
“Art of the Interview”



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2019: Volume 6

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Of Art and the Interview: Woven Performance

by Bonnie S. Sunstein

An artful interview is complex; a tapestry of threads, colors, textures, sounds, and voices as it weaves material among ourselves, our interviewees, and our audiences. What should we include in an interview? What choices do we have when we want to conduct one? When do we want to present what we find to an interested audience? How can we better understand the interview as an art form: its genres, purposes, processes, even its page layouts? How do we best present an oral interview on a written page, in a digital recording, or on a screen? What are the rules? And most important for teachers, how do we enable our students to create and disseminate the products of their interviewing adventures? It's a dense subject, a thick tapestry, and luckily each interview, like any work of art, is and should be unique. You'll see this idea play out in the following pages.

In this 2019 volume of JFE, we invite you to enter the breadth and depth of our special collection about the art of the interview, a set of skills often overlooked in haste. Interviewing is important, nuanced research: a data source as valuable as published citations, material objects, historical records, timelines, and charts. An interview requires what I like to call "collaborative listening." An interview requires guided yet unpredictable time. An interview needs to be an intricate, interconnected, intersubjective interweaving between the interviewer, interviewee, and subject, all with a sensitive eye toward an audience. Questions can be closed or open. Timing can be flexible. It requires preparation of your own design. It's consistent with what folklorists study as "performance theory." As humans, we've lived such performances since people have been talking to one another across space and time. An artful interview combines informal and formal data and finds a way to bring life to a final presentation.

Even the most traditional examples illustrate how the process works: Seek information, choose data sources, plan a living encounter with your subjects, reflect on what you've gathered, analyze patterns and themes in your data, check them with your subject, project those themes toward larger ideas, and eventually make decisions about how to present all you've gathered to an audience in the most artful, compelling way you can.

About the photo: Linsey-woolsey coverlet that belonged to Co-Editor Paddy Bowman's great-grandmother.

First, I offer you an unlikely example to illustrate the artful interview process, drawn from a most traditional English teachers' canon. In the final stanza of William Butler Yeats' classic poem, "Among Schoolchildren," a late middle-aged poet meditates on a visit he's just had at an Irish primary school for girls, having talked with the children and the "kind nun in a white hood" who answers his questions. He's ambled around the classroom and observed the details of a most enjoyable day. "The children learn to cipher and sing/To study reading-books and history/To cut and sew, be neat in everything." And as he reflects on the scene and the talk, he loops inward to his own life and longings and then he loops outward to influential scholars and writers he's encountered and, ultimately, to us, his audience, about the complexity of his experience. His famous last lines illustrate the ironies he finds as he thinks about that scene:

O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

Even a one-day visit to a school is artful and interconnected, Yeats reminds us as he meditates on the scene. The overarching effect (the strong rooted "chestnut tree") is not a single element but a complicated sum of its parts. Beside solidity, strength, and nourishment, the tree and its parts suggest history and possibility, uniqueness and similarity, parts and whole. Both in short and in symbol, the poem holds the irony of a life dancing in the midst of other related lives. To me, the image is what we should find in an artful interview.

Closer to home, contemporary folklorists and anthropologists have other artistic ways of describing what happens in an interview. Renato Rosaldo, in his *Culture and Truth*, uses yet another dance metaphor when he writes, "...the optimal fieldworker should dance on the edge of a paradox by simultaneously becoming one of the people and remaining an academic. The term participant-observer reflects even as it shapes the fieldworker's double persona" (1989, 80).

In *Translated Woman*, Ruth Behar describes the process of bringing to life the story of Esperanza, a woman with whom she spent 14 years interviewing, whose village considered her a witch. Behar's job, she knows, is to bring Esperanza to life on the page: "As I undid necklaces of words and restrung them, as I dressed up hours of rambling talk in elegant sentences and paragraphs of prose, as I snipped at the flow of talk, stopping it sometimes for dramatic emphasis long before it had really stopped, I no longer knew where I stood on the border between fiction and non-fiction" (1993, 16).

As I wrote my own book *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*, over four very different editions and 20 years, my co-author Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater and I realized more acutely with each edition that an artfully conducted and carefully presented interview is the fundamental basis of any account of people and culture. In fact, we devote two separate chapters to elements of interviewing: "Researching People: The Collaborative Listener," "Researching Language: The Cultural Translator." In each edition, we offer samples of fine published essays and interviews (most recently, psychologist Oliver Sacks' portrait of autistic scientist Temple Grandin, 19th-century American journalist Lafcadio Hearn's analysis of the term "cheek," poet Ofelia Zepeda's fascinating observations of writing in her non-written native language). But we also present our

own students' work with interviews: a college freshman's study of a woman in a biker bar, a graduate student's account of popular culture items in a presidential museum archive, a university professor's photographic interviews of hospital workers who are invisible to many people.

Over the years I've taught interviewing, my students have covered an astonishing variety of topics and people: An elderly farmer and his family talk about their history by simply looking at their great-grandfather's old ledger, a young woman interviews five members of her family and a region's literary history about a single book in her grandmother's garage, a Native American man sees tribal rivalry by interviewing a woman in the gift shop, a graduate student studies a 19th-century woman who mapped the ocean floor and eventually publishes it as a book. Of course, I could go on. I write this not to brag (although I'm so proud), but to recognize the literary and cultural nuances that come with teaching the art of the interview, guiding the processes, and reading hundreds of artful interviews written by professionals and by students.

There are great rewards in such work. You need time to do it well. And support. You will find a rich sample of new rewards here, along with the teaching strategies, thoughts, and support materials that accompany them. You will find sources of support, suggestions for projects, and samples of very different kinds of interviews as you look through the table of contents. I invite you to wrap yourself comfortably into the tapestry that is this volume, and arrange it to fit your future.

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“Interviews are the keystones for great stories that encourage us to think, feel, interact, or take action.”

~ Carol Spellman

In Celebration

Carol Spellman brought three young filmmakers, Alcides Cerrud, Miguel Cholula, and Adan Merecias-Cuevas, to the 2003 AFS conference to co-present with her. Here Carol, second from left, and Paddy Bowman of Local Learning pose with the teens after their film screening.



Photo courtesy of Paddy Bowman.

Carol Spellman came to folklore late. After a career as both a special education and gifted and talented teacher in Portland, Oregon, she discovered our discipline and fell so in love with folklore that she decided to get a second master's degree in the field. She also was avid about filmmaking. Combining folklore and filmmaking gave her fresh passion and useful tools to inform audiences about everyday traditions that are too often overlooked. After receiving her MS in Folklore from the University of Oregon, she worked in the Oregon Folklife Program at the Oregon Historical Society. The program was headed by folklorist Nancy Nusz, who shared Carol's attentiveness to education. OFP had a distinguished history of producing resources for K-12 students and educators as well as supporting traditional artists in school residencies. After Carol joined the staff, she quickly gravitated toward teaching interviewing and videography to young people through the Portraits of Oregon: Youth Exploring Culture and Community initiative. As with other joys in her life—Zydeco dancing, horseback riding, Irish music, child rearing—she went full bore at engaging young people in interviewing and filmmaking. When she attended her first American Folklore Society annual meeting in 2003 in Albuquerque, she brought three young Latino videographers who had made films about their families' traditions in their studies with Carol. She included them in two panel sessions, and they excelled. She took them to AFS receptions and plenaries, introducing them along the way. It was a joyful experience for them and for all of us who got to interact with Carol and her student filmmakers.

As JFE editors and publication committee members began planning this special issue, Art of the Interview, we thought of Carol, who died in 2017, and how she embodied our theme. We miss her, we honor her, we are pleased to reprint here an article she wrote for Listening: Interviewing in Education, our [2009 issue of the CARTS Newsletter](#).

The Artful Interview in Documentary Production

by Carol Spellman

For seven years, the Oregon Historical Society Folklife Program staff taught youth video production skills to document their communities' cultural practices. Youth in both rural and urban locations created 45 short documentaries; received awards; and learned interpersonal, intercultural, intergenerational, organizational, and technological skills that they will carry with them through life. In making documentary videos, youth learn to conduct background research, communicate with people from many walks of life, design questionnaires, conduct interviews, work collaboratively, and shoot and edit video.

Memorable documentaries tell compelling stories, and interviews are the keystones for great stories that encourage us to think, feel, interact, or take action. Through interviews 4th through 12th graders often have “ah-ha” experiences about what they know, don’t know, and can learn about this art.

Artful interviewing requires flexibility, curiosity, inquiry, ease with people, dogged determination to pursue the hard questions, active listening, empathy, and the ability to comprehend quickly what questions will elicit interesting stories.

How do we assist youth in learning how to “artfully interview?” What are the special decisions required when using video as the medium?

Listening Activities

Before sending students out into the community to video record interviews, give them opportunities to hone their skills with the following activities.

1. **Paired Listening.** Have students bring in an object to share. Ask them to pair up and share their stories about the items. The interviewer cannot take notes, must actively listen, and can ask three questions to clarify missing information. Each interviewer then introduces the partner to the class based on what s/he gleaned from the shared object story. Debrief and discuss ways that each person demonstrated active listening.

2. **Video Mock Interviews.** Begin using the camera to practice recording interviews. Assign teams of four or five students (one to operate the camera, one to operate a second camera for close-ups and extreme close-ups, one to interview, and one or two to be interviewed). Choose an activity to film such as a salsa tasting contest or a mock visit to a store to interview the “store manager.” Provide props for the “store manager” to tell about. Review the footage with youth for what works and what doesn’t in both the interview and the filming of visuals as seen through the eye of the lens.

3. **Practice Interviews with Guests.** After adequate practice, invite a guest to the class to be interviewed (traditional artist, musician, local community member, or elder). Have youth conduct the interview in a professional manner. Debrief.

Reprinted from CARTS, a publication of City Lore and Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education.

Skills for Teaching Video Production

On the first day of a video project, provide hands-on experience with equipment. Exploration engages youth and allows them time to discover how the equipment works, including camera, batteries, tripod, external microphones, lighting, types of shots (wide shot, medium shot, close up, extreme close-up).

Explore various crew roles including interviewer, camera operator, sound person, note taker, still photographer, editor, etc. Knowing all roles provides a back-up if someone is ill, adds a variety of perspectives, and offers more brains to “brainstorm” ideas and solutions.

View documentaries. Discuss how interviews, visuals, and editing styles and decisions contribute to telling the stories.

Divide youth into small collaborative teams as they use equipment. They will discover what crew role(s) they feel most confident with and what roles they need to learn more about.

Video equipment is expensive, so it is important to discuss proper handling to avoid accidents or damage.

Each student films one to two minutes of footage inside or outside the classroom. Include setting up the camera, dealing with background sounds, ambient sounds (wind, rain, etc.), natural vs. non-natural lighting, filming a variety of shots.

Artful Interviewing

Plan the interview and shoot with the final product in mind. Prepare youth for the “big interviews” they will conduct with community members. Using video requires that certain decisions be made. Will the interviewer be on camera with the interviewee in a two-shot, three-shot, over-the-shoulder, or person-on-the-street interview? What is the best way to set up external microphones to ensure audible sound? Will the interviewer be off camera (one-shot) in either a formal or informal interview? If the interviewer’s questions are not to be included in the video, it is important for the interviewee to rephrase the question as a part of the response.

Practice good interview manners. Discuss the importance of treating interview subjects with respect. This may require a discussion of culturally sensitive issues. Have students demonstrate rude behaviors (chewing gum, arguing with interviewees, tardiness, looking at notes during the entire interview rather than at the person being interviewed, etc.) and discuss why these may hamper rapport and information exchange.

Plan questions. Interviewers should come to an interview prepared with questions based on background research, but they also will need to exercise flexibility, curiosity, fast thinking, and active listening! Has enough background information been researched to generate a list of questions and do interviewers have the confidence to ask educated questions not on their list? Review the list of questions and ask, “Are the essential questions being asked?” The surprising, sad, poignant, or hilarious moments in documentary stories are often uncovered when interviewers ask follow-up questions.

Practice active listening. Active listening promotes an atmosphere of rapport and respect. It involves body language (facial expressions, leaning forward, eye contact), listening without interrupting, paraphrasing, allowing interviewees time to respond before jumping in with the next question, intense listening, and sometimes laughter, tears, etc., which may have to be communicated “silently” when the interviewer is not shown on camera. Active listening engages interviewees as part of the process and values their contributions. It is an essential ingredient for getting great stories in an interview.

Teaching youth the language of video production to document community stories using interviews is empowering, emerging, enlightening, and exhausting! One team’s film about a neighborhood restaurant and its legendary enchiladas illustrates the value of video interviews for youth. After viewing the footage of his team’s community interviews, Arturo, the team’s camera operator, wrote an introductory rap for the video:

*I rep my block in the 503
From North Portland to my community
Never would have known there was so much to see
That builds our culture’s identity
Until I started to film all about the folklife realm. . . .*



Carol Spellman, an independent folklorist and educator, worked throughout Oregon with folk arts community organizations and public and private schools. She died January 26, 2017, in Portland, Oregon. Her exuberance and work in the field are missed.

Carol and students at Owyhee Combined School locate Australia on a map during a National Cowboy Poetry Gathering outreach performance by bush poet Milton Taylor.

Photo by Jessica Brandi Lifland, courtesy of Western Folklife Center.

From Our Archives . . . A Special Reprint!

This is the first of what may become a tradition of sharing noteworthy Folklore and Education materials that are out of print or were only available through small distribution channels. Resources that continue to have significance for today’s audiences will be considered for publication. Contact *Journal of Folklore and Education* editors to suggest your favorite resources for republication.

~ Your Editors





City Lore Interviewing Guide

“*You don’t even know what you know until somebody asks.*”

~ Kewulay Kamara, Finah oral poet from Sierra Leone

Interviewing as a Tool for Folklore, Oral History, and Community-Based Research

Interviewing is a powerful tool for educators. Through interviews with people in their families and local neighborhoods, students make connections between what they are learning in school and informal learning in their homes and communities. They hear personal stories that bring family and local history to life. They engage with stories that reveal how larger historical events and social movements have affected their own communities. Interviewing builds skills, knowledge, and enduring understandings that will serve students throughout their lives.

At City Lore, the New York City-based nonprofit where I direct the Education Program, interviewing is an essential tool we use in our in-school and out-of-school programs. Students interview family members and community residents in their homes and workplaces and in the classroom. To identify potential community guests, we rely on our own contacts and on the suggestions of school staff and families. Often, we just hit the streets and visit local businesses and organizations, which is a wonderful way to learn about the school’s local community.

City Lore’s teaching artists emphasize the ways they conduct their research to gather ideas, materials, and resources for art making. In addition, they use interviews conducted by the students as source material for art making in our K–12 school partnerships. Examples of these projects include student interviews with community activists for a spoken-word poetry project; immigrants for songwriting and picture book projects; and Madeleine Sugimoto, whose family was sent to an internment camp during World War II, for a play on Japanese American history.

City Lore’s staff uses the guidelines below to prepare our teaching artists and classroom teachers for student interviews with community guests. We adapt the guidelines to the age of our students, and invite users of this guide to do the same.

~ Amanda Dargan

Why Use Interviews and Oral History

Interviews and Oral Histories Provide:

- Accounts of events, either historical or contemporary, through the eyes of people who played a role in or who witnessed those events.
- Insights into the perspectives and knowledge of people who participated or observed but who are not considered authorities and therefore are often excluded from history books and media accounts.
- Multiple points of view on events and shared experiences, not just established opinions or histories told from one group's point of view. What people believe influences what they do and how they interpret events even when information differs from other historical records—so this is important to record, too.
- Rich primary source material, with perspectives and stories that can enliven the topic of study and show how larger social issues and events have affected local communities and individuals.
- Opportunities to learn more about people we see every day, including family members.
- Practice using critical thinking skills, including close observation and listening, making connections, analyzing, inferring, interpreting, synthesizing, evaluating, and retelling.



Students observe Samantha Mukkavilli making *rangoli* designs next to her home before interviewing her about the tradition, how she learned, and the role it plays in her life.

Preparing to Interview

- **Think about the purpose of your interview.** Ask yourself, “What do I want to learn from the interview?” “Whose perspectives, knowledge, and experiences do I need to include?” “What is the purpose of the interview?” and “How will I use the material?”
- **Do background research** on the topic and the person you plan to interview beforehand so that you can ask informed questions.
- **Prepare a list of topics and focused questions** from your research to use as a guide. If you will be drawing on the interview to produce one or more products (such as an essay, radio program, podcast, exhibit, visual arts project, song writing, play, etc.) keep in mind the kind of information you will need as you prepare your questions.
- **If possible, talk to the people you plan to interview beforehand.** Describe your topic, why you chose them to interview, what you plan to do with the interview, and who will have access to it. Giving them a few days to think about the topic may result in a richer interview. Assure them that you’re interested in their personal experiences and memories; therefore, they do not need to conduct research on the topic in advance.
- **Make a technology plan.** Choose the appropriate audio, video, or notetaking technology carefully, considering the ways that you would like to use the material. If you plan to record the interview, test your equipment before you go and make sure that you’re comfortable with the set-up and controls. If needed, bring chargers, extra charged batteries, and memory cards. Decide if you need images (photos or video) in addition to audio.
- **When working with a team, discuss roles and responsibilities**, such as Interviewer, Note Taker, and Equipment Operator. Always give all team members an opportunity to ask questions before the close of the interview. Karl Orozco, a visual teaching artist with City Lore, divides classrooms into five roles for their interviews with community guests: Interviewers, Scribes, Character Artists, Setting Artists, and Object Artists. His approach encourages collaboration and ensures that every student has an important role in the interview process. [See [Classroom Connection: Creating Art from Interviews](#)]



Teaching artist Karl Orozco preparing his students for their interviews with a community guest who came to the United States as an immigrant.

Conducting the Interview

Deep Listening

Deep listening is the most important skill for conducting an interview. Good interviewers listen closely to the narrator's responses and do the following:

1. **Demonstrate active, attentive listening.** Show that you're listening by making eye contact, nodding, using facial expressions to respond to what you're hearing, and asking follow-up questions.
2. **Give the narrator and yourself time to pause, think, and reflect.** Inexperienced interviewers often rush to the next question when there is a long pause, which can give the impression that you're interested in only short answers. Also, people often pause before describing a powerful experience, so you may miss the best stories if you don't give them time to gather their thoughts.
3. **Ask follow-up questions** to clarify or probe more deeply into a topic or to ask for more details or examples.
4. **Take notes (even if you are recording the interview)** on the setting, the people, and other things you observe that may not be captured in a film or audio recording. Record your observations and write down questions you have based upon what you are hearing. Some interviewers find it helpful to divide their notetaking page into two columns, one column for notes on what you hear in the interview and a second column for questions you may want to ask later, issues or topics the interview raises, or things you notice about the setting.

Asking Questions

An interview should feel like a conversation, even though the interviewer does most of the listening and the person being interviewed does most of the talking. The job of the interviewer is to put the narrator at ease, listen actively and respectfully to what the narrator says, and ask questions that elicit rich details, stories, and perspectives on the topic you are researching.

Two types of questions, close-ended and open-ended, are essential to a good interview, but try to make most of your questions open-ended.

1. Closed-ended questions elicit "yes" or "no" and short answers that help you gather basic information. These questions often begin with the words:
 - WHAT (is the name of the town where you were born?)
 - WHERE (were you stationed during the war?)
 - WHEN (did your family come to the United States?)
 - YES/NO (DID your family enter the United States through Ellis Island?)
2. Open-ended questions give the narrator a chance to talk at length on a topic. Devote more time to open-ended questions, which often begin with words and phrases such as:
 - TELL ME ABOUT (your experiences working in the mine.)
 - WHAT WAS IT LIKE (living on the Lower East Side at that time?)
 - DESCRIBE (a typical day of work on the farm.)
 - EXPLAIN (how you shear a sheep.)
 - HOW (did you feel leaving your family behind?)
 - WHY (did you decide to leave your home?)



Students gather around Montse Olmos Tlalcihuatzin after their interview with her. Said one student, “Montse’s story is also my story.”

Other Interview Tips

1. Talk with your narrators beforehand and tell them why you want to interview them, how you plan to use the interview, and who will have access to it. When working with K-12 students, the classroom teacher or teaching artist can call the guest and describe the project, then ask the guest to consider demonstrating what they do or telling the students about themselves briefly before the questioning begins.
2. Arrange to record the interview in a quiet place with very little background noise or distractions. Do a brief sound check before you start and listen through your earphones to ensure that background sounds are not distracting from the interview. Sounds such as those from a fan or air conditioner will sound louder on the recording than you may perceive them. Don’t hesitate to ask the person to turn them off during the interview, and be sure to remind them to turn them back on when the interview is complete. If you’re recording the interview for radio or for podcast you may also want to record sounds from the narrator’s home or workplace.
3. Avoid asking leading questions. Ask questions that encourage the narrator to answer in a way that reflects their thinking, not your thinking. For example, instead of asking, “Don’t you think it was wrong to close the factory?” ask, “How did you feel about the decision to close the factory?”

4. Ask for specific examples and stories to illustrate the points your narrator makes. For example, if the narrator says, “We used to get in trouble for playing games in the alley,” you could ask, “Can you tell me about a time when you got in trouble?”
5. Ask for detailed descriptions of people, places, and events or describe them yourself as part of the interview. As [Radio Diaries](#) producer Joe Richman says, “Be the listeners’ eyes and ears.”
6. Use your list of prepared topics and questions as a guide, but be flexible and respond to what the narrator says and explore different topics that come up during the interview. If the narrator starts to talk about subjects that seem irrelevant to your topic, politely move back to the topic with a new question but also remain open to the possibility that the divergence could become interesting and useful. We try to go over our list of questions beforehand but put them aside until the interview is almost complete, then check our list to see if we’ve forgotten anything.
7. Be willing to share some of your own experiences. If your subject seems reticent about sharing personal stories, one strategy is to share your own personal experiences similar to those you are trying to elicit. Respect the fact that there are some topics that your subject simply may not want to share.
8. Ask your narrators to sign a release giving you permission to use the material and outlining what you will do with it. Get contact information in case you decide to use selections from the interview for other purposes later.
9. Create a plan for storing the interviews and documentation that students create based on the interviews. Post-secondary educators and students may have access to an archive for storing copies of interviews and related materials. K–12 educators can ask their school librarian or a local library to create a file for their interview materials. It is also important to offer the people you interviewed copies of the interviews and of the final products. A colleague described a recent call from a woman who asked for a copy of an interview he had done many years ago with her grandfather. “I’ve never heard my grandfather’s voice,” she explained.

Interviewing Etiquette

1. **Be polite and respectful of your narrator’s time and energy** by arriving prepared and on time and ending the interview at the scheduled time, unless the narrator wants to continue. You can request a second interview if you need more time. Interviews over an hour long can be a strain on the subjects.
2. **Think of your interview as having a beginning, a middle, and an end.**
 - Before the interview, talk informally to help both you and the narrator relax, establish rapport, and feel comfortable sharing personal information. Explain your topic and how you plan to use the information (even if you have done this previously).
 - Begin with questions that are not too personal or challenging. This gives the narrator time to get to know you, understand what you want to learn, and decide if they trust you enough to share personal information.
 - Move to more open-ended questions and questions that probe more deeply into your topic and your interviewee’s personal experiences.

- When you have finished, ask, “Is there anything you would like to add?”
3. **Thank your narrator** before leaving and ask if you can call for additional information after you have had time to look at your notes. Follow up with a thank-you note and offer to share a copy of the recording or photographs.

After the Interview

1. **Copy and label your recording file.** Make a copy of all digital files from the interview and save in a safe place like a classroom cloud storage site or a hard drive. Label your recording file soon after the interview and make sure the file data includes the names of interviewer and narrators, date, place, and other information relevant to your topic. Use the same file name for other forms of documentation from the same interview, such as photographs, notes, sketches, and artifacts.
2. **Listen to the recording and make a list of the key topics.** Transcribe the interview, or outline the interview and transcribe interesting quotes and information that you may want to use in your final project. Make sure this document includes the file name so that it can be traced back to the right digital file.
3. **Analyze your notes.** Look for evidence of the narrator’s point of view, thematic connections between different parts of the narrative, interesting quotes, and connections between the narrator’s personal story and larger historical narratives.
4. **Contrast and compare** the perspective and experiences of this narrator to others you have interviewed on the same topic and to written records. This will help you see how unique or broadly representative this narrator’s experiences and perspectives are.
5. **Treat the evidence with care.** Apply the same standards for citation and use of oral history materials as you would with other types of historical evidence. You have a responsibility to present your narrators’ points of view and the context in which they were expressed accurately.
6. **Be careful that one story does not become the only story.** One person’s perspective should not be generalized to an entire group or community. One moment described in an interview should not be understood as that person’s only story or full story.
7. **Reflect on what you, the interviewer, bring to the interview** and how that might shape the questions you ask, the topics you explore, and your interpretation of the interview. In their book *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research* (2011) authors Bonnie S. Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater suggest three questions to ask yourself when you’re conducting fieldwork, including interviewing: What surprised me? (This tells you what you didn’t know or thought you knew), What disturbed me? (This tells you what challenged your deeply held beliefs), and What intrigued me? (This tells you how your personal interests influence the questions you ask and the topics you explore more deeply).

All Photos by Amanda Dargan.

Work Cited

Sunstein, Bonnie S. and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 2011. *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*. 4th Ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s.

URL

Radio Diaries: <https://radiopublic.com/RadioDiaries>

Classroom Connection: Learning to Interview through Practice

A key skill in interviewing, one of the most challenging for inexperienced interviewers, is learning to listen carefully and make the interview feel like a conversation, even though the narrator is doing most of the talking. The activity below—the first one we use with students—helps develop those skills.

Procedure—Two-Minute Interviews

- Divide the class into pairs.
- Ask each pair to decide who will go first and second.
- Tell students that they're going to listen to each other talk for two minutes about a particular topic. Select a topic that relates to the lesson theme. For an immigration study, for example, you could ask students to describe a memory of having to leave or say good-bye to a person or place that they thought they might not see again.
- Tell students that while one partner talks, the other only listens, without taking notes or asking questions. When two minutes are up, ask the pairs to reverse roles.
- Invite each pair to stand or come to the front of the class, one pair at a time. Ask one partner to introduce the other and describe what their partner talked about and when finished to ask the partner if there is anything they would like to add or correct. Then reverse roles.
- Discuss. What did it feel like to listen and not ask questions? Was it easier to listen or to talk? Did anything surprise you? What did you learn? What more would you like to know? What skills did you use in this activity? (i.e., close listening and remembering; demonstrating your listening through eye contact, nodding your head, and facial expressions that show interest; retelling someone's story in your own words; telling your own story; checking for accuracy).

EXTENSION: Follow this activity by asking pairs to turn to their partners again and ask three questions based on what their partner shared—a close-ended question, an open-ended question, and a follow-up question based on something they said.

Discuss. What more did you learn by asking questions? What was the main idea of the story your partner told? Give your story and your partner's story a title. Share why you choose your titles with your partner. How are your titles similar or different? What do the differences tell you about how you each interpreted the other's story?

Classroom Connection: Creating Art from Interviews
by Teaching Artist Karl Orozco

What is the value of visual arts in my teaching practice? Can I connect art making to my goals? Why make comic books a product of an inquiry process driven by interviews and ethnography?



The following lessons integrate art making with the methodology of interviewing. Students of all ages can build skills of analysis and perspective-taking through visual arts activities as a way to extend the learning gained through interviews.

Picture book page by a student, Stephy, based on her interview with a family member.

Project Background

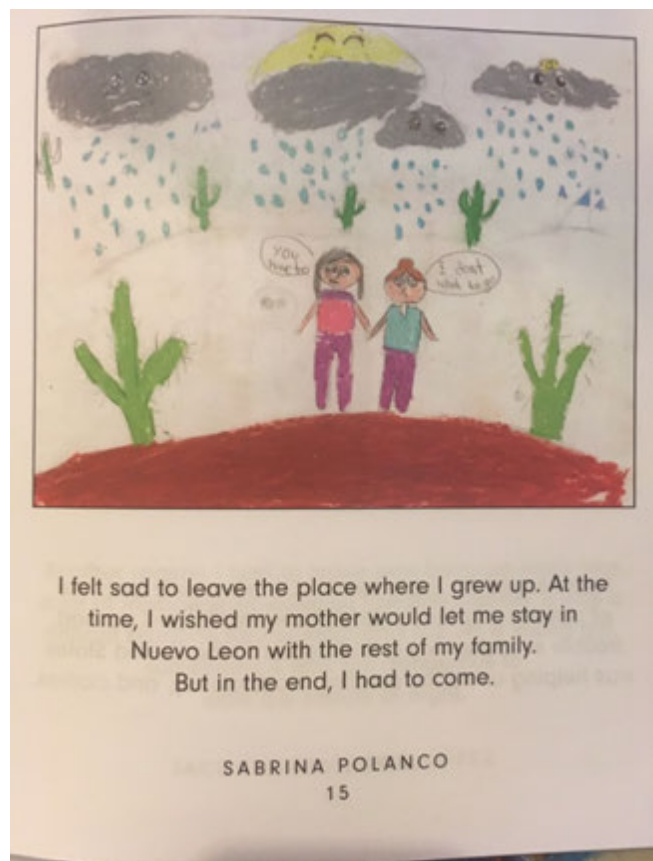
I recently conducted visual arts residencies in two elementary schools as a City Lore teaching artist. Students created picture books based on their interviews with family members and classroom guests about their migration experiences. Students first practiced interviewing each other, then family members at home, and finally classroom guests. To keep all students engaged during the group interview and emphasize a multisensory approach to interviews, I assigned each student a role, including “scribes,” who wrote down key phrases from the guest's story; “setting artists,” who illustrated the guest's descriptions of their home; and “object artists,” who created a catalog of the tools, foods, and traditions that played a role in the story. I found that giving each student a clearly defined role and responsibility in both the interview and in the process of creating the picture book increased the engagement of all students in the collaborative project. I also asked students to keep in mind the final product they would create from the interview as they are listening.

I asked each guest to bring an object or a memory of a tradition that they brought from the homes they left to their new homes in New York City. After the interview, students collaborated by sharing what they heard, wrote, and drew during the interview. The images were displayed on a “reference board.” Then they shaped the stories into a narrative sequence. At one school, each student illustrated one line in the story of their classroom guest and their combined pages were bound in a picture book to be presented to the person they interviewed (illustrations to the right, [lesson plan here](#)). Older students such as Stephy (previous page illustration, [lesson plan here](#)) begin to think about telling vs. showing a story and the ways in which graphic novels and comics can shape a reader’s understanding of a narrative.

~ City Lore teaching artist Karl Orozco



Norma Tamoor, who works at the school, reading the comic book students created from her immigration story.



Picture book page by a student, Sabrina Polanco, illustrating a line from Montse’s story.

Classroom Connection: Sample Lesson Plan—Collaborative and Multisensory Interviewing

This sample lesson plan is used within a larger class project ([City Lore: What We Bring](#)) to create an anthology of picture books that retell the migration stories of community members.

2nd-5th Grades ~ 45 Minutes






Goal	To introduce the concept of active listening and teach the components of autobiographical storytelling through creating sequential images paired with narrative.
Materials	Large drawing paper Colored pencils Pencils
Lesson	<p>Interview Roles</p> <p>Explain to the class that we will be visited by a guest speaker who is going to share their personal stories about their migration to New York City. To gather as much information and imagery as possible, the class will be assigned one of five roles (see worksheet with information on each role below):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Interviewers2. Character Artists3. Setting Artists4. Object Artists5. Scribes
	<p>Preparation</p> <p>Students receive their assigned roles and prepare their desks, materials, and minds for the Narrator's arrival. Interviewers should also prepare a list of questions they would like to ask the Narrator.</p>
	<p>Collaborative Interview</p> <p>The Narrator will spend the first 5-10 minutes sharing some background information and an introduction to their family, their home, and their migration.</p> <p>After the Narrator has finished their introduction, Interviewers may begin asking further questions to gather more details from their migration story. As the Narrator speaks, Artists and Scribes should be carefully listening and drawing and/or writing down details from their story. The interview process will carry on until the end of the period.</p>
	<p>Reference Board</p> <p>Next class, students will cut out their questions, sketches, and drawings to paste on a reference board for the class to use. Reference boards will serve as reminders for the class picture books, which they will work on starting next week.</p>

Multisensory Interviews and Student Roles

The following activity is a method of conducting group interviews that is intended to:

1. Engage all interviewing participants in active listening and build a notion of collective responsibility;
2. Harness the unique artistic, literary, and communicative strengths of each student; and
3. Generate a collection of reference materials for fuller, more descriptive storytelling

This methodology was developed by teaching artist Karl Orozco and adapted for City Lore's "What We Bring" program. Although these roles were originally created to gather migration stories from interview subjects, they can be adapted to suit a variety of project goals.

Interviewers		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interviewers create and ask interview questions to gather more details about the Narrator's life and times and their journeys.• Interviewers listen intently to the Narrator and come up with questions in response to their stories.
Scribes		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scribes write down keywords from the Narrator's tale, including names of places, people, and things.• Scribes write down short, descriptive sentences of the Narrator's story, paired with words to describe the feelings they experienced on the way.
Character Artists		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Character Artists sketch a detailed portrait of the Narrator. Pay close attention to their clothes and body language.• As the Narrator mentions friends and family in their story, Character Artists sketch smaller portraits of these "supporting roles."
Setting Artists		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting Artists listen to and illustrate the Narrator's descriptions of their homes—both before their migration and presently.• Setting Artists draw illustrations of the Narrator's homes, as well as smaller pictures of the key places they passed along their journey.
Object Artists		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Object Artists create a catalog of the tools, animals, foods, traditions, and sentimental objects that play a role in the Narrator's story.• Object Artists draw the objects and/or traditions that the Narrator brought with them from their first home into their new home.

Classroom Connection: Sample Lesson Plan—Collaborative Storyboarding

This sample lesson plan uses a space traveler as metaphor to create an exercise for students in perspective-taking—a key learning objective integrated into many interview activities. It is used within a larger class project ([City Lore: What We Bring](#)) to create an anthology of comics/picture books that retell the migration stories of students’ friends, families, and community members.

6th Grade ~ 45 Minutes

Goal	To teach the practice of storyboarding and introduce the notion that migration stories vary from person to person.
Materials	Post-it notes Pencils
Lesson	<p>An Astronaut Launches Her Rocket Ship (5 minutes) Students read aloud the following five-sentence story:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. An astronaut launches her rocket ship.2. She lands on the moon and plants a flag.3. She returns to Earth with much celebration...4. But realizes that everything is different.5. At last, she is home. <p>Panel Drawings (10 minutes) Break the class into groups of five. Distribute a stack of Post-it notes and pencils to each group. Then, within each group of five, assign students a number between 1 and 5. Each student reads the astronaut story sentence that corresponds with their given number. Students then draw a picture that illustrates what is happening in that sentence on a single Post-it note. Make sure students include the sentence number in the top left corner.</p> <p>Collaborative Storyboarding (15 minutes) After each group member has drawn their panel, ask students to arrange their panels in sequential order. Ask students what they think of the story in its current state. Is it missing anything? What parts of the story appear unfinished or unexplained? Instruct students to add new picture panels to the existing story. Students can add more details, plot twists, or detours by adding Post-its in between the existing five. Students can also add more Post-its before or after the initial five panels to explain their astronaut’s motivations or see what happens next.</p> <p>Exhibition (10 minutes) Ask students to organize their comics in sequential order. Students then walk around the classroom and read their fellow groups’ stories. Instruct them to spot key differences or surprises.</p> <p>Discussion (5 minutes) Finally, discuss the following questions as a class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How did working collaboratively affect your story?2. Where did the astronaut find herself at home?3. What words would you use to describe her migration story? (e.g. dramatic, joyous, difficult)



Interviews in American Sign Language

by Jean Lindquist Bergey and Zilvinas Paludnevičius

This article touches on cultural, linguistic, and technical issues that arise in video recording stories of Deaf individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL). Whether you are Deaf or hearing, documenting ASL interviews presents complex film making challenges. Unlike audio or spoken language filmed interviews, recording a conversation in ASL requires full documentation of a signed message along with careful editing decisions to determine what the viewer sees.

While interviews with Deaf people are often conducted in ASL, the film may be shared with audiences who do not know the language. The end product must be bilingual—meaning two languages, in this case ASL and English—and bimodal—using two modes of expression, visual and auditory or signed and spoken. Captions add text to the presentation. With planning and dedication to access, filmed interviews can effectively reach Deaf and hearing audiences.

Authors' Notes: Not all people who are physically deaf or hard of hearing sign. Interviews with non-signing deaf, deafened, or hard-of-hearing people require specific communications considerations not covered in this article.

The word “deaf” has cultural and physical meanings, and an individual can be both deaf and Deaf. This article uses “Deaf” with a capital “D” for any use that is not specifically physical.

About the photo: Zilvinas Paludnevičius, far left, teaching lighting for interviews.

For Deaf interviewers fluent in ASL this article may seem to state the obvious; we hope some of the technical information is useful. For hearing interviewers, consider who is on your interview team. Collaboration with Deaf people—cinematographers, editors, Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs), production assistants, cultural consultants, and historians will enhance your ability to engage with the interviewee and produce a meaningful interview. With cross-cultural projects, community collaboration is essential to accurate representation. Try to ensure that the interviewee is not the only Deaf person in the room.

What's in a Name?

Narrative history—or what is often called “oral history”—interviews can raise issues pertinent to the Deaf community or the local geographic area. Conversations can be biographical or focus on a sense of place, patterns of behavior, traditions, or beliefs. In the U.S. Deaf community, the term “narrative” (signed “story”) is sometimes preferred over “oral” because of an enduring history of “oral” education that has powerful, often painful, connotations for many Deaf adults. Historically “oral” education meant learning without signing, the visual/tactile means of communication used by the Deaf community. To be caught signing in an oral-only school usually resulted in punishment. Using “narrative” or “story” history to describe the interview sidesteps an unintended reference to oralism that may be brought to mind with the word “oral” and can help build rapport with the interviewee. Before reaching out to a Deaf individual to discuss an interview, consider how phrases such as “oral history” or “give voice to” might be taken.

What Are You Trying to Do?

Consider the purpose of your interview because it will guide how you document the discussion. Are you trying to enlighten history via documenting an event or locality and interviews with Deaf people are part of a more expansive effort that includes interviews with hearing people? Are you trying to understand a social “ism” (racism, sexism) via a Deaf lens? Are you trying to get at what is specifically Deaf? Deaf stories often reveal what it means to be part of an embedded community. They might explain how technology impacts life, or how medical science has changed the Deaf physical or cultural experience. The intersectional nature of Deaf lives is often expressed in stories about religion, race, gender and gender identity, or immigration circumstances. Childhood memories reveal how communication happened within a family that did—or did not—sign and how that affected the way a child felt at home. Members of the Deaf community, like members of many communities, use stories to amuse, instruct, reinforce shared values, show solidarity, and challenge stereotypes. Unless you have unlimited time and filmmaking resources, define the purpose of the interview and narrow the scope.

Pre-Interview Research

Documentaries are often peppered with expert interviews, usually with people who have written extensively on a subject and bring a well-known perspective. Their answers can be polished and, for the filmmaker, predictable. This is unlikely to be the case with most members of the Deaf community. Rarely is there primary source writing from or about the individual. Without sources, it's difficult to know if the individual will tell a story that is relevant to the research at hand. Fortunately, learning a Deaf person's basic story is often quite easy by reaching out to community members. The Deaf community is small and interconnected through schools, clubs, and organizations. One person leads to the next, and before long a list of proposed interviews grows to multiple pages.



Interviewee John Zakutney shares a story about serving as a test subject for NASA as interviewer Maggie Kopp listens. Note the size of the image on the small screen and the angle of the camera. The interviewee takes up about two-thirds of the screen space and is not centered.

