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Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez

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The Multiple Individual Interview Session: An Effective Method to Recover the Latina/o Perspective

MAGGIE RIVAS-RODRIGUEZ

In general, oral history texts suggest conducting interviews in the homes of interview subjects, where they will be more inclined to open up. However, there may be an urgency to conduct several interviews more quickly and to ensure that good production values are maintained. One approach has been developed by the Voces Oral History Project that allows interviewers to record up to fourteen interviews in one day.

ONE CHILLY, DAMP SUNDAY MORNING IN THE SPRING OF 2013, A SKEPTICAL Modesto Arriaga arrived at the church hall in a Houston suburb where my students and I were holding an all-day interview session. My class had spent the spring semester learning about the political engagement of residents of nearby Rosenberg, Texas, forty miles southwest of Houston. Arriaga had initially agreed to be interviewed, but had backed out the week before—without explanation, simply telling me he was not interested.

That morning he came by to drop off his wife, Felicita Arriaga, a woman who had run for office and become a political force. (Modesto Arriaga had been less directly involved, but we knew his perspective would be valuable.)

As he sat with his wife, waiting for her interview, Modesto Arriaga chatted with several of his neighbors who were also scheduled to be interviewed—sharing photos, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings. After his wife and neighbors had dispersed to their individual interview rooms, Arriaga approached me. He had second thoughts: he wanted to be interviewed after all. I interviewed him myself—my students were all occupied. It was an unforgettable interview, with clear

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Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez is a professor of journalism at the Moody College of Communication at the University of Texas at Austin. She founded and directs the Voces Oral History Project (formerly the US Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project).

Figure 1. Modesto Arriaga (center) looks on as Lupe Uresti (left), former mayor of Rosenberg, shares her scrapbook with him and his wife, Felicita. Richmond, Texas, March 23, 2014. Photo by Martin do Nascimento.

insights into the political powerlessness of the Mexican American people of his town and anecdotes that underscored his conclusions. He told us about how a Mexican American boy drowned in a dangerous river, the only way children of color could cool off in hot summer months because the city pool was only for whites. Once the parish priest became aware of the injustice, he appeared before the town's council, backed up by the children's parents, adamant that the pool—paid for with taxpayer funds—should be open to all the town's children equally. Restrictions on the pool were lifted. Arriaga talked about the accommodations his family made when his wife became politically active. Asked what he cooked for the couple's five children while his wife was campaigning, he laughed and said he didn't cook; he made sandwiches. He admitted he was glad that she had not won her election; she would be spending more time with the family.¹

Had it not been for that group gathering before the interview, Arriaga's story would have been left unrecorded. The peer affirmation that comes before one of our large sessions is an important characteristic of the multiple individual interview session, or MIIS. But there are several other reasons the Voces Oral History Project conducts a MIIS at least once a year as a way to record up to fourteen interviews in a day—seven in the morning and seven in the afternoon.² In this essay, I analyze the event itself as both a teaching tool that may be built into oral history classes, as well as a way to

record large numbers of interviews expeditiously. I critique the sessions, delineating the advantages and disadvantages of conducting these interview sessions. And I share with readers our methodology, in the event they wish to hold a MIIS themselves.

Pros and Cons

The MIIS is not in the lexicon of oral history. The major oral history methodology texts lay out the importance of one-on-one interviews, conducting interviews in the interview subject's home or other location where she or he is most comfortable, and holding repeated interviews with the same interview subject to tie up lingering questions.³ But our project, initially dedicated to recording interviews with World War II-era Latinas and Latinos, encountered an obstacle: how to conduct as many quality interviews as possible, as efficiently as possible. The need for finding ways to do large numbers of interviews quickly became evident at the launch of our project. In 1999 when our oral history project began, the World War II veterans and civilians were in their seventies, and many even older. After an initial newspaper column on July 4, 1999, outlined our effort, we were inundated by requests for interviews.⁴ Then—and even now—it was a race against time. The aging veterans and civilians were aware of how imperative it was to conduct interviews as soon as possible. Their stories were crucial to tell the story of the US involvement in World War II, on the battlefield and on the home front. Many of the interviews could be conducted by me and others I had trained, but it was essential to involve my students (I am a professor in the School of Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin). I launched a class, now called Oral History as Journalism, in which my students could be trained to conduct interviews. With this class, there was another calendar to mind: students needed to get their interviews completed within the sixteen weeks of a semester.

