

Preserving Community/Cuentos del Varrio
An Oral History Instruction Manual

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Introduction

"Preserving Community/Cuentos del Varrio" is an oral history project conducted by Drs. Daniel Villa (Language and Linguistics) and Jon Hunner (History) of New Mexico State University and Pauline Staski (Social Studies) and Jon Wall (English) at the Panther Achievement Center of Gadsden High School to record the heritage of southern New Mexico. The project teaches high school students how to interview the elders of their communities to capture the local history and language of the region and to empower the participants as they explore their ancestry and cultural background.

In the fall of 1996, we presented a proposal to Sam Larcombe of the N.M. Juvenile Justice Division (JJD) to teach oral history to teens who are considered at risk. We received a grant from JJD to start the pilot project, "Preserving Community," teaching high school students oral history. Our theory is that oral history can be used to preserve communities and reconnect people with their heritage. Social work practitioner Ruth Martin observes after using oral history in her work in the field: "I have found that using oral history methods can a) restore human traits to research participants depersonalized by other sociological and psychological methods, b) generate information from groups who are not always represented or who may have been maligned, and c) fill gaps in the historical literature" (Martin 1995, 142). With the grant from the JJD, we began to search for a high school to implement the project and test our theory.

From the beginning, JJD wanted us to engage students at Gadsden High School in Anthony, New Mexico in this project. Gadsden High School is near the state line with Texas and twenty-five miles from the Mexican border. The school's students come from the towns and villages of this predominately agricultural region of the state. Unfortunately, when we first meet with school officials, they discouraged us from working at Gadsden. We approached other schools and youth organizations who expressed some interest, but we received no actual commitments. In the summer of 1997, after a meeting concerning the Hispanic dropout rate in southern New Mexico, we meet Pauline Staski. Ms. Staski is the creator and director of an alternative educational program at Gadsden High called the Panther Achievement Center (PAC). Ms. Staski was enthusiastic about "Preserving Community," and we began planning to implement it at PAC in the fall of 1997.

PAC is an alternative learning center for students who have had difficulty in attending traditional high school classes. These students' difficulties range from disciplinary problems with school and law officials to employment conflicts with school attendance to parenthood. Whatever the reasons, these students are offered an alternative educational program at PAC that is tailored to individually paced learning. The teachers at PAC, Pauline Staski (Social Studies), Jon Wall (English), David Blobner (Computer Science and Math), and Michael Metz (Science), are dedicated instructors committed to working with the students in an alternative setting. For "Preserving Community," we worked mainly with Ms. Staski and Mr. Wall. When the PAC students heard about the project from Ms. Staski and Mr. Wall, they wanted to change the name, a change that better reflected the types of oral histories they would produce. The new name, "Cuentos del Varrio," means "Folktales from the Neighborhood" with the traditional Spanish word for neighborhood, "barrios," replaced by the local usage, "Varrio."

Before instruction at PAC began, Ms. Staski worked long hours to combine the components of "Preserving Community" with the New Mexico educational competencies so that students could work for credit toward their graduation while doing oral history. Thus, the interviews were only part of a block of research, discussion, and writing that the students undertook. The program she designed is reproduced in Appendix A. For example, one round of interviews focused on immigration. Students researched immigration in their library, discussed the issues about immigration in class, and wrote papers on the subject. After this round of preliminary research, students then went out and interviewed people about this key topic of their community. The southern New Mexico communities served by PAC are on the border with west Texas, and only 20 miles from Mexico. These communities are mainly rural, and many residents still have strong ties to families and communities in Mexico. The U.S. Border Patrol is a visible presence in Anthony, and several students talked about helping undocumented workers from Mexico avoid the United States immigration controls. As of this writing in February 1998, students at PAC continue to conduct oral histories but are mainly focused on using these oral histories to satisfy the English component of their educational competencies. They are using the oral histories to write about their communities.

Various individuals have contributed their time and effort for this project. Richard Lindahl and Sam Larcombe from JJD have been supportive and willing to take a chance on this unusual experiment to address the needs of juveniles at risk. Doña Ana County Commissioner Dora Harp, as chairperson of the New Mexico Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, has also been instrumental in supporting juvenile justice efforts not just in the southern part of the state, but throughout New Mexico. The NMSU Research Center for the College of Arts and Sciences, especially Carol Quintana, Martha Chavez, and Lorenza Sanchez have kept the paperwork flowing. The teachers at PAC, Pauline Staski, Jon Wall, and David Blobner who implemented the project and worked daily with their students on oral history, are to be commended not only for allowing us into their classrooms but also for working with teens who most adults have given up on. And the students at PAC have worked hard at doing oral histories, often wondering what this had to do with getting their diplomas. They are the ones who have contributed the most to Cuentos del Varrio.

Before discussing the instruction given to the PAC students and teachers, which can serve as a model for other schools and communities who want to use oral history to preserve their heritage, we offer a brief overview of why we use the approach that we do.

Ways of Teaching

The theory that underlies the structure of the project draws from work by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and the Russian social scientist Lev Vygotsky. Both these scholars have written about re-thinking the way we teach, and their work forms an important part of current teacher instruction in the United States. For example, Freire talks about a "banking" approach to teaching. In such a model, the teacher of a class is the only source of knowledge, and dispenses this knowledge to students much as a bank teller doles out money to customers. There is no discussion of where the knowledge comes from, why it's important, how it relates to students' lives, or what it will be good for in the future. The students are simply expected to memorize the knowledge given to them, and then spit it back out, more or less verbatim, on a test. Emphasis is

placed on the ability to memorize, with little attention given whether the knowledge will be retained or not for future use. While this method may be useful for certain tasks in teaching, it does not lend itself to building skills which students can use throughout their lives.

An alternative that Freire proposes is "critical teaching". In this method students are invited into a discussion of the topic at hand in order to better understand it. They are not expected to simply memorize material, but to look at how it pertains to everyday life. They are expected to challenge the teacher in a constructive manner, to invite the instructor to connect the course material with the world they know. In doing this, the students bear the responsibility of telling the teacher about their world, in a real sense becoming teachers themselves. In this back-and-forth kind of dialogue, students and the teacher form a group in which the instructor acts as kind of a guide, pointing the way but not necessarily saying how to get there. We must point out that this happens in an atmosphere of mutual respect. The teacher must recognize the validity of students' everyday experiences and the skills they bring to the class. On their part, students must recognize that the teacher is not some kind of warden who is there to keep them quiet and in their seats, but rather acknowledge him or her as someone trying to give them tools which will be useful for the future. Mutual respect and trust are essential in passing on knowledge from one generation to the next.