Pre-interview discussions can be done in person or via videophone. Relay services can interpret the call if you do not know ASL, but it may be more effective to work with a consistent interpreter or a Deaf team member for direct communication. Video conferencing is another way to have a pre-interview discussion when you describe what you are doing and why, how long it will take, and who will be in the room. Discuss topics but not specific questions if you can avoid it. Gather years they attended a school or were a member of an organization or other data that will help you formulate interview questions but don't venture into their stories. Ask if they have any photos or footage they wish to share, and determine if the questions you plan to ask are germane. An excellent resource for preparing to interview is the [Oral History Association's Principles and Best Practices webpage](#). Although these guidelines primarily address audio recordings, the concepts of ethical behavior and intellectual honesty are the same, as is the responsibility to ensure preservation of the interview.

A crucial pre-interview component is determining language preference and comfort with the interviewer. Deaf people use a wide range of signing styles. Some sign ASL with all the grammatical features of the language. Others use sign in English sentence structure. Some use their



Intern Brianna DiGiovanni is creating informed consent and video release documents in ASL for the [Drs. John S. & Betty J. Schuchman Deaf Documentary Center](#).

In ASL it may be more effective to establish the topic and then ask for comment about it. While you want open-ended questions that do not lead the interviewee, it is important to be clear, even blunt, in asking. Usually in narrative history, interviewers try not to give selections, but sometimes options clarify. For instance, “how did you communicate” might be too broad. If you are trying to determine if someone signed or spoke you may want to ask how they communicated with teachers—and then with students. You might ask about the school’s signing policy. If that does not work you might ask if students signed or spoke or used fingerspelling. You might break that question up for use in class, out of class, or on the sly.

Listening in ASL comes with a constant exchange that confirms a message is received. The person “talking” looks at the one “listening,” who is usually nodding—not in agreement but in understanding. As with any interview, listen intently. That means watching, and if you are listening to an interpreter, keep your eyes on the signer. Focus on the answer and avoid thinking about the next question. Wait longer than is typical in an everyday conversation before moving on. A follow up might be a facial expression—eyebrows up or a head tilt that asks for clarification or expansion on a topic. Sometimes the statement after a long pause is the most revealing. Don’t rush.

Questions will vary based on the individual and discoveries made during research. If the interview is biographical there are some common experiences that could be discussed. Answers to questions about childhood memories, language used at home, school experiences, organizational membership, work life, barriers to information and employment opportunities, and technology use will likely reveal common Deaf community threads.

There are questions that would only be asked of members of the Deaf signing community. How did you get your sign name? What do you think of it? What are the city or regional signs that outsiders do not generally know? What is a Deaf joke? Can you share one? What does the “Deaf grapevine” mean to you? How did you learn to sign? Were there times when you were forbidden to sign? What happened if you did? What kinds of technology do you use in your home today? Can you tell me about getting that technology? What did it change for you? Can you describe any efforts to medically “cure” or religiously “heal” you? Show me what that was like. As with any interview, ask if there is anything else they want to share.

The majority of Deaf children are born to hearing parents and are the only Deaf person in their family. Being Deaf will often affect communication, language use, and identity. Deaf children may learn language and Deaf identity outside their family. Questions about family often conjure up deeply felt responses if the family home was not a place where communication was comfortable and clear. For more on cultural identity read *Inside Deaf Culture*, by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries (2005), or see the online *Deaf Studies Digital Journal* (Gallaudet University Department of ASL and Deaf Studies 2009). If the Deaf community is unfamiliar to you, be self-aware of your assumptions and bias about what it means to be Deaf, and, conversely, what it means to be hearing.

Confidentiality

In any small community there may be dangers in being interviewed. The Deaf community is interconnected not just within close geographic areas, but nationally. It may be impossible to give any detail without someone figuring out who you are talking about during the interview. If the interviewer knows the family or friends of the interviewee there may be another layer of concern for privacy. Finally, if the interview is being conducted in a public space, a Deaf club or a school, others may see what is being signed, even at a distance. There is no privacy in public spaces. All these factors will affect how much an individual chooses to share, and it is critical that they understand exactly how their interview will be used, stored, shared, or protected.

Clarity of Visual Image

On screen, what’s behind the interviewee can distract from the signed message. It’s not necessary to have a blank wall or green screen. Context helps the viewer understand who this person is and what their life is like. But backgrounds for filming need to be plain or blurred enough to allow viewers to focus on the signed message. Take time to look at what’s going on in the space behind the interviewee. If a clock, lamp, or hanging mobile catches your eye, ask if you can move it. Try to pull the individual away from any wall to add depth to the visual image. Avoid harsh light or shadows. For seated interviewees, use a chair without arms that does not rock, swivel, or squeak.

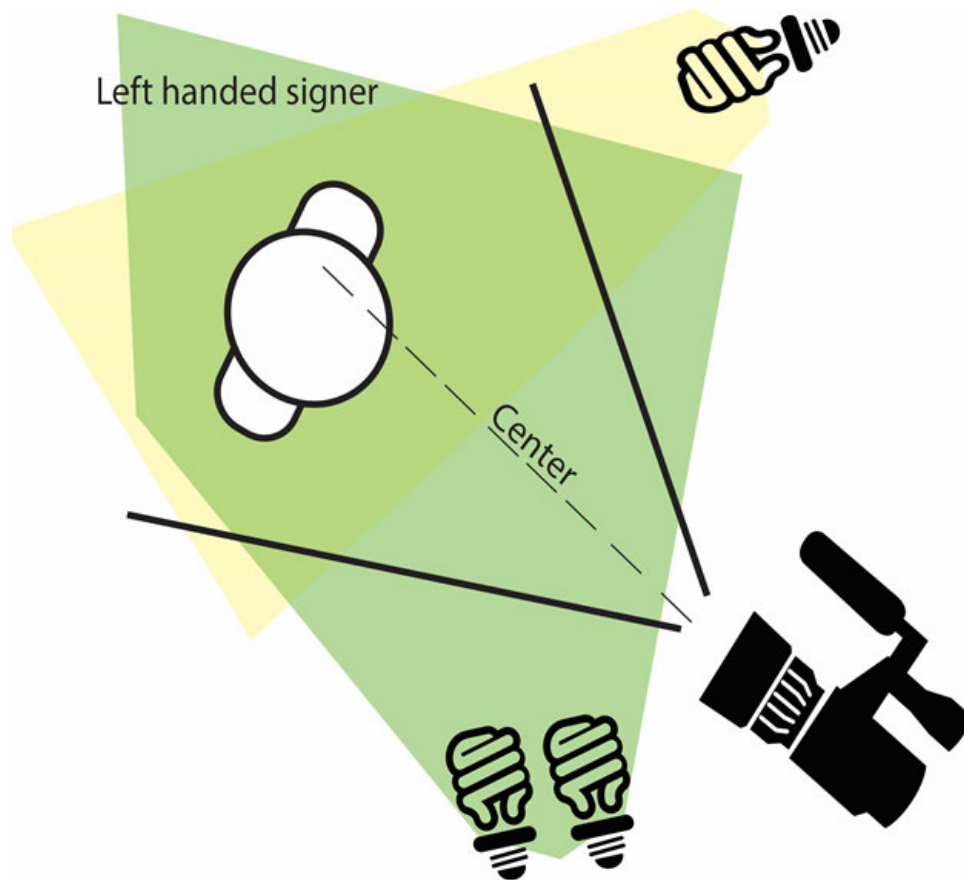
Clothing should be a solid color that contrasts with the skin tone of the individual on camera. Explain this to interviewees and ask that they wear solid colors. Nail polish can be distracting and

pointing this out may compel some to remove it for an interview. Jewelry is best kept simple; necklaces can be distracting. Minimize anything that diverts attention from the content of the interview.

Test camera settings to ensure you are capturing the complete message. Is the fingerspelling clear? Rapid movement of the hands can look blurry if the lighting and camera settings are out of sync. While the focus is on the face, without clear fingerspelling you will not have an understandable interview. Do the hands extend past the frame? If so, widen the shot. Check settings while preparing for the interview, on site and with the lighting you plan to use.

Light the Dominant Hand

In ASL the dominant hand is the one used to fingerspell. This hand also does more of the movement for many signs. Lighting the dominant hand more prevents shadows from impeding readability. There is more than one way to do this, but use the image below as a guide. Notice that the person is not sitting in the middle of the camera shot, but slightly off to the side. Shoulders are at an angle to the camera. More light is shining onto the hand that fingerspells words. Slightly more space is on the side of the dominant hand. This format gives the interviewee room for large signs that extend past the body. It also creates a more interesting visual image than sitting precisely in the middle of the screen with shoulders square to the camera.



This set-up diagram shows placement of the camera, interviewee, and lighting for a one-camera interview.

Illustration by Zilvinas Paludnevicus.

One Camera? Two? Three?

Depending on your crew, budget, and proposed use of the film, there are several ways to set up cameras. First determine if you want or need the interviewer and/or an interpreter on camera. Two people on in one shot can make viewing more difficult, especially on a small phone screen. Is seeing the interaction between two people important? Can you show the question in text form, or do you need it at all? Can you use two cameras and cutaway in the editing process? Do you need that extra camera to capture extreme close-ups that more clearly show emotion? How the footage will be used guides decisions on camera set up.

The simplest format is using one camera solely on the interviewee, or one camera with both interviewee and interviewer sitting together. A good example can be seen in the [Council de Manos Know Your Story](#) collection. In the shot, Carlos Aponte-Salcedo, Jr., is interviewing his father as they sit on the same couch about growing up in Puerto Rico and moving to New York City. This format requires minimal editing, but it means capturing a wider shot than with one individual. It can be more difficult to light but gives a better sense of personal relationship and interaction. It's possible to use a smartphone to capture this format. Be sure to turn off the autofocus feature, as it adjusts when hands and arms move closer to the camera. Keep the focus on the face. Give screen space to the arms and torso, as that is where signing usually occurs. Since people sign at differing visual volume, ask the interviewee(s) to sign so that the cinematographer can set the camera width.

With two cameras both the interviewee and interviewer can be filmed, or one camera can be set on the interviewee and the second used for close-ups. The interviewer often sits close to the camera, just to the side. There are different perspectives on where the interviewee should be looking. It is possible to have the interviewee look almost directly into the camera, or be nearly in profile. Thinking about gaze ahead of time will help determine how to position the interviewee. Three cameras can allow for one camera on each person with a third taking in the wide shot. This provides editing options but also creates what can be an overwhelming amount of footage to process. The beauty of using three cameras is flexibility, but it requires significant editing time.

If your interview involves walking or other ethnographic context that requires movement, see the [MobileDeaf](#) website. MobileDeaf is an international group of researchers documenting the many ways Deaf people connect across national and linguistic boundaries. See how they use two cameras in their story “Anthropologists and Filmmakers Making Deaf Ethnographic Films” to capture dialogue. Note how one cameraperson might occasionally appear on the screen.

Recording Sound

Several considerations go into determining what, if any, sound should be recorded. How will the sound be used? Who is the audience? If you are planning to add voiceovers, what sound can remain? Does the interviewee or interviewer speak while signing? Are there important soundscapes to record? Is ambient noise of kids playing outside or traffic important? Is there a historically significant sound such as teletype keystrokes? Is laughter important? Do you want to capture the sound of hands slapping while signing? If you plan to record sound, how will you do it without intruding on the signing of the interviewee? How you capture sound will depend on how you plan to use it and how the individuals use their voices. If sound is critical, a boom microphone might be the least visually intrusive, but it prompts questions about why sound is being recorded at all. Be prepared to answer that question.



Filmmaker Zilvinas Paludnevičius and intern Maggie Kopp work on positioning prior to an interview. The camera angle affects how viewers feel. Generally, positioning the camera low enough so that it is pointing slightly up at the interviewee creates a clear, respectful shot.

Accessibility

Access to the interview cannot be an afterthought. Who will be able to watch or listen to the interview? Who won't? Decisions about access must be made up front as they influence shooting. Will you add captions or subtitles? Captions can be "open" (always on) or "closed," meaning they can be switched on or off. Captions run on specific lines in the lower third of the screen. They cannot be moved. Captions typically show spoken words along with background sounds or references to music. Subtitles or on-screen text are not locked into a location. Placing them in a corner or across the top or extending from a hand is possible. This takes much longer to do but allows for some creative solutions. The [Deaf Jam](#) documentary uses placed text on screen innovatively.

Voiceovers make the interview accessible to non-signing hearing viewers and blind people. They add depth and tone in ways a caption cannot. A skilled interpreter or actor can "voice" the signed message. You may want to try and match the gender or regional accent of the voice actor to the interviewee. For hearing people who do not know sign, watching a Deaf person sign on screen and listening to a disembodied voice can be confusing. Adding a voice that seems to fit the image they see can help. It also clarifies who is talking for blind individuals.

Audio description is an added access feature that briefly, in between statements, tells blind viewers what is seen on screen. Professionals in this field must succinctly describe visual information. Posting a Word document of the script merged with text from the audio description will help make the entire interview accessible to DeafBlind individuals who use a refreshable braille display.



Jean Lindquist Bergey in a sound booth adding voiceover to footage.

Photo courtesy of Suzanne Scheuermann.

Editing forms a cohesive presentation of the story for all audiences. A Deaf editor or consultant can help make decisions on when and how to cut from one clip to another. For example, a frequent technique is slowing down the lead-in sign for clarity or ending sign for emphasis. Making that type of decision requires language fluency and cultural knowledge.

Working with Interpreters

Film production in any two languages is complex. An interpreter creates an insider/outsider dynamic. The interpreting process, no matter how expert the interpreter, alters the experience. There is lag time between each statement. There is lack of eye contact that can cause an emotional disconnect. There are turn-taking issues.

Bilingual documentary film production requires careful teamwork and modification of standard interpreting practices. A major concern for dual language production is loss of fluent ASL when interviewees switch to a more English-based signing, perhaps in response to the interpreter's language or because the Deaf person is more confident in the interpretation if they sign in English grammatical structure. This will always be a challenge when you have a two-language conversation. The best way to address it is by building a strong team, often including CDIs working alongside certified hearing interpreters.

Interpreters in documentary film production surrender a critical tool—the ability to interrupt to clarify the message. While the camera is rolling, the interpreter is asked not to interrupt when a

story is being signed or an extended answer given, even if a portion of the story is not understood. Rather than disrupt a story that cannot be recreated, it is better to wait until there is a pause and then ask for clarification. This requires interpreter(s) and the interviewer to collaborate closely.

Interpreting is an exceedingly complex task and omissions, misreadings, or insertions can occur. Since one interview answer often leads to the next question, the discussion may veer in a direction based on false understandings. Numerous challenges exist when filming or editing an accessible, signed interview or film, such as:

Absent reference. In ASL, a signer may point to a person or set up a place and then refer back to it with a point—similar to saying “he, she, it,” or “that place.” Often the interpreter rightly fills in the referenced person or place. What you then see on tape is the reference to a space, and what you hear interpreted is the specific name of the place or person. A signing editor would know that it is unclear for a Deaf audience. A non-signing editor would know only what they hear.

Place holding and turn taking. Deaf and hearing people hold onto control of the conversation differently and proficient interpreters adeptly negotiate that territory. Deaf people hold the floor visually; hearing people are usually only quiet until they hear a slight pause in the conversational flow. While “voicing” from ASL to English, skilled interpreters hold the hearing person’s attention and prevent interruptions until they can see and voice the full message. They do this in a few ways, most commonly by extension of a word—stretching it out. They may insert the word “aannd” to let the non-signer know that it’s not yet their turn. Understanding Deaf cultural turn-taking etiquette improves the flow of the interview.

Flat tone and decisions based on sound. Often a preliminary interview without cameras is when to determine if the individual would be a good interviewee and engaging on camera. If the interpreter has a flat tone, even if they accurately present the content, it may influence a non-signing interviewer/filmmaker not to include that person in a taped interview. This might happen simply because of the interpreter’s tone or a Deaf individual’s lack of confidence in the interpreter’s voicing, which can slow the pace and flow and make them seem halting and less compelling.

Distracting additions. Some interpreters use colloquialisms or include their own speech habits in voicing. Overuse of the word “like” or “like, you know” or even “like you know, oh my God” might find their way into an interpretation out of habit, not because it was signed.

Edits and selects based on transcripts. Once the signed interview is completed, if transcripts are needed they are typed either from the interpreter’s “voicing,” or transliterated (sign to text without spoken form) from the signer’s statement. Depending on the production team, the transcript rather than the footage may be the basis for film editors to make selects. A skilled bilingual production team makes a tremendous difference in the reliability of the end product.



Following an interview, Barron Gulak views footage as cinematographer Patrick Harris and interviewer Maggie Kopp look on.

Voiceovers. Some interpreters sound great; their language flows, but it does not match the signed message. Other interpreters might have a distracting accent or mumbling voice, but they provide complete and accurate information. At times interpreters accurately convey the message in content, tone, and even accent. Once an interview is filmed and the editors are working on using portions of it, they may pull in professional voice actors to restate what the interpreter said. The actors can delete the “uhs” and “mms.” They can add vocal depth and interest. While this adds nothing for the Deaf audience, for hearing people it may make the difference between watching and channel surfing. There are a few dangers. Actors follow a script that may not have comparable emphasis to the signer. For example, “Deaf people started staying home instead of going to the clubs because they could watch captioned videos and TV. It was good! But I missed the fellowship.” Or “It was good... but I missed the fellowship!” The statement could be read in two completely different ways. One suggests the loss of fellowship was regrettable, the other devastating.

Forming a qualified team can ensure accurate interpretation. If possible, hire the same team for pre-interviews, interviews, and editing. There is much more to working with interpreters than can be conveyed in this article. For further information see the [Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf](#) website.

Preservation

Care for the filmed interview should be resolved before the camera rolls. How will it be stored? Where will it live? In what format? Will transcripts be searchable? Who will have access? How will the community know it exists? Consider how you will create an edited, accessible, and, if consent is given, publicly available version of the interview.

Film is the only way to show sign and ASL accounts of Deaf life. Interviews can bring little-known stories to the public and enlighten viewers. They can empower individuals and bolster community. There is always an urgency in conducting interviews. People pass on, memories fade. Times change and community life of the past is no longer the reality of today. If a Deaf person agrees to

an interview, take time beforehand to consider carefully how you can collaborate with others, particularly Deaf people, to document their stories accurately, and how that recording can live on.

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Zilvinas Paludnevičius is a filmmaker with extensive experience filming and editing dialogue in American Sign Language. He taught ASL film production at Gallaudet University and many concepts in this article draw on his course materials. Paludnevičius, who is Deaf, is based in Salt Lake City.

All photos by Jean Bergey unless otherwise noted.

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Deaf Jam trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=muEliErm0J4>

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf: <https://rid.org>



“It’s About the Stories that People Are Willing to Tell You”: An Interview with Guha Shankar

by Michelle Stefano

Our purpose in this piece is to go “behind the scenes” of the ethnographic interview to illuminate some of its distinctive features, as well as its value as a tool for learning about shared human knowledges, expressions, and experiences of today and the past. Although, it cannot be denied that conducting ethnographic interviews—and ethnography in general—can be daunting, especially for those new to cultural research and documentation, but even for the most experienced. When undertaking ethnographic projects, we typically are talking with and learning from people we do not know, or do not know that well—whether during casual conversation or in more formal, prearranged interviews. In this light, ethnography courses and workshops really ought to be called, “Talking to Strangers 101,” to borrow from the folklorist Elaine Eff!

About the photo: Zuni Pueblo community members, including librarian Jennifer Lonjose (standing), practice eliciting and recording cultural memories by “reading” historical photographs during Mukurtu community training workshop with Guha Shankar (left), at Zuni Tribal Library, NM.

Original photo courtesy Mukurtu.org, 2016.

Despite this potential awkwardness, however, ethnographic interviews, and the broader projects of which they are a part, can be immeasurably rewarding and seriously important. Understandably, we may face skepticism and pushback, opening up possible opportunities for deeper dialogue, negotiation, and, hopefully, the building of trust with those from whom we want to learn. If there is an “art” to interviewing, it is safe to say that it is best honed through practice, trial and error, and honest self-reflection. Of course, having the chance to work with and be guided by a more experienced ethnographer could only enhance this process.

So, how does one teach it, and what is most significant to impart? In the spirit of ethnography, where the qualitative, personal perspective frequently shines, I thought that a good way to get at this “art,” in all its up-close and messy glory, would be to learn how my colleague Guha Shankar defines, practices, and teaches it. He has conducted countless ethnographic and oral history interviews, dedicating a large part of his professional life to ethnography and cultural documentation and guiding others in navigating it, so I looked forward to talking with him about his ideas on the topic.

Guha first joined the American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress in 2004 and quickly became the Center’s resource person for community and place-based education projects, as well as oral history projects, such as the [Civil Rights History Project](#), a U.S. Congress-authorized initiative led by the AFC and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). Significantly, Guha has organized, facilitated, and taught numerous workshops in ethnographic research methods and skills-based training in field documentation in a range of communities and institutions, where the art of the interview is featured. In 2003, he earned his PhD in Folklore and Public Culture from the Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at Austin. From 1985-1993, Guha served as Media Production Specialist and documentary film producer at the Center for Folklife Programs at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

As with most one-off interviews, it is difficult to capture it all, and the text below has been edited for length and readability. Nonetheless, my aim was to focus on some core components, or “ingredients,” of ethnographic interviews, and then to learn how Guha approaches the teaching of them to instructors, students, and community members alike. Importantly, he does not only highlight practical considerations for ensuring that an interview goes smoothly, and that it is recorded successfully and easily accessible for the future, but also values, such as respect and transparency, that all interviewers should honor. We touch upon the ethics of interviewing and the difficult and sensitive topics that it can bring to the surface. Moreover, Guha discusses the benefits of interview training within intensive ethnographic field schools and the work of the AFC in supporting this endeavor throughout the U.S. and beyond.



Michelle Stefano: Hello, Guha, let's first get into what brought you to ethnography and its methods...

Guha Shankar: My undergraduate degree in radio, television, and film at [the University of North Carolina] Chapel Hill is a foundational basis for the work I've done for the last...however long it is...and I don't want to name the years as that would make me feel very sad and old [laughs]! So, we were exposed in classes to theories, concepts, and the technical language in media and film studies. We would talk about people doing ethnographic work, we would look at documentary films and listen to documentary audio, and so on. We also had *some* hands-on training in shooting film and making audio recordings, principally in a formal studio setting. But the practical experiences—and this may get to the notion of “ethnographicness”—in producing field recordings were by and large absent from our repertoire, simply because of time and resources. You know, in a department of 155 people, there was not a lot of equipment to go around, so you'd take your training where you could get it.

That experience, as limited as it was, got me into freelance jobs and TV crews when I came out of school and moved to Washington, DC, in 1983. I had gigs like production grip and occasional audio engineer. And then came a longer gig: the Smithsonian's then Office of Folklife Programs, from 1985 to 1993. I was principally hired as a film editor and general media production specialist. There, I had this amazing experience of on-the-job training in ethnographic documentary production, and I'll talk about three different ways in which that taught me what I know about ethnographic interviews, and ethnography in general.

First of all, I listened to hours of raw, uncut interviews and conversations...and you're doing that in order to listen—well, this is how it works for me—for the content of the recordings and what they illustrate about the cultural and historical context of the film, right? So, from a research and scholarly perspective, that's one hat we put on. But then you're also listening to what piece of audio—or voice, cultural expression, dialogue—you think ought to be subsequently distilled and edited into a final product, and that's from a production standpoint. So, at the same time, I was learning to think in both those registers.

Then, a second training ground was the [Smithsonian Folklife] Festival, and I worked every summer at its stages and got to listen to truly remarkable and sensitive folklorists conduct interviews and solicit stories on the festival grounds, on the narrative stages, during demonstrations of craft and cooking, and with a range of community members. I got this invaluable front-row seat to Alicia Gonzalez, Betty Belanus, Lynn Martin, Jim Leary, my boss Tom Vennum, Nick Spitzer, and many others engage in the art of conversation and structure it for a public audience. I was able to understand how folklorists mediate between particular community perspectives and the broader audience: the notion that you're going from the unknown to the known, from that world of the hidden and obscure to a broader [public] audience, and that was pretty eye opening. And you had to do it within certain constraints of time and space in the festival setting.

The third training ground was accompanying scholars and folklorists out into the field on documentary film and radio productions, as production coordinator, driver, grip...you know, chief cook and bottle washer, as we often do [laughs]. I experienced firsthand what “deep hanging out” really means, right? And “deep hanging out” is a better way for me to think about what

ethnographic practice actually *is*. These settings allowed me to see how people merged deep hanging out with journalistic sensibilities. I watched, learned, and sometimes I was able to participate in a field shoot, and observe expressions, events, occupational practices, and behaviors among and between cultural community members. I listened to my senior colleagues inquire and probe, and get into the nuances of what was going on around us.

Specific examples that were formational for me were going out with Bob McCarl, specialist in occupational folklore, on a production with DC's firefighters for the Smithsonian Folklife Studies monograph/film series; this was the late 1980s and that project ended with lots of footage, but regrettably no completed documentary (for complicated reasons, shall we say). I worked with Frank Proshan on his research documentation with Khmu refugees, resettled in Stockton [California]: people who came to California from Southeast Asia. The last thing I worked on as production coordinator at the Smithsonian was with Frank Korom and John Bishop on a project with communities of Indo-Trinidadian Muslims. That effort resulted in *Hosay Trinidad*, both a [book](#) and a [film](#), and led to my subsequent dissertation research in Jamaica. While in graduate school, I went on to work with Jake Homiak (at the Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives) and Rastafari communities in Jamaica. In those instances, I was principally the production coordinator, and the scholars did most of the interviews, but they were really generous and asked for my input not only on technical matters, but also in terms of enabling me to participate more fully in the research process, such as asking questions in the course of our filming. That was a pretty heady experience—"wow" moments, really—for someone who was used to being way behind the camera and/or microphone to get such hands-on experience in the research process.

I took these experiences with me to grad school, where I ended up doing my fieldwork in Jamaica, completing my dissertation on race, citizenship, and belonging among South Asians in the diaspora. Interestingly, grad school is not a place where people necessarily get any technical training in doing interviewing and/or ethnographic fieldwork. So, my professors found out that I had this background in ethnographic production and they'd get their students, my fellow classmates, to come and talk to me...and ask, *Hey what do I do in terms of equipment? What do I do in terms of going out in the field to do a recording?* This was good for my long-term practice and got me back into media documentation in a way that I hadn't had much of a chance to do during my first years as a graduate student.

So, more recently, the AFC was where I got the chance to expand on the teaching aspect of ethnography. I was able to do that by taking the principles and methods I learned earlier and formalize them in a teaching setting, under the umbrella of the annual AFC field schools in cultural documentation training, shaped by David Taylor, former Head of Research and Programs at the AFC (my immediate boss at the time). He gave me great insight and invaluable guidance on how to translate and teach esoteric concepts that we as fieldworkers have imbibed—that is, we've naturalized (to invoke Bourdieu) certain ideas and skills over time and through repetition, to the extent that our practice and our methods go without saying because they come without saying. Yet, in the context of a teaching situation, you have to *translate*—get those esoteric techniques and approaches out of your head—and articulate them publicly and in ways that beginners will understand, practice, and reproduce in their own work.

The other key thing I learned is the *crucial* need to develop and record metadata—that is, the notion of developing metadata as a sustainable set of information to accompany one’s field recordings. This is not something that folklorists are trained to do, let alone scholars and professional counterparts in other fields and disciplines. It’s a pity, because if we call ourselves ethnographic practitioners, then we need to know what we’re doing with the products of our research—how to categorize and describe them to make them sustainable and useful for subsequent generations. That this is not taught as a regular part of documentary practice is no one’s fault, but this gap is what the AFC field schools addressed: integrating the methods and approaches established by those wonderful field survey projects that the Center conducted back in the 70s and 80s [e.g. the 1977 [Chicago Ethnic Arts Project](#) and the 1979 [Montana Folklife Survey Project](#), among others]. A large, critical part of the training that AFC did during the field surveys, mostly under the guidance of Carl Fleischhauer, and Mary Hufford in several instances, was to expose fieldworkers to the concept and practice of how to contextualize and capture the “scene,” by means of documentary media, and the accompanying metadata.

And that’s what stands out about what we do at the AFC in terms of raising metadata in importance...and we do so because it makes our collections a hell of a lot easier to use and find. Maggie Kruesi, former AFC cataloger, was great at cementing that in my head when we did field schools together—that need to develop and record metadata in the field and to ensure that that step is adapted as a core principle and practice and, as such, is not ancillary or an after-thought to the documentation and the interview. So, the first thing I lead off of now in my presentations, thanks to Michael Taft [former Head of the AFC Archives], is the principle that the fieldworker is the *first* archivist. And now, in the digital age, as I’ve worked in the field schools for the last 15 years or so, there is this corollary that the fieldworker is the first digital content manager, because everything digital now has to be managed in some shape or form, and without that there is no product, no oral history, etc.

MS: OK, well, let me jump in. And I already feel bad, so I need to stamp this as March 26, 2019, a Tuesday...just adding in the metadata [laughter]! So, I’m going to back up a bit and unpack some of the things you’ve said. I’m using this term, “ethnographic interview,” which I think is rather broad; nonetheless, you brought up these really interesting ideas of “deep hanging out,” “conversations”...and I know there can be differences between the ethnographic interview and “oral histories.” So, can you walk us through how you define these interview types?

GS: For me, the interview that takes place in an ethnographic setting, or with an ethnographer, is only one aspect of a complex of practices, right? So, the formal sit-down interview that we’re having now occupies an hour or two of our time. But, what do you do for the other 40 hours of being out in the field? What you do for the rest of the day involves the process of deep hanging out, or “participant observation.” Every one of those moments of interaction and communication comprises ethnography, when looking at it from a broader viewpoint, and the interview is *one* communicative act among many others. Where I see ethnographic *practice* differing is in the informal give and take, and the unstructured occasions—such as over a meal, after the work day, over a beer, when you’re out with somebody who is doing subsistence farming or shucking oysters, playing music, singing. Those are the moments when greater insight into a sense of community is actualized and made apparent, right? So, ethnography approaches documentation and information gathering from a perspective attuned to nonverbal communication, embodied expressions,

movement, all of which are far different paths to understanding socio-cultural life than you get by means of the oral history interview alone.

For oral history practitioners, the oral history is *the* focal point of the encounter. Over the course of two hours or more, they are going to conduct an interview, and that interview is going to formulate the basis of—or buttress, supplement, augment—received understandings about events that they have knowledge of through deep research, previous publications, and other sources. And the interest lies in understanding what individuals experienced and what they remember from particular moments in time, with reference to larger political, cultural phenomena. So, for the [Civil Rights History Project](#) (CRHP), we might situate an interview in the context of the principal question: *What did you do during the [March on Washington in 1963](#)? What brought you to that moment? Tell us what your days were like [helping organize the event](#).* While this approach yields rich details and amazing reflections, large parts of people’s lives are less documented, simply because of the form of the encounter between interviewer and interviewee, and the subject focus, which does not provide the space to do more. In this regard, ethnographic practitioners center attention on the practice of everyday life, as much as the grander questions of history, such as *Where were you when the Berlin Wall fell?* Here, we also ask: *How do you do things, where do you do them, who did you learn from, what are the community interactions...who are your people?* Those are the kinds of things that the ethnographic interview asks about in ways that maybe other disciplinary methodologies don’t, or at least not all of the time.

Having said that, my impression, based on personal observation, is that there *is* a strong resonance between the types of interviews employed, meaning that both ethnographers and historians are quite comfortable with semi-directional interviews and are on the lookout for stories, rather than the “data” that a heavily structured interview might yield. Although, it is possible to say that the



Zuni Pueblo librarian Jennifer Lonjose (left), practices photo elicitation methods and recording cultural memories through “reading” historical photographs during Mukurtu community training workshop with Guha Shankar at Zuni Tribal Library, NM.

Photo courtesy Mukurtu.org, 2016.

ethnographic approach is more eager to pick up on the tangents, the esoterica, and the deeply local ways of doing things that often surface in interviews. I mean, the interviewee recalls something quite intriguing, and while that is off the point of the ethnographer's main interview topic, you pick up that nugget or thread and you follow it where it leads, to the extent possible.

It may be obvious, but I would also point out that ethnography is a multimodal documentary practice. While ethnographers are also invested in the efficacy and importance of eliciting memories and historical and cultural reflections by verbal communication and oral narrative—the interview format—we have other tools in our toolkit to draw upon in the technical realm, such as photography, drawings, mapping, and field notes.

MS: So, in this broader sense of observing and talking to people about a wide range of their experiences and expressions, I wonder if you could speak about the changes that can occur when bringing recording equipment into the research and interview setting—whether we are talking about a camera or an audio recorder, or an oral history or ethnographic interview. I often talk to students about how that can change the dynamics of the interview, and I'm sure you have thoughts on that.

GS: Sure. You introduce recording equipment and people shut up. Or, you introduce the equipment and you might as well have placed, you know, a cup of water on the table, because people don't care. In all those situations, however, the thing that may present itself as an obstacle only becomes that if *you* present it as an obstacle; if you make more of it than it actually is...like, if you infuse the recorder with some sort of manna that it doesn't have. I use recorders and cameras as instruments, tools, and my approach is not to hide them or minimize them; rather I point them out and say: *We want to make sure we get a really good, clean recording (or a good image) and this is what we use to ensure that outcome.* Today, there's nobody anywhere anymore who is surprised by recording equipment. I have had situations where I pulled out all this bulky gear and they go, *oh, my niece interviewed me the other day for a school project and she had this cute little phone—you don't have one of those?* Oh, geez! So, that's something [the ubiquity of digital recording devices] that has certainly changed people's perceptions of recording equipment.

As for the very act of documentation, people certainly see interviews on TV, and they have been explicit in stating some variation on the theme of *don't do to me what they do on TV*, by which they mean edit the interview to make them look stupid or show them up. This was especially the case in Trinidad, where people were very sensitive to this issue of misrepresentation due to a general mistrust of negative, media portrayals from the past. And this suspicion was apparent enough that we needed to let them know that we, the camera crew, were not journalists there to do some kind of investigative hit-piece, because they knew full-well they didn't want to be a part of that sort of thing. So, we had to tell them more than once that the project [to document Indo-Muslim public performances] was different, that it was for scholarly purposes, and so on. The privilege of working at the Library, or any cultural institution, is that I can say, *what we really want to do is make sure that we add your voice to the public record, and I want to make sure that I get the best recording possible.* And that's what Bob McCarl calls "documentation in full view of the community." Alternatively, I like to say that we're not documenting from behind a duck blind; meaning, we're conscious of and conscientious about letting people know what the recording is for and why we're there. Every interview is situational, so there are no direct guidelines that have worked for me other than being open about it, because 95 percent of the time,

the interviews worked fine, and the five to ten percent of the time when they don't, I take it as my fault.

MS: So, we are getting into ethics, and I'm thinking about documentation and editing. I always wish, in an ideal world, that the person I interviewed will be in the editing suite with me, telling me where to make cuts and what they would like the finished product to say, but that is often too difficult, logistically speaking. How do you feel about the post-interview interpretation that can take place when making a short film, or whatever else—you know, the editing, interpretation, the cutting and pasting of things that didn't happen that way in real time?

GS: Again, it's about how transparent you are about what you've done, letting people know at the very beginning what's going to happen. Most often, people are interested in making sure that you're going to give them a fair representation. That fair representation is not something that is guaranteed in advance by you, but the more time that I've spent in the field with people, the more confident they are that I will represent them not just accurately, but that I will be true about the things they share. Yet, I've had people who say reflexively, *Well, you're gonna get a different story from somebody else, so don't take my word for it*. So, they have a sense that if I'm going to do a documentary, all those different voices will be included...and *they* can then decide if they're comfortable with having all those different voices included. And, yes, you're absolutely right this notion of "co-voicing" and collaborative editing should be the norm, but practical issues can make that too difficult.

CRHP provides a great example of where it works for us on a small scale, where all interviews we put online are full, unexpurgated interviews—although, I make a few cuts here and there to stitch together digital segments, and I have occasionally bleeped out the excessive number of "f-bombs"...you know, one or two is fine, but 25? Not so good, because the teachers [using the videos for educational purposes] would all complain! After that, what we do is return the transcript and DVD and let the interviewee know: *This is what's going out online; is there anything you want to take out, redact? Is there anything that you didn't want to say or be made public?*

During CRHP, there was an instance when we were interviewing an African American family down South. And they told us a story from the 1960s about their involvement in civil defense actions and, as many people do in the South—black and white, many different ages—if you're old enough to shoot for food, you carry guns around, and you carry them for self-defense, as well. It's the opposite of the KKK's purpose of going out to kill black folk. So, this family had guns in their car, and they were being chased by police...they had to flee an event...it was a very exciting story, with different people chiming in about how they had to evade the police, because they would get all the heat for possessing firearms, whereas white folks would not. Some time after the interview, I produced what I thought was the final cut and sent it back to them with the transcript. We then got a call from our colleagues at the NMAAHC, who said that the family was very concerned about that story. They didn't want it going online, because there might be repercussions. My first thought was, *that was 60 years ago, what repercussions could there possibly be?* It was a head-scratching moment, but about three weeks later, I heard that their house had been fire bombed, because white racists knew that they were being interviewed about their civil rights activism and still resented them for it. The lesson is that the consequences that people are going to take on [because of an interview] are not going to be yours since you are removed from the community,

but you have to try and be aware of them and respond appropriately. So, the notion of editing, redacting, being aware of the community's sensibilities and trials—that's important. And you're not going to know that without somebody guiding you through those nuances, right?

MS: Yes. Let's continue with CRHP. I can imagine that highly sensitive, challenging, and emotional stories and experiences were often shared with you. What's your approach to handling what are sometimes called "difficult histories," even if that's too light a term for some of the horrific experiences of racism and dehumanization during the fight for Civil Rights?

GS: We tend to think of "difficult histories" as coming up on issues of profound moral or political problems, such as Black Lives Matter or the Me Too Movement. But, we often don't know what the hard histories are until we get into the middle of them. We don't know what questions are going to trigger the hard-hitting emotions, and so the hard history is revealed right there on the spot, you know? However, that's a reason to do this work, since we are learning all the time. It's about the stories that people are willing to tell you, and remaining open to all of that. The only thing that I do, really, is to be as open as possible. We are not neutral recording machines; we are not the camera. The camera is recording something that we're experiencing. We are seeing through it, so we are a mediating point, and we are giving voice to those difficult histories. Understanding that everything is situational, you listen. That's what you do. It's amazing...one of the sobering things that I learned through the CRHP is that PTSD is not only a condition resulting from having been in a war in some foreign corner of the world. Being on the front lines of the freedom struggle in the South *was* like being in a war: The trauma individuals suffered from seeing and hearing about colleagues and friends being brutalized and killed was intense and long-lasting. When you hear strong, older women with immense dignity and courage tell you that they started watching a documentary on the Civil Rights Movement and had to turn it off and go to bed, and then *stayed* in bed for three days because of all the trauma it brought up—after 50 years had elapsed? I mean, that's serious!

I think it comes back to ethics. When doing the interview, or engaging the ethnographic process, there's the golden rule to *do no harm*. So, in the course of an interview, you may want to ask yourself this question, *Does this person really want to share this story in this particular way?* And one practical consideration is to say, *Can we just stop for a second? We are getting into deeply personal subjects here, maybe we can come back to this a little later.* You're giving people the chance to reflect upon whether they really want to be saying these things, because if not, then you may have to redact the story, or edit it out later, which can be challenging. But that's part of the ethical responsibility you have: Listening to stories of trauma, or situations that are just fraught. But you don't know in advance what's fraught, so you have to be open to it.

I find this with students, who can get overwhelmed when someone's sharing a deeply personal story. You need to ask, *How did that person deliver or say that story?* You need to read the situation, read the context. And by no means publish the story until you have a chance to tell that person what the story contains. This is just standard practice; it's for the protection of the individual giving the story, and for the student. As an instructor, you don't want the student to wander into trouble...and also what this might do to subsequent relationships between that person and the community, and researchers who might come after you to work in that same community. So, the idea of teaching difficult histories is about the idea of listening to them. It passes through you as

the first person hearing them, and then you have to try and put that out to the public in a way that is respectful and illuminates and expands upon our historical memory.