In the early semesters, students went to interview subjects' homes in pairs, one to conduct the interview and the other to record the interview. Over the course of a few semesters, I developed the MIIS as a methodology to create a common schedule for my students and to have control over the technical quality of the interview. But it is important to note that the Voces Oral History Project has conducted most MIISes outside of the classroom, using volunteers and staff.

The advantages of the multiple individual interview sessions are these:

1. One trained videographer is able to set up seven video cameras, microphones (for both interviewer and interviewee), and lights at one location, though in separate rooms. This economy of scale is key. Setting up and tearing down equipment is time consuming—it can take an hour or more to have everything in place.
2. We are able to help students who run into technical problems with cameras or microphones.

Figure 2. Adolfo Alvarez is interviewed at his home in Pearsall, Texas, on February 28, 2015. Photo by Ray Santisteban.

3. Our class can build toward the climax of the MIIS: In the first twelve weeks of the class, students learned about the topic, the experience of Latinos/as regarding the topic, oral history, best interviewing techniques, archival concerns, and ethical issues. The final four weeks are spent writing an index of the interview and creating a journalistic treatment of the interview.
4. We are able to ensure some degree of quality control in making sure that the interview subject's photos were scanned during an interview session and that the hefty preinterview form was completed—particularly the all-important consent form.⁵
5. We are able to dedicate two or three people to scan large numbers of photos or certificates and documents on-site during the interview and return them to the interview subject after the interview.

Two of the main advantages of the MIIS, though, were ones I had not anticipated: the creation of a sense of community among the interview subjects as they awaited their turn and the feeling by some interview subjects of the importance we were attaching to their perspectives.

This elevation of the interview as an important event was borne out in 2016 in Uvalde, Texas, where students and volunteers were conducting interviews with

Figure 3. Mexican American public school students in Uvalde, Texas, stage a walkout in the spring of 1970 to protest racial discrimination. The walkout would leave lingering divisions. Courtesy of Alfredo Santos.

participants of a 1970 public school walkout to protest discrimination against Mexican Americans. The walkout had been a traumatic event in the town, dividing it largely along racial lines. The school board refused to acquiesce to any of the student and parent demands. After six long weeks of protest, the students were forced to return to school, without an opportunity to make up their work. Instead, the school district ordered that all students be required to repeat the grade; many seniors dropped out or earned their GEDs. One of the seniors was Eleazar “Lee” Lugo, who initially seemed somewhat defiant about participating in our project and, in fact, suspicious of our work. He would require a special touch to draw him out, I concluded.

My students learn ways to transcend racial, gender, and generational differences. Many of my students are non-Latino, and the vast majority of our interview subjects are Latino. While usually more than half of my students are female, at least half of any interview group is male. All of my students are in their twenties, with very few older; most of our interview subjects are in their late sixties or older. As a general rule, my students are able to make connections with those men and women who are different from them. However, if I perceive those differences to create such a barrier that the interview will suffer, I find it is best to find an interviewer who more closely matches the interview subject. I matched Lugo up with volunteer Jorge Haynes, a Vietnam-era veteran who has been trained in collecting oral history and has

conducted some of our most important interviews.⁶ Lugo was a splendid interview. He opened up to Haynes and spoke of overcoming the educational challenges of being a migrant farmworker. He was an A and B student—mostly As, yet he “never cracked a book” because he could retain everything. The walkout was unsuccessful in effecting any lasting change, he said; in Uvalde, Mexican Americans were still relatively powerless. But there was one thing: his former Anglo classmates and his Mexican American classmates got along well and respected one another.