In a similar vein, Lev Vygotsky says that true learning happens through social interaction. That is, one best acquires knowledge through talking with friends, relatives, neighbors and other kinds of teachers. Also, he thinks that it is important to start with what we know in order to be able to reach out and successfully acquire new knowledge. This is called the "zone of proximal development", which means that the world we know, the everyday experiences that we have, form a solid foundation for building new ideas, new perspectives on the world. These two scholars emphasize the fact that we have many teachers, and indeed that anyone can be a teacher. Here we'll see how these concepts support the oral history project.

Imagine students who were born and raised in a rural area thousands of miles from the national capitol, who have had little or no chance to travel throughout the state, much less the country. They grow up speaking the language of their family and the community, and have a somewhat unpleasant surprise upon entering school that, according to the system, this language is not the right one for learning. So they rapidly acquire English, and embark on their academic career. Among the various topics studied, they learn about the history of their country. This history talks about people long ago and far away who came to a part of the country they've only seen in pictures, if at all. A set of dates go along with the story of these folks, 1492, 1658, 1776, 1812, 1860, among others. The people and events in this history have little or nothing to do with raising their children, working at a job to help out the family, or dealing with pressures to use drugs and alcohol. In a sense, this history is a sort of fairy tale.

Imagine the same group of students, being asked to go out and talk to the *viejitos en el varrio*, the old folks in the neighborhood. These are the people who remember them, and maybe their folks, as little kids, who can talk about family in a way others can't, who themselves remember stories about their own childhood. And when they talk about these stories, they use the language the students have grown up with, with its own particular words, intonations, rhythms and imagery that have been a part of the students' world since they can remember. Maybe they have

suspected, and still perhaps suspect, that this is just old folks carrying on, but on the other hand this gets them school credit, so maybe there's something in it after all! And the stories roll out, stories of having to leave behind villages, towns, worldly possessions during the Mexican Revolution, fleeing before mounted troops who laid waste to the land. The viejitos chronicle the journey north, of crossing the river, of having to start a new life in a different land. They recount the hardships of those days, when nobody, not even many gringos, had work, arduous, backbreaking labor in the cotton fields, chopping broom corn in Texas, the bailes and jamaicas to break the monotony, when there wasn't enough money in house to buy a nickel's worth of salt to put in the beans.

And on go the viejitos, talking about Germany, the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Viet Nam, those who came back and those who didn't, about building churches and capillas to honor the living and the dead. All of this is not remote and far off, because it was a brother, a son, a wife, a father who took a bullet and was buried en tierra bruta, unsanctified ground, because there was no other choice. The students record these stories, bring them back to the classroom, and write them down. Then they are asked to think about those other people, the ones that seem to fairy tale figures, And it is there that the connection is made, the fact that people throughout time have shared certain experiences, that those who lived through the American Revolution, the Civil War, through the Depression, faced what the viejitos faced. History comes alive through the community.

Oral History Methodology

Introduction to Oral History

This manual explains many of the aspects of conducting oral history projects. It addresses the entire range of activities essential for conducting a successful and productive oral history project. The first segment reviews the history of oral history and briefly goes into some of the theory behind the discipline. The next section discusses the initial planning necessary to insure that your project will run smoothly. Then, the importance of preliminary research is explored as you prepare for an interview. After that, the selection of equipment is discussed. With all of the preliminary details covered, the next segment addresses the pre-interview and interview processes. Then we will look at what to do with the audio- or video- taped interview once the recorder is turned off. In addition to this instructional guide on conducting oral history projects for your community, this manual also looks at some of the critical issues in heritage preservation. And finally, there is included in this manual a bibliography on oral history books that will prove useful for further study in the field.

The History of Oral History

Oral history has been part of human history ever since people could talk. It was the first type of history in pre-literate societies. Humans transmitted their history and culture by word of mouth and recited poems. The legends and stories of a people are orally passed down through the generations as younger members of a society learned the narratives from the elders. Eventually, some of these oral histories were written down as epic poems such as The Iliad and The

Odyssey or as religious texts like the Mayans' book of Popul Vuh. Thus, oral history has deep roots.

Over the last one hundred years, historians adopted a scientific basis of inquiry focusing on written documents to provide the proofs for their theories about what happened in the past. For many professional historians, interviewing was something that journalists did; however, since World War II, with the advent of audio recording technology, oral history has again been accepted as a valuable historical resource. The old way of transmitting a society's experiences through spoken stories has been legitimized by new technologies, new methodology, and new theories. This manual will introduce you to the field of oral history and instruct you on how to conduct oral histories and utilize them as a tool for heritage preservation.

Oral History's Strengths and Weaknesses

Oral history is the in-depth interviewing and recording of a person's life experiences. A thorough oral history explores a person's ancestors, his family of origin, his own life experiences from childhood to the present, and examines as much as possible the joys and sorrows, the success and failures, and the everyday occurrences of that person's life. Preliminary research is essential for a successful oral history, as well as training in interviewing techniques. Oral history is more than a journalistic interview about a specific topic or event. Oral history trawls the depths of a person's life and documents for the historical record the usual and the unusual, the mundane and the paradoxical of the human condition. This is one of the strengths of oral history. Traditional historians have difficulty at times including human emotion into history. Since oral history is straight from a person's mouth and often discusses or exhibits emotions, incorporating such intangibles as emotions is easier. Using the information that comes from oral histories creates thicker descriptions of a person or a place or a time.

Another strength of oral history is that it is egalitarian. It is not limited to just the famous or the influential, not just to the kings and generals. Oral history documents the lives of people from all parts of society and helps to fill in the gaps of the historical record that often concentrates just on the elite of a society. Some say that oral history is "history from the bottom up," since many people who are absent from the traditional history books make their voices heard through oral history. Oral history provides a new source of information for historians that is not dependent on written documents deposited in archives. Through these new sources, we can listen to more voices about our history than are deposited in the archives.

Having extolled the virtues of oral history in generating new knowledge about our history, we must also acknowledge its weaknesses. First, how accurate are these reminiscences? And second, does the interviewer overly influence the interviewee? To be sure, the reliability of oral history can be suspect. Some people tend to recall themselves in a better light than is accurate. Memory also can play tricks on the truth. Because of the inaccuracies of memory, oral history must be evaluated as any other historical source. The information must be evaluated and judged for its accuracy. This is no different than documents found in an archive.

Oral historians also have to prevent their own influences and biases from altering or adding to the memories of the interviewees. Even though you are recording the experiences of another

person, what is created is a "shared authority" (Frisch 1990). An interview is an interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. It is not a monologue but a dialogue. Sometimes, interviewees might say things that they think the interviewer wants to hear. In this way, both people contribute to the recording of a life history. The relationship between the interviewer and interviewee has to be a trusting one, friendly, warm, and understanding. But the interviewer also has to avoid personal opinions or any other influences that could change what the interviewee is remembering. Because of these issues in oral history-- that of the reliability of memory and of the possibility that an interviewer can unduly influence the interview, a methodology for oral history has developed over the last half century to address these problems. The following pages instructs you on how to conduct oral histories which reduces the impact that the interviewer has on the interview as well as offers some suggestions on how to deal with some of the other pitfalls of oral history discussed above.