MS: Since you've brought up teaching, let's shift the conversation to the AFC and its educational mission to train people in ethnographic methods and cultural documentation.

GS: The longer story is that it's written in the DNA of the Center's mission, which is to provide opportunities for the expression of folklife, cultural traditions, and to provide opportunities for folklorists and others to document, present, and represent their communities. So, documentation has always been a part of it. For instance, the field surveys [mentioned earlier] go back to the early days of AFC documenting, in an interdisciplinary fashion, cultural traditions from around the world. And it's one of the seminal efforts of the Center: To train people in ethnographic documentation methods and also sustain that cultural record by providing descriptions, a template for people who are not well-versed in librarianship principles and archiving, to enter into that field with some degree of confidence, and to train people to do that. So, Carl Fleischauer, Elena Bradunas, Peter Bartis, and others, set that standard over 40 years ago.

I think the concept of [AFC] field schools was raised during an early, 1980s AFC Board meeting, when the question *Would the Center undertake training in documentation?* was posed. It was felt at the university level that folklorists were going out in the field with no training, formal or



Ann Tome (right) interviews a Maasai community member during fieldwork training exercises for the Community Cultural Documentation program, Il Ngwesi, Kenya.

Photo by Guha Shankar, 2009.

otherwise, in field documentation. Thanks to David Taylor’s work as the main organizer of the field schools, they started out as partnerships between the AFC and an institution of higher learning, and remain so for the most part today. So, the first few years it was Indiana University for two field schools...our colleague Howard Sachs at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, did one field school...and Mario Montaña did field schools at the University of Colorado and University of New Mexico over the course of two summers. Many others have participated since then including the latest one in 2018 with the University of Wyoming and Utah State University. They not only trained students, but also academy-based folklorists themselves, in field methodologies in an experiential setting. I should add that about ten years ago we used the field school model to provide [documentary training to Indigenous people](#), the Laikipia Maasai of Kenya and Rastafari and Maroon communities in Jamaica, in partnership with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). And presently, the AFC provides skills-based methods training for North American Indigenous community scholars through collaborations with the [Sustainable Heritage Network](#), out of Washington State University.



John Ole Tingoi (center) and Edwin Kissio (right) of the Laikipia Maasai community interview a herder about drought in the Rift Valley, Kenya, during the 2009 Cultural Documentation Training for Indigenous Communities program run by AFC, WIPO, and the Center for Documentary Studies, Duke University.

Photo by Guha Shankar, 2009.

MS: If I may interrupt—for those who may not know, what is a field school?

GS: Well, the [\[AFC\] field school in cultural documentation](#) is about teaching a comprehensive set of [ethnographic] methods including technical training in various aspects of field documentation. Let me put it this way: Basically, the field school is an intensive ethnographic boot camp for three weeks. Classroom instruction is for about two weeks, which entails hands-on instruction where we take students out for two, four, six hours a day, teaching them how to turn the recorder on and off, manipulate the controls and so on. Quite literally, we shove the tape recorder into their hands and say *Here’s your field kit, here’s what you’ve got in here, now I want you to do a five-minute interview and tell me all that you did and didn’t do, and then we’ll listen to it*. So, from the very beginning there’s this notion of pushing people into the deep end, having them learn things they didn’t know, and *unlearn* things they thought they knew in terms of technical set-up. So, you have people teaching audio recording techniques using, as you are, a digital recorder...back in the day, it was a cassette recorder and before that...not quite a hand-crank Victrola, which is the gesture you are making with your hands right now [laughter]...but all of that combined with, say,

photography. (As an aside: when I began teaching in the field schools in 2004, we were still doing photography with single-lens reflex, analog cameras...we still have a bunch of them sitting up in the stacks somewhere, which all went away almost as soon as the digital age hit.)

And during the field school, you're taking them through the process of a fieldwork project, which has been determined by the instructor at the university and the AFC. So, when we worked with researchers at [Utah State University](#) (USU), we [AFC] say [to the instructor], *How does this help you with your research on refugee communities in Cache Valley, Utah?* This is because the university researcher/instructor has already built rapport and trust with community members who will be interviewed by students during the field school. So, instructors Randy Williams and Lisa Gabbert worked with folklorist Nelda Ault to get together members of three distinct resettled, refugee communities and to bring them into the school environment. The instructors' goal was to also demystify the school itself and try to get the children of refugees to start thinking of USU as a place where they are welcome. And one way to do that was to involve the communities in the documentation efforts and to say to them, *Now that you're here in Utah, what are some of the things that you would like to document about your community's traditions?*

Going back to an earlier concept you brought up, how involved is the community in shaping their own representation? That's a big part of these field school projects. We rely on these community members to be our interlocutors, guiding us through their cultural concepts and how they represent themselves as cultural beings in this new setting [e.g., Utah]. And, in an ideal sense, the things you look for when putting together a field school is, first and foremost, buy-in from the community. Who is going to be doing the work on the ground? The students and the instructors. And then we [AFC] come in (after already working with the instructors to shape the field school program) to teach alongside the university instructors.

MS: So, getting a little narrower in focus, what are the key elements, or ingredients, in teaching the art of the interview to field school participants?

GS: There is a [list of 24 tips](#) for doing a guided interview that we give to the students. They're tips and guidelines, not that you need to do them in order, but they need to be taken into account as a whole. For instance, what you just did: "stamping" that it's March 26 on the recording...

MS: And I'll ask for your consent at the end!

GS: That's right, because you didn't ask for my consent at the beginning [which is recommended].*

* Despite our joking, I asked for Guha's consent, or permission, when setting up the interview weeks prior. During this process, which happened via email and in person, I provided the reason for the interview (i.e., to produce this written piece) and the general topics about which I would ask him (e.g., interviews and teaching interviewing). As Guha and I are colleagues working in the same place and, thus, often in contact with—and trustful of—each other, the process of obtaining his consent was very informal. However, while the consent process can unfold in various ways, it is always a serious step in ethnography and/or interviewing. In my teaching, students learn to create written consent forms, where the aims of their broader research projects, as well as corresponding interview objectives, are laid out, and interviewees are encouraged to discuss and agree upon the conditions and other elements of the interview ahead of time. In addition, as folklorists, we often also use release forms, which grant researchers access to the recorded event and permits its use for non-commercial purposes, as explained further in the AFC's [Folklife and Fieldwork guidebook](#).

The guidelines are about demystifying the interview process—that is, to say that the art of the interview is, at base, a conversation. And how do you enter into a conversation with people, and what are the things you have to do to get ready for the conversation, and what to do when you're in the middle of the conversation, and what do you do after? And this is quite antithetical to standard ethnographic practice, which would be practicing deep hanging out before you even turn on a tape recorder, right? So, we point out these contradictions, because a field school is a very short burst of intense activity that exposes you to certain principles...and, from what I've seen, it spurs students to want to do more. And that's pretty cool.

Of course, there's also space built in for reflection after interviews. We start each morning off by asking, *What did we learn yesterday? What happened during the course of the interview that you want to find out more about? What were you completely unprepared for, and how will you ensure that won't happen again?* I mean, *do* work and find out who it is that you're going to be working with [and interviewing], so that would mean that you take the background materials and readings the instructors prepared for you, and you make sure you understand who these people are. For example, let's take John Roberts, son of Helen Roberts. What is John's day-to-day job; what is his standing in this particular community? If it's a ranching community, does he manage the ranch? Is he a cowboy? And what is it that you want to ask him about that? What do you want to know is always the first and most basic question you ask yourself. This is because you, as a mediator, have a duty to, first, the community whom you're documenting, since you will be turning over these recordings at some point and giving them copies. Even if they are not that interested in hearing themselves speak, cousins, daughters, spouses, and so on *will* be interested in hearing them speak. And you want it to be as exemplary a recording as possible for their benefit, as well as for anybody else's. Second, it does further the research agenda of the instructor (and/or institution) for whom you're doing this work. Third, you should be keeping to that principle of "do no harm." You don't want to "poison the well" with your interactions and the questions you ask, because you have a long line of people who will come after you who will want to interview these people, and if you were disrespectful, well...it will be remembered.

Going back to the tips: Practice careful listening. I always tell students to do what I do, which is to not just listen to the conversation you're having for the cultural and historical content, but to listen as a producer, too. Make a great recording because that's what's going to bear the test of time; that's what's going to help you to put together a podcast, or a written blurb on a project's website. The usual procedure is that one student is conducting the interview, and her partner's the recordist, and then in the next interview, they switch roles. This leads to discussions about the responsibilities and different ways to listen, depending on the role you assume. For instance, I stress the necessity of "listening to the room," because you're teaching students how to listen for extraneous or unwanted sounds that may end up in the recording—that is, getting them to think about putting on both their producer and research scholar hats at the same time. And all of this is reinforced with, at least, two to three days of practice, over and over again, and we critique constantly...we listen to each other's recordings and pick them over.

You'd think that students were all chatterboxes, but they're not [laughter], so it's important to demystify the process and say to them, *You know, you are allowed to make mistakes, but try and make them outside the interview situation, here in the field school, the so-called safe space.* There are also other ethical considerations, such as if you promise something over the course of an

interview, you fulfill that promise. If somebody asks you to come back, you say that you will try your best to, but you also explain the constraints. And, above all else, represent yourself as a member of an institution and a team, as well as a whole discipline in terms of practice. Be aware of the harm that you may do in this particular time and space long after you're gone. Your responsibilities are not just to your co-workers in this project, but to all of the community and to people you may never even know. At the end of the day, these conversations that participants are learning to facilitate can enable connections, and it is gratifying that the work we do can lead to such connections and transformations ...and maybe the students are inspired to go on to do something that's larger than themselves.

MS: Thank you, Guha. Based on your rich experiences and thoughtful advice, I think there are many important takeaways here. In terms of teaching, it seems that the immersive, out-in-the-field *field* school model can be highly conducive for critically engaging with the theories, ethics, and methods of ethnography. Field schools attempt to mimic, as much as possible, the more organic ways in which cultural research and documentation projects unfold in general practice. The AFC schools you describe make space for reflecting on the making of mistakes, or at least discussions about potentially negative impacts of poor technique and behavior on source communities—and making mistakes is certainly a part of interviewing! As you note, field schools can also foster the development of meaningful relationships between participants and the community members they get to hang out with and learn from, and a sense of the importance of the overall project—and ethnographic fieldwork in general—can emerge. However, it is also true that planning and facilitating field schools are logistically challenging and require great resources—financial and otherwise. So, if a proper field school setting is too difficult to achieve, it can be helpful to think of creating field school-like experiences in other formats, such as less intensively over a 16-week college semester or in terms of shorter workshop events, to name a few.

And as you stress throughout, what is most important to know—and, thus, teach in any format—is the notion that community members/interviewees are the true experts of the interview topics—that is, of their histories, memories, stories, and their cultural knowledges, skills, and traditions. And so, in terms of training one to actively recognize and honor this expertise, it becomes an exercise in learning how best to ensure that their stories are being told by them in their words and on their terms (and with keeping an ear and/or eye on making sure that the recording will be as good as possible).

Finally, you bring to light the broader dimensions of the ethnographic interview—that is, its relationship to the future. You stress the notion of preservation, in that these interview “products” (recordings, videos, documentary films, among others) can also be important as part of the historical record—years, decades, and centuries from now (if we are so lucky). Accordingly, they need to be made discoverable and accessible for future researchers, the public, and source communities through the conscious planning and use of metadata. Significantly, though, you also shine a light on the legacies interviews and ethnographic research experiences can have in the future—that is, the good and potentially bad repercussions of our work. Here, the notion of respect is not just crucial in the present, but can extend to people we may never know—the future communities, descendants, neighbors, and friends of those we have been so fortunate to interview today.

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URLs

Civil Rights History Project: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-rights-history-project/about-this-collection>
Hosay Trinidad Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002) by Frank J. Korom: <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/13848.html>
Hosay Trinidad (color, 45 min, 1999) by John Bishop, Frank J. Korom: <https://store.der.org/hosay-trinidad-p788.aspx>
Chicago Ethnic Arts Project: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/chicago-ethnic-arts-project/about-this-collection>
Montana Folklife Survey Project: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/montana-folklife-survey-1979/about-this-collection>
Civil Rights History Project: Dorie Ann Ladner and Joyce Ladner oral history interview conducted by Joseph Mosnier in Washington, DC, 2011-09-20: https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2010039_crhp0054
Civil Rights History Project: Courtland Cox oral history interview conducted by Joseph Mosnier in Washington, DC, 2011-07-08: https://www.loc.gov/item/afc2010039_crhp0030
Cultural Documentation Training for Indigenous Communities: <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/ed-indigenoustraining.html>
Sustainable Heritage Network: <https://sustainableheritagenetwork.org>
The AFC Field School in Cultural Documentation: <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldschool/index.html>
The Utah State and Library of Congress Field School in Cultural Documentation: <https://archives.usu.edu/folklo/fieldschool2015.php>
Suggested Guidelines for Recorded Interviews (“the 24 tips”): https://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/edcenter_files/interview-guide.pdf
Folklife and Fieldwork: An Introduction to Cultural Documentation (American Folklife Center, 2016) by Stephen Winick and Peter Bartis: https://www.loc.gov/folklife/edresources/edcenter_files/interview-guide.pdf



Teaching Young Students to Interview: When Family and Community Knowledge Informs Culturally Responsive Teaching

by Allyn Kurin and Gina Elliott

“ Talking to my mom makes me feel happy, I get to learn more about her life. ”

~ Ana, 2nd-grade English Language student

Ana, who joined our class at Bailey’s Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences in Northern Virginia last fall, was excited to share her parent interview with her classmates, and we were impressed with her willingness to share. Our instructional focus was teaching how to gain information by interviewing others. The desired outcome was to ensure a culturally responsive classroom that would create a safe place for students to share their thoughts. Ana, a student from Honduras, represents one of the many newcomer students enrolled at our school. Our families come from many countries and bring experiences that enrich and enliven our discussions and our learning. We know when students connect with their parents this bond strengthens their knowledge and creates a climate of mutual understanding and cooperative learning. We realize that our students and their parents have a wealth of knowledge to share. As Ana’s mom said, “Having a conversation with my daughter about my life and my experiences is valuable because it helps me to learn more about what she is learning in school, and it makes me feel like what I say is important.”

About the photo: Cultural Picket Fences outside the school are based on student interviews about family traditions and heritage.

As educators we need to create opportunities for our students to get information through various avenues. The folklorist's techniques of interviewing and listening closely provide purposeful, authentic conversations that allow students to develop further insight and a deeper understanding of their world. One way to build these conversations is to teach students how to research and interview community members, experts in various fields, and even their own family members effectively. This process of collecting information enables students to learn more about a topic of interest while promoting oral language, reading, writing, and listening skills. By building these academic skill sets we create a transference of knowledge that supports academic learning. Once students become more proficient in asking and answering questions, they realize the importance of creating a two-way dialogue that allows them to become more aware of themselves and their family histories as well as of themselves as collaborative, global citizens.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

"An educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective informational processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in relationship and having a socio-emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning."

From Zarretta L. Hammond, 2015, *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Publishing, 15.

Questions that a folk arts in education perspective help address:

- What does CRT look like in elementary education?
- What tools does a teacher have to begin to “recognize” a student’s culture?
- What does a “safe space” look like for diverse classrooms?

In addition, we want students to recognize and appreciate the cultural values their families embrace and be given a chance to share what they have learned with their classmates. In a recent cultural proficiency staff survey, many teachers at our school said they want more opportunities to relate to our families and understand their cultures better. As one teacher said, “I hope to build strong relationships with families and get to know them on a deeper level.” One way to learn from our families is to bring their voices, stories, and knowledge into the classroom through children sharing information gained from their interviews. We use interviewing skills to integrate content, however, our intent is that students will also begin a journey of self-discovery with their family members. This process will lead to inquiry that eventually will help them recognize the inherent cultural component this type of learning inspires. Creating, strengthening, and valuing the community/home/school connection fosters stronger relationships while developing appreciation, building background knowledge, and empowering families. Interviewing brings family stories and traditions to life and helps to break down and refine cultural barriers inside the classroom walls.

Once the process of interviewing has been established, we can begin to incorporate academic standards. Content areas such as social studies, science, and literacy provide a relevant forum for students to share knowledge gained in a meaningful context. For instance, when learning new science curriculum such as plants, habitats, or weather patterns, students can interview family

members and ask questions that will connect to personal experiences about these topics. This in turn leads to authentic conversations, giving students the chance to develop higher level thinking skills such as compare and contrast, synthesis, and evaluation. This experience also leads to richer conversations at home, providing mutual understanding and helping families relate to one another more meaningfully.

Conducting Content-Related Interviews

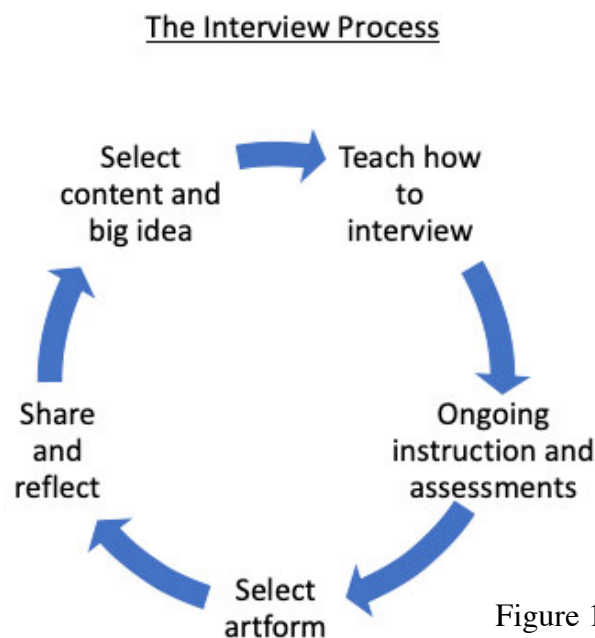


Figure 1. The Interview Process

Getting Started

Our first step in teaching the art of the interview is to choose a subject area that students will be learning. We intentionally integrate interviewing skills within the science curriculum, because science is relatable, concrete, and provides hands-on learning for students of any age. We begin by reviewing the overarching concepts and state standards of learning to guide decisions on what to teach and to develop pre- and post-assessments. We introduce interviewing by modeling with a *non-content* related subject related to family folklore such as food or games. We select these familiar topics because children identify with and connect to them in a meaningful context. Next we model the process by having one teacher pose as the interviewer and the other as the interviewee. Then we state the expectations and discuss the definition of the term *interview*. At this point the students are ready to conduct an interview. Students need to understand that the *interviewer's* role is to ask questions and use graphic organizers to record information with words and/or sketches. The role of the *interviewee* is to answer the questions and describe their experiences. We teach students to use question starters such as *who, what, where, when, why, and how* to create questions to help them gather information.

We ask students to practice by interviewing each other first. We assign two partners or a small group to work together. The time allotted for this activity depends on variables such as students' age and stamina levels. We gather students in a circle and ask them to share their interviews. We use guiding questions to aid students in summarizing their experiences such as:

What is something that surprised you?

What is something you know now that you didn't know before?

How is the game you play similar to or different from the game your friend plays?

Now that students are familiar with the interview process, they are ready to interview a family member. We always start the interview with a topic sentence, for example, "Tell me about a game you played when you were in 2nd grade." Follow-up questions such as, "Who did you play with? Where did you play? How did you play," need to be asked to elicit further conversations, which will help students more clearly visualize and understand the topic. During the conversation, the interviewer writes keywords and creates quick sketches. Once the interview is complete, students close by thanking the interviewee for their time. The interviewer brings the completed interview to class and is prepared to share what he or she has learned with their classmates. We give students sentence frames to show their understanding and summarize their findings, for instance: *One thing I learned about _____ is _____.*

Students are more adept at preparing for and conducting content-related interviews because they have experience brainstorming and formulating questions, developing graphic organizers, and sharing their knowledge. These strategies allow them to interview their parents or experts in various fields of study. This type of thinking and sharing of information also helps to deepen comprehension and show their learning. We design and use pre-

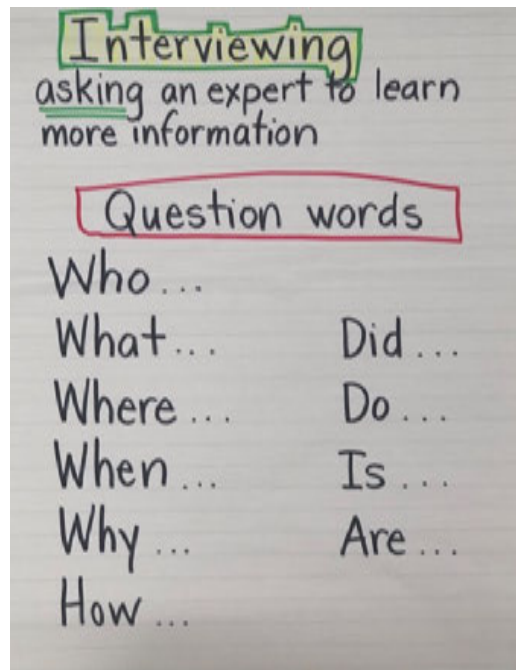
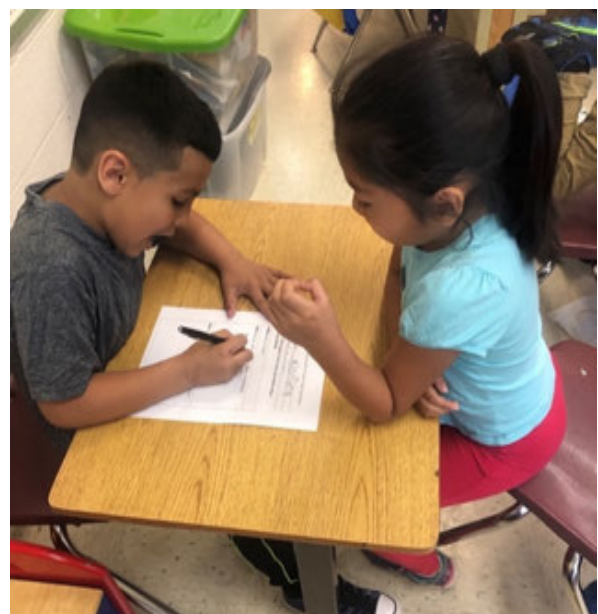


Figure 2. Question Words

Links to Graphic Organizers:
Interviews about Games
(Spanish and English versions)
Interviews about Food
(English version)



First graders practice interviewing skills with each other.

Weather Research

Date _____

Interviewer (you - the person who asks questions) _____

Interviewee (the person you ask questions) _____

Tell me about a time that you experienced extreme/dangerous weather.

What happened? Mucha agua.

When did it happen?
En el pais honduras
19 98 por el wa-
uacan

Where was it?
honduras

Who was with you?
mis padres
y hermanos
michio

In what ways did the strong weather make a change in your community?
no comida tres dias se cayeron los
los no tenia puentes




Figure 3. Parent Weather Interview Form Filled Out (Blank Worksheet in *Classroom Connections*)

ongoing, and post-assessments to inform our instruction and assess student learning. Figure 3 is a completed weather interview Ana conducted with her mother, while a post-assessment we used for our science unit can be found in the Classroom Connections appendix to this article.

Our students are now able to formulate their own questions on any topic to get more information and develop their research skills further. They are motivated to listen and share because they can connect the information being presented to their lives. We see this process as a cross-curricular methodology. It can be used across content areas and grade levels and sets the foundation for inquiry-based learning. The active engagement of interviewing and sharing also creates cooperative learning structures, creating the potential for students to be passionate, lifelong learners.

Real-World Applications

The assimilation of knowledge gained from students' interviews can be showcased in many ways. Our final outcome is to create an opportunity for students to display their work through a culminating, lasting artistic expression to be shared and celebrated. We have found that by providing a platform for our students to engage with their families, they create a product that reflects a meaningful and personal viewpoint. This helps to deepen their comprehension of the subject area being studied. Interviews give students and their families a way to share and express what is important

to them. Interviewing becomes a creative expression and allows parents to be partners in the educational system. The artfulness of the interview comes through modeling, practice, deep listening, and re-presentation, a process that promotes the need to connect with, understand, learn, and relate to one another.

Allyn Kurin is a nationally board certified ESOL teacher with over 20 years of experience.

Gina Elliott has served as the Lead ESOL teacher at Bailey's Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences for the past 11 years and conducts parent workshops for the school community. Together they have presented numerous programs that strengthen family engagement with a focus on developing home/school partnerships.

Listed below are a few examples of student projects we have created at our school:

Published stories
Illustrations
Murals
Cloth stories
Cultural picket fences
Poetry
Class books
Museum exhibitions
Social action projects (community needs such as recycling, beautification projects, etc.)

[Bailey's Elementary School for the Arts and Sciences](#) is a magnet school in Bailey's Crossroads, Virginia, just outside Washington, DC. It is one of the most culturally diverse schools in the region with over 700 students in grades K-2. Our students represent over 20 countries of origin and speak more than 30 different languages and dialects.

Recommended Texts

- Bowman, Paddy B. 2004. "Oh, that's just folklore": Valuing the Ordinary as an Extraordinary Teaching. *Language Arts*. 81.5: 385-95.
- Diaz, Junot. 2018. *Islandborn*. New York: Penguin.
- Elliott, Gina, Allyn Kurin, and Carmela Ormando. n.d. Cloth Stories Lesson Plan: Stories of Perseverance. *Art and Remembrance*, <https://artandremembrance.org>.
- Fairfax County Public Schools. 2019. Elementary Curriculum Framework: Pacing and Sequencing of Content, <https://www.fcps.edu/academicselementary-school-academics-k-6/second-grade>
- Henderson, Anne T., Karen L Mapp, Vivian R. Johnson, and Don Davies. 2007. Connecting Families' Cultures to What Students Are Learning. *Beyond the Bake Sale: The Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships*. New York: The New Press, 120.
- Johnson Martinez, Moly. 2009. *Los Hilos de la Vida, Threads of Life: A Collection of Quilts and Stories by Anderson Valley Artists*. Boonville, CA: Hilosquilts.
- Koetsch, Peg. 1994. Student Curators: Becoming Lifelong Learners. *Educational Leadership*. 51.5: 54-7.
- Locker, Thomas. 1995. *Sky Tree*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- . 1997. *Water Dance*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company.
- Moll, Luis C., Cathy Armanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma Gonzalez. 1992. Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms. *Theory into Practice*. 31.2: 132-44.
- Pryor, Anne and Nancy B. Blake. 2007. *Quilting Circles-Learning Communities: Arts, Community and Curriculum Guide Grades K-12*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Teaching Tolerance. 1991-2019. Window or Mirror, <https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/teaching-strategies/close-and-critical-reading/window-or-mirror>.

Classroom Connection: Quick Reference Guide on how to include the Art of the Interview in your classroom

Part 1. Teacher Planning and Modeling

- Teachers plan, collaborate, and select a non-content related topic such as favorite food, games, sports.
- Define the term and purpose of an interview to students and explain the role of the interviewer and the interviewee.
- Select images of folklorists or reporters interviewing and the tools they use (notepad, pen, recording devices, cameras).
- Create a graphic organizer with a primary question and space for illustrations and words, (see Figure 4 above and blank worksheet below).
- Make an anchor chart with question words (see Figure 2).
- Model an interview with a colleague or student and take notes.
- Students discuss and reflect what they have seen and heard.

Part 2. Peer-to-Peer Interviewing

- Students practice interviewing with classmates (partner A/partner B) or whole class with the teacher.
- Students record questions and answers (interviewer writes keywords and/or illustrates key information on recording forms/graphic organizer).

Part 3. Family Interviewing

- Students take the graphic organizer home to interview their family member.
- Students bring completed interview forms back to the classroom to share with the class.
- Classmates ask and answer questions about the work presented (which often leads to students returning home to learn more).
- Students share what they learned and summarize their findings.

Part 4. Content-Related Interviewing

- Teachers prepare content-related topic and interview forms.
- Repeat process through modeling, peer-to-peer interviews, and family interviews.
- Assist students in sharing and reflecting on what was learned and how the new learning connects to the overarching concepts and ideas in the content area.
- Create spaces to display work and ongoing student questions.

Part 5. Assessing (*Below find examples of questions and student responses from our projects.*)

- Teachers connect student learning to overarching concepts, for example, stability and change.
- During assessments allow students the opportunity to explain, write, or draw responses.

Part 6. Final Projects

- Students create a culminating project, for example, museum exhibit, gallery walk, parent night, collage, or storytelling.
- Teacher invites experts such as community members, artists, or a technology specialist to assist in creating final product.

Part 7. Celebrating and Reflecting

- Students create an invitation and invite family and community members to celebrate student work. This may include a classroom celebration, museum opening night, festival, or an international night.
- Students reflect on what they liked most about doing research and presenting their work.

Other Considerations

- Allow students time to brainstorm and articulate questions and ideas before conducting interviews.
- Emphasize the importance of active listening, the interviewer does not talk about their own personal connections, rather the interviewer gets information by asking questions, allowing wait time, and recording responses.
- Invite parents, community members, and experts into the classroom to participate in a student-led interview.
- Create a system for organizing student work. Some examples include use of a folder, binder, or family culture notebook.

Photos and Examples of Finished Projects



Mural completed by 5th graders depicting leaving students' homeland.

Classroom Connection: Weather Science Unit Examples and Worksheets

The standards we use to teach a 2nd-grade weather unit.

Overarching Concepts: Stability and Change

Students understand that some things stay the same while other things change.
Students learn that things may change slowly or rapidly.

Virginia Standards of Learning—Second Grade

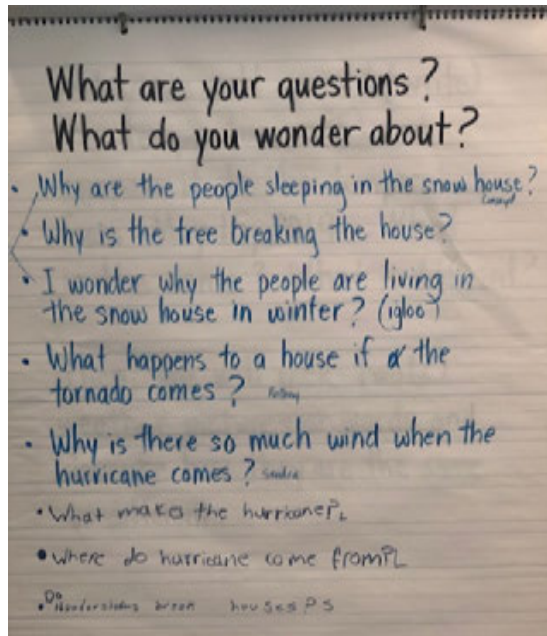
SCI.G2.6.a identification of common storms and other weather phenomena

SCI.G2.6.b the uses and importance of measuring, recording, and interpreting weather data

SCI.G2.6.c the uses and importance of tracking weather data over time

SCI.G2.7.a effects of weather and seasonal changes on the growth and behavior of living things

SCI.G2.7.b weathering and erosion of land surfaces



Pre-assessment:

What do you know about weather?

What kinds of severe weather have you experienced?

What are the similarities and differences of the four seasons?

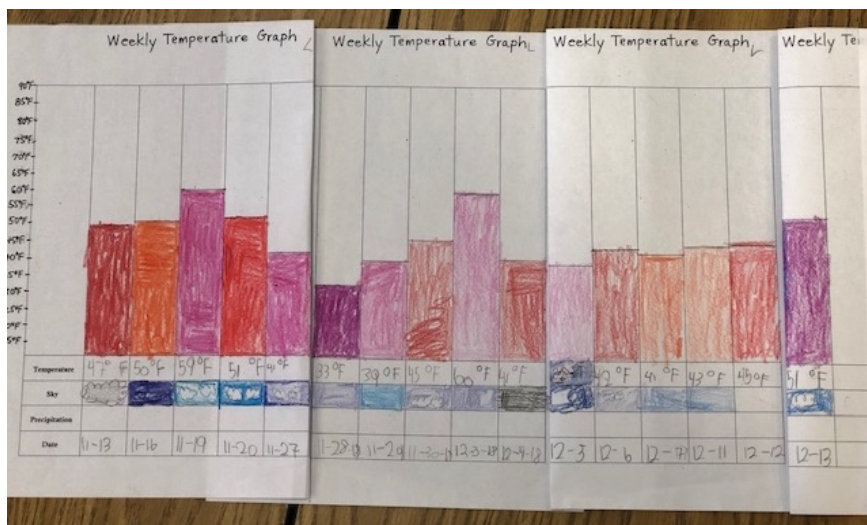
Create a diagram showing the parts of the water cycle.

Match photos of weather with vocabulary words.

Ongoing assessments:

In what ways does extreme weather affect the local community?

Read and record temperature changes over time and look for patterns and changes.



Top Photo:

An example of a pre-assessment generated by student wonderings.

Bottom Photo:

Weekly temperature graph.

Post-assessment:

How does severe weather affect change?

Give examples of how weather and seasonal changes affect the behavior of living things.

How does severe weather impact the community?

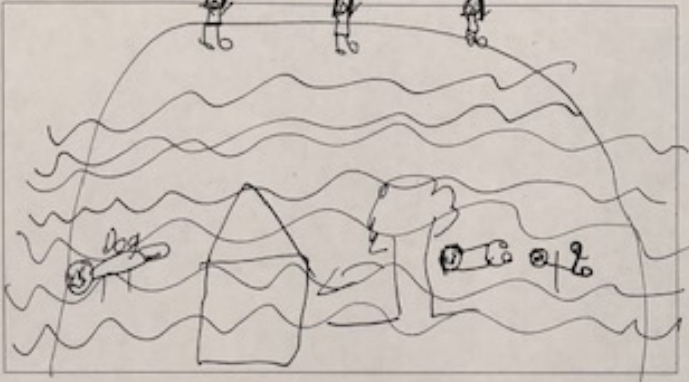
Research, explain, and write about how severe weather affects or makes changes to a community.

Name _____

Weather Assessment

Choose one of the following extreme types of weather: (hurricane, tornado, blizzard, thunderstorm, or flooding.)

Draw and write how this weather affects the community (people, buildings, natural resources, plants and animals.)



bt flooding people die the tree
fall down to the house animals
die the house break then they
don't have, food, rope, light and bed.
and the people life change to
die or don't have nothing else
like no house then there
life change to have things
in school this hapen to my mom
when she was litle in this
hapen

Weather Self-Assessment Checklist

How well am I doing?

I can...	Not yet	Starting to	Yes, I can!
Record weather data			
Describe the weather			
Describe the changes in weather over time			
Predict weather patterns			
Describe the four seasons and how they impact the environment			
Draw and label the water cycle			
Give examples of three states of matter: solids, liquids, and gases			
Explain how a solid, liquid, or gas can change its state			
Name the dangerous types of weather			
Compare and contrast two different types of weather			
Describe how dangerous weather can change a community (people, buildings, natural habitats, plants and animals)			

I still want to learn more about

Weather Research

Date _____

Interviewer (you — the person who asks questions) _____

Interviewee (the person you ask questions) _____

Tell me about a time that you experienced extreme/dangerous weather.

What happened?

When did it happen?

Where was it?

Who was with you?

Did the stormy weather leave a change in the community? In what ways?

Date _____

Interviewing: Asking questions to learn more information

Topic: A game you played when you were my age

Interviewer's name (my name) _____

Interviewee's name (person you interviewed) _____

What is the name of your game?
How did you play the game? (draw and/or write)
Who played with you?
Where did you play?
When did you play?

Fecha _____

Entrevista: Hacer preguntas para obtener más información

Tema: Un juego que jugaste cuando tenías mi edad.

Nombre del entrevistador (mi nombre) _____

Nombre del entrevistado (persona a la que entrevistó) _____

¿Cuál es el nombre de tu juego?

¿Cómo jugaste el juego? (dibuja y/o escribir)

¿Quién jugo contigo?

¿Dónde Jugaste?

¿Cuándo jugaste?

Date: _____

Interviewing: asking questions to learn more information

Interviewer's name (my name) _____

Interviewee's name (person you interviewed) _____

Topic: Tell me about a favorite food you ate with your family when you were growing up.

What is the name of your food?
Who made prepared) the food? (draw and/or write)
When did you eat the food? (Breakfast, lunch, snack, dinner?)
Where did you eat the food?
Other questions (How often did you eat the food, was it made for a special celebration, what did it look like...?)

“ Giving meaning to the lives of our children in the present while preparing them to become active citizens in a democratic society. ”

~ Grace Lee Boggs
Guiding philosophy of the
Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School



Supporting English Learners to Use Ethnography: The Stars Program at Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School

by Lucinda Megill Legendre

For a middle-school student who is just starting to learn English in the United States, myriad factors can contribute to a sense that one is beginning an insurmountable task. Not only is the English language unwieldy, wild, and unknown, but many students in the Stars Program at the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School (FACTS) in Philadelphia also come with limited schooling, traumatic experiences—or both—in their past or their present. They are not just learning grade-level reading, writing, math, science, and social studies in a brand-new language, they are also learning to navigate and interact with an educational system and peers in a new culture. The prevailing atmosphere of xenophobia, racism, and white supremacy demand a particularly meaningful education for these marginalized students, one that will strengthen and empower them. In the Stars Program, students are not only learning the use of ethnographic tools and habits of mind to build their efficacy and sense of empowerment, they are also effectively gaining English proficiency in a short amount of time.

Serving immigrant students and English learners is at the core of the mission of the Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School. FACTS was born from a long history of advocacy and service to immigrant communities in Philadelphia. Local nonprofit organizations Asian Americans United and the Philadelphia Folklore Project worked together to design a school that would be a safe and joyful place for immigrant students, and all students. After years of work and planning FACTS' charter was approved in 2005. FACTS worked to build a school that would integrate the community knowledge and folk arts of the surrounding Chinatown neighborhood and those of other groups in the city as well. The founders created daily and yearly rituals that allow for reflection and celebration of our shared values. Many of the shared values are summarized in the school pledge. “We care for one another and learn together. ... Our elders know important things and we take time to learn from them... All people have a right to use their own language and honor their own culture,” are just a few of the lines that students and teachers recite and refer to regularly. Through the hard work of founders, teachers and students FACTS has received many awards and recognitions not only for the academic success of our students, but also for our caring and safe community. We know that folk arts education and the practices that value community knowledge

are keys to our students' academic success. Seeking to serve a diverse immigrant community, the founders of Folk Arts-Cultural Treasures Charter School had long envisioned a special program to support students who were new to English in middle school. Finally, in early 2017, we received permission for an expansion that included a special class for beginning English learners (ELs). In September 2017, the Stars Program welcomed its first class. Fourteen students from ages 11 to 15 completed the first year. These students came from many different countries and backgrounds, including refugees from Syria and Central Africa and immigrants from Asia. Some have had six or seven years of schooling, some fewer than three. Some students are confident with academic tasks, others long to develop skills that will allow them to accomplish their goals in education. This June, the second year of the Stars Program finished with 20 students.

Stars students are in our main self-contained classroom for our morning community-building time, followed by English, math, science, and social studies. They travel from our classroom to study art, music, Chinese, and PE with our specialist teachers. In addition, a special folk arts class has been designed for them to experience different folk arts from our community. Stars students join other middle schoolers for lunch, recess, and extracurricular folk arts ensembles. The program design is that by being mostly self-contained and sheltering grade-level content within the larger task of English learning, students may increase the speed and depth of their language learning, more so than if they were simply supported in the general education classroom.

As our school's name suggests, folk arts education and ethnographic research are core to how we provide all our students with a high-quality, 21st-century education. As we designed Stars, it was particularly important to us to use this same educational approach with all its tools and practices to provide newcomer students with a high-quality educational experience too. We are guided by our intent to design effective education that also serves to break the paradigm that students who are learning English are limited or lacking because, in fact, we know that immigrant students bring many gifts and experiences that enrich their education and those of their classmates.

Why Ethnography?