Months later, Lugo traveled the 162 miles from Uvalde to Austin in driving rain to deliver additional materials to deposit with our project. I turned on a tape recorder and asked him what had caused his change of heart:

At the time, I didn't know what was going to transpire as far as our interview, what you wanted, what you were trying to get from the people in the walkout from us, forty years later, forty-five years later. And slowly I thought about it and it seems like you're trying to seek an answer as to why we committed ourselves to losing. And we did lose, in that sense, we didn't graduate. . . .

Figure 4. Eleazar “Lee” Lugo (right) shares material with Alfredo Santos (left) after driving from his home in Uvalde to Austin. August 17, 2016. Photo by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez.

[Initially] I just thought it [the interview] was just for an off-the-wall newspaper. But then . . . I realized it wasn't something that was going to be small. But it had to do with something concerning the university, concerning a publication that was going to be available for generations . . . to see that change has to have a starting point, any change. . . . And when I saw that you guys were going to be committed, to save it, give it light, I decided I needed to share with you more of what I've seen.⁷

In the weeks following the initial interview, Lugo had run into other interview subjects, and they discussed what had transpired during the interview session. Lugo acknowledged that the response of his former classmates had also given him a different outlook:

After the interview, it wasn't any specific thing about what they [former classmates] said, but what they said about the interview, what they felt was going to happen with the interview, how they [the interviews] were going to be put out, how they were going to be saved for people to be able to understand what happened.⁸

To that end, we strive to create an atmosphere that underscores the seriousness of our effort. Potential interview subjects are contacted beforehand by me. I determine who has a key perspective to add, relying on recommendations from other interview subjects, as well as getting names from newspaper clippings and other sources. I call each one, explaining what we are doing and seeking their participation. If they are able, I ask them whether the morning or afternoon session fits better. Once their participation has been determined, about ten days before the interview, we send each of them a personalized letter (on Voces University of Texas letterhead), confirming their participation in either the morning or the afternoon sessions and providing more detail. They are asked to bring photos, any diaries, certificates, news clippings, and so on, which are then scanned with portable scanners at six hundred dots per inch and saved as high-resolution TIFs. We call each interview subject the day before to confirm participation and to remind them to bring photos and other materials.

Students are assigned their interview subject in advance—undergraduates conduct one interview for the semester; graduate students in the professional masters of journalism programs conduct two. Students must prepare questions geared to their own specific interview subject. And there are more general questions that may apply to all the interviews. Throughout the semester, all readings are applied to the interview: how might this issue—say, reticence in an interview⁹—affect your own interview? Two weeks before the MIIS, students submit a draft of their questions tailored to

Figure 5. Interview subjects gather at a table before their interviews, hearing Voces Oral History Project director Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez outline the procedure. Hondo, Texas, April 8, 2018. Photo by José Centeno-Melendez.

their subject and including general questions, where appropriate. I edit the questions, suggest different wording and transitions, and recommend additional questions.

On the day of the MIIS, we hold a short orientation for both the morning and the afternoon interview subjects during which we thank them for being part of an effort to record the US Latino story. We provide coffee and a light snack in the morning; for the afternoon session, we bring in tacos or sandwiches and drinks. Interview subjects who arrive early are welcome to join us as we grab a bite. We explain what we are doing, why we are doing it, where the interviews will be housed, and the participants' rights as interview subjects. Student interviewers (or volunteers in some cases) introduce themselves to their subjects and fill out their preinterview form, learning more about the interviewees in doing so.

Advantages for Students

Students in this class are either undergraduate or graduate students in our School of Journalism, or graduate students in Mexican American studies, which cross-lists the class. Participating in an MIIS imbues them with a sense of legitimacy that too

Figure 6. University of Texas at Austin student Elizabeth Huang helps Ruben Alvarado complete his preinterview form. Hondo, Texas, April 8, 2018. Photo by José Centeno-Melendez.

