Oral History Bibliography


NIU FML HQ1122.W675


NIU FML BF371.M449


NIU FML E175.D38

In this essay, Davidson and Lytle discuss the difficulties of attempting to piece together the history of former slaves following the American Civil War. Few slaves and former slaves left written accounts, not least because their masters had often prevented their slaves from learning to read and write. The accounts of slaveholders are clearly biased, and accounts by Northerners, even the abolitionists among them, often betray racist assumptions all too prevalent at the time. One source that historians seeking the voice of the freedpeople can look to are the oral histories of former slaves collected as part of the New Deal’s Federal Writers Project. Davidson and Lytle argue, however, that even these must be read skeptically. The conditions under which the histories were collected need to be taken into account when using the histories. One especially illustrative example they cite is that of a former slave interviewed by two separate members of the FWP, one a white woman and the other most likely a black man. The essay’s authors reproduce the transcripts of the two interviews. The differences between them are stark. Davidson and Lytle’s analysis of the differences are astute. The discussion can serve as a cautionary tale for those embarking on their own interviews. The essay does a good job of

* Denotes Presence in CLLAS Oral History Resources Binder: Oral History Methodology
discussing the importance, usefulness, and pitfalls of oral histories as sources. However, the 
essay is not a model for citation. It contains no footnotes, despite significant discussion of others’ 
work. The authors do append a brief bibliographic essay, but this is hardly acceptable, given that 
the essay offers a brief overview of the history of the post-abolition period.


**Dunaway, David K. and Willa Baum, eds.** *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology.* 2nd 
ed. Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 1996.

NIU FML D16.14.O73


In this short article, the authors report and analyze the results of an experiment conducted 
through the *Slate* online magazine. Readers were asked to provide their memories of five news 
events, each of which was briefly described and accompanied by a photograph. One of the five 
events was a fabrication. Half of the respondents reported remembering the false news story. The 
researchers found that people were more likely to consider the false event true based on their 
political leanings, so that Republicans were more likely to remember President Barack Obama 
shaking hands with the leader of Iran and Democrats were more likely to remember President 
George W. Bush playing golf in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The authors offer a helpful 
review of earlier research into false memories in setting up the results of this latest experiment. 
Earlier research demonstrated that people were more likely to form a false memory if 
photographs, whether doctored or not, were introduced. This research is of interest to students 
conducting oral history interviews because it raises the possibility that interviewers may be able 
to inadvertently elicit false memories if they present events within a certain framework. This is 
especially applicable to the formation of questions in the two-sentence format, in the use of 
prompts (especially photographs), and in the general conduct of interviews. Also of interest may 
be the TedTalk by one of the article’s co-authors, Elizabeth Loftus, “The Fiction of Memory,” 


Writer Michael Lewis speaks with Emir Kamenica, who claims that his path to college started by plagiarizing a book he’d stolen from a library in his war-torn home country of Bosnia. A student teacher was so impressed with his work that she rescued him from a terrible high school and got him into an elite secondary institution. He then attended Harvard and became a professor. Years later, Lewis tracks down the student teacher so that Kamenica can thank her, only to find that she remembers the story differently. The radio program makes it clear that memory is tricky and can be manipulated by the stories we tell ourselves about our past. The radio piece can encourage the oral historian not to take recollections at face value.


I-Share HD 8039.S86 P86

This book was originally written in 1960 and is based on field work which the author accomplished in the years 1949, 1953 and 1956. When the life-history was first published it was a pioneering work in the field of oral history, as at that time social scientists were hardly concerned with rural minorities. The subject of the book converted to Pentecostalism after publication of the first edition, and the author discusses the changes in outlook the subject has experienced. The subject is atypical in that he is white, while the majority of the inhabitants of the sugar growing lowlands in Puerto Rico are of African descent. Nevertheless the accounts given by the subject mostly in his own words give us a good picture of life in this plantation area. We learn a great deal about customs, traditions, religious attitudes and folk-medical practices. There is a great importance of compadrazgo-relationships to extend the original kinship-network and to foster mutual aid. The subject was involved in labor activism, but later repudiates his work in this area. Each chapter contains a section that explains the exposed data, giving them more relevance for the student of social systems. In his introduction, Mintz familiarizes his readers with the Puerto Rican scene he studied for years. A large section of the book relates how the hero and his family were converted to Pentecostalism. The conversion was a major event in the life of Taso. It shows the importance of revivalistic sects in Puerto Rico, mainly for proletarians in search of a new identity. We also learn a great deal about traditional and modern working practices in the canefields and the shift from paternalism to industrial relations in sugar production since the American occupation in 1900. The book is of outmost importance for the study of socio-psychological changes that occur in many areas of the world today and served as an example for investigations of this kind by anthropologists.