In many newcomer classrooms students receive workbooks and textbooks to introduce and allow students to practice basic vocabulary and language structures most used and needed in English. Good programs blend academic English and beginning social and instructional language. In many programs for middle-school newcomers, teachers' guides recommend that students conduct dialogues or interviews, often pre-scripted or using circumscribed vocabulary or structures. One may gather from the structure and sequence of these curricula that students new to English need specialized, limited practice with English until they may be ready for harder, more challenging or real-world tasks. Practitioners and researchers have, however, found that the opposite is true. As Celia Roberts found in her book *Language Learners as Ethnographers*, students learning another language were able to complete meaningful ethnography research (2001). Roberts states, "Our experience and those of others (Jurasek 1996) is that those students with the most advanced language skills do not necessarily undertake the most interesting ethnographic projects or produce the best ethnographic assignments" (2001, 5). With her case study of undergraduate language learners in Europe she found that, "introducing an ethnographic approach can contribute to enhanced language learning" (Roberts 2015).

Others who work in the field of second language acquisition have argued that meaningful context is powerful to successful language learning, as opposed to learning isolated lists of words separated from their use or meaning. This research-based theory shows that students will learn and remember more vocabulary if words are embedded in meaningful context (Brown 2012). The Stars Program uses the cultural contexts that students find themselves in. Our classroom, school, neighborhoods, and families become the contexts for learning and using new and vital language. As Roberts succinctly asserts, “cultural learning is language learning” (2001, 5). Scholarship about ethnography and language learning have been foundational as we have developed a curriculum that goes beyond the workbook-based curriculum typical for newcomer programs.

In developing Stars, we have also been informed by the research and practice centered around trauma-sensitive schools. In a particularly practical book Susan E. Craig and Jim Sporleder lay out numerous recommendations for supporting students who have or have had trauma experiences (2017). Based on new understandings of not only trauma’s impacts but also adolescent brain development, they recommend practices that demand a curriculum that goes beyond the workbook. A few highlights include: “Get to know your students. Find out what matters to them and integrate topics of interest into content instruction... Design instruction that works with the brain’s plasticity to strengthen neural pathways associated with higher-order thinking” (30); and, “Use flexible groups for activities that involve student collaboration to help teens gain insight into the complexity of their behavior and that of their peers” (Craig and Sporleder 2017, 86). Based on this and other research, Stars middle-school students are not only developing English proficiency but also engaging in fostering higher-order thinking through ethnography that investigates culture and its complexity. Our meaningful ethnographic inquiry and research are supported by specific techniques to scaffold language learning. Students are able to conduct scaffolded ethnographic research that allows for authentic use and practice with social and academic language.

Curricular Design that Centers Ethnography

The curriculum we designed and have begun to implement for the Stars program is rooted and centered in building the capabilities and capacities of ethnographic inquiry and folk arts education. Centering ethnography allows the program to meet its objectives of accelerated language learning and also provides a supportive environment for students with past or current trauma. Centering ethnography includes beginning the year with investigations of people and places in and around our classroom and school community. These investigations replace the workbook-style memorization and limited application of classroom and school vocabulary (although workbooks and other printed materials are used for introduction or supplemental practice). More typical curriculum for middle-school newcomers would consist of a textbook page with large, labeled images focused on grammar teaching points or new vocabulary to be developed. There may be charts and examples with explanations. Then there is a series of questions for the students to answer. Good textbooks provide ideas for other extensions and interactions that teachers can lead to deepen learning, and they try to reflect the ethnic and racial make-up of modern English learners. However, no textbook can provide the interactive, higher-order thinking and collaborative work that teachers who know the students can. Centering ethnographic inquiry and folk arts education happens in our social studies and English language arts curriculum. Throughout the two-year curriculum cycle, students research components of neighborhoods, foodways, and public transportation. In the unit about Philadelphia neighborhoods students develop inquiry and research skills and also engage in meaningful use in context of both everyday social and academic

vocabulary to describe people and places in neighborhoods. Again, this hands-on research replaces the very limited exposure and practice found in many curricula for newcomer English language learners while providing the collaborative and higher-order thinking recommended for trauma-sensitive schools.

The Stars curriculum has been designed to teach to the tangible skills and intangible habits of mind as Linda Deafenbaugh lays out in her chart on *Teaching Ethnographic Inquiry in Folklife Education* (forthcoming). The process of ethnographic research provides meaningful opportunities to develop necessary English language skills and vocabulary and allows for supportive practices for students with trauma, such as collaborative learning, investigation of interests, and research into complex behavior. For example, the first step of ethnographic inquiry, data collection, is very important and relevant for middle-school language learners. By building the tangible skill of observation, students are purposefully acquiring the language to label and describe their new environment and expanding the cognitive groundwork for deeper exploration and investigation of norms and culture. A community of respect and support is built by making time for and teaching to the skill of observing the objects and people in the classroom, the school, and the neighborhood: skills that the students must have to survive. The recognition of the work they are already doing to interact in a new cultural context helps students gain confidence without feeling bored and belittled by simple memorization and book work. It also puts them into a position of decision making and control. Instead of filling in the blank within a sentence on a page, students are asked, “What do you notice?” This kind of open-ended inquiry allows for student creativity, voice, and autonomy to be centered in instruction.

Middle-school language learners are involved in a constant task of data collection by monitoring their environment trying to understand the names of people, places, and things, as well as learning and adjusting language and behaviors to fit (or defy) perceived cultural norms. Making this culture and language learning part of the curriculum and giving it an academic frame recognizes their daily work and provides the classroom community as support in this shared task. Ethnography centered in the curriculum also conveys a message greatly valued in folk arts education, the everyday is precious and worthy of study in school. Other examples of data collection centered in English learning are interviewing classmates and teachers in the building. At the beginning of the year, asking classmates about their background and interests is beautiful territory for authentic language learning and meets developmental social needs to build a caring community. Here again, the recognition of the work they are already doing teaches that our classroom is a place where your needs are seen, respected, and valued. The practices of folk arts education and ethnography are centered in the Stars classroom because they are effective for language learning and essential for building a supportive community to allow students with trauma feel safe in the classroom environment (Craig and Sporleder 2017).

Working through the next steps of ethnography—data analysis and re-presentation—also provides benefits. In the first few weeks of school, students interview a partner from a country different from their own and then report to the class their analysis of ways they are similar and different. This activity is powerful and sends a message that builds community while supplying meaningful language practice. Building community by getting to know each other allows students with trauma to feel more comfortable.

Conducting Ethnography Using Language Supports from the WIDA Framework

Vital to the successful teaching of English learners is an understanding of the progression of acquiring a new language. Most states and districts across the country use the research-based standards and assessments developed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium. WIDA research and frameworks are anchored in the philosophy that “Children and youth who are linguistically and culturally diverse, in particular, bring a unique set of assets that have the potential to enrich the experiences of all learners and educators. Educators can draw on these assets for the benefit of both the learners themselves and for everyone in the community. By focusing on what language learners can do, we send a powerful message that children and youth from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds contribute to the vibrancy of our early childhood programs and K–12 schools” (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System 2018). This philosophy has guided the research and creation of tools for teachers and families that describe what students can do at the various levels of English language proficiency. By learning the characteristics and possibilities for language understanding and use, teachers can design meaningful and engaging activities for students at any level of English language proficiency. This is also true when it comes to designing and guiding students in folk arts education and ethnographic inquiry. The WIDA Performance Definitions for the Levels of English Proficiency in Grades K–12 guides teachers to understand what types and forms of language can be expected in levels of English language proficiency (Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System 2018).

The first two levels are where most Stars students are along the continuum of language learning. Consequently, when designing activities I know I can expect students to be able to use “words, phrases and chunks of language” independently to talk about and write about what they are seeing and understanding. Students in the first level need and can use “pictorial or graphic representation of the language in the content areas.” It also means that if students need to do more than these types of responses they will need support and scaffolding, such as providing sentence frames to allow students to begin to form more complex ideas, or encouraging students to use translation to their first language to access more sophisticated language for complex concepts or ideas.

Another helpful tool for thinking about the language abilities of English learners are the [*Can Do Descriptors*](#) also published by WIDA (2014). These are more specific to the various language domains and key uses of language and provide helpful information to guide teachers in supporting student learning. The descriptors detail supports for language learners in the beginning levels and a vital support is found repeated throughout the descriptors and visuals. For example, students at Level 1 can “Indicat[e] relationships by drawing and labeling content-related pictures on familiar topics” (WIDA 2014, 7). Or at Level 2 students can “Sequenc[e] illustrated text of narrative or informational events” (WIDA 2014, 5). In the two years leading the Stars through these units, I have found that when students have access to and use visuals as part of their data collection, data analysis, and re-presentation, they are able to engage more deeply in conducting rich ethnographic inquiry.

Applying Linguistic Supports and Frames When Conducting Ethnographic Inquiry

Within days of arriving at FACTS in September 2017, Stars students embarked on their first journey into ethnographic inquiry. We began by studying the people and roles in the classroom. After practicing and generating some shared vocabulary for actions and behaviors, students were

given vocabulary cards of the keywords with visuals. They were encouraged to translate the words into the language of their primary literacy. We practiced using and acting out these words. We read and wrote about these words. Then I asked students to conduct observations and record their analysis of the different roles in the classroom (students and teachers, in this case). Students used a Venn diagram to show their findings. They then went to re-presentation and created classroom movies with narrations and visuals to show the actions of different people. Each student wrote their own script, but the project required them to work together to create photographs of the behaviors they observed in the classroom. Using Windows MovieMaker, students imported and labeled their visuals. Using a voice recorder on our tablets they recorded the narration, then they added the audio track to their movies. After the movies were finished, we watched them all. While watching, students took notes about the similarities and differences in what data various students decided to include.

Instead of completing workbook pages with cartoon images of different actions and people in the classroom, the students had just conducted their first, scaffolded ethnographic inquiry. They were able to proceed through the steps from data collection, analysis, and re-presentation (and some additional reflection and analysis at the end). They were supported to use and understand general classroom words, phrases, and simple sentences as outlined in the WIDA Performance Definitions. We used translation to students' primary language, visuals, and multimodal practice to develop understanding in the ever-present context of our classroom to support effective language learning. And potentially most importantly, we built our classroom community through a collaborative project of posing for and directing classroom action photos. I think back fondly at the teamwork and determination of the students to show the verbs we had been learning, helping classmates hold their arms just so or stand in the best place in the room to show the meaning. I still hear the laughter and nervous giggles of middle schoolers getting their pictures taken. These experiences, along with supporting each other to record and edit their narrations, help to build our community and make a safer space for students with trauma.

After exploring the classroom, we moved on to the school community interviewing and analyzing data about who is in our school, their roles, and what we have learned about our school. The Stars students' re-presentations for this inquiry were books that they shared with first graders. In one student's book she wrote, "Everyone at FACTS cooperates," and then explained by using evidence from our research, as seen here in the page from her book (Figure 1).

For this project the students went out in teams and took turns interviewing teachers in the school.

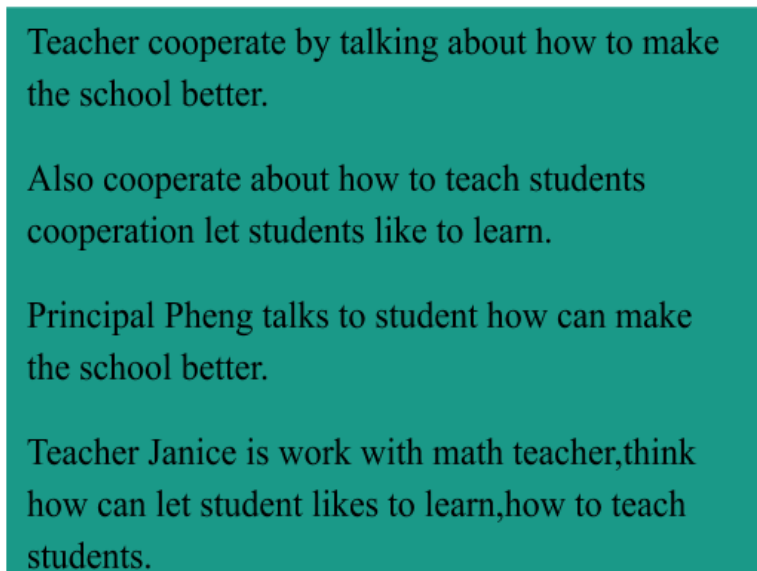


Figure 1. Stars student interview project book page example.

They recorded the interviews using our tablet voice recorders so that they could be transcribed into a chart in a shared Google doc. Once all the data had been entered, students set out to analyze the data and come up with a thesis to support with evidence from the research. Some students, depending on language proficiency, were given sentence starters to help guide their thesis writing. Once they had a plan, they created books using Google slides into which they inserted Google images or photographs they had taken. Finally, they read their books aloud to small groups of first graders who were also engaged in a social studies unit of study of the school community and roles of different people in the building.

In this project you can find similar centering of ethnographic inquiry to propel language learning and create a trauma-sensitive learning environment. Students worked with an additional tool of ethnography: interviewing. We developed questions together as a class and the students took turns conducting interviews after they had practiced with each other in the classroom. In a typical curriculum for newcomers there may be an activity to “Interview a classmate using the question words.” This is lovely practice, but it is not as meaningful as asking real questions to get real answers from the principal, the social worker, and the custodian. Practicing wh- questions ahead of time with a classmate does help students who are ambivalent, even terrified, about approaching and interviewing an adult they may have seen but do not know. Luckily FACTS staff are very patient and supportive, which helps the students doing this task. Thus, not only do students learn new skills and vocabulary, they discover what a resource our caring staff is. Taking the safe but scary risk of conducting an interview is far more powerful than just being told “all the adults in the building are here to help you.” I could have also told the students that many of the staff in our school come from countries other than the U.S. or that people in our school also speak more than one language, but these important facts were more meaningfully learned by students analyzing their own data and coming to those conclusions themselves.

In this school interview example, you can see how the three elements of our curricular design are intersecting and overlapping in important ways. Dividing the work of transcribing interviews was done as necessary and meaningful collaboration—we got much more done together than we could have by ourselves. Analyzing data required some real higher-order thinking in pattern finding and meaning making. Higher-order thinking has been identified as important for helping students with trauma backgrounds, but it is also important for using academic language. Finally, the representation of reading our books to first graders enforced a guiding principle of our school’s design, multi-age community building. And, of course, conducting interviews chockfull of vital school vocabulary, listening to them, and then transcribing them is a natural way to expose students to new vocabulary many times over. Students then analyze these ideas, write them, type them, and provide images to illustrate them. And, finally, they rehearse and then read those words to an authentic audience! The amount of meaningful practice with real-life vocabulary that is both useful and valuable in their daily context is far more valuable than filling out 25 workbook pages.

Expanding Inquiry into the Larger Community

Our use of ethnographic inquiry in the Stars classroom has not been limited to the basic social and instructional language of school. In the 2018-19 school year, after conducting interviews of classmates and then teachers in the building, students produced a directory for parents. Next we ventured out into our city to explore the neighborhoods. A guiding principle that I have employed in designing inquiry for my newcomer students is to set up a framework that centers around a core

group of vocabulary words. In the classroom project, it was a list of classroom verbs. For our neighborhoods inquiry, it was the key ideas from Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1958). These ideas helped us understand and explore the idea that neighborhoods help people take care of their wants and needs. The keywords of shelter, safety, community, belonging, medical care, and others helped guide our inquiry. We set out first on foot into our school’s Chinatown neighborhood and then via public transit to other neighborhoods to explore how different neighborhoods help people get their wants and needs. We also explored how different aspects of neighborhoods make us feel. Embarking on this exploration can sound complex and unwieldy, but we took the ethnographic inquiry step by step and used the tools and techniques outlined in the WIDA framework to support language learning. During the whole process we were engaging the strategies and understandings of trauma-sensitive schools to support students’ needs.

There were many steps and aspects of the inquiry, but I outline a few here and explain how they were used to support language learning and learners. Our first task was developing and teaching to this core list of vocabulary and ideas. We spent days exploring, showing, acting out, and translating the keywords like community, safety, and shelter. We then practiced our observation and note-taking skills by visiting the cafeteria to see how the cafeteria was providing for students’ needs. I can’t tell you the joy that leapt from my heart when a student sketched and labeled a teacher supervising a group of tables in the “Safety” section of the chart (Figure 2). It was proof to me that with the right supports (language practice, time, and a clear task) students, even those with minimal English, could really make use of ethnographic tools and make meaning about their daily lives. And then like popcorn, the brilliant ideas and insights just kept coming: Another student sketched the circle tables and identified that they provide community, and on and on. Now that we’d had our practice in the confines of the school cafeteria it was time to take the show on the road.

It. Neighborhoods help people get their needs and wants.

Needs	Sketch a picture of the things you see in Chinatown	Tally how many places you saw where people can get these things

Figure 2. Data collection tool

Students selected different aspects of the hierarchy of needs to investigate the streets in Chinatown. Their task was the same as in the cafeteria: Observe the neighborhood to find examples of how it might be helping people meet needs. Their tool was the same, a chart with their need and a large box to sketch or describe the things they were seeing. Students could sketch or take notes in English or the language of their primary literacy (Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, etc.). For some students this tool worked well, for a few it was too much to keep track of. Those students were equipped with a tablet and tasked with taking pictures of the things they saw for their needs group so that we could sort the photos later, back at school. We went out in small cooperative groups in which the students were working together to assess the diverse needs people have.

The next day we needed to compile and sort our data. We used the very sophisticated technology of large pieces of chart paper. The students sorted and labeled their findings onto the chart paper (Figure 3). They noticed the things that many people noticed and explained to their peers and to me why the fire hydrant, for example, was added to the safety group. This was in a way representation and in a way a tool that allowed for analyzing. We were able to see which needs Chinatown was very obviously able to meet (food!) and which needs you could also see if you looked closely (community and belonging).

Neighborhoods Investigation

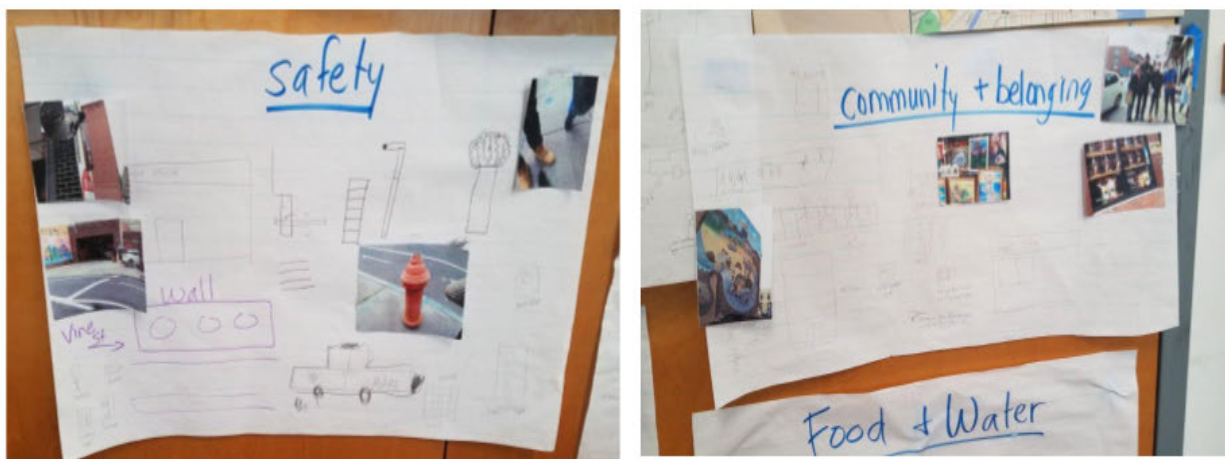


Figure 3. Data analysis.

We repeated these steps in other neighborhoods, adding additional research techniques and interviewing. Always speaking, listening, reading, and writing the same centering keywords (obviously adding more vocabulary for students who could), always making and collecting visuals, and always working in supportive, collaborative groups.

When students were finished, they turned their inquiry to their own neighborhoods to observe and analyze the ways they do or do not meet their needs and what can be done about that, either to celebrate or make change. The student work, posters or letters, showed they had an understanding of the core vocabulary by providing examples and explanations from their observations and analysis. It was exciting for the class to compare their neighborhoods with those we explored

together and discuss their opinions about what they and their neighbors need. I was surprised by how many students decided to choose something to praise about their neighborhoods—celebrating the ways where they lived provided for their wants and needs.

This was a complex unit. But it further proved to me that ethnographic inquiry could be used to meet the core goals of our Stars Program: providing meaningful and effective language learning while building the community and academic skills. Ethnographic inquiry also allows us to meet so many of the goals of our school using folk arts education to provide students the space to explore and analyze, critique, or celebrate their community and their cultures.

Goals for Future Study

Now that we have completed the two-year cycle of our curriculum, it's time to do more research and analysis. With the data we receive from this year's *WIDA ACCESS for ELs 2.0*, we will be able to assess the ways in which our curriculum is meeting our language proficiency goals and the areas that we need to strengthen.

Qualitative data collection about how the students feel and understand the purposes and methods is also very much needed. I have many theories about how students are experiencing different aspects of our practices and our curriculum based on observations, but more systematic data is needed to get a more complete picture of what the student experience is with this curriculum. Is it as empowering as we intend? Are students able to see how they are building their skills and their community? Do students feel successful and engaged in asking questions about their cultural contexts?

And, finally, long-term, what are the effects of this curriculum? Are students building skills that will guide them in high school and college with cooperative and project-based learning? Are students able to use observation, analysis, and meaning making as they move through different cultures and contexts? Will they use their voices and their data to share their important perspectives?

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URL

WIDA Can-Do Descriptors: <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors>



Tell Me What the World Was Like When You Were Young: Talking About Ourselves

by Simon Lichman and Rivanna Miller

Simon Lichman, a folklorist, and Rivanna Miller, a program evaluator, have been involved in the field of shared-society or co-existence education since 1991. In this article we discuss how the process of interviewing has become an intrinsic component of our folklore-based programs that bring together Israeli and Palestinian school and college communities. We examine how the interviewing process helps our Arab and Jewish participants gain knowledge of each other's daily lives and cultures and, through their interactions, overcome negative stereotyping and de-humanization.

Simon's interest in interviewing emerged out of a childhood passion for storytelling. Whenever his family celebrated weddings, bar mitzvahs, special birthdays, and festivals, the older generation would begin to tell stories. He would revel in the way the tellers and audience rolled around with infectious laughter at each embellishment. Nowadays, having moved up the generations, he and his cousins joyously tell their own versions of these stories.

About the photo: Students research family food traditions and continue to discover each other's cultures during Joint Activities in which they make pickled vegetables according to different families' traditions.

Rivanna grew up in Southern Africa and then lived in multicultural settings in England, the U.S., and Israel. Her background has given her a wealth of experience listening to other people's voices and, most of all, allowing them to speak freely and be heard. She integrated her own love of family stories and experience of folklore fieldwork into her profession of Program Evaluation. She believes that the stories people tell are not only fascinating for others, but also help them to process their experiences themselves. The result is a deep narrative that enriches every experience.

It was appreciation of family tradition and a cultural ease that set Simon on his course to becoming a folklorist, doing his PhD research on British Folk Drama, primarily in the village of Marshfield, South West England.¹ Although studies included interviewing techniques and discussions about the sensibilities that fieldworkers need when entering and leaving communities, Simon's interviewing skills were already second nature and he found himself challenging some accepted fieldwork conventions.

For example, in the participant observation technique,² interviews are conducted by an "outsider," the fieldworker (participant) who must be unobtrusive (observer), influencing the interviewee and community as little as possible. As he grew close to those from whom data was collected, he became aware that being himself created a mutual, trusting relationship that enabled people to share all sorts of information from the "factual" to the idiosyncratic and highly personal.³

Program Background

In 1991, Simon established the [Centre for Creativity in Education and Cultural Heritage](#) (CCECH), a nonprofit organization in Jerusalem that runs shared-society education programs and enrichment courses for school communities, teachers, and colleges. Rivanna's role in CCECH programs is one of evaluator, both formative and summative. Furthermore, she serves as a reflector for program activities, encouraging staff and participants to reflect deeply on their experiences. The use of reflective stories as described in this article is an outgrowth of this role.

Although these programs can bring together any diverse cultural groups, not necessarily those hostile to each other, we chose to concentrate on the relationships between the Jewish and Arab (Muslim and Christian), Israeli and Palestinian, communities of Israel and the region, and to provide positive opportunities for both children and adults to meet as ordinary people, rather than as feared stereotypes.

Many programs in Israel bring together Arab and Jewish groups.⁴ Due to the conflict, participating in "co-existence" or "shared-society" programs is complicated since most families in the region have been affected by the complex history and ensuing violence. What makes CCECH programs unique is that they are based on the study and exchange of folklore.⁵ In general, we have found that participants in our programs enjoy talking about their traditions. Even those people who seem to be against the idea of Jews and Arabs getting to know each other are hooked by the program's interest in their pasts and welcome the opportunity of telling their children about their childhoods.

In a society where rapid changes occur all the time, younger generations often dismiss their home cultures as irrelevant to their modern lives, while older generations lose their natural audience for the transmission of tradition. Information might be lost where formal or specific questions are not asked within this ever-widening gap between the younger generations and their cultures. We think

it is important, therefore, that our program participants first study their own folklore or home cultures. Central to this process is the interviewing of different generations within their own families. Their knowledge is then used as the vehicle for bringing together the Arab and Jewish partners in dynamic events in the school programs or as the basis for group discussions and dialogue in college and teacher enrichment courses where there is already a diverse student body. Although interviewing, per se, is not presented as the primary goal, the process of collecting information through interviewing underlies all our activities.

Program Descriptions

Our school-community programs pair Arab and Jewish schools.⁶ Each participating class is in the program for two years. CCECH team members lead separate one-hour weekly lessons with the class teachers in the Arab and Jewish schools. Participants are introduced to the folklore subjects, after which they go home to interview their families, returning to share the information collected in their own classes.

Throughout the year the children meet in several Joint Activities constructed around each specific unit of study. The pupils are the primary target population, but their family members (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings) are intrinsic to the program, both in transmitting information at home and in the meetings between the Jewish and Arab children. Teachers are also direct beneficiaries through their in-house training. Our choice of age group (nine- to twelve-year-olds) is dependent on the children's intellectual curiosity and ability to interview their families, collect and present information, and be open to meeting people from other cultural backgrounds. Parents and grandparents from both communities are invited to participate in their expert capacities as tradition bearers and folk artists. The material becomes active in these meetings, taking on a physical presence as some of the games are played, or when food is prepared together. Joint Activities take place in schools, community centers, shared space like public parks, and places of worship (mosques, synagogues, churches).

The first unit of study is usually *Traditions in Play*. The children work on games that parents and grandparents played in their childhoods. In the Joint Activities they are divided into small, mixed groups to play a selection of these traditional games. Where possible, parents and grandparents join the teachers and CCECH's team of facilitators to teach the different versions of games.⁷



The traditional game of walking planks.

Second-year subjects include *Foodways*. Children learn about the changing world through a brief introduction to the development of agriculture and the industrialization of food preparation. They research their families' food traditions and continue to discover each other's cultures during Joint Activities in which they make pickled vegetables according to different families' traditions, or they share a variety of starch-based foods (such as bread) and assorted spreads (hummus, cheeses, jams). (See opening photograph.)

Our college courses are based on the best practices of CCECH's experience in the school-community pairing programs. They provide a forum for students to examine stereotypes they have of each other and of themselves, while learning how the rich cultural resources of their own families can be used in multicultural education and shared-society work.



5th grader interviews her grandmother.

Interviews and Context

Training participants in interviewing techniques is not a formal objective of our programs, nor is there time for it in the limited hours allotted to our teaching in schools, and the college students come from various disciplines but do not study Folklore. However, we do some basic preparation about the interviewing process and we have developed guideline questions that shape their fieldwork and help these inexperienced interviewers maintain the balance between conversation and interview.

Sample questions from the Traditional Play and Foodways Units of Study

Relationship to Interviewer (mother/father/grandmother...)
Approximate Age (and the decade that places their childhoods in social history)
Country of Origin (City/Town/Village...)
Location of Childhood (which might differ from where they were born)

Information for Games

What games did you play in your childhood?
Number of players, age of players, boys/girls/both, outdoors/indoors
Seasonal/year-round/festivals
Who did you play with (friends, neighbors, families, siblings, cousins...)?
Where did you play (gardens, parks, forests, roads, schoolyards...)?

Specific Game Questions

Name of game in source language and Arabic/ Hebrew/English equivalent where different
Physical conditions required (walls, water, flat spaces, hard or rough surface, holes, trees, etc.)
Equipment needed (found objects such as stones, nuts, fruit pips, planks, sticks, bones; scrap materials such as cloth, rope, clothing elastic, tires; handmade objects; bought things such as marbles, balls, bats, skipping ropes)
Brief description of the rules and method of play

Specific Pickling Tradition Questions

Does anyone in the family make pickles now?
Is there anyone in the family who used to make pickles?
Which seasons?
What type of pickles do/did they make?
Source of vegetables in each generation (homegrown, local farms, open market, supermarket)
From whom did the pickle maker learn to make pickles and from whom did their teachers learn?
Is anyone in the family learning from them now?
Who is given the pickles (nuclear family, extended family, friends...)?

Pickling Process Questions

Ingredients and amounts
Pickling agents (vinegar, citric acid, lemons, salt...)
How long until ready for eating?
Storage until ready (window ledge, shade, direct sunlight, refrigerator...)
Briefly describe the process

The questions are designed to help the school pupils and college students focus on a complexity they might otherwise gloss over by thinking in terms of “yes” “no” answers or accumulating simple lists of games or recipes, and we talk about going beyond the short answers that close down the process of collecting information. Whereas folklorists automatically include questions about context in their fieldwork interviews, this is not obviously important to the teachers, pupils, and students, who need to learn to avoid limiting potentially expansive answers that might lead to unexpected revelations. We explain why context matters and how this kind of information provides an insight into the past.

We use role playing and orally transmitted examples to illustrate the interview situation. For example, the general opening question in the Traditional Play Unit, “What games did you play in your childhood?” might be answered with, “We didn’t have time to play,” or “We were too poor to play.” In this situation alternative follow-up questions with a slight change of focus, such as, “What did you do in your spare time?” might elicit a more accurate and complex answer. Or we might discuss what contextual information is missing and suggest follow-up questions so that the statements might be discovered to mean that their time was taken up with daily chores before and after school (if they had schooling) and they needed to devise games that could be played while working. For example, we have heard accounts of games suitable for young shepherds or a three sticks variant played with tent-sewing needles.

All program participants are “insiders” as opposed to impartial researchers since they are part of the family and community being studied and the interviews tend to have a conversational quality. The “insider” position is further highlighted when, for example, the children compare their families’ traditional games to their own repertoires of play and the college students interview themselves as representing their own generation.⁸

While the one-on-one interview is the basic model, students can also interview family members in pairs or small groups, which could elicit a more natural response to the questions and a sense of group excitement, with each person stimulating another’s memories.⁹ This atmosphere more accurately replicates a traditional group gathering that might lead to the exchange of information either as an informal discussion, banter, or storytelling event. However, because the object of this exercise is to collect information that will be used in program activities (presenting in class and exchanging in Joint Activities) the interviewer also needs to ensure consciously that each interviewee can complete and articulate their own thoughts.

It is also crucial to use teachers’ understandings of personal issues that might arise when their pupils are delving into family stories so that interview preparation can be steered in directions that best suit individual pupils. Where there are no living grandparents, children can interview someone of the relevant generation from the same cultural background (great-aunt or uncle, family friend, neighbor). If family members live too far away to visit, telephone or email interviews are encouraged. We recommend that participants conduct their home interviews in their mother tongues so that the conversation flows. The material is translated orally into Hebrew or Arabic when being shared in class and in the Joint Activities.

Presenting Data

When we first began working in schools, teachers would write our questions on the board for the children to copy. The fact that we did not use a previously prepared handout offered the flexibility to fine-tune questions and information categories to each class since academic levels and interests vary widely. However, most teachers soon requested a more formal printed handout with space for answers. Although we were concerned that this might restrict the scope of information being collected, we recognized that their suggestions could lead to an easier, more accessible method of conveying these guidelines. Of course, children still tend to use the constraints of the actual sheet of paper, squeezing their answers into the spaces they think have been provided, mostly ignoring the option of adding pages for more information or more than one interviewee.

We ask for as *many* games and their contexts from as *many* family members as possible, leaving the number of interviewees and the material to be collected open so that there is a built-in fluidity

in their own ways. The interview process sometimes enables children to show something of their private family life they may otherwise feel shy about “exposing.” They will have gained the confidence to do this from having seen how their classmates are genuinely interested in each other’s discoveries. For example, the children are asked to bring lullabies passed down through the generations in the original languages together with rough translations. The classes always listen to each other’s songs with respect and we can see the pride glowing in each presenter’s eyes. Through such experiences children and their teachers become aware of aspects of home life they might not have known such as, how some of their classmates are bi- or tri-lingual.¹¹

Opening Doors

The breadth and depth of cultural diversity is reflected in the range of material brought from home and the richness of variations. The mix of cultures in Israel is determined by various communities’ countries of origin.¹² Lying on major trade routes, the Middle East has been a region of migration, immigration, and exile for thousands of years, building up civilizations and enduring declines and endless warfare.

We have chosen the world of play as our opening subject because, as clichéd as this sounds, all generations have played, even in the most depressed and uncertain childhoods. On being given this interview to do as homework in the school-community pairing programs, children often say of their parents and grandparents, “Oh, they didn’t play games.” Their discoveries to the contrary amaze them.

Questions of context plunge the interviewers into worlds that are not necessarily new to them, but definitely alter or redefine the way they look at their physical environment. For example, parents and grandparents might have played in a field or an open lot that is now a block of apartments or system of roads. They learn of a freedom of movement in these outside spaces and compare this to their own period in history when playing outside is mostly associated with public parks, designated structured play areas, and the public spaces around apartment blocks.

The schoolchildren and our college students are usually surprised and delighted by accounts of games specifically suited to terrains that might be foreign to them. They bring examples of seasonal games dependent on finding horse chestnuts and apricot pips, such as the British game of conkers and the Israeli/Palestinian game of *adjoim/gogim/adjum*, respectively; or Bedouin games for dark evenings without electricity when sound is used to locate thrown stones or bones. They hear accounts that describe how the search for suitable play materials was part of game time and how games were especially devised or adapted, for example, to desert play in the Middle East or the snows of Eastern Europe.

For the school pupils, the emphasis is on interviewing the older generations (parents and grandparents) about their childhoods, as a way of coming to understand how the world we take for granted is in a constant state of flux, with changes from generation to generation. The college students become aware of the same process, but they interview four generations for each subject (grandparents, parents, themselves as representing their generation, and a child between 8 and 12 years old) to see their own and each other's families’ sweep of history.

As a means of introducing our college students to Folklore and the transmission of home culture, we ask them to bring an artifact that has been passed from generation to generation.¹³ We explain that this exercise is dependent on talking to their families because the story of the artifact is as

important as the object itself since it is placed within the evolution of their family's individual and societal identity. By including context as part of their presentations, these students are immediately building up pictures of their families' lives through time. Each subsequent interview focuses on a new theme or subject, thereby participants are constantly accumulating knowledge about themselves, their fellow students, and their families. When sharing their material with each other, they see what they have discovered in a new light as it now enters the group's experience of each other's cultural backgrounds, family histories, and religions.

Many of the college students have never thought of formally interviewing their families although they might have knowledge of family history from stories.¹⁴ Students have told us that interviewing their families about the world of play seemed a ridiculous idea for a compulsory college course assignment. They did not anticipate that the interview would be interesting or of educational value. Some students also worried that their families would feel that being interviewed was an imposition. Most students recount how the excitement generated in the actual interview sessions moved them past their initial negative responses to the exercise and, influenced by this atmosphere, they were able to expand the scope of their interest. They returned to class with unexpected enthusiasm, looking forward to the next assignment.

They have also often discovered things they did not know about their families and talk about how this process inspired them with further questions. A student described asking her mother if the family had any traditional artifacts, having little expectation of discovering anything. Her mother appeared with a small suitcase that contained an elaborate cloak from Morocco used for her pre-wedding henna ceremony some 30 years earlier. The student had never seen it because her mother thought no one would be interested. The student blessed this exercise for, without it, she might never have heard the detailed story of her mother's wedding and the complicated transition from one culture to another. She planned to wear this cloak at her own henna ceremony.¹⁵



Student artifacts discovered through an interview exercise.

The final work in our college courses is based on a more comprehensive set of interviews. Students are divided into small, mixed Jewish and Arab study groups and they design research questions relevant to their chosen topic. Issues include: Men's and Women's Roles in Their Communities; Traditional and Contemporary Methods of Settling Disputes; Family Honor and Transgression; Access to Education and Choices of Profession; Marriage-Courting Conventions and Wedding Rituals; Festivals; Foodways.

Looking at these cross-cultural interviews of three generations (grandparents, parents, and themselves representing their own generation) the students analyze how the issues have changed through time and what impact these changes have had on their communities. They read their interviews to each other, discussing themes they have developed as a group. Each student is responsible for ensuring that the material of their interviews is germane to the subject since their families are the sources of information as opposed to academic articles or formal histories. A secondary benefit of this approach is that their discussions are less likely to be dominated by political rhetoric, thus enabling the groups to be empathetic even when challenging and controversial subjects are raised.

Reflections

Interviews provide opportunities for participants to connect formally with their traditions and their families' tradition bearers. Through experiencing the interview process, participants are introduced to the way in which information is transmitted across and between generations and diverse home cultures, causing them to reassess how their own home culture may be valuable in shaping their contemporary identities.

Many children, college students, and family members have told us how excited they felt about interviewing and being interviewed. We realized that the experience of the interview itself was felt to be as important as the material being collected, therefore, we added questions that would encourage all pupils and students to reflect on their family interview experiences as part of their assessment of the course or program. One student wrote, "The interviewing was enjoyable and gave me an added perspective on the life my family led. It was good to see the family's smile when talking about their simple, happy childhoods. All old and discarded materials were used in imaginative play, nothing was taken for granted. And all this gives me a different way of looking at our lives today."¹⁶

A Jewish student-teacher said, "I realized that I haven't really spent so much time with my grandmother, I mean that I was used to being with her during the Sabbath and at bar mitzvahs and weddings, but we don't usually sit down together, just the two of us. I was so excited by this interviewing that I decided from now on to visit her once a week. She tells me the story of her life, which I've heard before but don't mind hearing again, and lots of things about her life that I didn't know keep popping up because now she knows I'm interested in the details, and we have much deeper conversations. It's given me a stronger sense of where I've come from, I can see how it all fits into my own life. And it has given my grandmother the chance to learn about my life—she says this brings her joy."

The interviews bring the family into the program and, through this, into the schools and colleges where participants see their parents and grandparents being respected for what they know and what they can transmit. In their reflections, several Bedouin and Jewish students wrote about how their grandmothers, who did not have access to formal education, had always felt too self-conscious to have any role in their children's and grandchildren's education. They could not believe that what they had to say was considered important enough to become part of the material used in a university course. One student wrote, "My grandmother cried to think that my professors were interested in her stories."

A Bedouin student-teacher added, “Researching home culture fascinated me. Most people are interesting. My family told me about their lives and they talked about the ‘values’ by which they have lived. I will use the idea of children interviewing their families in my own teaching. I believe that learning these values will help our children to live in a mixed society.”

The interviewing process itself brings participants to the nuances of contact. The family interview as an assignment in educational settings provides a framework for collecting information at home beyond that which is already known or discovered as a consequence of growing up in the family. The fact that participants are aware that they are all interviewing their parents and grandparents links them in ways beyond or outside programs activities and compounds their feelings of togetherness, as if they have been part of each other’s interviews. In recognizing their own and each other’s parents’ and grandparents’ roles in history, Jewish and Arab school pupils and college students appreciate that they too have a role in this process, which includes being responsible for how they interact with each other, replacing fear-bound expectations with a more hopeful vision of a shared society.

Simon Lichman is the Founding Director of the Centre for Creativity in Education and Cultural Heritage, Jerusalem, Israel. He has a PhD in Folklore and lectured in Folklore, Education, English Literature, Drama and Creative Writing in universities in England, the U.S., and Israel. He has published articles on the application of Folklore to shared-society education, and ritual drama, as well as poetry.