Figure 7. University of Texas at Austin student Alejandra Barrios (right) poses with her interview subject, Ricardo Cantu. Pearsall, Texas, March 28, 2015. Photo by Ray Santisteban.

often eludes young people conducting oral histories. Alejandra Barrios was one those students who traveled to Pearsall in 2015 to interview men and women affected by the 1975 Voting Rights Act. In a reflection essay, Barrios said:

I liked that the interviews were done in a little town like Pearsall, Texas because . . . it seemed that since it was little, all the people knew each other. Also, all the interviewees were really nice during the interview. They took us really seriously even though we were students. They showed respect to us, but most important, they took their time to come and help us do the interviews. I really appreciate what they did for us. To be honest, not many people take students seriously when doing an interview.¹⁰

For many students, the MIIS trips are their only field trips in college. Students room together in hotel rooms, work hard to complete all the tasks necessary, and are rightfully proud of the key role they play in creating a historical record. In exchange for their contribution, Voces covers their transportation, food, and lodging.¹¹ Undergraduate Stacie Richard noted that the trip itself functioned to make her feel closer to her classmates:

Figure 8. University of Texas at Austin student Stacie Richard (right) poses with her interview subject, Yolanda Treviño. Pearsall, Texas, March 28, 2015. Photo by Ray Santisteban.

Figure 9. University of Texas at Austin student Prakriti Bhardwaj (foreground) learns to set up backdrops in preparation for interviews in a classroom at Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde. Gabriel C. Perez shows her how. April 8, 2016. Photo by Eli Reed.

The trip to Pearsall was a great bonding and learning experience with my fellow classmates. I enjoyed everything from the setup of equipment, to the wonderful dinner at the resident's house, to the actual interview day.¹²

The Cons

There are disadvantages of the MIIS. It is in some regards a sort of mass-produced interview session. Interview subjects are not in their homes or other familiar surroundings. Instead, they are in college or high school classrooms that are temporarily converted into studios complete with backdrops, lights, video cameras, and microphones. Rather than the homey appearance of family photographs in the background, we use uniform cloudy-blue backdrops.

But we weigh that disadvantage against the ability to recording important interviews that might otherwise be lost. In one day, we can interview up to fourteen people. If we were going to individual homes, we would do well to interview that same number in one week, assuming two a day. It would be impossible for my small, part-time staff and dedicated volunteers to commit one week to doing two interviews per day—particularly out of town.

That said, we also do interviews in different settings, in people's homes and in a studio space we have access to. This is determined by scheduling and, in the case of out-of-town trips, resources.

Would the interviews be better—that is, would the men and women interview subjects share their stories more freely, tell us more intimate details than they do when they're sitting in a classroom? There is no way to tell, of course. But I offer that we have not noted a significant reticence. Men and women have conveyed their personal memories and insights liberally. I believe that among the men and women who have agreed to the interview, there is an understanding of the importance of what we are doing; without an intervention such as an oral history interview, their perspectives will likely go undocumented. Our project is essentially a partnership of the Voces staff, volunteers, students, interview subjects, and sponsors; our common goal is to document the participation of US Latinos/as. We have been fortunate that so many believe in our mission. In 2016, we conducted thirteen interviews in Pearsall, Texas, 135 miles south of San Antonio, centered on the 1975 Voting Rights Act, which extended protections to Latinos. Some of the principal actors, including four former attorneys for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, or MALDEF, drove 111 miles round-trip from San Antonio to Pearsall to be interviewed. They recognized the importance of chronicling this important event in our country's history.

Finally, once the interview gets under way, the rapport between interviewer and interviewee seems to overcome the uniform backdrops in the makeshift studios. As World War II veteran Miguel Morado wrote in 2010 to then history graduate student and Voces staffer Valerie Martinez after she interviewed him at length in a Kansas City college classroom, "You made me feel important."¹³

The Development of the MIIS

When I first began teaching oral history in the fall of 1999, students were expected to videotape their own individual interviews, using equipment from the College of

Figure 10. World War II veteran Mike Morado with Valerie Martinez after his interview. Kansas City, Kansas, June 17, 2010. Photo by Marc Hamel.

