history, acted out as performances, affect the official 'narrative of this period.

For example, the younger participants in the study expressed that as they grew up they realized that "the reality is a little bit different" (Faika, Ali, Nasia). Such realizations has implications for both the manifest curriculum and the latent curriculum. For example, consider Salih's confession, "We all believed what our only radio station was saying... and we believed, unfortunately..." (Salih). The influence of the "nationalist stories" on people at the time, who acting out of enthusiasm, spontaneity and naïveté versus using rational thought, and the realization, years later, of the impact of all these, reveal the possible twists in reality that add to our understanding of memory as curriculum.

As such, 'curriculum memory' can provide a window into the way these events are repeated through the years. What people say, how they say it and why, and what they mean by it and why, are of great importance in understanding the past, but also the current situation. Also, finding ways to overcome how individuals are trained to think, hear, and learn is important. In the related literature this is described as formalization and institutionalization (Taylor & de Laat, 2013), which can affect younger generations' perceptions of what it means to be politically active. Whereas institutionalization can depress understanding of the kind of social change or challenges that are possible, the tenets of such possibility can be revealed as individuals examine the impact of formalization in relation to the various social changes that have occurred (Taylor & de Laat, 2013). The stories in this study teach us about individuals and the context of the era: the way individuals participated in the cultural and sociopolitical context, and the way one's personal narrative is intertwined with, distinguishes itself from, and is in conflict with other larger narratives. The various perceptions of historical reality can help unravel what is manifested and what is latent, what is institutionalized and what is challenged. As Pinar (2010) puts it, some things are not as divided as they are presented, but they go "hand in hand," and in order to make sense of reality in this way, and the official narrative of a period, it must be presented spherically, including the different perceptions and performances that surround it.

There is a great volume of work on culture and identity that informs curriculum studies. One important strand of research in this area is work about and with persons who have lived through oppressive conditions (He & Phillion, 2008) and on exile pedagogy (He, 2010). There is also work concerning historic trauma, testimony, memory and relevant questions arising in literature. Historic trauma is not just "an event encapsulated in the past, but...a history which is essentially not over, a history whose repercussions are not simply omnipresent...in all our cultural activities, but whose traumatic consequences are still actively evolving...in today's political, historical, cultural and artistic scene" (Felman & Laub, 1992, p. xiv). The consequences of historic trauma are further evolving in curriculum studies and in teaching. This type of research that examines the perceptions and beliefs of the survivors of trauma is valuable, especially in understanding collective consciousness around people and their assumed identity. This examination entails a particular kind of pedagogy; one that is connected with understanding the reality lived, witnessed and narrated. Wiesel (2006), in discussing the Auschwitz experience, states that "the witness knew then...that his testimony would not be received... Only those who experienced...know what it was. Others will never know. But would they at least understand?" (p. ix).

This type of research and the focus on a person's 'performance' can offer a view of the individual in relation to a historical period. The period examined in the case of Cyprus, 1960-1974, defines the current society as one filled with dislocation, uprooting and post-traumatic stress syndrome. These themes come up again and again in the narrations of the fourteen individuals who participated in the study. Apart from compelling stories, what we extract from the performative aspect of storytelling and the various perspectives adopted, is information about the individual, the culture and politics of the time. All this is of course, rich curriculum material, that adds to the basic and conventional history teachings, which reveal aspects of latent curriculum. This essay could be the start of a broader sociological study, which would pose a challenge to the formation of the Cypriot curriculum. The study would tackle the issue of reconciling different interpretations of alienation and anomie, and pose significant challenges connected with issues of reconciliation and identity formation.

This essay is a contribution to the field of curriculum studies as it illustrates how we can consider oral history, not only as a source of information about ordinary people's lives but also for the role it can play in the construction of a historical context that is based upon people's narratives. Thus it can help us understand how the 'everyday' person was affected by the events, as we hear directly from the person who has lived them, rather than the official, institutionalized version of the story. Hearing all the different points of views that are often encountered through the practice of oral history can enable students to understand history in a broader context and as a contradictory field of possibilities. It can also enable them to see history as not limited to what is written and official but also as something produced by people who experience it and, in another sense, by those who study and write about it.

Notes

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³ www.frederick.ac.cy/research/oralhistory

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