Rivanna Miller has worked in Evaluation and Program Design since 1982, using reflective evaluation as especially suitable for shared-society work and teacher training. In addition to documenting the programs of the Centre for Creativity in Education and Cultural Heritage through video and still photography, she uses these visual materials as internal evaluation tools for participants. Her photographs appear in numerous articles about CCECH’s work.

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URL <https://sites.google.com/site/ccechfund/home>

Notes

¹ Simon Lichman, *The Gardener's Story and What Came Next: A Contextual Analysis of the Marshfield Paper Boys' Mumming Play*, PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1981.

² See Hortense Powdermaker. 1966. *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*. New York: W.W. Norton. For a general discussion of fieldwork techniques and interviewing see also: Clifford Geertz. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books; Robert A. Georges and Michael O. Jones. 1980. *People Studying People: The Human Element in Fieldwork*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press; Kenneth S. Goldstein. 1964. *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore*. Hatboro, Pennsylvania: Folklore Associates; Elliot G. Mishler. 1986. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

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- ³ See Simon Lichman. 2018. Sensibility and Rule Breaking in Israeli-Palestinian Shared Society Education Programs, unpublished paper, Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society (Buffalo).
- ⁴ For a discussion of shared society programs see Aneelah Afzali and Laura Colleton. 2003. Constructing Coexistence: A Survey of Coexistence Projects in Areas of Ethnic Conflict. In *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity After Violent Ethnic Conflict*, eds. Antonia Chayes and Martha Minow. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 3-20.
- ⁵ This article is part of a wider study about how Folklore is effective as a tool for bringing together diverse groups, some of whom may be in conflict.
- ⁶ When the State of Israel was created in 1948, the Arab communities chose to maintain a separate school system in which Arabic was the language of learning. In both Arab and Jewish schools, the class may be composed of children with family backgrounds from several countries, ethnic groups, and religions. Contact between Jewish and Arab communities, even those living side by side, is often limited to the workplace, with little opportunity for children to gain direct, positive knowledge of one another.
- ⁷ A fuller description of the program can be found in Simon Lichman. 2001. From Hopscotch to Siji: Generations at Play in a Cross-cultural Setting. In *Play Today in the Primary School Playground: Life, Learning and Creativity*, eds. Julia Bishop and Mavis Curtis. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- ⁸ See Gabriella Modan and Amy Shuman. 2011. Positioning the Interviewer: Strategic Uses of Embedded Orientation in Interview. In "Narratives in Interviews, Interviews in Narratives," eds. Anna De Fina and Sabina Perrino. Special issue, *Language in Society*. 40.1: 13-25. In their discussion of "embedded orientation," Gabriella Modan and Amy Shuman examine the significance of "the interviewer...as an insider and outsider." We find it of interest to note that the interviews in our programs are between insider and insider. See also, Powdermaker, op. cit., for a discussion of fieldworkers researching their own communities
- ⁹ The effect of sharing material in this way can be compared with what Barbara Rosenstein calls *stimulated recall*, where, according to her research, showing photographs and video clips can elicit deeper responses because of the visual stimulation. See Barbara Rosenstein. 2002. Video Use in Social Science Research and Program Evaluation. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1.3; 22-43.
- ¹⁰ For a detailed example for how the information gathered is used, see Simon Lichman. 2015. Uses of Hopscotch in Multicultural, Intergenerational Co-existence Education. *Journal of Folklore and Education*. 2: 3-13.
- ¹¹ This is a prime example of a syndrome Amy Shuman discusses in *Storytelling Rights: The Uses of Oral and Written Texts by Urban Adolescents* (1986, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) where teachers might not necessarily be aware of the high level of literacy functioning in the home lives of pupils who struggle in school.
- ¹² See Jacob M. Landau. 1969. Chapters 1 (Some Basic Data) and 2 (Adaptation or Alienation). In *The Arabs in Israel: A Political Study*. London: Oxford University Press. Also see Harry M. Rosen. 1970. *The Arabs and Jews in Israel: The Reality and the Dilemma, the Promise*. New York: The American Jewish Press, 12-6.
- ¹³ The students bring such objects as tea kettles from Morocco; teapots from England; Middle Eastern *Finjans* for making coffee; *Kiddush* Cups and candlesticks used on the Jewish Sabbath; prayer carpets and prayer beads used by Muslim worshippers; hand-embroidered garments, wall hangings and tablecloths; and handwoven carpets.
- ¹⁴ Most families tell stories in various natural settings such as parties, get-togethers, festive meals (Christmas, Thanksgiving, Ramadan, Passover), mourning periods (wakes and *shivvas*). We are consciously asking participants to create non-traditional moments of transmission (the homework situation of interviewing) as well as to share the stories (information) that are part of their families' repertoire. This is similar to Kenneth Goldstein's concept of "induced natural contexts" (Goldstein 1964, 87-90) as a means of collecting folklore. However, the induced settings for transmission in this work are quite different because both interviewer and interviewee are from the same family and the moment they are together, the older generation interviewees take on the role of tradition bearer as a matter of course, once they get past any self-consciousness they might have at being interviewed formally.
- ¹⁵ Although we have run teacher training and enrichment courses in various settings, most material to which we refer in this article is from our course *Researching Home Cultures as a Tool for Shared Society Encounters*, in the Multicultural Project for Jewish and Bedouin student-teachers at Kaye Academic College for Education, Beersheva. We would like to thank the other members of the team of the Multicultural Project for sharing their experience and profound insights over many years.
- ¹⁶ In contrast to these happy memories we are sometimes told that the interviewing has been difficult, especially when memories are painful, and people have been loath to share them. However, even here, the interview framework, which seems to have a formal structure, often opens the door to a flow of information and a way of articulating painful experiences.



Students Listen to Voices of the City with the Urban Memory Project

by Rebecca Krucoff

Student: Is there anything you miss from the bad old days of the neighborhood?

I now own a business on Seventh Avenue and when I moved here, Seventh Avenue was filled with businesses like mine, mom-and-pop stores. There were wonderful diners and butcher shops and bakeries and card shops and candy stores and almost all of them are gone because it's become so expensive, so expensive to live in this neighborhood and to run a business in this neighborhood.

~ Excerpt of an interview with Ezra Goldstein, co-owner of the Community Bookstore, Park Slope, Brooklyn

We are sitting in the back of the Community Bookstore in Park Slope, Brooklyn, with Ezra Goldstein, the store's co-owner, as he participates in a model oral history interview. Alongside owning this community anchor, Ezra has lived in the Park Slope neighborhood for over 30 years and has a thoughtful approach to discussing changes he has witnessed. His small, independent bookstore is a community touchstone and staple for area residents, but for many students visiting from a neighboring high school, Park Slope Collegiate (PSC), it is often an unrecognized storefront passed by to or from school.

The Urban Memory Project is a New York City nonprofit with a mission to strengthen the vital relationship between city residents' personal histories and their city's history. Founded in 2005, UMP has worked with more than 2,000 students and 300 teachers in NYC public schools. Using the research and documentation tools of urban planners, historians, folklorists, and artists, students develop tools to document and analyze the layered history of neighborhoods and consider issues affecting their daily lives and those of all New Yorkers. UMP's goal is to cultivate new generations of informed and civically engaged citizens who see themselves as part of their neighborhood's and their city's unfolding story.



Ezra Goldstein, co-owner of the Community Bookstore in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

Photo by Dinah Cortes, PSC student.

This interview is part of a process for teaching students to conduct their own oral histories, one piece of a curriculum implemented by the [Urban Memory Project](#) (UMP). UMP has been working with these students and their social studies teacher for the past month studying the history and current issues that shape their Brooklyn neighborhoods. Students have built background knowledge through field documentation and text-based research and are now preparing to enrich their understanding of their communities through talking with the people who live in them.

One of our favorite examples of the interview modeling method is the conducting of an oral history with Ezra. To interview him, students walk from school to his bookstore, one class at a time, and arrange themselves in seats in the cozy children's book section. Ezra and the UMP educator sit on stools facing the students and are sometimes joined by the bookstore's notorious and grumpy cat, Tiny, to whom the students joyfully respond. We begin by reviewing interview protocols together and testing our recording equipment. Then we engage in a series of questions designed to encourage Ezra to discuss what brought him to Park Slope from Ohio in the 1980s, how the community has changed, his thoughts on changes, and what it is like to run the bookstore.

Interviewing Ezra accomplishes a number of our teaching goals. Aside from modeling the process they will undertake, our conversation with him deepens students' understanding of history's impact on individuals. His personal experiences enrich their awareness of how a community's past informs its present. Bringing students out of school and into the bookstore engages their curiosity. Meeting Ezra and hearing him discuss his life and neighborhood awakens their empathy and develops the historical reasoning skills of understanding multiple perspectives. Finally, their experience of their school's community becomes more welcoming and expansive. The visit often becomes the first of repeat visits to the store.

Student: I was wondering, what was it like living here for you at that time?

Ezra: Well, it was very exciting and uh, and there was a lot more happening here than in Ohio, let me tell you, so..(laughs) it was a lot of fun. And we actually..found a rent-stabilized apartment up by the park and it was really beautiful. So, from then on, you know, I fell in love with the neighborhood right away.

Real-World History and Civics

A UMP school program is a community exploration done in partnership with teachers and students. Each project is custom designed to meet the needs of the specific school, teacher, and class. Teachers and UMP educators collaboratively develop units and lessons around current issues, teacher interests, and the needs of the school. A project might look like a fieldwork and oral history research project in a quickly developing Brooklyn neighborhood, or an examination of the legacy of mid-century urban renewal policies in today's South Bronx. In addition to writing research papers, students might curate a photography exhibition, a panel discussion, or a presentation of policy memos.

At the end, teachers have a complete curriculum of lesson plans and resources as well as a set of new strategies for maximizing student engagement with the local community, based on real-world history, humanities, and civics. Students end with an argument-based research paper, practice in several research methodologies, a developed set of tools for participating in their local communities, and portfolio pieces to submit to colleges.

Why Oral History?

Oral history has been a foundation of UMP school programming since our beginning. We believe it is a tool with the power and potential to engage students to connect with issues beyond their immediate lives in a highly relevant manner. Many political, economic, and social trends affecting students are presented to them in school on a macro level that feels removed. We believe that to engage students in civic conversation they need to see the direct relevance of these trends on the lives of real people.

Our programs work with young people ages 12-18 who, even if they have lived in one area their whole lives, do not have the same context and perspective that older residents present. We find it continually meaningful and rewarding for students to talk with people who have seen the places where they live change over time. The process allows for a dialogue between the students' experiences and the lived experience of others.

The interview process elevates student engagement. Students are in charge of preparing for, conducting, and processing the interviews. They choose pieces of an interview to illuminate a story about their communities. This ownership and rigor increase students' commitment to the process and are reflected in their work products, whether a podcast, an exhibition panel, a video, a blog post, or the basis of research toward a [Socratic Seminar](#) or paper.

Zion: *What would you say to this generation about making something in the neighborhood for ourselves?*

Royston Antoine: *..If the people get themselves together instead of trying to give up, see what happens is they give up on themselves too much. I didn't give up, I'm still here, I didn't give up, no, I'm still here. But people give up on themselves and they figure there's nothing in Brownsville [Brooklyn] for them. There's something here. Why other peoples coming to Brownsville? Because they see the vision is different from their vision. Their vision is "Oh, Brownsville is finished," and they running. Where are they running to? And what are they going to run towards? Other neighborhoods. No matter how rich I become I don't want to run to another neighborhood. I want to build this neighborhood.*

~ Excerpt of a student interview with Royston Antoine, former Democratic Candidate for District 21, Brownsville, Brooklyn

Methodology

We introduce oral history after students have developed some general background knowledge about the community we are studying. By this point students have gathered and processed information illuminating the complexity of a community's history and issues through fieldwork involving neighborhood observation and photo documentation walks as well as text research ranging from newspaper articles to research guides by local institutions such as the [Brooklyn Historical Society](#). The students are now ready to grapple with the concept of community stakeholders. Teaching students to conduct and present oral histories is an important process. Through trial and error UMP has developed several methods we reliably implement to engage students in working with interviews. These methods are organized into prepping for, conducting, processing, and presenting oral histories.

At UMP we use oral history to:

- Teach that history is more than a static set of generalized events but rather a collection of experiences that influence different groups of people in different ways, depending on their circumstances
- Connect young people to the role that neighborhoods play in the lives of New Yorkers, including their own
- Develop curiosity and engagement
- Spark empathy
- Give students ownership
- Reveal that individuals' lives are significant
- Deepen understanding of historical change through personal experiences
- Broaden historical reasoning skills and develop and deepen historical context
- Make history come alive

Model, Practice, Prep

Modeling how to conduct an interview is a key UMP best practice. We enlist the volunteer services of a long-time community member who can speak to the impacts of community change. This might be a local resident, a parent, or a teacher whom the students are surprised to see in a different capacity. Students observe the UMP educator conduct an oral history and take notes on a worksheet organized into three categories, [Information Notes](#), [Question Notes](#), and [Demeanor Notes](#), to help students critique the process. After observing the interview, students have a Q&A with the interviewee and then a turn-and-talk with peers to discuss observations they made on their charts. We then share as a class about the new neighborhood information we gathered and new research questions that emerged. Together we create a list of interviewing best practices. The debriefing discussion intentionally addresses each of three categories from students' notetaking sheet in turn to ensure that students have time to process how the use of questions can open up or shut down a conversation, how demeanor and professionalism affect the interview, and how learning someone's personal story enriches understanding.

Individual, Small Group, and Community Interview Days

After the model interview, we might structure some informal time for students to practice interviewing each other back in the classroom, or we might be ready to move on to students' conducting oral histories. There are several shapes these interviews can take depending on the project. Sometimes students are engaged in independent neighborhood research. In these cases, they use a structured series of steps to choose an interviewee, develop questions, and conduct their interviews. At other times students and their teacher are engaged in the study of one community. In this case we often organize a Community Interview Day when we invite a number of local residents to the school for a morning or afternoon of concurrent interviewing. A Community Interview Day invites us to partner with local organizations, like the [Park Slope Civic Council](#) or [Brooklyn Historical Society](#), which have helped us to organize interviews, bolstering our relationships and resources.



A general hubbub permeates the teachers' cafeteria of the John Jay High School campus, a building housing the consortium of four secondary schools that includes PSC. Groups of students cluster at tables of four or five, each engaged in an interview of a long-time neighborhood resident. Adults circulate the edges of the room, observing the process, which is entirely student-led.

Jeffrey and Carlos interviewing John Cortese during a Community Interview Day at PSC.

Photograph by Rebecca Krucoff.

Jeffrey: You've been here all of your life?

John: Still here.

Jeffrey: Wow.

John: I sit outside almost every mornin', winter and summer, watching all the neighbors pass by, they all know me. But we had a store in the neighborhood. My dad and I had a fruit and vegetable store here. Ah, we had the store over 90 years. Him 45 and me 45. And I retired about 12 years ago....

Jeffrey: You have a lot of people respect you in the neighborhood.

John: Oh, as I said, you can't find a finer neighborhood. Everyone seems to know everybody. I can sit outside my doorway and everybody comes by. They hug me, they kiss me, how do ya feel, how do ya do?

~ Excerpt of an interview with John Cortese, long-time resident of Park Slope, Brooklyn, conducted by PSC students during a Community Interview Day

To prepare for their Community Interview Day, student groups receive a bio of one interviewee and, referring to our model interview and question prompt lists, together develop and vet a series of questions. They decide who will be the main facilitator, who will be in charge of recording equipment and other logistics such as ensuring that waivers are signed, and who will ask which questions. We work with the school to arrange for a room large enough to host a number of groups at once. We order refreshments for a relaxed mix and mingle when the interviewing ends. After logistics have been accounted for, the actual day feels like magic. Students' independence in preparing and the event's formality ascribe a heightened significance, and students take their responsibilities very seriously. Additionally, the act of interviewing a community elder or long-time resident awakens their empathy and curiosity. That each group is engaging with a different person and their story creates a feeling of specialness to the interaction, one that is built on later in class through sharing the experience. Students gain new knowledge and experience the deepening importance of multiple perspectives. History comes alive.

Processing Interviews: Transcribing and Editing

Transcription can be a tedious and challenging task for many of us who use oral history in our work, and students are not immune to this struggle. We combat this fatigue with our students in two ways. First, we frame processing within the context of their final project. Seeing where the work is going and how it contributes to their project creates purpose. Second, we provide time for students to process and transcribe their interviews during class. This takes the pressure off to do this work on their own. Students are given a sanctioned opportunity to have their headphones on in class, which provides its own kind of thrill. It is always enjoyable to see students huddled over their class computers, intently listening and jotting notes with time signatures and keywords.

Teaching students to process interviews is straightforward. We give them a handout with very clear steps to take so that they can move at their own speed. As in the interview modeling, we also model how and why to transcribe by sharing examples of a transcription in process. We use the text of the model interview we did as a class to illustrate how this works. We also show students several examples of finished student projects that incorporate oral history so they have concrete ideas of where their interview work could lead.



***Destiny:** Have would you say the neighborhood has changed since you moved there?*

***Lucia:** When they built these buildings 100 years ago they were really made for workers. People who could afford to buy these buildings. The building that I live in and next from me were owned by the same families. The woman that lived below me was born in the apartment, not even the hospital.*

It's absolutely amazing. It's just unbelievable. When I moved here working people could afford the rent and that was before condominiums, they didn't have condominiums, so they had rental apartments, and affordable housing for people doesn't even exist anymore.



~ Excerpt from an interview with Lucia Bruno, long-time resident of Park Slope, Brooklyn



Lucia Bruno on the steps of the apartment building in Brooklyn where she has lived for 30 years.

Photograph by Destiny Cortes, PSC student.

Sharing Work: Exhibitions, Podcasts, Videos, and More

UMP school programs combine city exploration with action research to broaden students' community understanding and deepen their connection to the places where they live. This research becomes the basis for students' interpretations of controversial and complex issues facing their local communities. To end a project, students synthesize their research into formal presentations to share their knowledge and ideas with the larger community. Students' oral history work becomes integrated into various projects combined with their field documentation and other more traditional text-based research. UMP uses real-world project models for students to present their work. Student projects have included in-school, student-curated, two-dimensional exhibitions of photographs, interviews, and text; podcasts and videos; and policy memos, panel discussions, or Socratic Seminars that construct arguments about what should be preserved or changed in their communities.

Exhibitions

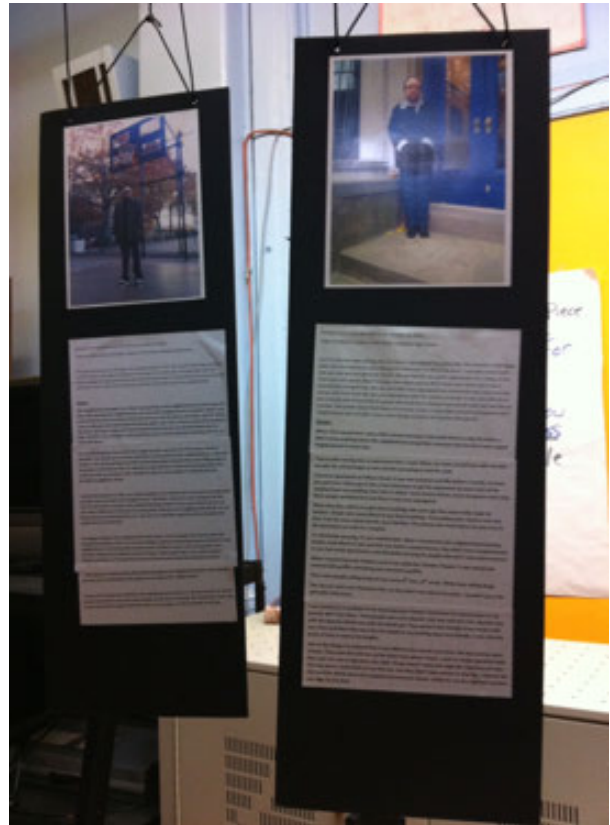
Many projects end in student-curated exhibitions. Students are broken into committees, each with a group leader, to take on one of the exhibition tasks. Students select, edit, organize, and mount the exhibitions themselves with guidance in the form of facilitation by their teachers. Students committees sift through photographs to choose and mount for display, or read through writing pieces and oral histories. At the end of the preparation period we invite the community to visit the exhibition in a celebration at the school.

UMP has had a partnership with PSC since our founding. Over 15 years students have researched the changes affecting their borough through close examination of their own neighborhoods and their school neighborhood. PSC has served as a lab site for UMP's teaching practices and its students and teachers as active collaborators. With their input and experimentation, we have codified our programming and implemented it at schools across New York City. The school remains committed to the work year after year and students have presented their shifting understandings of their borough through numerous projects, archived both at the school and through [UMP's website](#). This collection has created an historic record of the recent past to which a continuing cycle of students refers and enriches in a continuous loop of research and documentation.

Podcasts

Technology has dramatically developed in the 15 years since UMP began. Students are often much more tech-savvy than UMP staff are, resulting in new presentation formats. An example is seen in the accessibility of podcasting software for students, which provides them the challenge of synthesizing their interviews into an aural story.

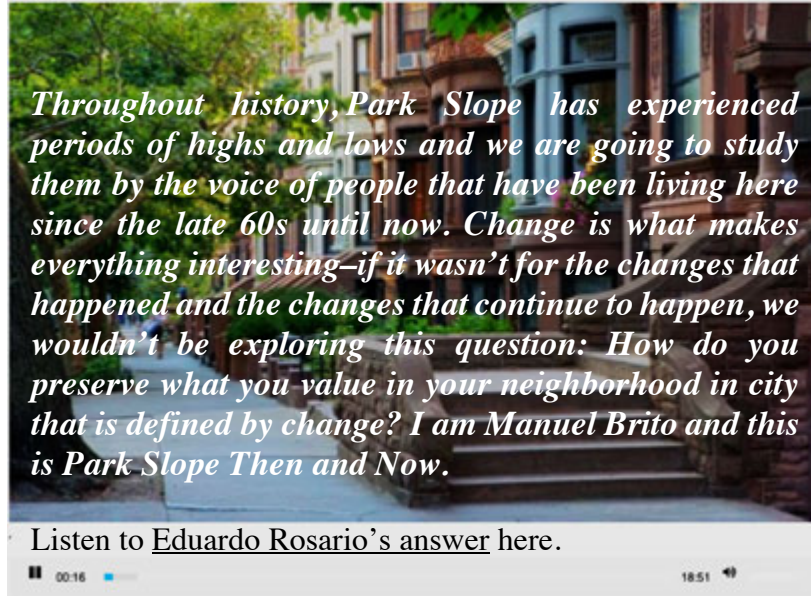
Students Manuel Brito and Franciely Paulino worked with their English Language Learning teacher, Louise Bauso, and Paul Allison, coordinator of the youth writing blog [Youth Voices Live](#), to learn the skills of podcasting. They applied these skills to an oral history presentation for their UMP project, embedded in their senior social studies class. Students used podcasting to capture the recollections of Eduardo Rosario, a long-time Brooklyn resident who has witnessed neighborhood change over many years, asking him questions about the neighborhood's character, its population, and the effects of gentrification.



PSC student interviews and interviewee portraits displayed in a student-curated end-of-project exhibition at their school in Brooklyn.

Photograph by Rebecca Krucoff.

At the start of their podcast the students state,



Elevating Teacher and Student Experience

I see it [the neighborhood] as a whole, and not just fragmented, like me just going on with my own life. It's livelier. I see Brownsville's value. These are people with lives. That's what built the community. When I'm walking down the street I see people, everyone walking around, it's connected. If something were to happen we would all come together.

~ Zion Leban, PSC student

UMP's programming stems from our experiences teaching in the social studies and humanities disciplines. Our projects encourage students to think historically to become civic actors in today's world. We incorporate much of the thinking on the forefront of social studies instruction today, specifically the work of the [Stanford History Education Group](#) (SHEG) and of Bruce Lesh, history teacher and author of [Why Don't You Just Tell us the Answer? Teaching Historical Thinking in Grades 7-12](#) regarding the teaching of historical thinking skills and historical reasoning. Working with oral histories gives students practice with these tools, specifically regarding the consideration of multiple perspectives, examining continuity and change, and understanding cause and effect. In synthesizing their interviews into larger projects, students must consider their sourcing information and the context in which the speaker is speaking. Seeing the interview as a primary source within a much broader study makes concrete to students the methods that historians use to analyze and interpret history. An additional goal is for our projects to promote college readiness. Engaging in oral history asks students to activate research, develop speaking and listening skills, transcribe, analyze, synthesize and summarize information in formal presentations. These are skills that will transfer to work in various subjects and projects as they move forward with their education.

Finally, the work resonates on a more poetic level. Students get the space to slow down and connect with someone else, a person whom they might not have recognized as a part of their community or to whom they have not listened closely before. This experience opens them up, at least temporarily, to think about someone else's experience, listen, and empathize. They have an opportunity to recognize history's dynamism through hearing the experiences of others and, possibly, experience themselves as part of their neighborhood and their city's unfolding story.



Student-generated map of neighborhoods where classmates live in Brooklyn. Each student holds an excerpt from an interview they gave to each other about their relationship to Brooklyn. Photos by Rebecca Krucoff.

Rebecca Krucoff is a former social studies teacher and museum educator who is on faculty at Pratt Institute where she teaches courses in education, museum education, and public history. She holds an MS.Ed from Bank Street College of Education and an MS Historic Preservation from Pratt Institute. Alongside her teaching and consultancy work, Rebecca is co-founder and director of the Urban Memory Project, an education nonprofit that encourages city residents to explore the vital relationship between their personal history and their city's history.

Acknowledgements

This article is indebted to the work of the amazing teachers and students of Park Slope Collegiate in Brooklyn, particularly Michael Salak, and Principal Jill Bloomberg, who has championed UMP since its founding. I am grateful as well to the numerous NYC residents who have volunteered their time and stories, allowing us a glimpse into their personal cities.

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URLs

- <http://www.urbanmemoryproject.org>
- <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/socratic-seminar>
- <https://www.brooklynhistory.org/research-collections/research-guides>
- <https://parkslopeciviccouncil.org>
- <https://www.brooklynhistory.org>
- <https://www.youthvoices.live/2018/01/10/park-slope-then-and-now>
- <https://sheg.stanford.edu>
- <https://www.stenhouse.com/content/why-wont-you-just-tell-us-answer>

MODEL INTERVIEW NOTES

Information Notes	Questions Notes	Demeanor Notes

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MODEL INTERVIEW DEBRIEF

INFORMATION:

- What are some new facts/anecdotes we learned about the neighborhood?
- Which of the pieces of information was most interesting? Why is that so?
- How can the information shared be organized into themes?
- Which themes are about the neighborhood? Which themes are on other topics?
- How does the information shared link to any of the themes of our course?
- How does the interviewee characterize what he/she believes is the "greater good" for the area?
- Do you agree with him/her?

QUESTIONS:

- Which questions elicited the most thorough answers?
- Which questions didn't work?
- Which follow-up questions stemmed from answers?
- Did the questions asked address information that we were looking for?
- Were there questions asked that raised answers that led us to topics we hadn't thought of?
- Did the interviewer have to attempt to keep the interviewee on track? If so, how did that work?
- What are some other questions you would have liked to ask?
- How would you advise someone to ask questions in an interview, based on what you observed?

DEMEANOR:

- What types of things did the interviewee say and do to help the interviewee feel comfortable?
- Which types of body language did the interviewee use to show interest?
- Were there places in the interview where the interviewer could have said something, or used body language to encourage the speaker to speak more, less, or to feel more comfortable?
- How comfortable or uncomfortable did the interviewee seem? What did you hear or say that makes you say that?
- Based on what you saw, what kinds of tips could you give someone who is about to conduct an interview?



I like hearing the different accents from the various countries and seeing how they are similar to or different than those of my country. It was great to hear that so many students had come here with the same cultural experiences.

~Verónica¹

Weaving Our Histories: Latin@ Ethnography in the Heritage Language Classroom

by Elena Foulis and Jennifer Barajas

Latin@ heritage language learners (HLL) carry with them a wealth of experiences related to race, immigration, and language. The use of ethnography and oral history with heritage learners of Spanish allows educators to create opportunities for engaged teaching and learning practices when students invite their families into classrooms as knowledge producers, fostering creativity and self-confidence. This article builds on the foundation of the importance of using students' voices and experiences in heritage language instruction (Carreira and Beeman 2014; Roca 2000), but we also look at how HLL are rarely asked to consider their lived experiences as rich cultural and historical knowledge outside the HLL classroom. Furthermore, in our work as educators and teachers of HLL, we have the opportunity to model inclusion and engagement of students' literacy pluralities centered on their families' heritage and also their own experiences as Latin@s. In doing so, we show the importance of recognizing and honoring their unique backgrounds, and we, as educators, also participate in the transformation of thought by becoming a community of learners along with our students. In the same vein, Deafenbaugh (2015) writes about including aspects of folklife and folk arts instruction that encourage educators to include students' personal experiences and knowledge of their community in the classroom as a way to recognize the importance of

understanding different perspectives. She comments, “Allowing community knowledge and ways of knowing into the classroom requires teachers to be learners and reflective about their own practice” (Deafenbaugh 2015, 77). Moll et al. (1992), use the term Funds of Knowledge to talk about the resources in our students’ and their families’ communities and homes. Indeed, intentionally incorporating students’ lived experiences challenges deficit models of language learning and use, both found in their own communities, that remind them that their Spanish is not good enough, and the majority English-only population who point to English as the revered (valid) American identity. By centering students’ socio-cultural and socio-linguistic knowledge, we challenge existing views that promote English as the language of success or that stigmatize U.S. Spanish.

Judith Flores Carmona and Dolores Delgado Bernal (2012) identify using oral histories in the classroom as a pedagogical practice that encourages solidarity and integrates culturally relevant educational practices. Their study focuses on an elementary school project in which Latin@ students work with their families to collect oral histories and family stories. They note that engaging students in this work encourages qualitative research methods and the creation of “intergenerational knowledge that centers the epistemologies of their families” while working collaboratively with others (Flores Carmona and Delgado Bernal 2012, 3). We agree, and students confirm our assumptions, that this is also happening in our classes. For instance, Verónica reflected at the end of the semester, “I really liked taking this class because I was able to learn more about my culture and other cultures from Latin America. I like hearing the different accents from the various countries and seeing how they are similar to or different than those of my country. It was great to hear that so many students had come here with the same cultural experiences.”² Verónica’s reflection reveals the solidarity that is created within the classroom and the joy that students find in examining their own culture while also learning about others that are similar. Sebastián had a similar experience as he announced, “Learning about other cultures in the Latin@ community made me appreciate my own culture so much more.” Collecting oral histories allowed these students the space to delve into their cultural knowledge and create a sense of community with students from similar backgrounds. Since our students attend universities in the Midwest, the campus community makeup often differs from where they grew up, so they welcome a chance to encounter others with comparable stories and begin to form a new community.

We center our analysis and description of using family histories in the writing classroom using Critical Race Theory and Latino Critical Race Theory (Delgado Bernal 2002; Solórzano 1998; Solórzano and Yosso 2002; Yosso 2005a, 2005b), approaches that have thus far not been considered in the analysis of heritage language courses, because both “acknowledge that educational structures, processes, and discourses operate in contradictory ways with their potential to oppress and marginalize and their potential to *emancipate and empower*” (Delgado Bernal 2002, 109, italics ours). HLL, an often-racialized minority, carry with them a generational wealth of experiences related to race, immigration, and language. Yet rarely do they have the opportunity to see these experiences as cultural capital—borrowing Yosso’s term—in the classroom. Educational systems in our K-16 schools often fail to center experiences of minoritized students as knowledge producers, and culturally relevant curricula and classes for HLL are limited and frequently dependent on whether there are enough students enrolled. When classes for HLL are cut, it continues to reproduce White privilege and erasure of the Latin@ student experience, since they are often put into second-language learners’ classrooms where their unique needs are not

addressed. Certainly, inviting students to integrate the epistemology of lived experiences in connection with those of their families makes them creators of new knowledge and in doing so we are attempting to dismantle unequal structures of power and privilege, often enjoyed by the White majority. In his 1998 article, Solórzano identified at least five themes in research and teaching approaches to Critical Race Theory in education. Those are: 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; 2) the challenge to dominant ideology; 3) the commitment to social justice; 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and 5) the interdisciplinary perspective. We believe that each of these themes is present in the work our students do in documenting family history. We use Solórzano's themes with a focus on Latin@ identities, to analyze and demonstrate how using ethnography through pedagogy produces individual stories that then become part of a collective consciousness. These family stories lead to greater understanding of a larger historical and social context for developing research and creative writing assignments while also focusing on transferable skills that will help students to be successful throughout their time in university and beyond.

There is a growing trend for preserving and documenting Latin@ life across the U.S. Archives such as *Voces Oral History Project* (Rivas 1999), *Borderlands Archive Cartography* (Álvarez and Fernández 2017), *Oral Narratives of Latin@s in Ohio* (Foulis 2014), and others demonstrate the need to collect the unique history and contribution of our communities. In the classroom, we can assign interviews and documents from these archives so that our students learn and understand more about their heritage, their own communities, and the diverse experiences of Latin@s across the country. We also have the opportunity to teach and empower them to begin collecting their own family histories.

We begin our courses by helping students recognize that they bring a wealth of linguistic knowledge of Spanish and that our goal is to help them use Spanish in different contexts and writing genres. For example, for most of our students, this is the first heritage language course they have ever taken, which already signals to them a different experience. They are in a class with other HLL with similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds and they are asked to explore further these identities as points of departure and engage in collaborative learning with their peers. One activity they are asked to complete is to talk about their names, their family names, and the pronunciation of them. They are asked to reflect on whether the names were anglicized, and whether this had any influence on their identities and Spanish language use. This initial discussion and activity help students see their histories as places of knowledge. In our work as educators—and bringing our own lived experiences of native and non-native speakers of Spanish, first-generation college graduates, immigrants, women, and mothers of heritage language speakers—of HLL of Spanish in intermediate to advanced writing courses we aim to support students' learning journeys that intersect with issues of race, gender, immigration, and, central to these classes, language. Furthermore, as Delgado Bernal (2002) concludes, "To recognize all students as holders and creators of knowledge, it is imperative that the histories, experiences, cultures, and languages of students of color are recognized and valued" (121). Through their work on their ethnographic projects, students begin to recognize the importance of their experiences and cultures and know that their stories are worth sharing.

Planning and preparing for an ethnographic interview entails planning, writing questions, recording the interview, transcribing, reporting, and composing drafts, all done in Spanish. Lynch

(2003) suggests that by using Spanish in diverse situations outside the classroom, students are more likely to acquire and continue using the language. This ties in nicely with our goals: 1) to develop critical writing skills and expression; 2) to develop a historical consciousness about the Latin@ presence in the U.S.; and 3) to document the experiences of Latin@s in the U.S., all of which begin with the interview assignment. Each step requires that students make critical choices about language (i.e., is it formal or informal language, address forms: *tú* vs. *usted*), coding for transcription, summaries, identification of keywords, themes, and organization. The diverse use of Spanish allows students to realize the benefit of knowing and communicating in another language, thus contributing to their sense of confidence. While students are not told to interview a specific family member, most choose to interview a parent, grandparent, or mentor who, for the purpose of this class and goals, must be a Spanish speaker. While most of the interview is in Spanish, we understand that part of the family's experience of living in the U.S. involves language contact, so we advise students to allow their narrator to speak in both English and Spanish, if that happens organically. This too is part of documenting family history, and it is part of creating trust and rapport with the narrator. Additionally, this allows the students to reflect on bilingualism and code-switching (changing between one language and another [Poplack 1980]), themes that are often discussed in our classes, not in the abstract, but rather in real-life situations. Indeed, allowing code-switching in the classroom and studying code-switching as an organic form of communication in their families pushes students to consider their bilingual or multilingual abilities, given that code-switching happens among those who are not monolingual. This is not to say that it is not a stigmatized practice—a view fueled on racism and exclusion—but by allowing it to happen spontaneously, we enact the counter-storytelling tenant of Culturally Responsive Teaching. We present the project as one that focuses on the centrality of experiential knowledge (Solórzano's fourth theme) because we want to affirm and be inclusive of family epistemologies that can inform us about relationships, (im)migration, language experiences, gender practices, and cultural traditions, among other themes or topics. Often students do not start the project with a theme in mind, but we provide students with some examples and encourage them to think about

The Art of the Interview: Oral History and Ethnography

While we use the terms ethnography and oral history interchangeably in this article, we are aware of the differences. We do not use the term ethnographic methods because we believe many of the family members who our students interview are in close proximity or live with them, therefore, their research aligns more with that of an ethnographer who spends a significant amount of time with their interviewees. At the same time, as Hamer (2000) describes, “The folklorist’s perspective, as an outsider, is explained as helping people to see the value of that which is normally overlooked” (57). Although the student researchers are not outsiders when interviewing family members, they are charged with demonstrating the value of the traditions and experiences that have been undervalued by their own families or by society. However, the student is only capturing a period of time of the family member’s life (oral history), or, sometimes, a specific practice such as a celebration, a cooking tradition or cultural practice (i.e., *curanderismo*) that might be identified as folklore. Therefore, we see so many similarities between ethnography and oral history in the work our students do because each interview allows meaningful encounters to exist organically. That is, as cultural insiders, students are not only observing someone else’s culture or behaviors, they are getting at a deeper understanding of who they are in relation to their families’ histories.

what it is that they want to know more about from their family. We emphasize that they are documenting history and family folklore, and they might discover something they did not know.

Through oral history, students are collecting their families' histories, dialoguing with the past and actively engaging in public memory (Frisch 1990; Hamilton and Shopes 2008). Alessandro Portelli (1990) explains that in oral history, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is one where two subjects recognize each other as such, which "stimulate others, as well as ourselves, to a higher degree of self-scrutiny and self-awareness; to help them grow more aware of the relevance and meaning of their culture and knowledge..." (43). Yet, when HLL conduct oral history interviews they are also acting as an ethnographer who already has many insights into the family culture and their histories—and perhaps secrets—which is why we choose to talk about this assignment as one that engages in both practices. In ethnography, as an ethnographer collects and later composes a narrative based on their observations, they become a social analyst (Rosaldo 1993) because they are a "positioned subject" who is "at once cognitive, emotional and ethical. She constructs knowledge through contexts of shifting power relations that involve varying degrees of distance and intimacy" (180). Reflection and interpretation are a key component of ethnography (Marcus 1998; Geertz 1973) and this is what happens in the writing process of this assignment.³

As we talk about this work with students, we point out that collecting family ethnography or oral history involves interviewing the family member to get an inside perspective into what it was like to live in a particular time and region(s); hence, they are preserving a piece of family history. Ethnography allows close encounters with family history because students in their roles as researchers get close to the everyday experiences of other people and use of Spanish in non-academic settings; this requires a deeper immersion into the narrators' (interviewees') world, even when they might be family members, to understand what others consider meaningful and important experiences for them. Although Núñez (2012) uses ethnography and writing in the service-learning context, her findings align with the work we do with HLL, for example, when she notes, "The act of reflecting upon personal observations also creates opportunities to reveal the meta-cognitive aspects associated with thinking about the ways in which we relate to the world we live in and the people we interact with" (86). For instance, several of our students reflect on the hardships their parents have gone through so that they could one day enroll in a university. This reflection makes the students recognize and become more appreciative of all their parents' efforts. Additionally, we find that ethnography of family plays a key role in the development of HLL awareness of their own culture and identity formation. Furthermore, students are documenting experiences from different racial and socio-cultural perspectives (Solórzano's fifth theme), for example, those of working-class backgrounds, varying generations, race (black, indigenous, mestizo, white), or gender. Through the use and practice of oral histories, HLL gain knowledge, document family life, use their Spanish language skills outside the classroom, and learn to preserve and celebrate their heritage.