Communication's equipment checkout service. The class at that time focused on the US Latino/a World War II experience. Students read a history of World War II and excerpts from oral history texts.¹⁴ Interviews took place in people's homes in the Austin area. The results were generally good, but sometimes the quality of video was uneven—some students were quite expert in framing the interview subject and making sure the lighting was on the subject, rather than behind the subject. But a few were not. Scheduling was sometimes problematic—students were responsible for scheduling their own interviews, after receiving their assigned interview subject's name and contact information.

I had, by that time, developed a backlog of people in other parts of Texas, and in fact, in other parts of the country who wished to be interviewed. I knew I would need to transport my students to different cities—and with them the equipment necessary. The most efficient way to do this was en masse. Our first MIIS was in Austin in 2002 at the Veterans Readjustment Counseling Service, or Vet Centers, offices. I developed a template, which has since been tweaked and replicated thirty-four times, not always in connection with a class. Through a partnership with the Vet Centers, most of our early MIISes were at their offices throughout the country.¹⁵

How We Do It

One of the most exciting things about doing oral history on the US Latina/o experience is that sense of plowing new ground: there is little or no research on the specific topics we study most semesters. For instance, we may find newspaper clippings or dissertations or master's theses. But more often than not, this is pristine territory. We use readings that touch on, but are not usually directly about, the topic. It is a challenge, but also, for those who don't mind living on the edge, it is exciting: we know that what we are recording will provide the primary source material that may be used in future books or journal articles.

Interview Subjects

Finding that first interview contact is key. In the case of the 1975 Voting Rights Act, our first interview was a former MALDEF attorney named Al Kauffman.¹⁶ Kauffman drove to Austin for us to interview him and learn about his involvement. Kauffman opened the doors to several other former MALDEF attorneys, who in turn suggested that Pearsall was a central location. One of the key people who testified before Congress in 1975 was a local farmer named Modesto Rodriguez. The MALDEF attorneys and former MALDEF attorneys had credited Rodriguez with playing an essential role—and shared that Rodriguez had been beaten by law enforcement officials for his involvement. Rodriguez had suffered a massive stroke some years earlier and was not

Figure 11. World War II veteran Carlos Cavazos with University of Texas at Austin student Yvonne Lim at the San Antonio Veterans Readjustment Counseling Center, October 25, 2003. Photo by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez.

able to be interviewed. But because he was from Pearsall, that became our location. And from there, we found several more interview possibilities.

MIIS Location and Setup

If possible, I like to be able to scout the location beforehand; schools are particularly good. We need someplace with good surface parking, access to a large central room, like a cafeteria or a library, and at least seven rooms without accordion partitions between them (the sound tends to bleed through the partitions), preferably away from noisy bathrooms. Sometimes we are asked to pay for the location, but it is generally a small fee.

Our class is typically taught in the spring semester, so we build toward a MIIS that takes place in late March or early April. We arrive to our MIIS location on a Saturday afternoon and unload equipment and set up as much as possible. Setup generally takes three hours.

In the interview rooms, we set up the backdrops, which must be steamed to take out wrinkles, and lights to make sure they are at the best locations. Cameras may be set up that afternoon, for staging purposes, but may be taken down for the night for security reasons. Students are shown how to set up backdrops, how to steam them, how to set up lights and microphones, and what is needed by the videographer.

In a central area, usually a cafeteria or library, we create a headquarters, a place where subjects can congregate for coffee and refreshments before and after their interview.

This is essential, as interview subjects are able to visit and share their photographs. The central area is also where students or volunteers scan photographs with portable scanners. Large, clear Ziploc bags are labeled with people's names to avoid mix-ups. As noted earlier, this staging area is also an important meeting place for the men and women who will be interviewed. The casual conversation before and after has

been known to lead them to reevaluate their own perspective and to reinforce what *Voces* is trying to convey: their stories are of the utmost importance to including the Latino/a perspective in the broader historical narrative.