Designing an Oral History Project

Thorough designing and planning before you begin doing oral histories is essential for a successful project. In the following section, we will look at the general areas of inquiry that any project needs to consider before interviewing begins. Second, we will focus on how to adapt an oral history project to your particular school curriculum.

Planning an Oral History Project

In planning an oral history project, there are nine topics to consider:

1) What are the goals and objectives of the project?

To begin with, write down a list of objectives and goals about why you are collecting oral histories and what their use will be. From those goals, you can distill a short mission statement. Write a mission statement that is no longer than 12 words. Then, as you consider your goals, thoroughly explore them and ask how realistic these goals are.

2) Who will you interview? (And who decides who will be interviewed)?

After determining the project objectives, prospective interviewees can be selected. The best project includes as wide a sampling of interviewees as possible-- not just the oldest of the community, but anyone who helps to accomplish the projects objectives should be included in the interviewee pool. Two manners of choosing who will be interviewed are used. A small committee of community or school members can shift through the possibilities or the project manager or head of your organization can make the ultimate decision.

3) Will sufficient time be available for the interviewers to prepare for the tape-recorded discussions and for the interviews to be conducted?

Inadequate interviewer preparation leads to low quality interviews. The quality of the information obtained from an interview is integrally related to an interviewer's

background in, and knowledge of, the subject matter. To help with planning the time requirements of your project, determine the accessibility of the resources for preliminary research and begin to use standardized forms for the collection of biographical information about your subjects during the research phase. Examples of these forms are reproduced in Appendix B. Then plan the amount of time needed to conduct the interviews and process the tapes. Allow for the unexpected and schedule some time for the delays that can happen.

4) Who will conduct the interviews?

If you are interviewing a number of people, you must consider who your interviewers will be. This is the time to start planning for the project team that you will need to accomplish your goals and objectives in the time allotted. You may want to hold workshops for training the interviewers and even bring in outside consultants to conduct the trainings. The tasks in an oral history project range from doing preliminary research to scheduling the pre-interview and the interview meetings to conducting the interviews. As you can see, there are a variety of tasks involved. Will you have a project manager that oversees all of the details of the project? Will your project send out individuals to the interviews or will you have interview teams? At PAC, team work was encouraged for several reasons. It was easier to get tasks accomplished and since teenagers as minors were going out to private residences to interview, it made sense for their mutual safety to send out a team of two. Now is the time to decide on what your project team will be.

5) Where will the interviews be conducted? Will they be held at the interviewees home or a public place?

Most interviewees feel more comfortable in their home, and familiar surroundings might help with their reminiscences. But if you are planning to broadcast the interviews, you may want to conduct them in a sound studio to insure high quality recordings. In addition, if minors are the interviewers, school policy might insist that interviews be conducted at the school.

6) What kind of equipment and supplies will you use?

Of course, this depends on your goals and objectives as well as your budget. If you are videotaping your interviews instead of just audio taping them, your budget, equipment requirements, and training will be vastly different. Keep in mind that the better the tape recorder, the better the sound quality of the interview. A good quality tape is important since these recordings will be listened to for years. If possible, use an external microphone since it greatly improves the sound quality of the recording. More about this can be found in "Recording Equipment and Techniques (p. 16)."

7) What will happen to the tapes after the interview is completed? Where will the tapes reside at the end of the project? Who will own the interview tapes and transcripts?

Before you begin conducting interviews, you must decide where the tapes will be deposited. After you and your organization has accomplished the goals of your project and used the interviews for their intended purposes, give the tapes and transcripts to a library or archive for other researchers to use. Usually, an archive has a release form for oral history that all participants must sign to legally transfer ownership of the interview to that depository. The release form will be discussed further in "The Interview (p. 17)." Seek out a depository that makes sense for your project one where future researchers will know to come to and will have ready access to listen to your interviews. The best oral histories in the world are useless if researchers can not use them.

8) What products will result from your oral history project?

The basic package of tapes and transcripts provide your school or organization with an invaluable resource to accomplish your goals and objectives. Additionally, they are a valuable source of information about your community's history. Besides research sources, good quality tapes are essential for classroom instruction, media programming, museum exhibits, and other uses.

9) Where will funding come from?

Once you have planned your project, you will know the necessary requirements to conduct it. Now is the time to develop a budget. In discussing the budget here, we will look at the full range of options needed for an oral history project. Of course, some projects already will have office space or volunteer interviewers, so take the expenses that fit your project as you write up your budget.

The main categories that you need to include in your budget are: Personnel, Supplies, Office Space, Project Expenses, and Equipment. Personnel includes project manager, support and office staff, interviewers, and transcribers. Rates vary for these positions so check around your community for the going rate. Do not forget to include benefits when you calculate salaries. At NMSU when we write up budgets for grants, an automatic 21 % is added to all salary subtotals for benefits.

Supplies include paper, audio and video tapes, batteries, office supplies, computer supplies, and any other purchases that you need to ensure a smoothly operating office.

Office space can be the most expensive part of your budget. Hopefully, your school or organization will already have an office that you can use. Many grants do not give money for setting up an office so that would be a non-supported expense. Costs include rent, utilities, insurance, and possibly licenses to operate at that location.

Project expenses are those you incur to conduct the actual interviews in addition to paying your interviewers. Interviewees are rarely paid for their participation. The project expenses include travel to the interview site (\$.25 per mile), telephone calls if they are long distance, and any other expenses incurred to conduct the actual interview such as per diem if overnight stays are necessary.

Equipment depends on your funds and what type of taping you will be doing. Obviously, audio is cheaper than video equipment. In addition to the recording machines, external microphones, power cables, microphone cables, carrying cases, and other equipment will need to be budgeted.

Once you have your budget, you can begin to investigate funding sources. It might be helpful to consider your solicitation for funding like going to a bank for a loan (even though you are hoping to secure funds that will not have to be paid back). Present a detailed business plan (the initial planning that you have done will assist you in writing a concise explanation to what you want to do and how you are going to do it) and a detailed budget. A bank will not lend money to someone they consider a risk. Humanities funding agencies are no different from banks in that respect. They want to see that you have a realistic plan, that the project is worthy, and that you have the staff and resources to accomplish your project.

Over the next pages, we will explain many of these details more fully. Carefully planning an oral history project long before the first interview is conducted insures that the interviews will hold useful information that your organization and future scholars can use (UCLA 1988, 1-5).

Planning for a High School Curriculum

The second area of consideration for planning the project is unique to working in schools. In order for your students to receive credit for the work they will do, you need to align your course with your state and district competencies and standards. We have inserted in Appendix A the plan that Pauline Staski of PAC wrote to show how she aligned "Cuentos del Varrio" with state and district requirements.