Since we are working with HLL college students, and the focus is writing, after the collection of their ethnographies we discuss how best to capture speakers' emotions, points of view, and use citations. Furthermore, we agree with bell hooks (1994), that we must not ask students to take risks we are not willing to take. "Professors who expect students to share confessional narratives but who are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a manner that could be coercive"



A student with her mother who was interviewed as a part of a class project.

(hooks 1994, 21). When we assign this project, we have already established a rapport with students, we have shared our own narratives of language learning, family language, experiences with immigration, and gender roles. For example, students read the article “Belonging and Accents: Salvadoran Diaspora in Mexico and the U.S.” (Foulis 2017) in which I talk about my experience of having family members who identify and speak differently than me. We explore the concept of identity as related to birth, and as one that complicates our histories when we carry multiple heritages. hooks continues, “When professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it eliminates the possibility that we can function as all-

knowing, silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material” (1994, 21). She identifies this as engaged pedagogy, one that not only empowers the students to own their story and experiences, but we, too, as professors, are being transformed by each student we work with and, certainly, by each story we read. Moreover, we provide the space for students to understand the self through shared knowledge (Freire 1970) when the classroom becomes a place of dialogue centered on the experiences of all: students, family (community), and teacher. One way we have done this is by sharing a family interview we conducted, a published personal essay or poem we authored, a family video, or stories of our individual and family experiences.

One foundation of teaching HLL is that we honor students’ experience and knowledge of the language (Spanish) and add to their repertoire by pushing them to use Spanish in different contexts and in all the skill areas (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) (Colombi and Roca 2003; Lynch 2003; Potowski and Carreira 2004; Schwartz 2003, among others). Hence, drafting questions, recording, and transcribing give students additional practice with language mechanics and an opportunity to interpret and be creative in the way they compose their essay. Crucially, the assignment is broken into smaller, more manageable tasks and students receive feedback at each step. For example, after deciding who they want to interview and why, students are asked to draft questions for the interview so that they are prepared, while at the same time keeping in mind that the natural flow of conversation may lead the interviewees to elaborate more or less on certain topics. Part of composing questions is deciding whether these questions are appropriate and sensitive for the person they plan to interview, that is, we highlight that being insiders of the culture and family does not mean we can ask anything. Strategically, this preparation work is accomplished and revised early enough in the semester so that students are ready to complete the interview during a mid-semester break, when many students will already be visiting family. We do not assign this project as the first writing piece of the semester. Although we teach different

levels, and some of our assignments vary, we have students first write an autobiography. We ask that students focus on their linguistic background or an aspect of their Latin@ heritage. When they get to this assignment, we want them already to be thinking of their identity and experiences as a source of knowledge and as something worth writing about. Building their confidence, both linguistically, in their language skills, and of their identity and feelings of belonging, is an important aspect in both our classes.

Although Solórzano's themes four through five happen at different points throughout the process of planning, practicing, and developing questions, we find that the opportunity to explore 1) the centrality and intersectionality of race and racism; 2) the challenge to dominant ideology; and 3) the commitment to social justice happen in the writing process. For example, as students transcribe, identify themes and keywords, and reflect on the narrator's perspective, they might begin to see and recognize their family members' language use (i.e., education level, dialectal variation, attitudes, discrimination), their experiences with immigration as tied to race and class, the privileges that come with citizenship, and gender roles and dynamics. As they then decide what the focus of their essay will be and what citations they want to use and highlight, they see their writing as an emancipatory vehicle that honors their family history. Tere, in the advanced writing course, decided to interview her mother about running one of the family's restaurants. She initially thought she was going to learn about the restaurant business, but she realized that being a Latina business owner, with primarily male employees, has many challenges. During our meeting about this essay, we discussed the content and developed an outline. In our conversation, I pointed out that her mother had achieved and overcome so much, while also supporting and encouraging her female employees. Tere wrote, "A woman that is willing to get an education and see what's ahead of her, without regretting the sacrifices and challenges that exist, has the resources she needs to achieve her dreams. Marisela [student's mother] advises women that want to own their own businesses to reach the highest level of education possible, because 'education is key.' She highlights that before starting this enterprise, one must have a strategic plan in order to be successful." The ability to read and listen to the interview again—often multiple times—gives students valuable moments of reflection and an opportunity to go over their notes and to pay attention to the speakers' inflection as they are also trying to include the speaker's tone into their essays. Students are asked to write a three- to four-page essay in two columns, draw out two to three key quotes from the narrator and place them in between the columns, and include a literal (narrator) or metaphorical picture. Family ethnography writing allows us to curate the life of our narrators, one that is at once accurate and aesthetically pleasing.

Furthermore, we find that students' engagement and incorporation of lived experiences is similar to what Leeman, Rabin, and Román-Mendoza (2011) find in the role of HLL in critical service-learning pedagogy. When they go outside the classroom, we encourage students to exercise "their agency by becoming language activists engaged in shaping the language policies and practices in the society in which they live" (Leeman, Rabin, and Román-Mendoza 2011, 483). Because students spend a longer time on this assignment and it involves several different steps, there is time to reflect on the collected content and to see that their work creates primary sources. Foulis (2018) identifies the work of oral history in the service-learning classroom as one that "allows the student to reflect on their own lived experiences in relation to others, providing them with enough context to have interpretive authority over their own learning" (121). For example, Dani decided to interview both her grandparents at the same time. This, as we later discussed during our writing

workshop, adds a level of complexity because we must be clear about who said what during the interview. The student commented on how difficult it was to keep them focused on the questions and minimize their side conversations, but she also incorporated the peculiarities of interviewing couples who often finish each other's sentences or intervene to "set the record straight." The student wanted them to tell the story of when they met, and she wrote their responses in this way, "There was a town celebration and that's when he saw her for the first time. He recalls asking my grandmother if she wanted to be his girlfriend. My grandmother immediately corrected his statement, saying that he did not ask until the next day. That day, there was a parade with a band, and my grandmother's family hosted a party at dawn. She invited José and right there, in the middle of the street, he asked if she wanted to be his girlfriend." The way she composed her narrative is both personal and distant. It is clear that she is composing their story, but she also wants the reader to know that this is part of her story. As shown in this example and throughout her larger essay, Dani distances herself from the story by using pronouns like "they" or saying "my grandparents/grandma/grandfather" to write their history, but she also uses "my grandparents/grandma/grandfather" to write herself into this history. She is, indeed, weaving her history with theirs. Writing family ethnography is creative writing and is deeply personal. Indeed, this project demonstrates a greater connection and commitment to ethnographic essay writing.

As we have mentioned previously, an additional benefit to using ethnographic interviews in the classroom is the engagement in the language and culture on the part of the student. Although Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) worked with students learning a second language (L2) rather than HLL, their findings are relevant to our students. The authors point out that ethnographic work is beneficial because it is versatile and "more than just a cognitive process, the use of ethnographic interviewing techniques to interview live target language speakers engages the learner affectively as well as cognitively" (Robinson-Stuart and Nocon 1996, 437). Thus, these types of projects can be assigned and adjusted to different levels of HLL classes, from beginners to more advanced students, and tend to affect the students' behavior and attitudes. For example, in a beginner course, the focus of the interview might be solely on family language use and the connection of the student's own use of Spanish. For a more advanced course, it would involve broad topics such as their family's immigration story or a significant experience—positive or negative—with using Spanish or English as non-native speakers in public, again, always offering students the opportunity to reflect upon their own identity. Moreover, both their L2 and our HLL experienced a stronger desire to continue using and learning the language and researching more about the culture. For instance, Verónica commented, "I love to learn about my culture, and I want to learn the language better so that I can improve my communication with my family." Although Verónica was already speaking and writing at a more advanced level, she realized the importance of improving so that she could continue with these types of insightful conversations with her family members.

Finally, we believe that engaging in ethnography and writing about it prepares students for writing other types of research assignments. Through the process of recording, researching, preparing, interviewing, and organizing the materials collected, students have gained numerous skills including working with multiple sources and analyzing and synthesizing data that they themselves have gathered. This is especially important for HLL who tend to have stronger oral capabilities than writing skills (in Spanish). As Schwartz (2003, 251, her emphasis) proposes, "It is important that we include instruction *and* practice on writing strategies" in classes that focus on writing.

Because of the step-by-step nature of the ethnography project, students are able to contemplate their writing goals and receive feedback at several stages throughout the course of the semester.

Thus, through the use of ethnography and oral history our HLL refine and improve their writing skills, which will help contribute to their continued success, both in future classes and in their careers. Meanwhile, as students collect and curate each family story, they create new primary sources that put family experience at the center, allowing them to recognize and acknowledge the value of telling our own histories. Through this work, we provide students a safe place to embody a new personal script and we are inviting them to feel comfortable and to be active agents in the creation of new knowledge. Furthermore, through the many in-class activities, students create community with each other, and this solidarity is especially important in the Midwest, where they many not encounter as many Latina/o/x peers.

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All photos courtesy of the authors.

Endnotes

- ¹ All students' names have been changed.
- ² All students' quotes have been translated and edited for clarity.
- ³ We find that our students merge in and out of ethnography and oral history which is why it is difficult to talk about them separately.

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Using Formal Interviews to Build Understanding in Social Studies

by Nate Grimm

The Personal Value of Interviewing

It wasn't until I decided to interview my grandparents that I started to understand the power of the interview. Grandpa had told stories before, but not for a formal interview recorded for preservation. I formally interviewed my grandparents right after I graduated from college, asking them about how they met, what their parents were like, Grandpa's experience as a Seabee in World War II, and their life on the farm after the war. I used that experience to guide my instruction for an oral history assignment with sophomore U.S. history students in my first few years of teaching at the high school in Slinger, Wisconsin. With History Center of Washington County help, we interviewed over 40 veterans of World War II.

After that teaching experience, I felt something was missing from my interview with my grandfather. I needed something more about how Grandpa connected to place, the farm that he lived on his whole life. I returned to talk to him again, this time changing the location from his living room to his pick-up truck. After explaining the goal of writing a family history book to my grandfather to help tell his story to future generations, he gave consent for me to use an audio recorder while he was driving his truck around the farm so that I could capture stories more directly about the farm.

About the photo: Slinger High School students interviewed several workers involved in a school renovation project before branching out to other local construction and trades projects, companies, and workers. Here, a sociology student, also the school store manager, interviews the project manager.

Photo by Nate Grimm.

I found that asking him questions while he was in his element, the farm fields, had value. He added stories because he saw an object, building, setting, or sensory cue that triggered memories. He was driving, so he had control over what places he was going to show me, but my questions helped give him ideas and my follow-up questions helped him add detail. I also used this technique with his son, my uncle, who worked on the farm with his father. We went to similar areas of the farm to get a second perspective for the family history book.

This two-pronged interview process helped me understand the life of the farmer and how the farm and family were constructed. It also deepened my bond with my grandparents. After transcribing and storing the video and audio interviews, my grandparents' voices were preserved in multiple formats long after they were gone. The experience gave me the confidence to treat others whom I've interviewed like family members. It also inspired me to continue to teach students about the value of interviewing and immersing interviewees in a location that might facilitate more detailed responses.

Interviews as a Teaching Strategy

“ I believe that interviewing gives the learner an extra perspective toward understanding the studied people or topic. The interviews I conducted with owners of Sauve Terre Farm and the Gundrum Insurance Building provided insider information and opinions that research on websites and books could not give me. They brought the topic to life and made my learning experience more valuable. ”

~ Bailey Donahue, a Slinger sociology and history student

History and sociology students at Slinger have interviewed over 100 people each year during the last 20 years. History students conduct oral history interviews rooted in local history and sociology students conduct interviews rooted in local culture. Students have interviewed adults at school, homes, or workplaces, and in the process I have observed them make a deeper connection with people from other generations, preserve community and family history, and create bonds with others in a society increasingly reliant on fewer face-to-face connections. Interviews also link students with place and deepen understanding of identity formation, shared roots, rituals, norms, values, roles, community development, and cause and effect— aspects of the social sciences that are not always easily learned through other curricula.

Collaborations are key for interviewing projects. After working closely with the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Sociology Department on applied sociology projects, the Wisconsin Teachers of Local Culture with their [Bringing It Home](#) folklife education project, and the Wisconsin Humanities Council [Working Lives Project](#), we have begun to take a more thematic approach with history students interviewing people about the past and sociology students interviewing people about the present. We've also begun to reach out beyond the [social studies curriculum](#) to work with other high school departments and more community members in businesses, government organizations, historical societies, nonprofits, and civic organizations (See also NCSS 2013).

Curriculum constructed by students and teachers derived from local interviewees can engage future students and the community. Teaching students tips for conducting and archiving interviews relays communication strengths and weaknesses that will benefit them as citizens and in their careers. Students gain experience in empathy, the value of word choice, preparation and background research, how to stay in the moment, the importance of listening, and how to get to the heart of complex stories. Interviews often help students see the human hands and minds behind workplaces, organizations, communities, technology, and end products. In a world with more expectation of automation, students become aware of human actions and individual choices that lead to continuity and change.

Student Voices

“During my interview with my dad, I uncovered a lot about my late grandpa’s work philosophy. My dad stressed to me how Grandpa was an artisan. He always knew what he was doing, what he was talking about, and what he needed to get done in a day. He never completed a project without putting everything he had into it. Grandpa stressed quality in his projects and that’s how he was so successful. I was able to document some of these characteristics and stories for future generations.”

~ Katie Kirsch, a history student

"Conducting interviews outside of school helped me become more comfortable with new environments and people in a variety of ways. I learned to ask effective questions and help the interviewee express their opinions and experiences. I believe teachers creating projects where it takes you outside of the classroom and into an environment that is unfamiliar are essential.”

~ Megan Michaelchuck,
a sociology and history student

“Having the opportunity to interview family and community members helped me develop confidence and an appreciation for the value of verbal communication.”

~ Jane Schaub, a sociology and history student who interviewed her grandfather and also a local worker



In my classroom, interviews are the foundation for community-centered projects, curriculum building, and invitations for content experts and the community to connect at a year-end event, which attracts a few hundred people each year. Interview projects are shown publicly through displays, papers, [websites](#), and audio and video.



Teacher Preparation for Interviewing, with Examples

Use community members to help identify participants

To prepare for thematic interviewing, during the summer I do some fieldwork and invite people who have ties to the chosen theme to participate. I've collaborated with veteran teachers and retired teachers to help build a list of categories and then brainstorm who should be interviewed within each category. Sometimes the teachers even join me when I visit people and places on the list to learn more and prepare for the school year. While students sometimes pick people they know to interview, there are students who want to stretch outside their comfort zone to meet new people—the list comes in handy for those students.

Here is a sample of themes and lists for local history and culture subjects in our area.

Theme Samples

Places and Job Titles

Music and Recreation	Ski Hill, Race Track, Sports, School Music, Music in Community, Ice Age Trail
Agriculture and Foodways	Restaurants, Chefs, Bakers, Farmers, Farmers' Markets, Food Plants, Milk Delivery, Farm Implements, Distributors, Grocery Stores, Community Gardens, Meat Markets
Manufacturing, Innovation, and Design	Manufacturers, Artists, Designers, Engineers, Patent Holders
Water, Transportation, and Working Lives	Truck drivers, Firefighters and First Responders, Railroad Workers, Snow Plow Drivers, Sanitation Workers, Weed Harvesters on Lakes, Invasive Species Experts, Water Engineers, Sailing Club members, Fuel Truck Drivers, Intermodal Station Project Managers, Water Business Leaders
Construction, Trades, and Working Lives	Land Changes, Building Changes and Renovations, Masons, Electricians, Architects, Project Managers, Carpenters, Welders

Stay observant for good interviewees for specific students

Example 1: When we had a sophomore music artist in my class, I thought about a Slinger alum who was a lead singer in a band. I arranged for her to come to school on a weekend to be interviewed by this student. It was interesting to hear the questions the student artist had for someone who had experience in her career path. That sophomore ended up being on the TV talent show *The Voice* a few years later. Sometimes part of the success of an interview is just getting the right two people together. Alumni are often very eager to give back to their alma mater, especially when someone is taking an interest in their career field.

Example 2: While sitting in the lobby getting my brakes fixed at a local auto service shop, a man started a conversation about his armed forces experiences on Eniwetok Atoll testing hydrogen bombs as part of Operation Castle. I thought about my ultra-curious science student and asked if he'd like to be interviewed. The student conducted one of the better interviews because he asked questions about the hydrogen bomb that other less scientifically curious students may not have thought to ask. (Listen to an interview excerpt with [Richard Schmidt](#).)

Research interview candidates through fieldwork and practice conducting interviews yourself

There are times when I've done short interviews during my summer fieldwork to learn more about a subject, start building a strong interview list, and keep my interview skills fresh. I also learn what areas might be challenging for students in that theme and get to know the people before the students do. Occupational culture has become a consistent component of our yearly themes.

When we were focusing on recreation, I visited the Slinger Super Speedway race track and Little Switzerland Ski Hill to see how they operated, who was there, and what adults were taking the lead. The visits revealed mentors and workers, who were often hidden to students and the public, who helped make businesses and gathering places sustainable.



A history and science student interviewed former soldier Dick Schmidt.

Photo by Nate Grimm.

Calling a local conservation foundation to identify a terrestrial invasive species expert led me to a nature walk with him to observe his technique. I knew by listening to his teaching style that he'd be a good interviewee for students. I heard about a group of villagers who met every week to talk around a potbelly stove in a retired mechanic's old garage, so we set up a [Fox Valley Writer's Project](#) Summer Camp interview there. The interview centered on what the garage once was and what it is now. Many students were only familiar with today's service centers. My visit with the retired mechanic led to ideas for school-year interviews with other mechanics, gas station owners, and fuel transport workers.



Retired mechanic interview.

Photo by Robyn Bindrich.

Teaching Students Interviewing

The interview process and product need to be modeled and students must practice creating questions and interviewing. A good way to help students tie content to the curriculum is to share with them sample student interviews. In addition, students see examples of how professionals interview. Oral historian Studs Terkel's books are helpful for history students (1990; 2011a; 2011b). In sociology, we use University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh sociology professor Paul Van Auken's [*Hmong Voices: Fox River Heritage and Perspectives*](#) (2014) to show how researchers interviewed Hmong interviewees about how they interact with the Fox River. Van Auken, as well as a local Director of Communication for Cooperative Educational Service Association (CESA), Dean Leisgang, visit yearly to model and give tips to students about interview techniques. Having professionals demonstrate open-ended questions, patience, and empathy has helped teachers and students use similar style and techniques. (See also Van Auken et al. 2012; 2010; 2016.)

See [“Classroom Connection: A Step-by-Step Process for Student Interviewing in History Class”](#) here. It has tips, activities, and lessons based on these primary tasks:

- 1) Get students talking
- 2) Show and evaluate interview models
- 3) Teach students to identify good questions
- 4) Practice large group interviews
- 5) Practice individual interviews
- 6) Conduct a formal interview
- 7) Use the information and recordings collected

Students in both history and sociology practice class interviews when the teacher starts the interview and the students ask follow-ups. I use large group instruction, practice interviews, and conferences to customize questions to interview subjects before they conduct interviews on their own.

Beginning Interviews with the End in Mind

In teaching students interviewing, I start by reminding them to think about where their interview may go. The stories need to be preserved in ways that others can understand them. Some interviews might be preserved for family histories, others might be shared in a community night celebration, while others may only be seen by the instructor. Release forms are used and we teach students archival practices and ways to share with many audiences—their family, the teacher, or the public.

After audio or video recording the interview, I ask students to extract parts for a paper. For written text, students choose one of three options: 1) Write a short biography paragraph and add a transcribed section from the interview. 2) Write a narrative about the whole interview, isolating key categories as body paragraphs and using several direct quotes to share the interviewee's voice. 3) Create a poem as an introduction to a biography.

I have learned that lessons on the difference between paraphrasing and direct quoting are necessary and models are helpful before students begin the writing process. Students and the teacher will need to identify through editing and transcribing which excerpts may be unique or prove to be pathways to additional interviews or stories.

Sample of student work for history of the local race track with an example of a transcribed section



Slinger history students, also race car drivers, interview Miles Melius.

Photo by Nate Grimm.

We've had a race track in Slinger since the late 1940s. We've interviewed racers, race track owners, ticket sellers, racing mentors, pit crew workers, and more. Several student racers in my history class got to ask Slinger resident and short track legend Miles Melius about how he got the itch to race. By the time Melius retired from racing in 1969, he had won at 37 of the 39 tracks where he raced and people even put bounties on him. At the Slinger Speedway, he won the season championship seven times. Interviewers noticed he glossed over part of his origination in racing, so they went back to ask him to elaborate.

Q: Go back a little bit. So, did you get the racing bug from hanging out with others who raced? How did you know you wanted to race? Before you met Bill Johnson, there had to be something that showed you that racing might be something you were good at.

A: We had a 1941 Chevy and I'd haul my mother around when I was 9 years old. My dad had to work on the farm so I drove her around. I'd go to mill with a trailer behind and he'd load it. I was under 5 feet until I was 17 years old. Now, I was only 9 so I couldn't have been too tall. I couldn't even lift a 100 lb. bag of feed. Guys at the mill would take it off and grind it and then I'd haul it back home, my mother and I. Course, I drove that Chevy and spun the tires a few times. As I got older, the speed...what really set me off with speed is I just turned 16 and quit high school and had worked for about a year on the farm for about \$10 a month for a farmer and then I went back to West Bend. The *West Bend News* was hiring someone to drive and they bought a brand-new 1944 Ford panel truck that they used to run around West Bend to pick up ads for the paper and that was the job I took. When I went to West Bend to Barton, I would go a roundabout way so I could get it up to 100 miles an hour (*laughs*). Got to love the speed.

[Click here for more racing data and interviews](#)



Catalyst Construction workers talk to sociology students.

Photo by Nate Grimm.



Sociology and architecture students interview HGTV/DIY Network's Matt Muenster via Skype.

Photo by Jenny Boyd.

Classroom Focus: Working Lives

The worker is often at the forefront of many social and cultural changes and eager to discuss trends. Interviewing a worker can help students make connections and some students choose to focus on a cultural study of work after the teacher shares a few frameworks for how other sociologists have studied work. For students focusing on cultural study of work, they are shown examples from Douglas Harper's *Working Knowledge: Skill and Community in a Small Shop* (1987) and Douglas Harper and Helene M. Lawson's *Cultural Study of Work* (2003). The Wisconsin Humanities Council has excellent examples from the Working Lives Projects. Students create interview questions for the workers by building on sample standard questions such as: 1) Describe your typical work day. 2) Describe your training (role models?). 3) What do you most like about your work? 4) What do you most dislike? 5) What are trends that you've noticed since you've started? 6) Describe other individuals or groups who help you perform your job well. Photos are often collected with permission of the interviewee.

Students reflect about what they learned when they return. A senior sociology student involved in construction and trades worker interviews shared: "Going behind the scenes to talk to design and construction workers helps us to understand how the community functions and works together to stay functioning. We can see how different businesses come together and collaborate." Sociology student Joey Neumann after visiting several Keller Construction sites said, "The

biggest thing I took away from interviewing construction workers was the teamwork.... When you drive across construction sites, you usually don't typically put much thought into who is doing what on the site." The interview helped students put a name and a face to the work being done and understand process rather than just product. They reflected on all the work that goes on behind the scenes to construct a building.



Top: Sociology students interview a race track worker.

Photo by Nate Grimm.

Bottom: Sociology students interview a Ski Hill worker.

Photo by Isabel Schoenherr.



connection between students, teachers, workers, and community members. Intergenerational relationships are cultivated. Innovators, patterns, interdependent webs, legacies, human hands, and voices are revealed. School walls become permeable. Visitors are encouraged. People are met where they are. Through the interview experience, students and teachers place themselves in a position to be constructive. They sit on the edge of perception, face to face with another human being, ready to learn and grow.

Site Visits

Site visits immerse student interviewers and interviewees in a place where students can often get to the core of the individual's work or identity. Students may observe the interconnectedness between the interviewees and local and regional groups or organizations. It is ideal for sociology students to see individual actions as well as the larger structural perspective. A senior sociology student reflected on the value of the site visit to Little Switzerland Ski Hill. "From listening to the group sales director, I have learned that it takes a lot of teamwork to coordinate events and just an average night at Little Switz. All the team members work together to set up the hills, the sales, and communication between the workers and guests. Their main objective is to keep guests satisfied and to make sure the hill is running smoothly."

[Click here to see a sociology student's Working Lives project](#)

Conclusion

Interviewing has been transformative at Slinger High School. It has encouraged students and teachers to use inquiry to learn, collaborate, practice staying in the moment, and actively find people and places that intersect. It has become a bridge to create meaningful relationships with local workers and other community stakeholders. The habitual, consistent pathway for a mutual flow of information about the history and culture of the Slinger area has expanded the



Students interview Paul Sebo.

Photo by Nate Grimm.

Here is an excerpt from the last question in the interview with the Washington County Conservationist, Paul Sebo, from the boat launch area near where a retention pond was put in. Students asked him what he'd like to add, resulting in a good story about the interview location.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A: Let's talk about why we are standing right here. This was a retention pond project between 15 and 20 years ago. This used to be an old dance hall and there was a large gravel parking lot. Any wedding place and dance hall usually has a large parking area. That dance hall was gradually going out of business. Above here, there's also about 140 acres of watershed that drains down through this area, and when it rains, when we got heavy rains, it would flow like a river through this gravel parking lot and take all the gravel and sediments, much less all the nutrients off the landscape above this. The landscape above this was a combination of what I call rural residential, but also farm fields. So like I mentioned before if we had excess rains and if there are extra nutrients from animal waste or fertilizer being spread on that landscape, that would all wash down, take the gravel right through, and go right down into the lake. You could actually see plumes of sediment and gravel and sand and it would go out on the lakeshore. In working with the Lake District and looking at this site and seeing that the tavern and restaurant was potentially going out of business, we thought it was an excellent opportunity to put a storm water retention pond.

[\(Click here for more Working Lives interviews\)](#)

Nate Grimm has helped facilitate thousands of interviews in his 20 years teaching U.S. history, sociology, and language arts at Slinger High School in Slinger, WI. He earned a BS at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in secondary education, an MA from Viterbo University in education, and has been a sociology adjunct in the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Sociology Department since 2013. He has been a recipient of a Herb Kohl Teachers Fellowship Award, an Edith B. Heidner Award for local history work from the Washington County Historical Society, and has been published in Wisconsin People and Ideas. He has worked with the Wisconsin Teachers of Local Culture, Wisconsin Humanities Council, Cooperative Educational Services Association 7, local historical societies, local businesses and civic groups, and Slinger area workers, teachers, and students to include interview results at an annual local history and culture community night held at Slinger High School.



Venice Williams of Alice’s Garden (left) and Joe Mantoan, Jr. of Sauve Terre Farm (right).

Photos by Julia O’Neill.

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Classroom Connection: A Step-by-Step Process for Student Interviewing in History Class

1) Get students talking. I use an activity to get students talking. Students receive 20 prompts and they gather stories from peers. Not only is it a great ice breaker, it also shows students that some content questions engage better than others and some people need more elaboration and encouragement than others. It also reminds students that their initial goal in interviews is to get interviewees talking.

Sample questions: Tell a story about your favorite childhood store. Who did you want to be when you grew up? What vacation has affected you the most?

These are normal ice-breakers many people use, but the purpose of these is to ask students to reflect after the activity: What types of questions were easier for some people to answer? Any patterns? Did you learn something new because of the question or the way you asked it? Were there some people who didn't say much when you asked a question? What did you have to do to help them? Are some people more talkative? If you get a long answer, how do you keep track of follow-up questions without interrupting? Do you write keywords in a notebook quickly as a reminder to come back and follow up or make mental notes?

The discussion after the ice breaker is key as it sets the foundation for understanding that the interview the students will conduct is intended to be as conversational as possible and that the questions can help with that process. I use this on the first day of the semester as we discuss the oral history interview.

2) Show and evaluate interview models. A value of conducting oral history work as part of curriculum building is that you also have student models to show students in successive years. I show models of audio and video interviews from students and from local historical societies and we critique the interview methods using our tip sheet for interviews.

Sample of things to have students evaluate: Did the interviewers record formal introductions? Did they ask one question at a time? Did they frequently interrupt the interviewee? Did they ask good follow-up questions? Did they use more open-ended questions than close-ended questions? Did they avoid unnecessary starts and stops? Was the audio quality good? How did they achieve good audio quality?

3) Teaching students to identify good questions.

A) Gather biographical data ahead of time. When were they born? Where did they live? Where do they live now? This is also a time to identify key life events—some students choose to use a family tree to have a visual model for organizing the information. This forces students to narrow their focus on certain eras, regions, or topics that may require a little research before the interview. The teacher can keep a copy of this student-collected biographical information to help the student prepare, particularly if students reach out to teachers for help outside class time.

B) It is helpful to encourage students to use more open-ended than close-ended questions. For example, I ask students to consider a better question than “Were you born in Wisconsin?” They

quickly see that asking the interviewee to describe the village or town where they spent the early years of their life will yield more detailed information.

C) Students should prepare starter questions. I help by offering a few sample interview questions.

Early interview question suggestions (particularly for family member interviews): To get an idea of time and place ask *When were you born? Where were you born? Describe the house you grew up in? Street? Farm?* These questions, asked one at a time, are easy and establish context. Location questions may take the pressure off the interviewee. First house or street questions can lead the interviewee's brain back to the early years. Sensory triggers and objects can lead to building connections to side stories.

To get information about previous generations: *I don't know much about your parents Please describe them for me.* Many times, an interviewee's parents are no longer alive. The interviewee may have early life memories or have been told stories by their parents. The interviewee can fill in details about their parents, which helps the student learn more about an earlier generation. Once the interviewee passes, the stories from the previous generation may be gone.

To get ideas on immigration and migration: *When did first family members of yours move to this area?*

For life story interviews: I have students break the interviewee's life into stages ahead of time and tell the interviewee that you are going to ask some elementary age questions (match it with a decade), high school age questions (match it with a decade), and post-high school questions. Sophomore interviewers are always encouraged to ask driver's license stories. Students may be surprised at the interviewee's answer on how they got their license. This is an intergenerational connection that can help the student and adult interviewee bond.

Some phrases and words work really well: *"Describe" "Paint me a picture" "I wasn't there... What was it like?"* Students are taught to keep track of local and national timelines as transitions to help jog the interviewee's memory if they seem to be having trouble. For example: *"Ok. we are in the 1950s and you just told me that you were in high school. In school, we learned about the Red Scare, Sputnik being launched, and fallout shelters. Describe any experiences you had with fallout shelters."*

I give students a few sample questions for farmers: *Describe the chores you did on the farm. What was done by hand and what was done by machine? Describe farm life (the kitchen table, milking, field memories, threshing).*

Transportation sample questions include: *Describe the roads of your youth. What memories can you share about the construction of (insert highway)? What were gas stations like when you were my age?*

For sports and recreation: *What can you tell me about (insert local recreational landmark or activity)? Tell me about popular sports in the community when you were young. Best games? Best teams? Girls' sports in the 1970s?*

Municipality changes: *Where were the outskirts of town when you were growing up?*

Sample questions for veterans: We use pre-service, early days of service, wartime service, and coming home as categories and the questions suggested by the [Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress](#) as guidelines. For example: *If you served abroad, what are some memories you have of that experience?*

4) Practice large group interviews. If possible, the teacher models an interview with another teacher, student, or community member in front of the class before students conduct interviews by themselves. The interviewing teacher can pause and talk to the student audience at various points to ask for suggestions on good follow-up questions or to share the thought process of the interviewer. Think-alouds, in which the teacher models what they are thinking in front of students before asking the next question, work not only in reading instruction but also in other areas of inquiry (Kukan and Beck 1997).

5) Practice informal, 10-minute individual peer interviews. Ask the interviewee to provide some one word responses, as well as embellished longer responses. The one word answers require the interviewer to ask for elaboration. The longer answers require the interviewer to listen and ask a follow-up question based upon what was said.

6) Conduct a formal interview. Students check that equipment works and they know how to use it. They bring a pen or pencil to make notes. When they arrive, they chat informally to reduce any anxiety, but also scan the room for distractions. They review the process with the interviewee and have them sign the release form. They build in a break at the anticipated mid-point when the interviewer can check in with the interviewee. This also builds student reflection time into the interview process. In terms of media, the break allows for a second audio track to be created, which gives the student digital and organizational flexibility after the interview. It both reduces file size and can help them with transcriptions or identifying where key quotes are located. It can also be good to have anxious students write a reminder note in the questions at the mid-point to “slow down and ask for elaboration.” The goal is to collect the best interview and not to rush to complete it.

7) Using the information collected. I start by reminding students to think about where their interviews may go. The stories need to be preserved in ways that others can understand them. Some interviews might be preserved for family histories, others for a community night celebration, while others only the instructor sees. Release forms are used and we teach students archival practices and ways to share with these many audiences—the teacher, one another, the interviewees, their family, or the public.

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Interview as Curriculum and Collaboration: Behind the Scenes of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Field School

by Emily West Hartlerode, Makaela Kroin, Ken Parshall, Anne Pryor, Riki Saltzman, Dana Creston Smith, and Valerie Switzler



Introduction

by Emily West Hartlerode

A folklorist's approach to interviewing is not only a technique employed for producing high-quality archives, valuable ethnographic research, and compelling public products, and it is more than a set of skills to teach and share with individuals and communities who want to produce their own records. It is also a communication style useful in networking and collaboration. In this article, co-authors Emily West Hartlerode (Oregon Folklife Network/OFN), Makaela Kroin (Washington State Parks and Recreation), Ken Parshall (Jefferson County School District), Anne Pryor (Wisconsin Teachers of Local Culture/WTLC), Riki Saltzman (OFN), Dana Creston Smith (Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs/CTWS), and Valerie Switzler (CTWS) contribute perspectives on our collaborative design, support, and delivery of folklife field schools at CTWS in 2016 and 2017. The partners engaged in a process that involved careful conversations among collaborators, conversations that drew upon interview skills like careful listening, asking clarifying questions, and checking back for accuracy.

About the Photo: Warm Springs during Pi-Ume-Sha pow-wow 2013.

Photo by Riki Saltzman.

Whether our cross-cultural collaborations bridge cultures like ethnicity, occupation, age, gender, or even sovereign nations as when Tribes engage state programs in nation-to-nation relationships, differing communication styles always pose challenges. Direct and indirect communicators ideally learn to respect and understand each other despite different, often culturally embedded, ways of articulating things like preference, task completion, and delegation. Add to these complexities the various forms of communication available to us (email, phone, face-to-face), and we are bound to misunderstand any number of details. Interviewing techniques can be a helpful tool for ensuring that collaborators' ideas are heard and adhered to. Practitioners can also learn from communication successes and challenges in our partnerships, which enable them to become better interviewers by bringing these lessons back to our methodologies.

When our communications succeed, the resulting collaborations add exponential value to projects and extend the impact and reach far beyond any one project or single institution. We gain trust and build lasting relationships that seed new ideas and enable future partnerships. We learn more deeply about each other and develop empathy, which serves us in all our relationships; at the same time, the process sows seeds for new ventures. By pulling together the various perspectives and plural voices from the collaborative field school project for this article, the partners were once again challenged to articulate and unify different versions of a shared story. We hope to deepen our relationship even further through this process as we share our collective experiences as a model for other collaborations.

Warm Springs

In Oregon there is a little town 200 miles southeast from the nearest metropolis, a tribal community named Warm Springs. The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indian Reservation is home to three tribes—Warm Springs, Wasco, and Paiute—federally recognized by the U.S. government. This is where Native language teachers work every day to keep the language and culture alive in its Native American students. The work involves a multifaceted approach that includes education, culture connectivity, museum studies, natural sciences, and technology advancement. The State of Oregon is unique in its government-to-government relationship with the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon, which resulted in forming several work groups or clusters. The education cluster helps to determine the future of education for each Native American student enrolled in their tribal communities. While most of society is working with their students in high school to determine a college-bound career, we are disheartened that many of our students don't even make it to high school. Thus, it has always been a drive to reach the Warm Springs Native American student at the youngest age possible to start planting seeds of higher education or gaining knowledge for career opportunities after high school. Following a Warm Springs Sound Archives preservation project with OFN, we were enthusiastic to start work on a project to engage middle schoolers in language, culture, and technology, while supporting our tribes' oral history work.

~ Valerie Switzler



2017 field school staff and students.

Photo by Brad McMullen.

Further Background

by Riki Saltzman

Thanks to work that James Fox (now at California State University, Sacramento) and Nathan Georgitis (University of Oregon/UO Libraries), as well as Emily Hartlerode, had previously done in collaboration with CTWS for an [audio digitization project](#), we learned of Valerie Switzler's priority to have youth participate in her Culture and Heritage Language Department's initiative to interview tribal elders. Switzler's goal was to enhance the archives at CTWS and engage CTWS youth in their heritage and tradition. As we at OFN were thinking about a field school of some kind, we imagined with Valerie that if OFN staff offered to teach documentation skills to high school students, perhaps they could get UO undergraduate course credit for interviewing elders. At that time, OFN's goals also included involving UO Folklore students as co-learners along with CTWS teachers to create a unique, immersive experience of learning, professional development, and fieldwork. As it turned out, we weren't able to involve either teachers or UO Folklore students in that way. For the first year, we enlisted OFN's most recent Summer Folklore Fellow, Makaela Kroin, who had just completed her MA in Public Folklore and had extensive teaching experience. The second year, we were able to include Folklore graduate students Jennie Flinspach and Brad McMullen, who earned internship credit for their excellent work. Both had teaching experience at UO, and Flinspach was particularly effective because of her first career as a public school teacher.

During the early planning process, we learned from Valerie that middle schoolers, not high schoolers, should be the field school target; they were the most at-risk and in need of such training. Valerie connected us with Ken Parshall, then a relatively new principal of the CTWS K-8 Academy. During our initial phone conversation with Ken, he enthusiastically embraced the field school idea. But it was our face-to-face conversations that were critical to establishing the strong

collaborative relationship that allowed us all to succeed. Ken's participation was critical to the success of this project. Teaching is his passion, and motivating students to learn and succeed is his life mission. During our first in-person meeting, as he told us stories about his work and his students, he teared up, as did we. This man inspired not only students but also teachers and parents. Ken's goal was to increase literacy and get more students on the path to college. For example, to get students excited about attending college, he instituted "college day" at the Academy, which involved getting a college t-shirt for every child to wear, even the kindergarteners.

Ken's goals guided the field school's development. To introduce the opportunity to students, he suggested that he and his staff invite families to come to an orientation meeting on an evening when a school supper was already planned. Then OFN staff would pitch the idea and scope to parents and students. We prepared our materials, and that summer's OFN Folklore Fellow, Makaela Kroin, and OFN's part-time program coordinator, Emily Ridout, and I drove three and a half hours from Eugene, over Oregon's Cascade Mountains to Warm Springs.

While our talk with Ken gave us confidence to pitch the field school to families, the actual encounter was extremely challenging. The room filled with parents and students. Ken introduced us, and I introduced OFN as the state's folk and traditional arts program. I listed all OFN's prior collaborative work in digitizing valuable tribal archives with Valerie's staff. We drew connections between OFN's documentation of their tribes' master artists for our traditional arts apprenticeship program and the field school project, which was for students to document tribal elders and contribute that work to the CTWS archival collection. Despite what seemed an impressive foundation for ongoing partnership, neither students nor parents reacted much or provided feedback to my over-the-top introduction. The reticence was palpable and evidence that we had no actual relationship with these young people and their families. Parents had absolutely no reason to trust us with their children or this project. I was talking at them instead of having a conversation with them. Emily Ridout and Makaela spoke next about the details and passed out registration paperwork for parents and students to complete. That got a bit more chatter, and we answered questions one-on-one. Those beginning conversations were the actual start of our relationships with students; it was the field school experience itself, with Anne Pryor, Emily Ridout, and Makaela, that created an essential, in-depth rapport with the students.

Anne Pryor demonstrates an interview with CTWS master artist Bernyce Courtney (Wasco).

Photo by Makaela Kroin.