Conclusion

The Multiple Individual Interview Session, or MIIS, is a useful strategy for capturing large numbers of interviews expeditiously when time is of the essence, because of the limited availability of interview subjects, the physical fragility of the interview subjects, or the geographical distance from them.

As interview subjects meet in a staging area before the MIIS, they are able to converse with one another, and those exchanges may lead them to think more deeply about the interview experience and, that, in turn, may result in their greater commitment to the project.

As part of an oral history class, the MIIS provides a natural apex within the semester, as students build up to it and then spend the

Figure 12. Videographer Gabriel C. Perez shows University of Texas at Austin students how to set up lights in preparation for their interviews. Left to right: Brigit Benestante, Anna Casey, Prakriti Bhardwaj, and Reina Olivas. Uvalde, Texas, April 8, 2016. Photo by Eli Reed.

weeks after the interview creating indices and multimedia treatments from them.

The disadvantages of the “mass-produced” nature of the MIIS are outweighed by the possibility of recording interviews that might otherwise be lost.

Essentially the oral history interviews of US Latinas and Latinos are a recovery effort undertaken as a partnership among interviewers, interview subjects, and the collecting group, in our case, the *Voces* Oral History Project. Interview subjects are cognizant of the need to document the stories, experiences, and perspectives of US Latinos and Latinas and of the fact that their collaboration is essential. With scarce resources, oral historians must think creatively to find ways to tell the stories of underrepresented peoples.

The Voces Oral History Project has found the MIIS to be an effective way of ensuring technical video and audio quality control, of capturing more than a dozen interviews on one day, and of creating a bonding experience for students within a large university, as well as for interview subjects.

Appendix A. Supply and equipment checklist for a multiple individual interview session (MIIS)

Equipment	Amount needed	Notes
Video camera	8	One extra, in case of malfunction
Memory cards	16	For camera, the number varies, depending on how much each one holds
Tripods	7	For cameras
XLR cable	16	Two per camera
Sony EMC mics	16	Lavalier, both interviewee and interviewer
Scanner	2	For scanning interview subjects' photos, documents
Laptop	2	To hook up to scanners
External hard drives	2	To save photo and document scans
Gaffer tape	1	Big yellow tape, to mark placement of tripods, cameras, chairs
AA batteries	pack	For microphones
Headphones	7	For monitoring interviews
Sandbags	14	To hold backdrops or lights in place
Backdrops	7	
Backdrop stands	7	
Clamps	14	To hold backdrops up on backdrop stand
Extension cords	7	Use AC adapter, rather than camera battery, for reliability
Power strips	7	In the event the lights are too far from electrical plug
Large lights	7	We use three-point lights, a large one and two small ones (below)
Small lights	14	
Light stands	21	
Grip head	10	
Clamps	15	

Office Supplies	Amount needed	Notes
Clipboards	8	For interviewers to use (for preinterview forms and then questions)
Large Ziplocs	box	Each subject will have a labeled Ziploc bag for photos and documents, to ensure photos and documents are not commingled
Wire baskets	4	Labeled to hold completed preinterview forms, materials to be scanned, etc.
File folders	box	Each interview subject's signed preinterview form will have its own folder
Preinterview forms	22+	
Interview questions	14	Each student should bring his or her own questions
Project banners	3	(Not essential)
Packing tape	1	
Sharpies	5	For labeling
Brochures	Stack	To hand out to interview subjects
Rubber bands	Handful	
Signs	4	For wire baskets
Printer paper	Ream	In box
Post-it notes		
Steamer	2 or more	For steaming backdrops
Index cards	3 stacks	For video monitor to hand to interviewer, suggesting additional questions
Rope	2 coils	To hold up Voces banners

Appendix B. Course schedule

Oral History as Journalism
 The Voting Rights Act in Medina County
 Course Sked
 Spring 2018

Week 1: Intro to Oral History

Jan. 17: Wednesday: Intros

Week 2: Indexing/Website Team Formation/65 VRA

Monday, Jan. 22: Indexing assignments—Training in class. Learn how to index an existing interview. Part of this assignment is to evaluate the interview (Assign teams for website reviews).