To make oral history work in schools, several important factors need to be in place. First, the humanities teacher needs to be enthusiastic about the incorporating oral history into the curriculum. Ideally, the teacher should have some training in oral history, but with outside preparation and dedication, this is not an imperative. Second, it helps to have the support of your school's administration. Third, as you plan your project, decide if the focus will be more on product or process. To create a valuable product, a resource that researchers will find useful, rigorous application of oral history methodology is required. On the other hand, if your purpose is to reconnect students with their heritage and provide them with an exciting alternative to traditional humanities instruction, then process is more important than product. In that case, rigorous oral history methodology is not as important as for a product oriented project. Just be aware that the finished interviews will have less value to researchers than the more carefully prepared ones. At PAC, we decided early on that process was more important than product. Indeed, the grant proposal for JJD stated that the project's objectives centered on reconnecting the students to their heritage. So even though not all of the oral history's are useful to researchers, the process of conducting the interviews allowed students to explore the rich heritage in their communities and in their families.

Preliminary Research

Preparation before an interview including preliminary research of your interviewee is essential in oral history and a key ingredient to a successful project. Before you begin the actual interview,

you must know as much as you can about your interviewee, the places and people important to that person's life, and the time period the person lived in. You need to be as familiar with this person as possible. There are several reasons this is important. First, such research will allow you to follow the narrative of the interview. Second, by showing that you have spent time researching the person's life, you show that you are serious about the person and his life experiences. It is a form of flattery and helps build rapport with the interviewee. Conversely, if you have not done your preliminary research, an interviewee might think that the interview means little to you, and they might dismiss you as not a serious interviewer or just frivolous. Third, with proper research, you can identify both during your preparation and during the interview the avenues of questioning that could be fruitful.

There are many places to go to research your interviewee. To begin with, study the general time period and then, focus on the specific events and places relevant to your person. For example, the PAC students studied immigration between Mexico and the United States in preparation for the interviews that centered on that topic. After you have researched the time period and place in general, look into any references of this person in local newspapers, history books, even census reports. If this person's family have been in the area for a while, they might be mentioned in the U.S. Census reports. These reports are released to the public after 70 years, so that you can go to a U.S. Government Documents Depository and search for people who were listed on the census in the 1920s and before. School yearbooks also provide early pictures and information about people. A final source for research into your person's life are his friends and family. Ask them about the person, about the important events and people in his life, and about their favorite stories and key points of a person's life. Family and friends can be valuable sources for your preliminary research.

As you research your person, you may want to use some type of personal information or biographical data sheet. There is an example of such a sheet in "Appendix B-- Oral History Forms," under the title "UNM Oral History Program Workshop: A Family History Project." Carlos Vásquez, director of UNM's Oral History Program, and the oral historian for the New Mexico Hispanic Heritage Center, created this form.

Another benefit from this preliminary research will be the beginning of a set of questions that you will use in the interview. As you research and talk with people, keep a list of questions that come up for you or are mentioned by friends and family. As you wind up your research, go over these questions and start arranging them in the order that you want to ask your interviewee. Appendix B has a question set to show you what they look like.

Recording Techniques and Equipment

The basic equipment needed for recording oral histories are:

- Tape or video recorder with batteries and machine power cord.
- External microphone and stand.
- Cassette operating instruction sheet. Extra set of batteries.
- Extra set of microphone batteries (if necessary).
- Adequate supply of tape (use C-60s or C-90s for audio tape).

- Extension cord, twelve feet.
- Paper and pens or pencils.

The type of tape recorder you will use ultimately depends on your project objectives and budget. If you want to produce oral histories that are of broadcast quality or useful in a museum exhibit and you have the budget, then some of the better machines, like a Sony or a Marantz, like be necessary. You might also consider a digital recorder, which helps produce quality recordings and can facilitate easy editing of the tapes. Whatever model of tape recorder that you choose, be sure that it is durable and produces a good quality sound recording. If possible, use an external microphone. This will vastly improve the quality of the recording. Several models of microphones are available. There is the standard table mike that is a directional mike placed between the people in the interview. A PZM microphone that lies flat on the table is better at picking up sound from multiple directions. Lapel mikes that attach to each person's shirt or blouse capture the conversation very well and are recommended. Be sure to get a "Y" connector that combines both the interviewer and interviewee mikes into one input wire so that both mikes will be recorded. When you buy audiotapes, avoid using 120 minute tapes since they break easier than the 60 or 90 minute ones. Finally, consider the power source for your recorder. Ideally, a machine should have both battery (DC power) and household electrical power (AC) options. All recorders run on DC so that a power cord to connect with an AC source needs to have a transformer in it. Most have this transformer on the power cord or internally, but be sure when you get a quote that the transformer is included. Alkaline batteries, although more expensive than the carbon-zinc type, are the best buy. They last four times as long and do not leak as much. Rechargeable batteries or a rechargeable battery pack are also a viable and cost effective option.

The videotaping of the interview is a valuable addition to oral histories. The interviewee's expressions and body language are visible and give a fuller picture of the interview process. And videotapes are essential for producing media programming and documentaries about your project. Videography is a new aspect of oral history and requires a manual of its own. Fortunately, the Smithsonian has produced one. For more information about videotaping oral histories, consult Terri Schorzman, editor, [A Practical Introduction to Videohistory: The Smithsonian Institution and Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Experiment](#) (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1993).

Once you acquire your equipment, experiment with it until you are familiar with the operation of the machine. Allow your interviewees also to use the machines as much as possible before they go out in the field. The actual interview is not a place for on-the-job training in the operation of the equipment. You also need to pay attention to the location of the microphones and equipment in relation to the people talking. Different placement of the microphones will produce different sound quality. In Appendix B, there is a sheet titled "Suggested Arrangement for a Tape-Recorded Interview" that illustrates the set-up for an interview. This was presented by David Mould at a workshop during the 1993 Oral History Association conference.

The Interview

Pre-interview

The interviewees have been identified and have agreed to participate, equipment secured, and preliminary research completed. Now it is time to meet face-to-face with the interviewee. But not for an actual interview. The pre-interview is an important meeting between the interviewee and the interviewer for several reasons. It is a chance to evaluate the interviewee to make sure that his memory is sharp enough to achieve the goals of the project. Furthermore, the interviewer can complete the personal background questionnaire, if used, and examine the interviewee's home for a noise-free room for conducting the taping session. The pre-interview is a time to talk about the general areas of questioning, arrange for the date and time of the first session, and for explaining the release form in detail. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, the pre-interview helps build rapport between the interviewee and interviewer. Let us go over these points one by one.

Memory is central to oral history. Thus, an interviewee's clear and reliable memory is a must. As we all know, some people's memories are clearer than others. During a pre-interview, you can evaluate your subject's memory by asking just a few specific questions that you have identified from your research. This is not an opportunity to discuss the person's life in detail-- that is what the interview is for. If it is done now, the person might later say: "We've already talked about that..." It will be easy in just a few questions to evaluate a person's memory and decide if it is sharp enough to achieve the goals of the project.