Summary of Project

by Ken Parshall

As the principal at Warm Springs K-8 Academy, I had the opportunity to partner with the OFN, University of Oregon, and Warm Springs Culture and Heritage Department to provide an amazing field school for some of our middle-school students. Over the course of two summers, two separate groups totaling 30 students, participated in a week-long learning project that allowed them to become familiar with research, culture and heritage, and archiving. This learning involved students eventually selecting their own project, conducting research, archiving that research, presenting their project to family and community members, and finally presenting their project to college staff during an overnight visit to the UO campus.

Students who completed all phases had the opportunity to earn one college credit at UO. This credit alone was powerful for the students and their families. Historically, our community has had a graduation rate far below the state average. I believe the confidence instilled in students that they are capable of doing good work and earning college credit will serve them well as they enter high school. Part of success in high school and college is simply believing that you are capable of success.

OFN staff traveled to Warm Springs and stayed in the area during the week of the field school. They met many community elders, staff from the Culture and Heritage Department and Warm Springs K-8 Academy, and family members of the students involved in the program. I found them wonderfully supportive and encouraging of our students. They had to push some students out of their comfort zones. However, they always pushed encouragingly and students developed trust and improved their effort and confidence over the course of the week. The field school was a wonderful learning opportunity for our students and a celebration of their learning, their families, and this amazing community.



2017 students practice interview skills.

Photo by Makaela Kroin.

Project Management

by Makaela Kroin

As a community-steered collaboration, the field school required a great deal of flexibility, a nimble approach to problem solving, and sensitivity. Unknown variables challenge the most seasoned program planners, and in both years the project staff responded to last-minute changes in resource availability, project theme, and final product. Extremely impactful to the entire community at Warm Springs was a wildfire in Year 2 that displaced several students and caused the evacuation of key project staff due to smoke inhalation.

Our team of folklorists and local tribal members exhibited the creativity and resilience needed to translate most of the surprises into learning experiences. Repeat project staff helped smooth the challenges.

Anne Pryor's expertise in Folklore in Education was essential, as was her patience. Invaluable support came from Dana Creston Smith, a tribal archivist whom Valerie provided from her staff to support the field school. Alongside his extensive relationships with families at CTWS, Dana had augmented his background in radio and audio technology with OFN's archives training during the Sound Recording project. He deepened students' engagement with OFN, thanks to his positive experiences with both. And my own participation as a Year 1 classroom aide and Year 2 OFN project coordinator provided important consistency and institutional knowledge.

Despite prior collaborations between OFN and CTWS, our fieldwork team arrived as outsiders to the youth in Warm Springs. Their adolescent silence, typical of their age, was exacerbated by the cultural divide and history of high teacher turnover. Building relationships with students was the initial goal, and critical to delivering any curriculum. Fortunately, Dana and two local teaching aides knew the students and provided indispensable insights. Their encouragement bridged the divide and softened barriers, and student resistance gave way to boundless energy by midweek.

In response to Valerie's request to increase youth experience with technology, the Year 1 team included MA graduates from UO's Folklore Program, which emphasizes transmedia fieldwork skills. Warm Springs students learned to use fieldwork equipment and produce digital products. That year, a family folklore theme gave us the greatest flexibility in working with many unknowns. The autonomy to conduct their interviews independently with a family member after class worked well for some students. However, some had equipment malfunctions, and others were unable to coordinate time with a family member. Producing PowerPoint presentations to share what they had learned from their interviews was outside many students' reach, as well. Where these challenges became apparent, staff provided a great deal of one-on-one support and after-class time to keep student success an achievable goal.



Dana Creston Smith discusses the importance of and professions in archiving with 2016 students during a site visit to the Culture and Heritage Archives.

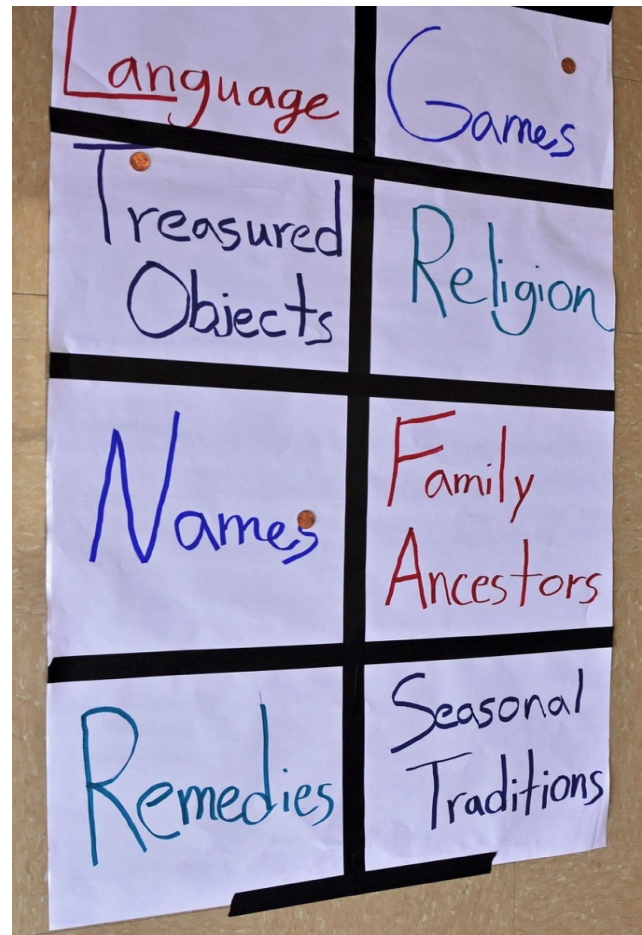
Photo by Anne Pryor.

Curriculum

by Anne Pryor

While planning the field school curriculum, we strove to balance multiple goals in the design and content of the field school. Some goals were original to our design and others we added after consultations with community partners.

- **Folkloristic goals** related to best practices in cultural documentation led to students interviewing each other, family members, and community members; recording interviews; processing interviews; and visiting several tribal archives.
- **Cultural goals** to document living practices and traditions in the community led to students interacting in multiple ways with knowledgeable cultural practitioners, identifying valued cultural elements observed in the community and heard in interviews, and analyzing interviews for cultural content.
- **Educational goals** to enhance literacy skills meant we spent time reading, writing, and discussing content. Students wrote daily reflections on their work and experiences in the field school. The most challenging exercise included interpreting the formal language of UNESCO conventions on maintaining cultural heritage.
- **Experiential goals** to have students as agents of their own learning in active, community-based, culturally relevant ways meant that, whenever possible, students made their own topic selections and chose whom to interview, and the group interacted in the community whenever possible, despite logistical challenges.
- **Fun goals** to have an enjoyable field school meant that we included team building games, lessons that were structured like games, and daily free time for playing in the gym or outside. One especially successful learning game was “Coin Toss,” in which each student and staff tossed a penny onto a grid and then told an example from their life to illustrate the cultural element in their grid square.



Coin toss game board using cultural elements was a fun way to introduce key concepts.

Photo by Anne Pryor.

Each day was sequential, building on the previous material and experiences. Basically, Day 1 introduced key concepts and individuals; Day 2's focus was interviewing techniques; Day 3 was working with the recorded interviews; Day 4 required content analysis; and Day 5 was finalizing presentations. Fieldtrips to key cultural sites such as KWSO 91.9 FM tribal radio station and the archival collections of The Museum at Warm Springs and the Warm Springs Culture and Heritage Department accentuated the in-class material, connecting it with tribal cultural projects.

Your Name Jessica BHA
 Folklife Field School August 2017

Interview Reflection

What I did: (explain what you did during the interview. What questions did you ask or equipment did you run?)
 I was the questioner

What I enjoyed: (write about what you liked most about the interview)
 what I enjoyed was when the elders talked about their funny moments and their scariest

What I found difficult: (write about any part of the interview you found hard to do.)
 Trying to find out more questions to ask on a topic I dont know much about

What really worked: (write about any part that you thought worked well).
 I had lots of follow up questions

Next time: (write what you would do differently next time).
 I would be more out going with my questions.

Specific ethnographic skills included how to read objects for cultural information, compose effective photographs, find cultural information in photographs, practice good interview etiquette, compose questions to elicit basic information and questions to elicit narratives, employ active listening, operate recording equipment, create audio logs, transcribe audio, compose introductions of interviewees, summarize a key cultural element from the interview, provide constructive feedback to their peers, speak clearly in a public presentation, and write thank-you notes.

We selected the topic of family folklore as the organizational focus for 2016 because, being unsure of access to community resources, we needed a reliably rich content source that could be easily accessed by the students. That indeed gave us great stories and information about topics such as traditional practices for gathering berries and roots, fishing for salmon on the Columbia River, occupations like wheat farming or boxing, favorite family food traditions, or life lessons like “help people first before you help yourself.” However, multiple community voices urged us to focus solely on interviewing elders to preserve their wisdom and experience. The following year we followed those requests more directly.

Students wrote daily reflections on their work and experiences in the field school.

In 2016 for family folklore, students conducted one or more interviews with family members in the evening outside class, using a recording device of their own or borrowed from the field school

(OFN made equipment available to the project). Students processed that interview and developed a short slideshow according to a predesigned outline. In 2017, recruited community elders came to the school for group interviews; we dispersed into four groups, each with three to four community elders, three to four students, and a folklorist, and each group had a camera, a video or audio recorder, or both. Afterward, students selected a segment of the interview, transcribed it, and wrote and recorded an introduction of the speaker explaining why the content was culturally significant. Students presented the final products of their fieldwork to members of the Warm Springs community before repeating the presentation in Eugene at UO. Honing public speaking skills thus became an additional goal.

Full, active support by each partner led to success. One result was having multiple staff in the classroom each day—OFN folklorists and graduate students, K-8 Academy aides, and Culture and Heritage Department personnel. Each brought invaluable assets. Without this intensive staffing, accomplishing the ambitious goals in five days would have been impossible.

Local Support

by Dana Creston Smith with Emily West Hartlerode

Recognizing his essential role, the authors asked Dana to contribute his voice to this article. However, competing obligations did not provide him that kind of time. In line with this project's dedication to flexibility, and in the spirit of this volume's "Art of the Interview" theme, the team decided that I should conduct a phone interview with him to gather his reflections and broadcast his perspective on the project.

“Getting somebody from the local area to help out is a good idea.”

~ Dana Creston Smith

DS: When we first started, you [OFN] had some equipment, and we [at Culture and Heritage Archives] had some archiving auditory equipment we used to show the kids how to preserve stuff.... We had a desktop recorder, pen recorders, disk recorder, cassette tape recorder, even dual cassettes, and some of the kids made iPhone recordings, born digital. They enjoyed learning the different techniques and equipment used to gather the materials. Some of them had iPhones and had [their interviews] done before they arrived at the Archives for the fieldtrip. Even those ones took notes, recorded, and used what they learned on their tour of Culture and Heritage.

[Students] wanted someone there who could tell them about their history. As they started their projects and doing recordings, I actually went to their house and helped them. Showed them how to set up questions for their interviews. Went to their house if they were too bashful to talk in class. One of the kids couldn't finish because his family had to be evacuated for a few days [during the forest fires], and he got real sick.



2016 student presents her PowerPoint at UO.

Photo by Riki Saltzman.

Priscilla Villagomez, a 2017 student, built her presentation around this quote from elder Radine Johnson, collected in a group recorded interview to the question, “What changes have you seen in gathering?”

I've seen a lot. Well, I will talk about huckleberries first. They used to go out [on] horseback. Now we can get in a car and get a cooler, take a lunch, go pick for a couple of hours and come back in. When we were kids, we used to have the real cedar baskets. Today they pick in gallon jugs or ice cream buckets or, you know, there's not hardly any baskets used anymore.

The root digging, the same thing. It's just, you know, drive out and go gather for a few hours and come back. It's not an all-day thing like when we used to be kids.

Pricilla's reflection included this realization: “It's very moving because I don't know a lot about our culture. I learned about how it changes and how I needed to learn about their root digging and feasting and know about what's going on around me. We have to learn it before jumping in...because the more you know, the better you get out of it.”

Even stuff like grammar—some of what they learn in school is hard for them to retain. I asked them, “What did you learn in writing—how to make a sentence?” I told them, “Listen to your interview and pick out the parts you want,” as they put their audio collages together. They didn't want to type the whole thing out. I told them, “This is your project, so pick out the best parts.” Their grandma talked about the solar eclipse and it wasn't a good thing, so they went inside the house and then when it was over, they came out. And while they were inside, they sat at the table and sang songs. I showed them how to mark the audio (in/out times) to help with the editing.

Grandparents, uncles and aunts, family came out to the [student] presentation. I like how all the OFN staff did their presentations at the kids' level. But them not knowing the students, Indian kids and culture... I helped them connect with students. I helped them translate. I can read and write in all three languages. So [I could help] if an interview included [Native languages like] Ichishkíin or a Wasco word. I encouraged kids to ask people who use their Native language [what they mean]. Even if it's not in Native language, you can ask. You know, sometimes an interviewee uses bigger words that they don't know. Second year—interviewing the language teachers. Then they broke apart after the interview and each of them got to work on their audio collage.

EH: In my interview with Dana, I discovered his far-reaching support as a classroom aide, cultural diplomat, community scholar, and dedicated friend to all involved. He described drawing upon all his resources, personal and professional, to ensure student and project success. I hear in his story that he essentially interviewed the students about what they liked about their interviews and helped them go back and listen for those

sections. He got them talking about what they liked as a path to writing their introductions and later recording them for their audio collages. This kind of oral/verbal processing may be an important cognitive form of prewriting for many types of learners and would help those whose thoughts don't immediately translate into typing and writing.

As noted earlier, the field school concluded with public presentations, one of which was to their home community. The other was part of an overnight visit to UO that included touring campus, eating in college dining halls, and sleeping in the newest dormitory. We coordinated on-campus visits with lots of consultation and engagement with UO's "Native Strategies," a working group of faculty and staff who unify their independent efforts to support Indigenous student/faculty/staff academic, professional, and programmatic advancement. Members contributed generously, resulting in meetings with UO's Native recruitment and retention specialist, a viewing of Edward Curtis original photographs at the Special Collections and University Archives, sharing lunch with Native American Student Union members at UO's Many Nations Longhouse, and playing a Native sport called sjima, or shinny ball, to let off some anxious steam about their presentations.

These value-added features proved critical to success and future fundraising because, combined with the college credit students earned, the field school became a pipeline project of value to university partners. I question whether Native Strategies members would have made their crucial investments without having first built relationships by attending monthly potluck meetings in order to learn about the issues affecting Native students/staff/faculty and share about OFN's projects with tribes. I am grateful for lessons and best practices I've learned sitting in council with these Indigenous partners, a process akin to the interviewing practice of listening, sharing, and reflecting back what I'm hearing.

Leveling hierarchies is another folklore interviewing skill that supported a successful inaugural field school and allowed us to develop a second-year program. Although as interviewers we may have preconceived ideas born of outside knowledge and past experiences, we set them aside and listen to what is present for the interviewee. We ask questions to explore the unexpected. And we recognize ourselves as stewards of the story that emerges, the story of the folk, even (or especially) if it flies in the face of what the institutions report. I recall swallowing my pride in our presumed victories in Year 1 to revise and revamp based on a crucial piece of feedback from Valerie. By selecting family folklore as an accessible theme, the project neglected her key goal to interview specific elders. And so we made sure to partner with her more closely in Year 2. Another crucial piece of feedback came in watching students struggle with the PowerPoint technology and public speaking anxiety. Makaela and Anne, returning for Year 2, felt that learning waned for youth overburdened by these expectations. We planned on modifying the product and theme, and circumstances required them to revise the interview process, too.



2017 student group answers questions at UO Many Nations Longhouse.

Photo by Emily Hartlerode.

Building on Our Achievements

by Makaela Kroin

In Year 2, students produced group audio projects with their individual audio projects nested within. After each student selected a portion of the group interview that they found interesting, they recorded introductions, analysis, and conclusions to include. These audio projects were designed to maximize student ability to communicate their reflections with others. We worked with students one-on-one to express their reflections, write them in short essay form, and audio record their scripts. Students who were ahead helped other classmates, contributed to the group project, or added photographs. Both the theme and the final project needed to be flexible and scalable to work with a variety of comprehension levels and logistical considerations.

The difference in our reception from families and students in the Year 2 orientation was marked. Ken and assistant principal Diane Dominiak had gathered a much larger group. Makaela and I first ate dinner in the school cafeteria with families. Students and parents alike were very excited and talked to us about getting involved in the summer folklife field school. For the actual presentation, everyone was engaged—they had questions, they interrupted with their own stories, and signing up was an easy process. The difference? There was already a relationship that we had all worked hard to foster. Ken and Diane knew that we could deliver, and students and families had heard good things from the previous year's cohort.

~ Riki Saltzman



Students visit the KWSO recording studio.

Photo by Anne Pryor.

Connecting students to specific elders on predetermined topics in Year 2 was more ambitious than predicted, and nearly failed. Miscommunications became apparent when staff at the senior center, where we thought interviewees expected us, did not anticipate our arrival and could not accommodate what for them was a last-minute drop-in by 20+ youth and staff. Anne and UO graduate student classroom aides Jennie Flinspach and Brad McMullen hastily rearranged the curriculum for the day while Dana and I walked down reservation roads, canvassed the elder center, and knocked on doors. Despite our efforts, we didn't really know how many elders would arrive at the school for interviews the following day. Anne's brilliant solution, group interviews, gave us the flexibility to accommodate whatever elders and students were in attendance, and the results were fantastic.

In both years we ended up reevaluating our plans and expectations to match reality during our on-site week in Warm Springs. After long days in the classroom, our team gathered for dinner to debrief and radically reformat the following day to integrate the latest developments. Our days had Plans A and B, some even had Plan C. If we couldn't get a confirmation for a fieldtrip or the students became too antsy, we developed a cache of back-up activities bolstered with ideas from those of us with experience as camp counselors or youth drama instructors. These nightly gatherings were as much support groups as they were work sessions that again put interviewing

skills into practice by listening deeply, asking clarifying questions, and reflecting back what we heard for accuracy.

Co-designing partnership programming is challenging, but it's incredibly meaningful and instructive. Students produced final projects that contained cultural information and personal insights and demonstrated experience with cultural documentation processes. Students discovered that they had a wealth of traditions in their families ranging from rodeo and ranching traditions to fishing from family scaffolds, First Kill ceremonies, beadwork, tanning, and more. The results went beyond improving students' traditional knowledge and pride. We heard feedback in Year 2 that a Year 1 student who exhibited some typical "class clown" behaviors had become markedly more focused and was earning higher grades. The relationships we cultivated with the students and one another made those very long days bearable at the time, exceptional in retrospect. These personal and institutional relationships continue to bear fruit in wonderful and surprising ways for many of us, a lovely reminder that the most valuable outcomes are often the most elusive to document.



Makaela Kroin reviews recording devices with 2016 students.

Photo by Anne Pryor.

Outcomes

by Dana Creston Smith* and Riki Saltzman

DS: Some [students] came back and talked [to me] about their grandma, great-grandma. [I told them] "You're related to a lot of people—probably most of the reservation!" I still have some of the students call me, even just a few months ago. They were asking about applying for jobs and wanted me to give them a little information about what they did [in the field school]. They knew it. They just wanted reassurance."

RS: Despite UO funding cuts that prevented collaborators from offering field schools beyond these two, Valerie asked OFN to involve former field school students in experiences at a once-in-a-lifetime event. The Confederated Tribes secured the loan of the original [1855 Treaty from the National Archives](#), and the resultant exhibit display at The Museum at Warm Springs became the

*Dana's words come from an interview with Emily West Hartlerode.

centerpiece for a pan-tribal conference during the late fall of 2018. The treaty, which “defined the area of the Reservation and affirmed Tribes rights to harvest fish, game, and other foods on accustomed lands outside the reservation boundaries,” is the seminal living document for CTWS, and everyone there had strong emotions about it.

Valerie suggested elders to invite for interviews during the conference, and we had a few sign up in advance. Student participation was key to the success of this project, however. When we let attendees know that students would be among the interviewers, several more elders asked to be part of the process. Three from the 2016 field school—Dylan Heath, Taya Holiday, and Kathryce Danzuka—now high schoolers, took over the interviews. After a brief training on the video equipment and reminders about interviewing procedures, they showed considerable ease, attention, and maturity in their roles. Because the elders were so enthusiastic about the students’ participation, the resulting audio and video documentation was much more detailed and deeper than anything Emily West Hartlerode and I could have elicited on our own.

Conclusion

by Riki Saltzman and Emily West Hartlerode

Both years of the folklife field schools at Warm Springs were a success because so many committed and devoted people were involved. We believe that a good part of that commitment was the result of extending the “art of the interview” beyond the content of the curriculum; our interviewing skills were a key element of our collaborative partnerships. Interviewing, like collaboration, is all about relationship building, and both benefit from using best practices like meeting in person, asking thoughtful questions, listening to those responses, and checking back to confirm details, permission, and next steps. When projects have hiccups, these interview skills form a strong foundation for getting things back on track; nurturing the relationship is central—any project is secondary. The authors intend to continue adopting and expanding this exercise by looking closely at the skills we teach and then applying them broadly in our professional practices in ways that keep us learning and growing. We encourage our readers to do the same.

For Further Reading

Anne Pryor compiled multiple resources that served as useful starting points for creating specific materials for the field school curriculum:

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. 2016. <https://warmsprings-nsn.gov>.

Falk, Lisa. 1995. *Cultural Reporter: Reporter’s Handbook*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History.

Louisiana Division of the Arts Folklife Program. 1992-2012. *Louisiana Voices: An Educator’s Guide to Exploring Our Communities and Traditions*, <http://www.louisianavoices.org>.

Richman, Joe. 2000. *Teen Reporter Handbook: How to Make Your Own Radio Diary*. New York: Radio Diaries, Inc.

Wagler, Mark, Ruth Olson, and Anne Pryor. 2004. *Kids’ Guide to Local Culture*. Madison, WI: Madison Children’s Museum.

Emily West Hartlerode is Associate Director of the Oregon Folklife Network, managing collaborative projects, administering grants, and supervising graduate students. She also supports folklife programming at the Museum of Natural and Cultural History at the University of Oregon. Her focus includes feminist ethnographic filmmaking and decolonizing methodologies.

Makaela Kroin is Folk and Traditional Arts Program Coordinator at Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. She develops partnership programs to support and celebrate Washington folklife. She serves on the board of the Center for Washington Cultural Traditions.

Ken Parshall serves as Superintendent of the Jefferson County School District 509-J in Central Oregon. He recently completed his 33rd year as an educator in Oregon, where he has served as a high school math teacher for 12 years, a school administrator for 18 years, and as Superintendent the last two years. He has been the principal of three high schools, one middle school, and most recently served as the principal of the Warm Springs K8 Academy for three years.

Anne Pryor is a co-founder of Wisconsin Teachers of Local Culture, the board chair of Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education, and the former state folklorist of Wisconsin. Her research and public outreach areas include folklore in education, Iroquois raised beadwork, Marian apparitions, and traditional cultures of the Upper Midwest. She is author of [Listening to the Beads](#) and co-author of the [Kids' Guide to Local Culture](#), among other publications.

Rachelle H. (Riki) Saltzman is Executive Director of the Oregon Folklife Network. That position involves collaborations with groups and organizations to develop projects, grant writing, and public presentations. She also teaches classes in Folklore and Foodways and Public Folklore at the University of Oregon. Her interests range from festival, food, and place, to ethnic identity and cultural heritage.

Creston (Dana) Smith was hired and trained to digitize heritage sound recordings on open reel under a 2013-14 National Parks Grant. He has strong technology and communication skills, including the ability to distinguish Ichishkiin, Numu and Kiksht—the three languages of Warm Springs (vital to determine translation contacts). He has successfully completed two projects for the department as a Culture and Heritage Language Department Media Specialist.

Valerie Switzler is General Manager of Education on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation of Oregon overseeing all branches—from early childhood to higher education—including culture and heritage, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, vocational rehabilitation, and Oregon State University extension. She has served on numerous boards and committees that focus on heritage languages, cultural preservation, and revitalization of traditions and works vigorously to promote education that is relevant to Native American world-views. She has taught her heritage language nearly 20 years and continues to advocate for all heritage languages.

URLs

Audio Digitization Collaboration (CTWS and OFN):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o_jQOZ2dNw

OFN blog post about conducting interviews at the Treaty of 1855 Conference at CTWS:

<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/ofnblog/2018/10/29/treaty-of-1855-conference-museum-at-warm-springs-oct-25-27-2018>

Kids' Guide to Local Culture: <https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Documents/FAIEKidsGuide.pdf>

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Interview as Curriculum and Collaboration: Behind the Scenes of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Field School



Photographing Folk Artists We Interview: Reflecting on 35 Years in the Field

by Alan Govenar

Photographs can document the skills and art forms that individuals and communities recognize as integral to their folk traditions, but in today's ever-changing world how that documentation engages the viewer and affects the people it documents raises difficult questions. Over the last 35 years my documentary approach has evolved as a result of the widening scope of my ethnographic experience and the dynamic landscape of technology. When I started doing fieldwork in the 1970s, I had little experience using photographic equipment. Within the scope of my academic training in folklore and anthropology, I understood the importance of photography but had not developed the fundamental technical skills I needed to document the folk artists and the communities I was observing and interviewing.

I bought an inexpensive 35mm film camera and started to experiment with different approaches. Through consultation with others working in the field and through trial and error, I gradually acquired the technical competency needed for my work as a public folklorist. I began to understand the ways photography needed to integrate with other fieldwork methods. Talking about photography often deepened my dialogue with the folk artists I was interviewing. Asking to see their scrapbooks and family photographs expanded our conversations and provided a bridge for discussing my interest in photographing them.

The most difficult part of photographing a fieldwork setting was encouraging folk artists to try to detach from the camera and to work or perform as they normally did. It was helpful to have other people present, especially family members or friends. However, some people simply didn't like

About the photo: National Heritage Fellows (left to right) Chitresh Das (2009), Norma Miller (2008), Agustin Lira (2007), Evalena Henry (2007), Frank Newsome (2011), Qi Shu Fang (2008).

All photos by Alan Govenar.

being photographed, and when they were in front of the camera they tensed up and were accustomed to posing. In other instances, it was necessary to take a break or to return at another time to make photographs. Photography is inevitably subjective through the process of framing, composition, and lighting, but it is also affected by the nature of the interaction between the photographer and the subject of the photograph.

My goal when conducting fieldwork was to document the work of exemplary folk artists and to explore the ways that folk and traditional arts were passed on from one generation to the next. One exhibition I organized in 1981, titled *Ohio Folk Traditions: A New Generation*, featured the work of established artisans alongside that of their apprentices. In my photographs, I emphasized the interaction between generations and strove to establish the context in which folk artists lived and worked.

My involvement with the [National Heritage Fellowship Program](#) of the National Endowment for the Arts began during this period. One of the first individuals to receive a National Heritage Fellowship in 1982 was Elijah Pierce, an African American woodcarver who had a barbershop around the corner from where I was then teaching at Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio. Each semester, I took students on fieldtrips to Pierce's barbershop to meet him and to watch him work. My photographic documentation, limited as it was, focused on Pierce and his apprentice Leroy Almon. Looking back, I would have done more to document the process through which Pierce made his woodcarvings, focusing perhaps on an individual piece from start to finish and exploring how the completed work was shared, sold, or displayed. In addition, I would have examined more closely his relationship to his community and his daily interactions with those people who frequented his barbershop and the cultural dynamic through which his woodcarvings attained meaning.

After founding the nonprofit organization [Documentary Arts](#) in 1985, my thinking about photography advanced. With each new generation of cameras, I challenged myself to develop the necessary technical expertise to put this equipment into use. However, during the 1980s the purpose of my documentation focused largely on the development of public programs. Between 1981 and 1991, I organized six Dallas Folk Festivals; developed a folk artist residency program in the schools; produced three 13-part *Traditional Music in Texas* radio series; compiled and released a series of audio recordings of local African American, Asian, Mexican, Native American, and Anglo musicians; and produced and directed documentary films for broadcast and educational distribution. In conjunction with each of these public programs and media projects, I made photographs that were featured in exhibitions; published in books, articles, brochures, and posters; and also disseminated to local communities and the public at large. I aimed to develop an infrastructure for involving local communities. With the support of grants from governmental agencies, as well as from private and business contributions, Documentary Arts gave honorariums to the folk and traditional artists who participated in its public programs and media projects. We secured signed releases, enabling us to make our documentation as widely accessible as possible, and we created a mechanism for individuals and communities to use the documentation we produced free of charge. Documentary Arts distributed its audio recordings to students, teachers, schools, libraries, museums, and community centers, and the performers featured on our cassette and later CD releases were paid 50 percent of all net profits, instead of a conventional royalty that

a commercial company might have provided. During this period, photography was a tool that complemented the implementation of public programs.

I became more aware of the ways that different cultural groups document themselves by investigating how photography is made, presented, and displayed in people's homes, as well as in public places of work, education, worship, and fellowship. To explore the distinction between photography as evidence and photography as a manifestation of shared values and beliefs, I have used an interdisciplinary methodology that draws from the fields of folklore, popular culture, anthropology, and history to challenge existing formalistic approaches. In so doing, I have developed the concept of community photography to understand better the work of African American photographers in Texas who actively documented the world in which they lived and worked, focusing on those events, ceremonies, and activities that were integral to the daily life of the people they served, from baptisms, weddings, and funerals to homecoming parades, graduations, and family reunions. In 1995, my wife, artist and feminist arts advocate Kaleta Doolin, and I founded the [Texas African American Photography](#) (TAAP) Archive to preserve and present the work of photographers whose work had been overlooked by mainstream cultural institutions.



Couple dancing, Longhorn Ballroom
Dallas, Texas, 1984.

Photographers represented in the TAAP Archive, like Alonzo Jordan in Jasper and Eugene Roquemore in Lubbock, were not professional per se. They worked day jobs, Jordan as a barber, and Roquemore as a janitor, but both recognized the importance of photography as a means to bolster identity and self-esteem by documenting and sustaining oral memory through the visual representation of personal experience and community traditions. In this way, the photographs they produced embodied the values and beliefs of their subjects. While the photographers were usually compensated for their efforts, they often donated their time and services to individuals in their communities who might not otherwise be able to afford them. The photographers were highly regarded, not only because of the quality of the images they made, but also as a direct result of their commitment to the enrichment of their respective communities.

In my own documentation, I started to rethink the premises that were the basis of my photographic work. While I recognized the importance of context and performance to elaborate the ways that individuals and cultural groups interact and present themselves, I began to explore the significance of the portrait and how perspective, framing, lighting, and composition of the image were linked to perception and recognition. Photographic portraiture is rarely discussed as a best practice in cultural studies. Yet, portraits are probably the most common form of photographic documentation. Portraits are displayed proudly in people's homes, schools, businesses, governmental buildings, and places of worship. Portraits are both public and private, ceremonial and intimate. We see them virtually everywhere we go, and we carry them in our purses and wallets, on our screen savers and cellphones.

In the 1990s I began making photographic portraits in earnest, experimenting with different methods and equipment, using both film and digital cameras and creating images in black and white and color. I photographed individuals and groups in different settings, from living rooms and hotel rooms to backyards and expansive natural environments.

Then, in 1997 I printed my first human-sized photographs for an exhibition at the [African American Museum](#) in Dallas and began to recognize their potential. In 2005, my wife Kaleta had the idea to purchase a Hasselblad camera with a 39-megapixel digital back that had just been introduced. With this camera and its technological advances, my capacity as a photographer expanded exponentially. I started making human-sized photographs of the National Heritage Fellows because I felt that seeing these individuals face to face might engage the viewer in unexpected ways. I tried different color backdrops and settings and finally decided that a neutral black background was at once the least intrusive and the most evocative. I was particularly interested in the ways that individuals presented themselves in street clothes as well as in the trappings of their cultural heritage. I encouraged each individual to pose as they wished and then gave them the opportunity to see themselves as they appeared in the photograph, often talking with them about how portraits can express the core of who we are or aspire to be. The immediacy of a high-resolution digital image on a computer screen heightened the experience, and frequently the subjects, after seeing themselves, wanted to pose differently.

The resulting decontextualized portraits emphasize the inherent equality of all people and cultures. Looking at these human-sized prints invites the viewer not only to reconsider preconceptions about cultural identities, but also to reflect on continuity, transfers, exchanges, and transmissions in the living heritage of communities, groups, and individuals. Face to face we are encouraged to interact with the people before us and to participate in the fundamental process of recognition that is so essential to our culturally rooted traditions and to our comprehension of the world in which we live and work.

In a decontextualized portrait, the viewer must see the subject as a person in his or her own terms. Portraits involve direct communication not only between the photographer and the subject resulting from a dialogue, and perhaps negotiation or intervention, but also between the viewer and the person represented in the final print. The portrait commemorates achievement in a form that is easily understood, but when seen full-body and human-scale the image is imbued with added significance through its detailed expression of human dignity.

In my own work, portraiture has provided opportunities to engage in a dialogue with National Heritage Fellows that has energized more in-depth study and documentation. My portraits, for example, of Sidiki Conde led me to photograph Sidiki and his day-to-day life in New York City over the next several years. I photographed Sidiki in his apartment, on the street, and in workshops he conducted for disabled children. These photographs then became the basis of my feature-length documentary film [You Don't Need Feet to Dance](#). Today, Documentary Arts helps to fund Sidiki's work teaching disabled children at the Brookville Center in Brookville, New York.

Over the years, my work with Documentary Arts has become increasingly more holistic through an interdisciplinary approach. My feature-length film [Extraordinary Ordinary People](#) features more than 75 recipients of the National Heritage Fellowship and demonstrates the importance of the folk and traditional arts in shaping the fabric of the United States. From Bill Monroe and B.B. King to Passamaquoddy basket weavers and Peking Opera singers; from Appalachia and the mountains of New Mexico to the neighborhoods of New York, the suburbs of Dallas, and the isolated Native American reservations of Northern California—the artists share exceptional talent, ingenuity, and perseverance. In addition, the Documentary Arts website [Masters of Traditional Arts](#) includes more than 4,000 photographs, 550 video segments, 30 hours of interviews and audio recordings, as well as an education guide with free downloads and biographical entries on National Heritage Fellows, 1982-2016. Again, my hope is that by making documentation freely available people will encounter the humanity as well as the artistry of folk and traditional artists.



Sidiki Conde, Washington, DC 2007.

Classroom Connections

- The [Masters of Traditional Arts Education Guide](#) is a dynamic, interdisciplinary tool designed for teachers featuring stories, cultural context, and media of the NEA National Heritage Fellows.
- [Local Learning](#) hosts lessons featuring Alan Govenar's portraits to explore connections between dress and culture. See also his article in [Journal of Folklore and Education, Volume 1 \(2014\)](#).



Top: Sidiki Conde leading an after-school workshop, Manhattan School for Children, New York City, 2011. Bottom: Sidiki Conde boarding a bus, New York City, 2011.





Sidiki Conde climbs the stairs to his fifth-floor apartment on his hands, New York City, 2011.

With the technological advances of the 21st century, the possibilities of photography have expanded exponentially. Cameras have never been more accessible, and the technical quality of the photographs made by professionals and amateurs alike continues to improve. While professional photographic equipment can aid the process of documentation, it may also be imposing and, perhaps, culturally inappropriate. Using a point-and-shoot pocket camera or a cellphone camera may be readily accepted, but a sophisticated SLR camera with a zoom lens may be threatening in certain situations. More study is needed to assess the extent to which different photographic technologies and the expertise to use them affect the documentation of folk traditions and how the resulting documentation is perceived and understood by those being documented and those studying and viewing the documentation. Moreover, the aesthetic qualities of photography may be as important as its content to folklorists and cultural specialists and to the individuals and communities who are the focus of documentation. Striking a balance between the photograph as art and as artifact may be necessary to catalyze the viability of folk traditions through the awareness and the dialogue that the image engenders.

Alan Govenar is a writer, folklorist, photographer, and filmmaker. He is a Guggenheim Fellow and president of [Documentary Arts](http://www.docarts.com), a nonprofit organization he founded in 1985 to present new perspectives on historical issues and diverse cultures. He has a BA in American Folklore from the Ohio State University, an MA in Folklore and Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin, and a PhD in Arts and Humanities from the University of Texas at Dallas. He is author of 30 books and has produced and directed numerous films in association with NOVA, La Sept/ARTE, and PBS for broadcast and educational distribution. His artist books and photographs are in collections in the U.S. and abroad, including The Museum of Modern Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, Centre Georges Pompidou, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, National Portrait Gallery, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

URLs

<https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage>

<http://www.docarts.com>

<http://www.docarts.com/archive.html>

<http://www.aamdallas.org>

<http://www.docarts.com/you-dont-need-feet-to-dance.html>

<http://www.docarts.com/extraordinary-ordinary-people.html>

www.mastersoftraditionalarts.org

<http://www.mastersoftraditionalarts.org/education/preface>

<https://www.locallearningnetwork.org/education-resources/national-heritage-fellows>

<https://www.locallearningnetwork.org/journal-of-folklore-and-education/current-and-past-issues/volume-one-2014/>

Journal of Folklore and Education (2019: Vol. 6)

Photographing Folk Artists We Interview: Reflecting on 35 Years in the Field

A NOTE: Bridging Cultural Gaps Through Interviews

by Raymond M. Summerville



In early August of 2015, as a graduate student in Folklore at the University of Missouri-Columbia, I participated in the [Missouri Audio Project](#), a six-day intensive radio workshop organized by Julija Šukys of the English Department and taught by expert radio producer and instructor Rob Rosenthal. Throughout the workshop, eight other participants and I learned the basics of interviewing, recording, script writing, and editing. As a trained folklorist, seeing so many parallels between folklore fieldwork and radio fieldwork was eye opening. I realized that taking notes in the field and formulating questions for recorded interviews are not entirely different. They both require one to pay very close attention to detail, and it is primarily through these processes that the fieldworker shapes the story. It also requires a good deal of work. Transforming an hour-long interview into a very concise six-minute script was daunting and taught me a number of important lessons.

Editing my interview primarily involved identifying the most interesting or telling segments, finding the parts that I really wanted to share, and cutting the rest. It also involved rearranging certain portions of the interview to tell the most cohesive story that I could. All the things generally viewed as germane to natural conversation come under scrutiny during the editing process. For instance, through the course of any given interview, one may expect a subject to say any number of things that may be humorous, exciting, sad, or simply interesting. Additionally, one's subject may go off on thought-provoking tangents at times. Although all these things collectively may contribute greatly to one's understanding of the individual, as a radio producer I may need to omit much of it. As a folklorist, I had already become familiar with the tedious process of transcribing, but storytelling takes the transcription process in a different direction. Within a set of transcriptions from an interview one may see multiple narratives at play, and any of the narratives may be used to highlight any single aspect of a subject's life. Thus, my overall goal—and my biggest challenge—was learning to edit zealously while still keeping the story that I really wanted to tell clearly in focus.

I learned a lot about radio production throughout the workshop, but I also learned even more about Columbia, Missouri. Being from the Raleigh-Durham area and an alumnus of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, the largest and proudest of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the country, I was already well versed in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. The North Carolina Piedmont region is closely tied to its birth. Four A&TSU students started the sit-in movement in Greensboro in 1960. A few months later, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded in the

bookstore of Shaw University, a neighboring HBCU in Raleigh. A plethora of museums and monuments in cities and on campuses throughout North Carolina and the South commemorate this era in history.

As I listened to my interviewee, George Hatton, I realized that he did not have the privilege of learning about racism through such neat and convenient means. Hatton learned instead through his direct exposure to racial hatred. Hatton, a Columbia native, explains in our interview that implicit institutional racism and openly exposed racism affects his life in many ways. Hatton is an African American man, approximately 60 years of age, whom I had met a couple of years prior to our interview while working a side job as a houseman at a local hotel. While working, Hatton would often tell intriguing stories to workers and guests alike to pass the time, making arduous, repetitive work a little less tedious.

