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# Whose Voices Count? Oral Sources and Twentieth-Century American Indian History

**JAMES B. LAGRAND**

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## INTRODUCTION

From the beginning, observers have remarked about the special relationship American Indian people seemed to have with the spoken word. All the powerful and fantastic tribal stories—that spoke of the origins of the earth, culture heroes, and crafty tricksters—were transmitted exclusively by oral communication in America's native cultures, making the spoken word appear to carry even greater power. And ever since anthropologists at the turn of the century brought cultural pluralism to their profession, they and others have seen tribal myths, folktales, and legends as worthy of scholarly attention, as well as personal interest.

Over the past decade and a half, a new generation of scholars has again begun to give prominence to the words of American Indians. Perhaps even more than their predecessors, this new group—composed primarily of literature scholars—has emphasized the importance of native oral texts of different types, and has suggested their value for modern America. This group's work has even caught the attention of the public in some cases, in arguing for the "strength," "richness," "wisdom," and "cosmic balance" of American Indian oral literature. Brian Swann, one member of this group, has argued that in contrast to those influenced by

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western culture, American Indians have a “truly sacramental sense of language” in which object and word are fused together in a uniquely creative process.<sup>1</sup>

This circle of literary-oriented scholars has greatly benefited those who study American Indians from many different disciplinary perspectives. Some disciplines that once questioned the use of any and all oral sources now accept or even embrace them, due in part to the work of these scholars that has demonstrated the value of giving Indian people a voice. Now, however, new questions should be asked regarding the use of oral sources in American Indian studies. *Which* oral sources are to be used? From which time periods? Emerging out of what social groups? Whose voices, ultimately, should count when scholars consider American Indian oral sources?

This essay will suggest that the study of American Indian oral sources, broadly conceived, is currently tilted toward what will be called “oral traditions” and away from what will be called “oral histories.” Furthermore, it will list some possible explanations for this situation, ramifications of it, and (since this situation will be portrayed as unfortunate), remedies for it. Widening the circle of oral sources used in twentieth-century American Indian history to include oral histories may serve scholars in this field, just as it has benefited historians of Europe and the United States in recent decades. Specifically, then, this essay will contend that the use of an oral history methodology within the field of twentieth-century American Indian history has the potential to give ordinary and representative Indian people a voice, providing both scholars and the Indian community valuable first-person narratives on recent American Indian history. In addition to helping create much-needed sources on the recent past, the use of this methodology will also bring about various intellectual benefits. In particular, it will focus more vigorously on the dynamic rather than static nature of American Indian history, address the issue of power relations, and speak to the important concept of Indian identity.

In one sense, then, this essay will attempt to show the advantages of one type of oral source—oral histories—first through discussing various types of scholarly literature on the topic and then through examining two specific examples of American Indian oral history. More generally and more importantly, however, it will try to show the benefits of an inclusive approach to American Indian oral sources. It should be noted that the argument to be presented is not that we replace one type of source or

methodology with another, but rather that we widen the circle of acceptable and profitable oral sources that we use as scholars studying the history and culture of American Indian people.

#### DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO AMERICAN INDIAN ORAL SOURCES: DEFINING TERMS

Those studying any facet of this topic will initially be overwhelmed at the many different terms used by scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Similar to the types of texts discussed here but differing in their written format are numerous biographies, autobiographies, and works of fiction about American Indian people. Looking strictly at oral texts, twenty terms alone can be arrived at by combining a series of common prefixes ("oral," "personal," "life," "folk") with a series of frequently-used suffixes ("history," "tradition," "narrative," "story," "tale"). Some of the resulting terms can be used interchangeably without much of a significant change in meaning. For example, many studies that discuss and use oral history—including this essay—use the terms "oral history," "life history," and "life narrative" to describe basically the same thing. There are important differences among some of these many terms, however. The differences between oral history and oral tradition, in particular, should be understood.

The term *oral tradition* will be used here to describe a type of oral source in which a message considered important by a group of people, but not witnessed first-hand by the narrator, is passed from one generation to another. Often, the message passes through a formal, structured, and even ritualized process of transmission. Through this process, narrators of oral traditions try to stay as close as possible to the original message. Therefore, the recounting of an oral tradition is usually not a spontaneous, but rather a deliberative process that emphasizes continuity. Oral tradition also usually emphasizes the group or community over the individual. In the recounting of an oral tradition, the listener or person who asked the question which elicited the telling of the oral tradition plays little role as the message is repeated.