If you are using a personal background questionnaire or data sheet, this is the time to complete it. This will also help build rapport as you show your interviewee that you have already done research about him. Since many people's initial reaction upon being asked to talk about their life experiences is "Why do you want to interview me? I haven't done anything important," producing a personal data sheet shows them that you think enough about their life that you have done considerable work in getting ready for the interview.

If the interview will be at the interviewee's home, use the pre-interview to find out where the best place to hold it is. The kitchen can be the worst place since the many hard surfaces there produce a lot of echos. Furthermore, if the refrigerator kicks in during the session, the whirl of that machine will also be recorded. Noisy pets, televisions, air conditioners or furnaces, and loud clocks also present problems for quality sound recordings.

Go over the general areas of the person's life that you want to focus on. Let them know what you want them to talk about but again, do not be specific and if they start talking about specifics in the pre-interview, change the subject or mention that you want to save that for the tape recorder. Some interviewees might be nervous about being interviewed so by talking about the general scope of the session, you hopefully will calm some of their nervousness. Most oral historians do not give their questions to an interviewee since that would deprive the interview of its spontaneity. Use the pre-interview to set up a time, date, and place for the interview.

Go over the release form with the interviewee so that they know what they are doing when they sign it. If you do not get a signed release form before the interview starts, you might as well not

do the interview unless you are absolutely sure there will be no difficulty in getting it signed afterwards. An interview without a release form can not be deposited in an archive and is of no use to future researchers. Without the release form, you and future users of the interview will have no legal right to use the information in the interview. Basically, the release form is a legal document that transfers the ownership of the information in the interview to the person or institution that collects and preserves the tapes. It gives the copyright to that sponsoring person or institution. There are two possible reasons why a person might not want to sign a release form. First, they think that someone will use the information from the interview to make money and they want their share of that. At PAC, we agreed that if any money was made from the use of the interviews, it would be put into a fund to benefit future students of the program. The other reason is that the interviewee is afraid that what they say about other people might come back to haunt them. Thus, it is important that all interviewees know that what they say on the tapes will be public knowledge. In Appendix B there are several examples of release forms.

Throughout the pre-interview, while you are evaluating your interviewees, the interviewees are evaluating you. They are deciding if you are serious, trustworthy, reliable, and friendly enough for them to tell you the details of their lives, possibly telling you things that few friends or family know about. So take time to create a good impression and be truthful about why you want to interview them and what will happen to the tapes once the interview is finished. The rapport that you build with your subjects during the pre-interview will influence the course and ultimately the success of the interview.

Interviewing

Question Sets

Above all else, oral history is about asking questions, some that have been answered often and others that have never been asked. From your research and pre-interview, your question set will be developed. It is best to start an interview with basic questions, usually about the subject's mother and father, grandparents, time and place of birth for the subject and his other family members: easy questions that we all know. This helps put a nervous interviewee at ease. After establishing who the family of origin is and how the interviewee feels about his family, move onto questions about childhood, early schooling, and teenage years. From there, ask about early adulthood-- about leaving the family nest, about college, military service, and employment. For most interviewees, the adult section of the interview will focus on career and family. So tailor your questions to exploring what paths their careers took and how their family has evolved. For their career, find out how they decided what to do, where their jobs have taken them, and what their best and worst memories of working are. For family, find out how they first meet their spouse or significant other, if they have children and the vital information on them, and any other details about how their family faced or faces the challenges of living in the late twentieth century. With elderly interviewees, follow these same general areas of inquiry and also add questions about retirement and grandchildren. In addition to these basic topics, your preliminary research will give you specific questions that pertain to these general areas. Before you go to the interview, organize the questions in a way that makes sense for you. Usually, question sets are arranged chronologically or topically.

Here are some basic do's and do not's for asking questions during an interview:

- **Do not ask "yes and no" questions.** You want your subject to go on at length about themselves and a simple yes or no will not do that. Instead of asking "Did you go to school at Gadsden High School?" ask "What was your high school like?" Usually, the place they went to school will come out in the answer.
- **Ask only one question at a time.** Multiple questions lumped together in one sentence rarely get fully answered.
- **Do not stay "stuck" to the prepared question set.** One of the biggest mistakes that inexperienced interviewers (who themselves might be nervous) make is to just ask the questions on the sheet and not to listen to the answers. It is a common error to let the tape recorder listen while you are taking care of all the other things during the interview (like making sure the machine is still working, wondering what question to ask next, evaluating the interviewee for signs of fatigue). Do not let the tape recorder listen for you. You need to pay close attention to the answers so that you can ask intelligent follow-up questions. Follow-up questions to answers are sometimes where the most interesting answers come from. So practice with your interviewers in not only asking questions from the prepared question set but also forgetting the prepared questions and improvising new questions.
- **Do not rush through the question sheet.** The interview is not a race. In fact, those who finish first lose since they have not asked follow-up questions and have not engaged in a free-ranging dialogue with their subject. Listen to the interviewer and pursue interesting avenues of experience with follow-up questions.
- **Listen to the silences.** If you ask a question, and there is no immediate reply, wait. Do not fill the silence yourself. To help appreciate what happens when silence occurs, do this exercise right now. For the next ten seconds, remain absolutely silent. OK, now imagine yourself as the interviewee with the tape recorder running and a question left hanging and that uncomfortable feeling you had with the ten seconds of silence. Sooner or later (and usually it is sooner), the interviewee will break the silence, sometimes with information that they would not have thought of before. The silence must be filled. It is part of having a conversation. If you the interviewer do not fill it, then the interviewee will and sometimes that is one of the best parts of the interview.
- **Use a mix of open-ended questions or specific questions.** An oral history is a combination of specific information combined with more subjective feelings and evaluations by the interviewee. A combination of the specific question "Who are your siblings?" followed by the open-ended one "Which one did you get along with best?" will provide more interesting answers than either one by itself.
- **Ask probing questions.** In addition to the who, what, where, and when questions, ask why and how. These questions will bring out the opinions and feelings of your interviewee.
- **What if the answers are perfunctory?** You might be asking too many specific questions and not enough open-ended ones. Or you might not be allowing the interviewee to fully answer a question before you jump to the next question. You might also have done something else to make the interviewee annoyed with you. Or they might just be

getting tired. Ask if they are getting tired and if so, end the interview and arrange for another session. If they are not tired, try to be more responsive and encouraging to the interviewee.

- **Do not ask leading questions.** Leading questions tip your hand about what you think the correct answer is and might prejudice the interviewees into giving you your answer, not their's. An example of this is asking the leading question "Do you support a balanced budget amendment to end waste and fraud in the government?" as opposed to "Do you support a balanced budget amendment?"