Hatton explains in the interview that being raised in Columbia means that he has seen its African American community change drastically over the course of several decades. He describes how the close-knit, safe neighborhood where he grew up changed as he got older and began to be plagued and overrun by drugs, gang violence, and racism. As a teen in the 70s, Hatton was a star athlete at Hickman High School, but a combination of poor decision making and difficulties adapting to Columbia's rapidly changing culture meant that Hatton would end up spending nearly a decade in prison. Despite his many setbacks, through hard work and perseverance, Hatton would eventually make a new life for himself and prevent his daughter and nephew from making the same mistakes that he once made.

It weighs heavy on you... the way they [the police] always harassed you all the time to where the atmosphere that you lived in... the surrounding that you lived in pulled you or sucked you in to... street life.

~ George Hatton

Hatton's interview illustrates a number of things that may be of interest to folklorists and educators. On the one hand, it shows how communities change over time. People often live only in the present, taking age differences and generational gaps for granted, but social and cultural changes may also create opportunities for learning. For instance, some scenes of racism that took place in Columbia in the 1980s that Hatton describes in the interview resemble the same kinds of racism experienced by many African Americans who lived through the St. Louis race riot of 1917. Likewise, this assignment led me to ask if ongoing, open dialogue could not have prevented the Ferguson riot of 2014, or the Concerned Student 1950 protest that took place at the University of Missouri-Columbia in 2015 (see more in Shonekan 2018). In thinking critically about these occurrences, the span of time separating these events is as equally relevant as the 120 miles or two-hour drive that divides the communities involved. These clashes clearly illustrate how being physically close in proximity is oftentimes not enough to prevent conflict, but the implementation of interviews as a pedagogic tool at all levels of learning (in the classroom and in the community) may be a way of using communication to bridge cultural gaps. If younger students are able to learn from older community members through conducting interviews, in addition to building new relationships, students would more than likely ascertain information that would otherwise be

impossible to gain. Furthermore, by not relying on textbooks or teachers for this research, students may be more likely to view themselves as agents of change.

Identifying people to interview, talking with them, and then carefully processing their findings may teach students to see familiar people and common surroundings in entirely new ways. For example, Hatton's interview offers a harrowing glimpse into what some scholars and educators identify as the school-to-prison pipeline, an old social problem that intersects with issues concerning race, class, and gender (West 1993, Alexander 2010, Morris 2015). Hearing firsthand accounts of the school-to-prison pipeline is important because listening to these narratives may foster empathy and potentially a greater sense of understanding. To understand the impact that this pipeline has on individual lives and communities, one must hear the stories of those affected the most.

Projects that require students to conduct interviews in their communities may help them to see the interviewing process as a vital component of storytelling. Storytelling differs greatly from reading about town history, listening to history lectures, or even watching historical documentaries. It is a much more powerful way to implement praxis in the classroom because students govern so many different things for themselves. Students determine who they want to interview. They decide what questions should be asked, how to ask them, and how to follow up to get the information they need. Ultimately, the student shapes the story from the interview.

Additionally, this process forces students to make complicated decisions on the fly, as opposed to having information dictated to them. My reflections upon this process have pointed me to the understanding that teaching interviewing as an important component of storytelling may be viewed as a form of independent learning that is more likely to foster critical thinking than most other learning methods, in part, because it requires a great deal of creativity. Students must be creative in determining the best way to display information derived from their subjects. Overall, conducting interviews may encourage young people to think more critically about history, about themselves, and about the complex cultures in which they live.

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URL

Missouri Audio Project: Telling Stories in Sound: <http://missouriaudioproject.com/2015/11/04/missouri-audio-project-summer-workshop-2015>

Direct link to Dr. Summerville's piece: <https://soundcloud.com/missouri-audio-project/raymond-summervilles-piece>

SCRIPT for George Hatton Community Profile

1. NARRATION: GEORGE HATTON HAS LIVED IN COLUMBIA ALL OF HIS LIFE AND CAN RECOUNT A NUMBER OF VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS THAT HE HAS HAD WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT. GEORGE FEELS THAT THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM IS RACISM.

2. (24:35) I remember when I was in my forties...and I was walking down the street with a blue shirt on...and a police stopped me and asked me if I was a crip and I told him noooo. Well that in turn led to an argument between the both of us and one thing led to another. (25:19) It got real close to being violent. (25:36) I don't like being stereotyped because I have a blue t-shirt on or a red t shirt on. (39:42) Everybody is stereotyped as a gang member or a drug dealer.

3. NARRATION: TODAY GEORGE HATTON IS NOT A GANG MEMBER OR A DRUG DEALER HE IS A PILLAR IN HIS COMMUNITY. GEORGE GRADUATED FROM HICKMAN HIGH SCHOOL, CLASS OF 1975. AT THE TIME HE WAS THE THIRD BEST KICKER IN THE NATION. AS GEORGE EXPLAINS, HE DIDN'T GO TO COLLEGE BECAUSE LIKE FOR MANY BLACKS IN HIS NEIGHBORHOOD...THE OPPORTUNITIES SIMPLY WERE NOT THERE.

4. (26:50) When I grew up as a young kid there wasn't really a lot for blacks to do or opportunities doors wasn't really open to a lot of people. You had to have a lot of people in high places or parents that are well known.

5. NARRATION: A LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTANT HARASSMENT FROM THE POLICE MADE LIFE DIFFICULT FOR GEORGE AND OTHER BLACK PEOPLE IN THE AREA.

6. (24:00) It weighs heavy on you...the way they always harassed you all the time to where the atmosphere that you lived in...the surroundings that you lived in pulled you or sucked you in to...street life.

7. NARRATION: AFTER GRADUATING FROM HICKMAN HIGH SCHOOL GEORGE PLAYED SEMI PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL, BUT WHEN PLANS TO PLAY IN THE NFL DID NOT WORK OUT, HE WAS PULLED INTO THE STREET LIFE WHERE HE WOULD MAKE THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS A WEEK SELLING CRACK COCAINE.

8. (43:54) Money is the root of all evil in the world. (44:00) If you make a thousand dollars a day are you going to work a 7 or 8 dollar an hour job I'm making a thousand dollars a day kicking it on the street selling drugs.

9. NARRATION: GEORGE'S LIFE AS A DRUG DEALER WAS SHORT LIVED. AFTER MULTIPLE ARRESTS HE SPENDS MUCH OF THE NINETIES INCARCERATED FOR DRUG RELATED OFFENCES. DESPITE THIS UNFORTUNATE TREND IN URBAN CULTURE GEORGE STILL BELIEVES THAT RACISM IS THE CAUSE OF MOST OF THE POLICE VIOLENCE IN COLUMBIA.

10. (19:56) Back then you had a couple of police officers on the force that just had it in for blacks. (20:36) They made it a point to try to get to know all the blacks but to really kind of like dog most of the blacks out.

11. NARRATION: GEORGE RECALLS A TIME WHEN TENSIONS IN HIS NEIGHBORHOOD HAD FINALLY REACHED ITS BOILING POINT.

12. (19:10) Two girls had an argument and one girl was pregnant. The police was arguing and she was arguing with the police. The police kicked her in the stomach while she was pregnant which set off almost a riot. I saw several people beat this police officer and they smashed his car and tore his car up until the state patrolmen came in and actually got the car back but it was for a couple of days like marshal law around here.

13. NARRATION: RACISM, HARASSMENT, AND RIOTS CHARACTERIZE GEORGE HATTON'S EXPERIENCES WITH LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT IN COLUMBIA. DESPITE THIS FACT HE WAS STILL EXCITED WHEN HIS DAUGHTER TOLD HIM OF HER PLANS TO BECOME A POLICE OFFICER.

14. (28:33) When I was off in the street life she told me, dad I don't know if I could ever arrest you if you did something wrong and I try to embed in her...do your job...to be the best you can be at your job.. to be the best you can be at what you do. If I do something wrong...arrest me.

15. NARRATION: ARRESTING DAD IS SOMETHING THAT HIS DAUGHTER WOULD NEVER HAVE TO DO. HAVING A DAUGHTER ON THE FORCE HELPED TO CHANGE GEORGE'S OUTLOOK ON LIFE. TODAY GEORGE IS A ROLE MODEL. KIDS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD CALL HIM GRANDPA AND HE TRIES TO INSTILL A SENSE OF PRIDE, RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT IN ALL OF THE YOUTH IN THE AREA. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE FUTURE, GEORGE HOPES THAT THE YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIS FAMILY WILL BE ABLE TO LIVE A MUCH BETTER LIFE WITH MANY MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN HE HAD.

16. (58:37) Today I have grandkids that play sports, that are very good at sports and...I got a nephew that verbally committed to Missouri. It was a smile to see that me growing up and the talent that I had I always wanted to play at Missouri, but mother didn't have the money to pay for that first year of college so, I never got the opportunity to play college ball, but I smile and look at my nephews...and one of my nephews just verbally committed to Missouri. Missouri offered him a scholarship and probably about forty other colleges offered him a scholarship already, but I'm hoping he stays at Missouri.

17. NARRATION: GEORGE HAS GAINED A SENSE OF PRIDE FROM YOUNG PEOPLE LIKE HIS DAUGHTER AND NEPHEW. WHILE LIFE MAY HAVE SLOWED DOWN FOR GEORGE, WITNESSING A GROWING RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEXT GENERATION MAKES HIM GLAD THAT HE IS STILL HERE TO BE A PART OF IT ALL.

18. I AM RAYMOND SUMMERVILLE. THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.
(August 6, 2015)

A Note: Informed Consent, Release Forms, Thank-You Notes, and Other Tools of the Ethical, Artful Interview

from The Editors

Volume six of the *Journal of Folklore and Education* has been a special one for us to work on because interviews are at the heart of our work as folklorists and as educators. Through interviews we gain access to expertise that may not be in any written text, we prioritize the responsibility and value of creating relationships between people, and we offer a significant methodology for inquiry that also encourages taking multiple perspectives and empathy. The interview guides, learning frameworks, and case studies included in this volume all reference and use tools that show the work is being done ethically, with a keen eye toward ensuring that students, teachers, interview participants, and communities are protected throughout the process. We want to highlight some templates and sample language in one place so that our readers who are new to interviewing, as well as readers who want to revise their own process, might access this information easily. Please write us with additions or feedback on these linked pages that we intentionally update to reflect current best practices.

Informed Consent

Each person interviewed or included in documentation needs to be informed about the project, how their material will be used, and any risk that may arise from their participation before the interview. Generally, ethnography as a field research method employs oral rather than written consent.

Release Form

Asking permission to use a person's stories and images is not just good manners, it is ethically essential. (www.locallearningnetwork.org/sample-release-form)

Thank-You Note

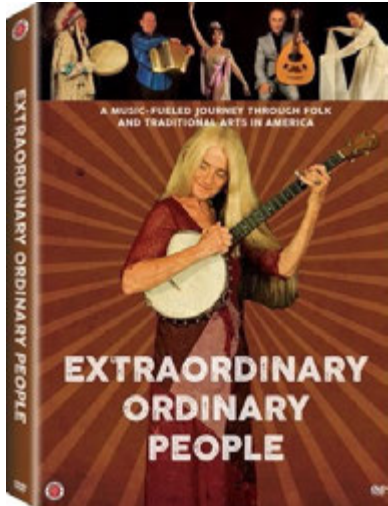
Interviews are gifts and should be acknowledged. Teachers are particularly encouraged to think about how the thank-you note offers an excellent opportunity for authentic assessment to occur. (Find a sample thank-you note from a student at www.locallearningnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/Guests-in-Classroom.pdf.)

If you teach in higher education, a Native American community, or museum (among other institutions), you may need to learn more about

Institutional Review Boards (IRB)

An institution's IRB reviews research that includes human subjects to ensure that all activities proposed meet federal regulations and policies. Research conducted as part of a classroom assignment may not need IRB approval. Likewise, Oral History is excluded from IRB oversight, and most ethnography is seen as "exempt" or appropriate for "expedited" review. We encourage you to reach out to your IRB for more information.

Journal of Folklore and Education Reviews



Extraordinary Ordinary People: A Music-Fueled Journey through Folk and Traditional Arts in America, by Alan Govenar

(2017. 84 minutes. DVD format, color, includes extras: five short films and portrait portfolio. Documentary Arts, Dallas, TX.)

Timothy H. Evans is Associate Professor of Folk Studies, Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology, Western Kentucky University.

The National Heritage Fellowships have been awarded to folk and traditional artists by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) every year since 1982, to “recognize the recipients' artistic excellence and support their continuing contributions to our nation's traditional arts heritage” ([NEA National Heritage Fellowships](#), 2019). *Extraordinary Ordinary People* is a celebration of the artists honored by the Fellowships. Much of it was filmed at the 2015 National Heritage Fellowships concert (the annual awards ceremony) in Washington, DC, but it also includes footage of artists going back to the first year of the award. The film is directed by Alan Govenar and co-written by Govenar and Jason Johnson-Spinos, who also edited it.

Beginning with several definitions of “tradition,” the film surveys dozens of traditional artists, generally grouped by genre or style (bluegrass, blues, conjunto music, baskets, quilts, etc.), interspersed with longer interviews with artists such as oud master Rahim AlHaj, circus aerialist Dolly Jacobs, and especially North Carolina balladeer and banjo player Sheila Kay Adams, who also narrates the film (along with Elva Perez). The longer interviews nicely convey the importance of narrative to the artists in presenting themselves and their art, as well as many details about their art forms.

The film also explores the history and goals of the Fellowships through interviews with the late Bess Lomax Hawes (former NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Director and creator of the Fellowships) and, especially, with Dan Sheehy, winner of the 2015 Bess Lomax Hawes Award for the preservation and awareness of cultural heritage (awarded annually as part of the National Heritage Fellowships). Sheehy, an ethnomusicologist, is former director of NEA Folk and Traditional Arts, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

The film looks briefly at several political and cultural issues surrounding folk and traditional artists: the impact of immigrant and refugee experiences on the maintenance of traditional arts; the impact of language and language loss, especially with Native arts; the lack of recognition and

financial compensation for many traditional artists; the role of art in surviving and healing; the passing of traditions to the next generation; the simultaneously conservative and dynamic nature of most traditional art forms; and the ways that traditional artists must adapt to new technology, new modes of communication, and changing social norms. All these issues are explored through interviews with artists.

The film emphasizes music and dance and, inevitably, explores only a slice of the hundreds of art forms of National Heritage Fellows, but it still manages to survey a great variety of art forms, from mariachi music to Orthodox icon making, to straw weaving, boat building, rockabilly, bobbin lace making, retablo making, Korean and Cambodian traditional dancing, Peking opera, capoeira, Nez Perce and Tolowa singing, and many others. The film is beautiful, multi-sensual, exciting, thought provoking, and often moving. As diverse as the artists are, they have in common an intense passion and commitment to their art forms. Although the film touches just briefly on specific art forms and artists, it compels the viewer to learn more. As I watched, I paused it frequently to look up more information on the artists and their traditions.

The DVD includes five short films, mostly interview excerpts, and a portfolio of portraits of some of the Heritage Fellows. It does not come with any materials directly intended for classroom use. However, the [Masters of Traditional Arts](http://www.mastersoftraditionalarts.org) website includes photos, audio, and video of over 400 Fellows as well as an education guide by Paddy Bowman, with lesson plans and activities. (Unfortunately, there is no mention of this site anywhere on the DVD package.) Even without the online materials, the film (or excerpts from the film) could definitely be used in the classroom to illustrate the incredible variety and beauty of folk and traditional arts in the U.S. It is easy to imagine activities based on the film—for example, having students choose an art form from the film that interests them and create a research paper, class presentation, or creative project centering on that art form. Such activities would enrich curricula in art, culture, and history, among other subject areas.

The DVD can be ordered through [Documentary Arts](http://www.documentaryarts.org) or [First Run Features](http://www.firstrunfeatures.com), and it can be downloaded from iTunes.

URLs

<https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage>

www.mastersoftraditionalarts.org

<http://www.docarts.com>

www.firstrunfeatures.com

FOLKSTREAMS

Folkstreams (<https://www.folkstreams.net>)

Virginia Siegel is Folk Arts Coordinator at Arkansas Folk and Traditional Arts.

For nearly two decades, *Folkstreams* has held a reputation as the go-to resource for viewing and browsing ethnographic films online. The website, founded by Tom Davenport, is now managed as a 501(c)3 organization headed by Davenport and staff and advised by a committee of distinguished folklorists and scholars. The growth of this site is clear; over the last several years, it has experienced a significant design overhaul. Many features remain consistent, but the site is now sleek, easy to navigate, and visually appealing as a searchable resource.

While visiting the main page of *Folkstreams*, a large banner image that changes with each new visit to the site greets viewers. The main navigation menu at the top features the opportunity to browse films by title, filmmakers, or search bar. Additionally, from the top navigation, viewers can learn more about *Folkstreams* history, the rights of the films available on *Folkstreams*, and how to contact and donate to the organization.

Folkstreams is a remarkably searchable website. Browsing film titles by name, the viewer has the option to filter titles by category or region, as well as sort alphabetically or by the date they were added to the database. Search results appear as a grid of thumbnail images with title, date, and film length. When the viewer hovers the mouse over the film images, brief summaries appear without having to navigate to a new page. Upon clicking on a film, the viewer can watch the film, learn more about the production crew and licensing of content, and even browse related films on the lower right side.

When browsing films by filmmaker alphabetically, a particularly savvy feature is the way that each filmmaker's complete body of work on *Folkstreams* is listed immediately below their name in the filmmaker index. If a viewer is a fan of a particular film, they will immediately be able to see other content by that filmmaker. If one is looking to browse more casually, the homepage offers the option to view featured films and popular categories of films. If a viewer would like to search by specific term, the search bar is highly responsive; the results for a search go beyond the titles or categories of videos to scan the descriptions of each video for keywords.

Folkstreams maintains a strong commitment to education, with the bottom navigation reflecting the website's intended audiences, including educators, community members, families, and users looking to learn more about video preservation. For educators, a portal developed by Paddy Bowman features a variety of lessons and worksheets to accompany several films. While this section might appear limited in content with only four film-specific guides, advice is given for adapting these plans to a wider variety of films. The worksheets are highly adaptable. For example, the [Film Analysis Framework worksheet](#) helps viewers analyze content from any film through a variety of pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing tasks. Viewers are asked to look for specific elements in a film, such as narrator, setting, techniques, vocabulary, and symbols, to name a few.

For community and family audiences, *Folkstreams* offers a resource page that encourages the use of *Folkstreams* videos to bring intergenerational groups together and spark dialogue. This page

offers a variety of topics (framed as questions) to kick-start these conversations. The page links to further resources, including [Louisiana Voices](#) and the [Veterans History Project](#) at the American Folklife Center.

Lastly, the bottom navigation menu features a tab on video preservation, which, although small and unassuming, links to a robust database of video demonstrations on a variety of topics related to motion picture preservation and restoration. Although this appears like a separate site visually, this page is also created and maintained by *Folkstreams*. Topics range from film repair and cleaning to disaster planning and storage. The videos supplement aids that already exist on the linked National Film Preservation Foundation's [Guide to Film Preservation](#).

In all, *Folkstreams*' growing site has tremendous educational potential for a variety of contexts. The website is approachable, fun to explore, and rich with resources. Educators should note that *Folkstreams* emphasizes that the films are limited to home use. Film rights remain an omnipresent theme on the site. Rights appears as a category both in the top and bottom navigations, and the page indicates that users who wish to stream in classrooms/institutions must apply to *Folkstreams* or the filmmaker. This holds true for users wishing to use footage in projects as well. Alongside the educational resources, *Folkstreams*' commitment to showcasing and crediting the hard work of folklorists and scholars remains part of the mission and legacy of this project.

URLs

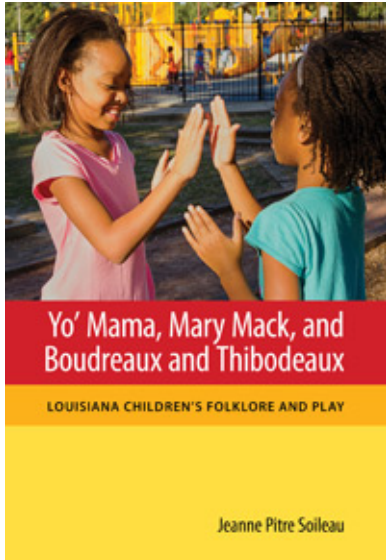
www.folkstreams.net

Film Analysis worksheet and other education tools: <https://www.folkstreams.net/educators.php>

www.louisianavoices.org

www.loc.gov/vets

www.filmpreservation.org



Yo' Mama, Mary Mack, and Boudreaux and Thibodeaux: Louisiana Children's Folklore and Play, by Jeanne Pitre Soileau (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2016, xi +193 pp, appendices, notes, index.)

Nic Hartmann *currently serves as both the Director of Learning & Civic Engagement at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library and an Adjunct Professor of Leadership Studies at Mount Mercy University.*

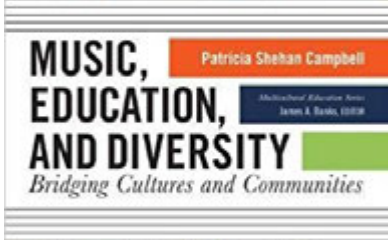
In *Yo' Mama, Mary Mack, and Boudreaux and Thibodeaux: Louisiana Children's Folklore and Play*, author, educator, and folklorist Jeanne Pitre Soileau presents an analysis of over four decades of fieldwork on southern Louisiana children's games. Soileau's work as an educator gave her extensive opportunities to collect recordings from children from around the state, and this book highlights the vast variety of verbal and play-based lore that comes from these communities. Looking at children's folklore as an example of ephemeral art that serves as one of the "most treasured outlets for artistic expression," Soileau emphasizes how this folklife has served as a constant for African American children over the last several decades, whether in facing the backlash of integration, responding to the issues of busing, or coping with other contemporary issues related to African American life.

Soileau's collection adds to the rich collection of African American children's folklife not only by displaying the rich regional collection of Louisiana folklife, but also by emphasizing the role of girls' play as being equally present, yet not nearly as researched among historical folklorists. Rather than looking at the media, and the rise of electronic devices, as a negative presence set to reduce the role of children's folklore, Soileau heavily discusses their importance in her chapters, "The African-American Child in the Media" and "To Infinity and Beyond: Children's Play in the Electronic Age." Readers get a strong idea of the evolution of children's play and the methods of Soileau herself, who goes from playgrounds to school anime clubs over the course of 44 years of research. This is just as much a study of her life as a folklorist as it is the people she examines, and the evolution of her work over time is very evident in the text. It's part ethnography and part autobiography, which work well together.

While the book is well organized into four basic sections—one each for the study of boys' and girls' play and the others to examine media and technology, respectively—there is more to the book than those theoretical analyses and examples. Rather than lament technology as a distraction from the cultural creation process, Soileau's book actually embraces it, which makes it a better model for educators to understand better how to embrace technological innovation and its effects on youth. Some of the richest materials come from her appendices, which feature recent examples of fieldwork in various formats and make the book's purpose stronger. It is a solid resource for educators, both inside and outside the classroom, that gives an idea of how a fieldwork session can operate and how educators can engage children in the fieldwork process. It is just about analysis but also about how folklorists engage with youth and how they can do so in a way that sparks creativity. Over the years, Soileau has succeeded in doing so, and her collection is both vital to the study of children's folklore and the study of folklore and education.



Music, Education, and Diversity: Bridging Cultures and Communities, by Patricia Shehan Campbell
(New York: Teachers College Press, 2018, 214 pp.)



Lynne Hamer holds a PhD in Folklore from Indiana University and is Professor of Social Foundations of Education in the Judith Herb College of Education, University of Toledo. At UT, she coordinates Teach Toledo, an initiative to diversify the teaching profession through supporting urban citizens to become licensed teachers, and teaches graduate and undergraduate courses including “Schooling and Democratic Society.”



In this accessible monograph on the intersection of music education and ethnomusicology, Campbell uses her “half-century’s work as a teaching musician, a card-carrying music educator,” and an ethnomusicologist to explain music education in the U.S. as lagging behind larger societal shifts toward multiculturalism and social justice but as having promise. In doing so, she demonstrates the usefulness of ethnomusicological approaches and materials for multicultural education as well as the utility of contemporary social justice and multicultural education scholarship for ethnomusicologists and folklorists working in schools and teacher education. The book should be required reading in music teacher education programs and in applied folklore courses as it helps explain needed developments in music education today while also revealing the kind of theoretically-informed work that ethnomusicologists and folklorists need to do for our work to be relevant in the broader society.

Campbell is an accomplished and prolific scholar, having authored seven books and many articles, and edited several handbooks, including a recent seven-volume series on World Music Pedagogy for use by teachers and in teacher education (<https://www.routledge.com/music/series/WMP>). *Music, Education, and Diversity* has eight chapters, two of which are adapted from Campbell’s entries in the *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (2012) and *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Education* (2015). Throughout, Campbell uses the trope of herself as “musical artefact,” inserting personal experience narratives that allow her to reflect on her “sense of connections between musical power and cultural equity” and to share her firsthand observations of the diversification of music education programs as well as the challenges that have kept them predominantly monocultural.

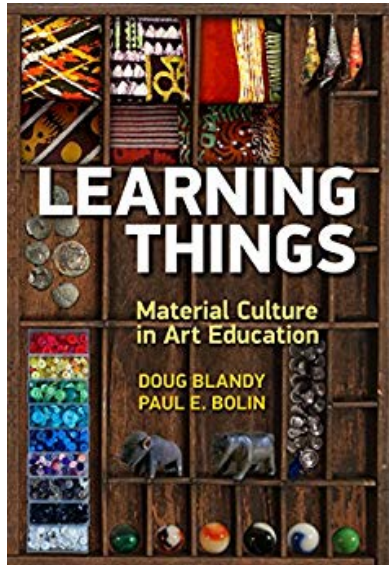
The first four chapters give the big picture of “musical engagement as human need” (chapter 1), “the changing nature of school music” (chapter 2), “educational intersections of ethnomusicological ideals” (chapter 3), and “multicultural education and social justice in school music practice” (chapter 4). *Music* is a “pan-human phenomenon” but without a “universal language”: it must be understood in context and is grounded in the home. *Musicking* is not object but action and process, and music educators should focus on “living musical-cultural experience.” All people deserve music in their lives as a right rather than a privilege. The question is whose music will be included in the curriculum as official knowledge.

Campbell answers that question through a literature review of how school music has been conceptualized, from its Anglocentric roots to the present ongoing expansion into global and local musicking, starting with UNESCO's International Music Council in 1953. She reviews "crossover scholarship" by ethnomusicologists working in music education and music educators using ethnomusicology. Campbell identifies the persistence of a "19th-century conservatory model" in higher education, including teacher education, as thwarting inclusion of global and local musicking. But she also introduces social justice and multicultural education approaches, illustrated by exemplary music education in practice, and concludes that music educators are increasingly paying attention to equity and social action, "leading [their students] toward the socially responsible citizens they will become."

Campbell's last four chapters drill into specific pedagogical concepts and techniques, and it is in these that the reader finds the application of core folkloristic and ethnomusicological concepts: "transmission, teaching, and learning" (chapter 5), "world music pedagogy as learning pathway" (chapter 6), "connections with communities and culture bearers" (chapter 7), and "principles of diversity in school music practice" (chapter 8).

For music teacher educators, *Music, Education, and Diversity* provides a blueprint for diversifying the curriculum to catch up to the 21st century. It could be the main text used in undergraduate or graduate introduction to music education courses and should not be relegated to a specialty course on multicultural education.

For ethnomusicologists and folklorists working in education, *Music, Education, and Diversity* provides an excellent lesson in how to use folklore for democratic, multicultural, social justice education while maintaining a focus on key folk processes. As part of the *Multicultural Education Series* edited by James A. Banks, the book illustrates how to operationalize Banks's five dimensions of multicultural education (content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture) as well as his four levels of curricular reform (contributions, additive, transformation, and social action). Framing folkloristic materials and methods in canonical educational practice allows for teachers and teacher educators to understand the power of global and local materials and processes.



Learning Things: Material Culture in Art Education, by
Doug Blandy and Paul E. Bolin
(New York: Teachers College Press, 2018, 133 pp.)

Suzanne Godby Ingalsbe holds a PhD in Folklore and a Master of Library Science degree from Indiana University. She is Associate Director of Indiana University's Institute for Advanced Study.

In their cleverly titled volume, repeat collaborators Doug Blandy and Paul E. Bolin offer a brief overview and introduction to material culture studies and outline a case for including material culture studies topics and techniques in art education. While ostensibly for an audience of art educators, the book may serve as a useful quick start guide for anyone looking to orient themselves in the interdisciplinary landscape of material culture studies, whether seeking to enhance their own research or to plan activities for students.

The book is organized into seven accessible chapters plus an introduction and list of selected readings for further exploration. The first chapter offers an overview of material culture and material culture studies, situates those in comparison with—and potential inclusion in—art education, and outlines 12 key ideas such as the interdisciplinarity of material culture studies, the inherently political nature of material culture, and the multi-directional connections between things and stories. The following chapters elaborate on these ideas through slightly expanded discussions of objects and stories; collecting and collections; objects and links between people, places, and times; technology and material culture; multisensory engagement; and specific techniques for teaching and studying material culture.

Theoretical treatment is light, contained to succinct mentions of some key figures and perspectives. The bulk of the text is devoted to descriptions of various categories of material culture, examples of what may be learned through examination of objects, and explication of “how to” methodologies for closer consideration of those things and topics. Miniature case studies drawn from the authors’ experiences are sprinkled throughout, grounding the work in easily grasped concrete examples.

The majority of the techniques presented would be quite effective in undergraduate curriculum, either as standalone activities or as part of a course-wide (or multi-course series) focus on the study of one or more types of material culture and/or research methodologies. These approaches would also work well in museum, archive, or library education settings, whether for single-visit audiences or as part of continuing education offerings. The strategies might well prove fruitful, too, for scholars planning cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Some of the activities, such as the “Who Made That?” exercise or object-linked storytelling, also could be used with students as young as Kindergarten, perhaps with slight adaptation. Indeed, the show and tell/show and share time that is commonly part of elementary school experience already touches in a simple way on some key points of interest to the material culture scholar, and variants of some of the book’s other approaches have been incorporated, at least in part, into instructional

exercises for elementary through high school students. Material culture can be a lens through which to focus on any topic, and the activities suggested by the authors pair nicely with the structure of existing academic standards.

It is worth revisiting the authors' aim of providing a "motivational catalyst" (p. 5) for art educators to include material culture studies as part of their teaching. Blandy and Bolin do a respectable job of laying out what can be learned through material culture studies, with some notable focus on linkages between people, processes, worldview, and objects. It does not take a huge feat of imagination, however, to think that some scholars might not be persuaded to stretch what have been the conventional boundaries of their purview to take on these expanded considerations. The authors' argument that may be hardest to dismiss is that, unlike approaches that privilege the visual, material culture studies lend themselves to including and accommodating individuals with visual or other sensory impairments, since material culture engages all the senses. This inclusiveness is noteworthy.

The authors reiterate material culture studies' interdisciplinary nature at several points. Their streamlined format does not allow extended discussion of the differences between disciplinary orientations or techniques, however, so readers interested in such details will need to do additional research. Even included models are not always linked to their disciplinary background. The "Selected Books" are a thoughtful gesture toward this, although I wonder whether an author-alphabetized list is the most helpful presentation. Perhaps organization by topic or discipline might be more useful to newcomers to this subject, or to those looking to make connections outside their own disciplines. An online resource searchable by multiple fields would be a welcome companion tool to *Learning Things*. All told, though, this volume provides a good jumping off point, offering a wide enough range of readings, curriculum ideas, and additional resources to solidly launch early forays into studying material culture.

2020 *Journal of Folklore and Education* ~ Call for Submissions

Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity

The 2020 *Journal of Folklore and Education* (JFE) titled "Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity" is now accepting submissions. This issue speaks directly to

the national crisis of equity, representation, and access in our zip codes and our cultural and educational institutions. Folklore includes the traditions, arts, and stories that make cultural communities unique and strengthen social bonds within our communities. The tools of folklore—such as observation, identifying important traditions and rituals, and deep listening to diverse narratives through interviews and ethnographic fieldwork—create opportunities for addressing significant social justice questions because the study of folklore and folklife centers students' linguistic, cultural, social, and racial pluralities. The terms "inclusion," "diversity," "equity," and "access" are often used to critique privilege and hierarchy to address long-term effects of infrastructural and lived inequity. Yet as buzzwords these terms sometimes mask inaction and perpetuation of the status quo. This special issue of JFE asks how folklore and paying close attention to culture in our learning spaces can equip educators with tools and resources to engage more fully diverse students and audiences.

We seek submissions that present case studies, lessons, and research on the significance of arts that are based in community cultural life that may be useful for:

- Educators in diverse settings or contexts;
- Curators and program managers at museums, community centers, and cultural institutions addressing issues of representation and access in content creation and program development;
- Administrators addressing the complexities of equity and access in teacher preparation and professional development, as well as in curriculum development and sustaining community relationships; and
- Students and community members who want to see their cultural knowledge valued in educational practices and policy.

The *Journal of Folklore and Education* (JFE) is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal published annually by Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education. JFE publishes work that uses ethnographic approaches to tap the knowledge and life skills of students, their families, community members, and educators in K-16, higher education, museum, and community education. Our intended audience includes educators and students at all levels and in all settings, folk culture specialists, and those working in community-based organizations.

As a digital publication, the *Journal of Folklore and Education* provides a forum for interdisciplinary, multimedia approaches to community-based teaching, learning, and cultural stewardship. It is found at www.locallearningnetwork.org.

Essential questions that contributors may use to inspire their writing, interviews, and media submissions include the following:

- ~ Culturally responsive teaching asks educators to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making (Gloria Ladson-Billings 2007). Culturally sustaining teaching sees culture more deeply as an asset that should be explicitly supported (Django Paris 2012). How might folklore in education, with an attention to local knowledge and arts, enhance pedagogy in diverse learning spaces?
- ~ What are best practices in Indigenous/indigenous methodologies to bring traditional ways of knowing, creating, and learning into a classroom, museum, or community?
- ~ How can the tools of folklore such as observation, identifying important traditions and rituals, and collecting personal experience narratives through interviews create opportunities for addressing significant social justice questions? Describe and unpack classroom activities, exhibition design protocols, resources and curriculum development, public program formats, and other engagement methods that use these tools for social justice.
- ~ What does a culturally safe space look like for diverse and equitable classrooms or cultural institutions and organizations?
- ~ How can educators from multiple disciplinary areas, including science, health care, social studies, composition, or literacy, use culture in their teaching to create inclusive, differentiated learning environments?
- ~ How does a folkloristic, ethnographic approach in a classroom or other educational setting connect learners with cultural knowledge systems different from their own and deepen understanding of their own community—from early childhood, to K-12, to adult learners?
- ~ How can higher-education teacher-preparation programs incorporate cultural ways of knowing, creating, or learning as a key part of their pedagogy?
- ~ How can the field of Folklore help address “tough conversations” or controversy in contemporary discourse surrounding the education achievement gap or structural racism in schools and the communities where they are situated? How might this practice help serve learners with diverse perspectives in our classrooms?
- ~ What lessons and activities can help educators address stereotype threats?
- ~ Describe models for incorporating mindfulness, restorative justice, and uncovering unconscious bias in school-based classrooms and other educational settings. How might such practices meaningfully connect with folklife and cultural knowledge?

More about Submissions: *We seek submissions of articles, model projects, multimedia products, teaching applications, and student work accompanied by critical writing that connects to the larger frameworks of this theme.* We particularly welcome submissions inclusive of perspectives and voices from represented communities. Co-authored articles that include teachers, administrators, artists, students, or community members offer opportunities for multiple points of view on an educational program or a curriculum. We publish articles that share best practices, offer specific guides or plans for implementing folklore in education, and articulate theoretical and critical frameworks. We invite educators to share shorter pieces for “Notes from the Field.” Nonconventional formats are also welcomed, such as lesson plans, worksheets, and classroom exercises. Media submissions, including short film and audio clips, will also be considered. When considering a submission, we highly recommend reviewing previous issues of JFE (see www.locallearningnetwork.org/journal-of-folklore-and-education/current-and-past-issues). We

encourage you to be in touch with the editors to learn more and see whether your concept might be a good fit and to discuss submission and media ideas.

Research-based writing that theorizes, evaluates, or assesses programs that use Folklore in Education tools and practice are also welcomed. These research articles may intersect with the theme, but all submissions with a research component will be considered. We expect that, regardless of the format, all projects presented in submissions will have appropriate institutional permissions for public dissemination before submission to JFE, including approval from Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and/or data licensing for the acquisition of existing data, as may be required. See the protocol for publishing a study used by [ArtsEdSearch](#) for guidance.

Format: Articles should be 1,500-4,500 words, submitted as a Word document. We use a modified Chicago style (not APA) and parenthetical citations. Contact the editors for our formatting requirements and citation style template. All URL links hyperlinked in the document should also be referenced, in order, at the end of the article in a URL list for offline readers. Images should have a dpi of at least 300.

Contact editors Paddy Bowman at pbbowman@gmail.com or Lisa Rathje at lisa@locallearningnetwork.org with ideas for stories, features, lessons, and media productions. You may also request a citation style template. Initial drafts of submissions are due April 1, 2020.

Please share this announcement with colleagues and educators in your community. This endeavor is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

We are grateful to our **Advisory Committee** for this special issue:

Danny Belanger, Director of Arts Education and Accessibility, Louisiana Division of the Arts

Jean Bergey, Associate Director, Drs. John S. and Betty J. Schuchman Deaf Documentary Center, Gallaudet University

Sue Eleuterio, Goucher College faculty, Masters in Cultural Sustainability

Jenna Gabriel, Manager of Special Education, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Laura Marcus Green, Program Director for Folklife and Traditional Arts, South Carolina Arts Commission

Keonna Hendrick, School Programs Manager, Brooklyn Museum

Jean Tokuda Irwin, Arts Education Program Manager and Accessibility Coordinator, Utah Division of Arts and Museums

Nakia Lent, Cultural Director, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

Rossina Zamora Liu, University of Maryland Assistant Clinical Professor; Teaching and Learning, Policy and Leadership, College of Education

Phyllis May-Machunda, Professor, American Multicultural Studies, Minnesota State University Moorhead

Vanessa Navarro Maza, Folklife Curator, HistoryMiami Museum

Susan Oetgen, Professional Development Institute Manager, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies

Suzy Seriff, Senior Lecturer, Department of Anthropology; University of Texas at Austin

Nancy Watterson, Associate Professor, American Studies, Cabrini University

The *Journal of Folklore and Education* is a publication of
Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education



Local Learning connects folklorists, artists, and educators across the nation and advocates for the full inclusion of folklife and folk arts in education to transform learning, build intercultural understanding, and create stronger communities.

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Please support *The Journal of Folklore and Education* so that we can continue to provide this free resource.

Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity, Volume 7 of the *Journal of Folklore and Education*, will be published in September 2020. See the Call for Submissions in this issue.

About the Editors

Bonnie S. Sunstein is professor of English and education at the University of Iowa, where she teaches essay writing, ethnographic methods, writing theory, and folklore. She has been Director of the Nonfiction Writing Program, Program Chair in English Education, and Director of Undergraduate Writing in English. A veteran of New England colleges and public schools, she conducts writing and teaching institutes around the world. Her chapters, articles, and poems appear in journals and anthologies. *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research* is in its fourth edition. Her newest book explores issues in teaching nonfiction. Bonnie has received awards and grants for excellence in teaching and outreach projects involving teachers, students, and university faculties locally, nationally, and internationally.



Paddy Bowman is Founding Director of Local Learning and creator of numerous folklore and education resources. She co-edited *Through the Schoolhouse Door: Folklore, Community, Curriculum* (2011) and co-wrote a chapter in *Folklife and Museums*. She was awarded the Benjamin A. Botkin Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Public Folklore and is a Fellow of the American Folklore Society. Reach her at pbbowman@gmail.com.

Lisa Rathje is Executive Director of Local Learning. She also teaches in the Goucher College Masters in Cultural Sustainability program. She currently serves on the Arts Education Partnership Equity and Higher Education Working Groups. Reach her at lisa@locallearningnetwork.org.