Wednesday, Jan. 24: The 1965 Voting Rights Act: “The Color of Law: Voting Rights and the Southern Way of Life,” *New Yorker*, July 8, 2013

Week 3: Indexing/Foundation of '75 VRA

Monday: No class

Wednesday: Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Texas Mexican Americans and Postwar Civil Rights*, Chapter 3 MALDEF (find it as an electronic resource on the Library website at Texas Mexican Americans and Postwar Civil Rights)

Week 4: The Expanse of Oral History

Monday, Feb. 5: Web presentations

Wednesday, Feb. 7: On Canvas: newspaper clippings about the Medina County lawsuit

Week 5: Deep into the '75 VRA

Monday, Feb. 12: Index #1 Due

Interview Analysis Due

Discuss: Parts 1 & 2—The 1975 Voting Rights Act, audio podcast by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez for Digital Humanities (<https://humanitiesmediaproject.org/voting-rights-act-1975>)

Wednesday, Feb. 14: Listen to Part 3—The 1975 Voting Rights Act, audio podcast by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez for Digital Humanities

Week 6: Oral history

Monday, Feb. 19: *White v. Regester*

Readings: On Canvas

Wednesday, Feb. 21: In-class interview with Jose Garza, former MALDEF attorney who represented plaintiffs against the Medina County Commissioners Court

Week 7: Relationships between Interviewers and Interviewees

Monday, Feb. 26: Coursepack: from Ritchie, Chapter 1 “Oral History,” pp. 19–46 + notes pp. 261–266

Coursepack: from Perks and Allistair, Chapter 3, Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” pp. 32–42

Wednesday, Feb. 28: Benefits to the interviewee and ethics & legalities

Coursepack: Ritchie, Chapter 3, “Conducting Interviews” pp. 84–109 + notes pp. 268–270

Coursepack: David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, introduction, foreword, afterword, in "Vietnam": A Portrait of Its People at War (London: Tauris Park, 2009), ix-xxxii and 203-210

Week 8: Relationships between Interviewers and Interviewees

Monday, March 5: Coursepack: E. Culpepper Clark, "Reconstructing History: The Epitomizing Image," in *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, ed. Eva M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 19-30

Coursepack: Ritchie, Chapter 2, "Setting Up an Oral History Project," pp. 47-83

Wednesday, March 7: Coursepack: Yow, Chapter 4, "Interviewing Techniques," pp. 92-120

Week 9: Spring Break

Week 10: Getting Down to the Raisins

Monday, March 19: Reading: On Canvas, Tracy E. K'Meyer and A. Glenn Crothers, "If I See Some of This in Writing, I'm Writing, I'm Going to Shoot You": Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics, and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian

Tentative: Get names of your interview subjects and some background. Begin writing your individualized questions.

Wednesday, March 21: Coursepack: Yow, Chapter 6, "Legalities and Ethics," pp. 121-156

Week 11: Interview Dynamics

Monday, March 26: On Canvas: Lenore Layman, Reticence in Oral History Interviews

Wednesday, March 28: On Canvas: Dejah T. Rubel, Accessing Their Voice from Anywhere: Analysis of the Legal Issues Surrounding the Online Use of Oral Histories

Due: First Draft of Individualized Questions

Week 12:

Monday, April 2:

Receive remarks from your interviews. Discuss in class. Role-play difficult questions.

Wednesday, April 4: Final individual questions due.

Saturday, April 7: Depart for Medina County.

Week 13:

Monday, April 9: No class.

Wednesday, April 11: Postmortem: What worked? What didn't?

Field notes due

Week 14:

Monday, April 16: Indexing your interview

Wednesday, April 18: Creating multimedia with your interview

Week 15:

Monday, April 23:

Wednesday, April 25: flex day

Index due

Week 16:

Monday, April 30: flex day

Wednesday, May 2: Last class day. Potluck party.