Interviewing Etiquette

Before sending someone out on an interview, have them use a checklist to make sure that they take everything that they will need with them into the field. There are two samples of the checklists that PAC uses in Appendix B. It is also a good idea to pre-label the tapes so that there will be little confusion from the beginning about whose interview is on which tape. This will also prevent you from sending a master copy of a completed interview to be recorded over by a new interview.

Once at the interview but before it begins, the interviewer should do a sound check to make sure that the equipment is operating correctly and that both people can be heard on the tape. Take special care that the interviewee can be heard. After the sound check, rewind the tape and let it run for 30 seconds to a minute. This will allow enough blank tape at the beginning of each side should repairs to the tape be needed. Then the interviewer should say "This is (interviewer's name) interviewing (interviewee's name) on (date) at (place of interview)." After that, the interviewer can begin asking the questions. The interview should last no longer than two hours since many people get too tired after that length of time. If an additional session is required, a time and date can be decided before the interviewer leaves. During the interview, the interviewer should write down any proper names that are used. This identifies names that need to be checked for accurate spelling. If the interviewee is up to the task at the end of the interview, you can go over the list and get the correct spellings. Otherwise, send a copy of the list before transcription begins so that the correct spellings can be part of the transcript.

Here are some pointers on what to do and not to do when you interview your subject:

- **Establishing rapport** with your interviewee is one of the most important ingredients for a good interview. Good rapport begins at the pre-interview and continues throughout the interviewing process. Be friendly, encouraging, and attentive as you listen to the interviewee. Maintain eye contact, use quiet signals like a smile or a nod to encourage the interviewee. These are better than verbal signals like "yes," "uh huh," or "You don't say" that could impede the interviewee's narrative flow. Remember, this is not your story and anything that you do to interject your own opinions and ideas can alter the course of the interview. Of course, you have to ask questions and engage in a dialogue with the interviewee, but the more you can remove yourself from the process, the more the interviewee can fully express themselves.

- **Pay attention to the interviewee's body language.** Try to read defensive body language as a signal that the subject matter is something the interviewee is uncomfortable with. If possible, find out why. For yourself, adopt encouraging, friendly body language. Maintain eye-contact, do not stare off, look at your hands or your watch.
- **How should you react to a statement that you strongly disagree with?** Don't react. Remember, this is an oral history of the interviewee's life, not yours. You need to hear the interviewee out fully. You can challenge answers that are misleading, but do not argue over points of view. The only time an argument is acceptable is after the interview is over and the tape recorder is turned off.
- **What if you suspect that the interviewee is lying?** First, do not be too quick to assume this. If they are indeed giving faulty information, perhaps it is inadvertent due to memory loss. Do not directly challenge the truth of their account but ask specific questions to test the validity of it in the bigger scope of their life. While we were conducting the training session at PAC about asking questions, this question came up. The example was an interviewee who claimed to have harvested a whole chile field by himself. Some of the students first wanted to directly confront the subject as a liar. Others though suggested that the follow-up questions to this would be "Oh, who long did it take you to harvest the field?" and pursue the matter along those lines.
- **Pay attention to the fatigue level** in both you and your interviewee, especially if you are talking with an older person. Ask if they are getting tired and if the answer is yes, end the interview and schedule another session in the future.
- **What is the best way to end an interview?** Look for a wrap up question to end the session. Some possibilities might be to ask the interviewee to compare recent times with past events, draw conclusions about the major events they have lived through or ask them to look into the future. Finally, ask them if there is anything else they would like to talk about. And thank them for their time and effort in participating in the interview. If you are going to send them a copy of the tape, tell them so. You might also want to remind them how the tapes will be processed, where they will be deposited, and what role the interviewee will play in editing the tapes. These subjects will be discussed in the next section. As soon as you take the tape out of the machine, punch out the tabs on the back of the cassette so that the tape can not be recorded over. This is very important and will prevent the frustration of losing completed interviews.
- **If the interview was emotional, take some time after the tape recorder is turned off to talk with the interviewee and help them with what has upset them.** Sometimes, interviews bring up buried memories that are painful. It is important to let the interviewee know how important the interview is and reassure them that they were helpful.
- **Most interviewees take the recording of their life experiences very seriously.** It is an opportunity to set down their life for the historical record, to talk about successes and failures, moments of pride and disappointment. Most interviewees, especially if they are older, see this as a validation of their lives and an opportunity to set the record straight. So respect the interview and their reminiscences.

Post-Interview

Processing the Tapes

When the tapes from the interview are brought back, the labels should be checked to make sure that they correctly identify the interviewee, the tab in the back of the cassette should be checked to make sure it is punched out, and the tapes should be logged onto a ledger that keeps track of the processing of the tapes. An example of a tape log is included in Appendix B. An identification number should be written on the tape and in the log. The tapes should be copied as soon as possible. After that, the master tape can be released for deposit to wherever the tapes will go. The duplicate will be the tape that is used for transcribing.

Send a letter of thanks to the interviewee if the transcribing is going to take a while.

Transcribing

Producing a word-for-word written transcript of the interview is the next step in an oral history project. Transcription transforms the interview into a written document, easier for researchers to use than an audio tape. If possible, obtain a transcription machine that has a foot pedal that operates the movement of the tape. Such a machine permits the transcriber's hands the freedom to type the conversation on a word processor without having to hand operate the tape player. At PAC, a transcription machine was not available so teams of students transcribed the tapes. One person would operate the tape recorder playing the interview while the other person wrote down the conversation. Both helped in getting an accurate verbatim account of the interview which worked quite well. Then the students typed in the interview on the word processors at the school's computer lab.

The transcription of the interview must be accurate and true to the original conversation. Correcting a person's use of language is not a good practice. Once a rough draft of the transcript is ready, have someone who did not create the transcript "audit edit" it. Audit editing means reading the transcript while listening to the tape and correcting any mistakes that the transcriber made. After these corrections are entered into the transcript, you send the transcript to the interviewee for their approval. After the transcription is completed, a copy is sent to the interviewee for their approval. At that point, the interviewee can correct their own use of language if they want. In the interview, it was the interviewer's responsibility not to unduly influence what was being said. Again, here in transcribing the interview, editing and changing what has been said compromises the quality of the interview. You can delete "Umms," "you know" and false starts, but the less you edit an interview at this point the better.

As mentioned above, once the transcription is finished, send it to the interviewee for approval. In the letter accompanying the transcript, thank them again for their participation and invite them to review the transcription for accuracy. Let them know that if you do not get anything back from them in a set time period, say two weeks or a month, you will assume that they have read the transcript and have found no problems with it. This is to prevent you from having to wait and wait for the returned transcript. After the time limit has passed or when you get the transcript back from the interviewee, make the corrections and then send the transcript to the archive to accompany the tapes.