NIU FML JV6455 .M67

Morrison and Zabusky present 126 immigrants’ stories in this oral history edited in a way reminiscent of Studs Terkel’s books. Like Terkel, Morrison and Zabusky have pared down the interviews to what they see as the “core,” focusing on “what is significant in each case.” The interviews sought to answer three questions: why did the immigrant travel to the U.S., how did he travel, and what did he find in the U.S.? These questions do not appear in the text of the stories, and the very few questions that do appear seem to be those that cannot be avoided through clever editing. The editors wrote that they worked from a set of standard questions, which they do not include (unless those above can be said to be representational, which is highly doubtful, given their sparseness and some people’s penchant for short answers, especially when a tape recorder is present). The effect is that the book seems to be a series of short stories told by immigrants to the United States from all around the world.

Morrison and Zabusky arrange these stories roughly chronologically, separating them into three distinct periods, which they borrow from the literature on the history of U.S. immigration. The first period began with the inception of the colonial project and lasted until about the mid to late 1930s. This period included a motley bunch: the early English settlers, the Chinese immigrants who worked on the railroads and in the gold mines in the American West, Mexican immigrants to the American Southwest following the Mexican-American War (and what historians have crassly called The Gadsden “Purchase”), the potato-famine Irish, and the Germans and Italians fleeing civil strife and poverty in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, among many others. This period includes the 1882 legislation forbidding the entry of certain “undesirables” and the Chinese Exclusion Act, which made U.S. citizenship unattainable for these Far Easterners; the massive influx between 1900 and 1914 of some thirteen million people; and the first quota in 1921 and subsequent quotas. Morrison and Zabusky call this period “The Last of the Old: The Traditional Immigrants” for the purpose of their book. Since they do not spell out what they mean by this phrase, we can infer that they see this period as the founding period of the U.S., and see the experiences of these people as somehow set apart from those who follow. The phrase itself borders on nostalgia.

Most of the stories were gathered from the type of people that one typically identifies with an oral history project; those who would be unlikely to document their story in written form; the common or everyman. However, there are exceptions. Included in this volume are the stories of statesmen, celebrities, and some famous merchants. Prime among these are Alistair Cooke, W. Michael Blumenthal, Edward Teller, Eugene Wigner, and Denise Levertov. The selections in the book are from less than a page to five pages, and these seemingly more noteworthy subjects’ stories are afforded a higher number of pages than most.


This fact sheet provides information in bullet-point form for working with people who have experienced trauma. It may be helpful for interviewers whose subjects will be talking about traumatic events in their pasts, e.g. losing a loved one, abuse, being arrested, detained, or deported. It provides some suggestions for further reading. The NCPTSD website has additional resources in English and Spanish. It may be something helpful to which to direct subjects who have experienced trauma.

Necoecha Gracia, Gerardo. “‘My Mother Told Me’: Two Women’s Point of View on Home and Work/ ‘Mi mamá me platicó’: punto de vista e historia reciente.” Oral History Forum d’histoire orale 32 (2012).


This short book is an essential resource for those establishing an oral history program or beginning a research project in oral history. Neuenschwander supports the Oral History Association’s Principles and Best Practices and explains why some of them are so important. The book is aimed at preventing litigation that might arise from oral history interviews and raising ethical concerns about the conduct, storing, and use of oral history interviews. Neuenschwander reviews relevant case history. There is not much directly related to oral history—the main example of this is the subpoena of oral histories as part of a criminal investigation of activities during the Troubles in Northern Ireland as part of Boston College’s oral history project. The university was unable to resist turning over the interviews, despite assurances by the interviewers that the materials would be kept confidential. The interviews were not protected by press privilege, nor by a theoretical and related academic privilege. No archive privilege exists, either. Therefore, interviewers cannot legally or ethically guarantee confidentiality. Other topics discussed in the volume include copyright, deed of gift forms, defamation liability, online publication of interview materials, and Institutional Review Boards. Strongly recommended, as it raises legal and ethical issues that one might not otherwise consider.

NIU Law Library (1st ed. 2009) KF390.O7 N48


http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/


NIU FML D16.14 .O76

Pisani, Alejandra and Ana Jemio. “Building the Testimonial Archive of the Operativo Independencia and the Military Dictatorship in Famaillá/El proceso de construcción


NIU FML LA430.T55 P613

This translation of Poniatowska’s 1971 La noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral [NIU FML LA430.T55 P6], is a classic of Latin American oral history.


NIU FML D16.14 .R57


NIU FML CT220 .T42


NIU FML F548.5 .T37


NIU FML HQ1064.U5 T44

NIU FML F548.52 .T4


NIU FML ML385 .T45


NIU FML D811.A2 T45


NIU FML E839 .T47


NIU FML E806.T45


NIU FML BD216 .T47


NIU FML CT220 .T43


NIU FML AC8 .T38


NIU FML E184.A1 T46


NIU FML PN1583 .T39


NIU FML BD444 .T47

NIU FML HD8072 .T4


In this brief article, Thompson cautions against relying too heavily upon interviews to reconstruct the past, echoing calls by other authors to take seriously the problems with memory. She also points out the emotional hazards to interview subjects in recalling traumatic events in their pasts and the difficult situation this creates for the interviewer.


NIU FML F291.2 .F6