Professional masters and undergrads: Multimedia due

Monday, May 7:

Professional masters: Second index due

Theory students: Academic paper due

Notes

1. Modesto Arriaga, videotape interview by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Richmond, TX, March 23, 2014, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries (hereafter Voces Oral History Project, as the Benson Latin American collection houses all Voces documents and recordings referred to here).

2. Originally, when I created the project in 1999, it was the US Latino & Latina World War II Oral History Project. In 2010, when we expanded to the Korean and Vietnam War periods, we changed the name to Voces Oral History Project. For more information, please see <https://vocesoralhistoryproject.org>.

3. Some oral historians are known to conduct dozens of hours of interview over many days. They include, for instance, Tracy E. K'Meyer and A. Glenn Crothers, who interviewed an African American woman for thirty-two hours over three months. The woman, who was light-skinned and traveled in both black and white worlds, seemed to be at times disinclined toward and dismissive of her racial identity, and at other times voluble about the topic. They detail their conclusions in "If I See Some of This in Writing, I'm Writing, I'm Going to Shoot You': Reluctant Narrators, Taboo Topics, and the Ethical Dilemmas of the Oral Historian," *Oral History Review* 34, no. 1 (2007): 71–93.

4. Veronica Flores, "WWII Latinos Sought Liberty, too," *San Antonio (TX) Express-News*, July 4, 1999, 2G. The column appeared on a Sunday; when I arrived at work on Monday morning, I found seventeen messages, the maximum number allowed in my voice mail. I also found dozens of emails from people who wanted to be interviewed or wanted a loved one to be interviewed. It was obvious that there was a tremendous interest—and demand.

5. The Voces Oral History Project uses a template developed by the Holocaust Survivors Oral History Project. We asked for, and received permission from, the Holocaust group to adapt its impressive form to our own needs. It has been revised several times but includes information about birthplace, birthdate, military experience, educational attainment, names and information on both parents, as well as names of siblings, spouses, and children. Interview subjects choose whether to allow us to include their preinterview form—stripped of contact information for them and their next of kin—in their public file.

6. Eleazar "Lee" Lugo, videotaped interview by Jorge Haynes, Uvalde, TX, April 9, 2016, Voces Oral History Project.

7. Eleazar Lugo, audio recorded interview by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, Austin, TX, August 17, 2016, Voces Oral History Project.

8. Lugo interview, August 17, 2016.

9. Lenore Layman, "Reticence in Oral History Interviews," *Oral History Review* 36, no. 2 (Summer-Fall 2009): 207-230. Layman outlines different "conversational ploys" that interview subjects may seek to deflect questions, sometimes by providing short, dismissive answers.

10. Alejandra Barrios, reflection essay, spring 2015, in writer's possession.

11. Many, probably most, students could not cover the costs. And as the class is intertwined with Voces, it seems only fair that Voces covers their costs. How we cover our costs is covered later in this essay.

12. Stacie Richard, reflection essay, spring 2015, in writer's possession. One of the interview subjects treated our class to a backyard cookout.

13. Miguel Morado to Valerie Martinez, June 21, 2010, Voces Oral History Project.

14. Michael J. Lyons, *A Short History of World War II*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003). Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd ed., Oxford Oral History Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3rd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). Others are usually readings from Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Eva. M. McMahan and Kim Lacy Rogers, eds., *Interactive Oral History Interviewing* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994); along with several articles from a wide array of journals.

15. The Vet Centers welcomed us in several cities, including San Antonio, Austin, Houston, and Laredo, Texas; Tucson and Phoenix, Arizona; Albuquerque and Santa Fe, New Mexico; Kansas City, Missouri; Tampa and Miami, Florida; and Los Angeles.

16. Albert H. Kauffman, videotaped interview by Amayeli Arnal-Reveles, Austin, TX, March 3, 2015, Voces Oral History Project.