Wrapping Up the Project

There are several final details as you wrap up the project. Since the information you have gathered will be used by researchers, you should make sure that all pertinent material from the project is organized and left with the depository. This includes all the original tapes, the duplicates if possible, the corrected transcriptions, the notes from the preliminary research and any notes that the interviewers wrote while in the field. Acknowledgements should be sent to both the interviewees and the interviewers announcing the completion of the project and the valuable part that they played in the process. And then it is time to begin planning your next project.

Critical Issues in Heritage Preservation

This section on issues in heritage preservation is a broad exploration of these issues and how oral history contributes to such work. Heritage preservation involves various endeavors that run across a wide gamut of fields and professions. From preserving historic buildings to recording oral histories, from exhibiting cultural artifacts to operating community archives, heritage preservation confronts a basic dilemma of modern life and of the human condition. In our work around the state, through our individual efforts and through our organizations like the Panther Achievement Center at Gadsden High School, Cornerstones Community Foundation, the New Mexico Historic Preservation Office, the New Mexico Heritage Preservation Alliance, New Mexico State University, and all the other places where we attempt to preserve heritage, we encounter the challenges of progress, of the change over time that occurs, of history. But as we strive to preserve heritage, we must ask some basic questions about what we do.

First of all, what is heritage? Heritage is culture from the past. But then, what is culture? The dictionary declares it as the arts, beliefs, and customs that make up a way of life for a group of people at a certain time. Culture is a socially constructed set of beliefs and customs that are created in response to the experiences that a group of people have. A more anthropological definition looks at culture as change, that culture is the adaptation by individuals and societies to the challenges of life. Culture passes the survival strategies of a community down through the generations. In this regards, culture is one of the tools that we as a society use for survival.

Having defined heritage as the shifting culture from a group of people, can we preserve such heritage? We can restore the physical artifacts of a past culture, like an historic building or a wooden caretta, to our best estimates of what it looked like at a certain time in the past. We have attained a lot of success with such physical embodiments, with the built expressions of a culture. But we can only restore an artifact to a certain time period, not to how it looked over its entire existence. So, ultimately, we can only preserve a physical artifact on a very selective basis. And these physical artifacts, like buildings or furniture, clothing or tools, are the easiest things to preserve. They are the physical embodiments of the more abstract part of heritage and culture, the tangible manifestations of the arts, of the customs, and of the beliefs. No wonder we have difficulty preserving heritage since we are attempting to preserve the nebulous and often intangible beliefs and customs of a people who were constantly changing them to adapt to the challenges of their times. How can we preserve the rest of a society's culture, the beliefs and

customs? How do we preserve something that is abstract and at the same time constantly adapting, changing to the influences and forces of history? Once we move away from buildings and artifacts, our work as heritage preservationists becomes more difficult.

Heritage preservationists do have a valuable tool at our disposal to aid us in recapturing the beliefs, customs and cultures of a people-- oral history. Oral history gathers the reminiscences of people and when conducted properly, can record such beliefs, customs, and cultures of a community and a group of people. Oral history can protect the intangibles of a community, and can preserve the abstract components of heritage and culture. In conjunction with the preservation of buildings and artifacts, oral history is a powerful and much needed tool in heritage preservation, a tool that is well suited to guard the nebulous and shifting heritage of a community.

An example of this is the oral history project at the Panther Achievement Center (PAC) at Gadsden High School in Anthony, New Mexico. PAC is an alternative learning center for students who have had difficulty in attending traditional high school classes. These students' difficulties range from disciplinary problems with school officials to employment/school conflicts to parenthood to troubles with the legal system. Whatever the reasons, these students are offered an alternative educational program at PAC that is tailored to individually paced learning. Our oral history project, "Preserving Community/Cuentos del Varrío," teaches these teens to record the cuentos or folktales and history of their community in order to preserve the language, culture, and heritage of this often ignored part of New Mexico.

One of the areas of focus for "Cuentos del Varrío" was the issue of immigration. In the oral histories on immigration, the students interviewed family members and people in their communities about how they arrived in the United States. The students talked with an undocumented worker from Mexico, several first generation immigrants also from Mexico, and an uncle who came from Britain to North America in the 1930s. The interviewees from Mexico had various reasons for immigrating with economic opportunity, education, and marriage as key factors. Zoila Quezada, who came from Chihuahua in 1989, stated she came "to get a better education and to also get a job to send money to my parents and my brothers and sisters." When asked about how things have changed since she has been in the United States, she replied: "Over there in Mexico, there was no way to get ahead.... It's different [in the United States] because like I said there is more jobs, it's bigger and here you have better opportunity to get ahead and here you can earn a lot of money and over there it's small and there's hardly any jobs. It's like a small town that is very poor" (Quezada Oct. 15, 1997, interview). Economic opportunity was not the only reason for Ms. Quezada's move. She also stated that better education was a major influence. When asked what she had gained in the United States that she did not have in Mexico, she said: "A very good job, a better education for my family, and a better life in general"(Quezada Oct. 15, 1997, interview).

"Claudia" is an undocumented alien who came to the United States in 1993. She said she immigrated "because I got married to someone who lives over here. Even if I didn't want to come, I had to" ("Claudia" interview Oct. 27, 1997). But "Claudia" also came over because of economics: "There is not a lot of jobs over there [in Mexico]. Everything we need is on this side" ("Claudia" interview Oct. 27, 1997). When asked if she would go back to Mexico,

"Claudia" answered: "If my husband didn't have a job, or if it was time for them to throw us out, or if my husband couldn't fix the papers, then we'd go" ("Claudia" interview Oct. 27, 1997). "Claudia" was still working on getting her papers to become a legal resident of the United States.

Karla Morales came to the United States with her parents when she was seven. She remembers some of the difficulties in setting up legal residence: "We had to take tests, go to meetings, and prove to them about relatives' income and a good explanation to why we had to come to the U.S" (Morales Oct. 28, 1997, interview). It took the family a year and a half to adjust. When asked if she was a resident of the U.S., she replied: "I'm considered a resident. I got everything settled and into school the same month I came, so I know pretty good English except I don't know how to write it" (Morales Oct. 28, 1997, interview).

The PAC interviews on immigration allowed the students to explore an issue that is central to their community. Some of the students were born in Mexico, and many still have family across the border. Economic opportunity was a major factor in the decision to immigrate but so was better educational systems. As a means to reconnect the students at PAC with their history, the immigration component of "Cuentos del Varrio" proved successful. The proximity of the historic issue about immigration allowed the students to identify with the wider issues of why people leave their homelands and come to a foreign country, a fundamental process in the United States for the last four hundred years. Since this part of "Cuentos del Varrio" was connected with a broader study of immigration in the United States, the students at PAC experienced through a zone of proximity one of the key issues in the nation's heritage.

Connecting students with their own heritage and showing how that heritage fits into the larger history of the United States is a primary goal of "Cuentos del Varrio." However, having outside people come into a community with goals that might not fit that community's aspirations is a common mistake in heritage preservation projects. Non-local preservationists need to be aware of this problem and seek to combine their goals with the local communities. At PAC, Professor Villa and I were interviewed by the students early in the project. One of them, Daniel Bercerril, asked me why we were at PAC and not teaching at the university. I talked about community and language preservation, about reconnecting with one's heritage. After each answer, Daniel asked me again: "But why are you here at PAC?" I finally said that by doing oral history, he would gain self-esteem to which he replied: "We need that here." Daniel's question is valid for whatever heritage preservation project you are involved in. Why are you doing that one? And does the local community want what you want? In order to better understand our own motivations in doing heritage preservation, I offer these five observations knowing that there is no one answer that explains everyone's motivations.

1) We explore heritage because of what it can teach us about ourselves. Heritage is important. It is the foundation of our society. It is our roots and explains why we as a society take the actions that we do. Our heritage is the collective responses by the families of our communities to living and adapting to the changes in our world, in our history. Why do we preserve it? We are proud in how our ancestors faced the challenges of their times, and we want to acknowledge them for what they did. So we preserve our heritage because we want to understand ourselves and our society and to help explain ourselves and our society to our fellow citizens.

2) We study the past because it is a refuge from the present. Heritage reflects the past, reflects how society adapted to the past. For those of us who look at the present with uneasiness, with confusion and trepidation, the past is a refuge, a place to find respite from the present. Some of us dive into the past because we see a simpler, less complicated time.

3) Some of us use our heritage in an effort to address today's problems in our communities. Some use heritage preservation to combat some of the difficulties and challenges that our communities face. Those of us who are social activists try to reconnect troubled peoples to their communities and their past, to their heritage to nurture their self esteem, to give them a foundation in who they are and where they came from. We also seek to correct some of the current problems that our communities face by preserving the traditions, beliefs, customs, and heritage of the past.

4) For those of us concerned about the lack of economic opportunity in rural areas or who have to justify our actions to state legislators, heritage preservation is economic development. More and more communities are turning to tourism for creating new employment opportunity. To do so, communities throughout New Mexico are conducting cultural resource inventories, renovating their main streets, and publishing brochures and advertisements to attract the tourist trade.

5) Finally for some of us, heritage preservation is just good fun. It is challenging, interesting, exciting, and makes us feel good.

These are some of the reasons that we strive to preserve heritage. But let us return to the nagging issue-- how can we preserve heritage? How can we preserve something that is abstract, that is constantly changing, and that has different meanings for different peoples? We are in an important year of commemoration in New Mexico-- the quatercentennial of Oñate's colonization of the region. Celebrations are slated around the state to honor the rich Hispanic heritage that has descended from Oñate's expedition. At the same time, the statue of Oñate at the cultural center north of Española has recently had its right foot cut off and stolen, to commemorate a different aspect of Oñate's legacy. Shortly after he arrived in New Mexico, Oñate punished Acoma Pueblo's resistance to the Spaniards by cutting off the right foot of the men of the village. The recent removal of Oñate's right bronzed foot illustrates how the term heritage preservation is relative. What one culture chooses to preserve might not be what another would choose, and might even be a symbol of oppression or tragedy as Oñate is for some New Mexicans. So we need to be sensitive to the fact that the heritage we preserve is a subjective heritage. There is no one definitive heritage that we all embrace. Heritage is not just the physical embodiment of the beliefs and customs of a people, but is something a lot more slippery to grab hold of, and a lot more difficult to preserve.

A final look at the definition of culture is relevant here. In biology, culture means the act or practice of cultivating the soil. In this sense, culture is not something from the past to preserve but an action to grow something new. If we consider heritage and culture as a garden that needs attention, that needs cultivation, we will be better equipped to address the many difficulties that arise in heritage preservation. After all, the root of culture is "cult" which in Latin means tilling,

care, and worship. In preserving heritage, we need to till it, care for it and worship it as if it is a garden.

To preserve heritage, we must preserve as much of the traditions, beliefs, and customs as we can. Physical artifacts, buildings, and historic districts are all vital elements of a community's heritage, but they are just the tip of the iceberg. To fully preserve a community's heritage, we need to record the history, the cuentos, and the language of that community. We need to talk to the people of the area and find out what they think is important about their past and their heritage. Through these oral histories, heritage preservationists will protect more than just a building. We will help preserve a way of life.

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Appendix: Miscellaneous Oral History Forms

Preserving Community Oral History Project
Gadsden Independent School District Anthony, New Mexico

I hereby authorize (name) _____

to use my oral history memoirs which were recorded on the following date(s):

It is my understanding that the original tape or an acceptable copy will be donated and become the property of the

I understand that the Center will allow qualified scholars to listen to the tapes and use the interviews for their research. In addition, I wish to grant qualified researchers my permission to use the materials in connection with their research or for other educational purposes.

Signature of Interviewee

Date

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Signature of Interviewer

Date

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Restrictions:

Interviewer Checklist

_____ **Tape Recorder**

Make sure:

- 1) Batteries (if used) are changed.
- 2) Machine power cord is included.
- 3) Cassette operating instruction sheet is included.

_____ **Recorder Batteries** (if used),

Extra set

_____ **Tape**, adequate supply

Use C-60s or C-90s

_____ **Extension Cord**, twelve feet

_____ **Legal Agreement**

_____ **Research Notes and Question Sets**

_____ **Pre-Interview Questionnaire Forms** (if used)

_____ **Addresses, Phone Numbers, and Correspondence of Interviewees and of Close-By Individual for Help in Case**

_____ **Line Pad and Pens**

_____ **Black Felt Pen**

Checklist For Interviewing

1. Contact narrator, making certain that he or she fully understands the project.
2. Acquaint yourself with as much information as possible on the general background of the interviewee.
3. When necessary, arrange a brief pre-interview visit so that you and the narrator may be personally acquainted. Shy persons often times are more comfortable with this arrangement.
4. Prepare a list of topics for discussion.
5. Thoroughly check out equipment prior to the interview. An interview should not be an on-the-job training session.
6. Make sure you have all materials you need before departing for the interview:
 - *recorder
 - *external microphone
 - *adapters for two-pronged outlets
 - *fresh batteries (if necessary)
 - *tapes
 - *pencils
 - *pads
 - *release forms
 - *Go over "Interviewer Check-List"**
7. Make certain you are interviewing in a room which will minimize external noise, such as air-conditioning, fans, washers, dryers, dishwashers, telephones, cuckoo clocks, icemakers, et cetera.
8. Check that the recorder is recording. Identify yourself, the narrator, the date, the place, and the purpose of the project.
9. Proceed with the interview. During the interview, jot down proper nouns and other words if spelling may be questionable, and no verification has been made on the tape.
10. Have the narrator sign release forms.
11. When you arrive at home or at the office, make a list of proper nouns and other words, and aspects of the interview which you think may be useful to future indexers and transcribers.
12. Send thank you note to narrator.