By contrast, the term *oral history* will be used here to describe a type of oral source in which an individual addresses experiences and feelings experienced first-hand in narrative form. It is an "eyewitness account" as opposed to one "handed down by word of mouth to later generations," to use oral historian Paul

Thompson's definition of oral history and his differentiation of it from oral tradition. Thus, there is no process of transmission in oral histories, much less a formally structured process. Oral history will not be understood here to be a simple or direct account of the past, however. Rather, it concerns connections between past and present and between the individual who is remembering and groups or communities to which he or she has belonged. Thus, oral history does not speak about either the past or individuals in the abstract, but in the contexts in which they have lived. It will be understood not as a strictly objective account of an event witnessed first-hand, but rather as a subjective account in which memory is constructed—influenced by the individual's relationship with other people, institutions, and structures of power and authority. Through oral history, people make sense of their past and usually talk about the *meaning* of events in the past rather than the events themselves, and thus use the accounts of the past to teach lessons in the present. The recounting of an oral history proceeds from the initiative and intervention of an interviewer or listener, who asks pertinent and open-ended questions throughout. Thus, the oral history is the result of a collaborative relationship between narrator and interviewer and not, as is sometimes suggested, the narrator "speaking for himself or herself." The influence of the listener is always present in the telling of an oral history and thus it should be understood as part of a dialogue between two people.<sup>2</sup>

This essay will focus on this oral history methodology within the context of twentieth-century American Indian history, and contrast it with the use of American Indian oral sources by literature scholars. It should be briefly noted, however, that other disciplines as well have made use of American Indian oral sources, most notably anthropology. A few anthropologists using American Indian oral sources have resembled oral historians in some of their theoretical and methodological approaches. Julie Cruikshank's fine work on the Athabaskans stands out as one example. For Cruikshank interprets narratives as culturally and socially constructed, and not as mere repositories of facts. She acknowledges change as well as continuity. She notes connections between past and present. And finally, she notes the collaboration in Athabaskan oral narratives. Other anthropologists, however, have more resembled literature scholars in emphasizing the continuity and collectivity of American Indian oral sources. Anthropologists Steven Mintz and Dennis Tedlock have both com-

mented on their colleagues' emphasis on collectivity. Mintz writes approvingly of studies that assume that "personality can only manifest itself in a cultural guise" implying collectivity, while Tedlock criticizes the numerous ethnographies where subjects "speak only as a group." Mintz and Tedlock evidently disagree about the value and appropriateness of a collective assumption in oral sources and texts. Both, however, agree about the prevalence of this approach in anthropological scholarship.<sup>3</sup>

Before further examining oral sources as used by both literature scholars and historians, the ways in which various disciplines view the relationship between interviewer and narrator should be mentioned. Everything from language difficulties to the perceived expectations of listeners and readers—from the types of questions asked to cultural differences—can influence the recording of oral history. Fred McTaggart provides a case study of how these issues play out in the field in his account of his work among the Mesquakies. Intent on discovering and recording traditional sacred stories, McTaggart realized after several unfruitful and frustrating meetings with Mesquakie informants that the interview process was not as straightforward as he thought, and that his subjects were not simply reservoirs of information which he could quickly and efficiently tap into. Instead, he slowly began to discover that the interview process is a complicated back-and-forth process that often produces unexpected results.<sup>4</sup>

Some scholars, however, are uncomfortable with the type of collaboration that McTaggart and many others have seen in oral sources. Whereas most oral historians believe the collaboration at work in the creation of the oral histories is helpful and constructive, some in other disciplines are less laudatory. Folklorist Jeff Titon, for example, prefers what he calls the "life story" to both the "oral history" used by historians and the "life history" used by anthropologists. He explains that this preference is due to two factors. First, he argues that the historian-interviewer's role within the creation of the oral history is too often intrusive and domineering, and that the lack of structure in life stories is preferable. Second, he argues that the anthropologist's life history neglects the folklorist's concern with performance and creativity. Titon shares some characteristics with recent oral historians, as will be seen more fully later. The most significant similarity concerns Titon's assertion that the questions or statements used to elicit responses should be open-ended, and that questions that speak to narrow factual issues should not dominate an interview. How-

ever, in suggesting that the life story is solely a "story of personal experience"—completely uninfluenced by the listener, other individuals, groups, or authorities—Titon parts company from oral historians. He suggests that life stories have a sort of reified purity about them of which many oral historians would be skeptical. They would argue that there is always collaboration and adjustment occurring in greater or lesser degrees. Furthermore, they would claim that even the person providing Titon's preferred "life story" does so not as an isolated performer, but in the context of the other people and groups.<sup>5</sup>

It would appear, then, that oral history is positioned between two other scholarly approaches to oral sources in the way it views and interprets the narrator. The oral history approach allows for more acknowledgment of the individual than the oral tradition approach, but not as much as Titon and other proponents of the life story. It is not willing to focus entirely on the group to which an individual narrator belongs and to ignore the ways in which the individual and group interact in personal accounts. Neither is it interested in vainly trying to eliminate the influence of anything but the individual in the telling of these oral accounts. In recognizing the influence of both the communal or collective and the individual, oral history concerns itself with the political, social, cultural, and economic forces acting on individuals and with the ways in which they speak to these in the midst of their narratives.

#### LITERATURE SCHOLARS AND AMERICAN INDIAN ORAL SOURCES

As suggested, there has been an increase in the number of works on American Indian oral literature and oral traditions produced in recent years. Literature scholars have been greatly responsible for this trend and for its benefits to all those interested in the history and culture of Indian people. However, the exclusive use of the types of American Indian oral sources usually examined by literature scholars has also brought about three less beneficial results. First, the emphasis on the communal aspect of these oral sources has often obliterated any individual difference among them. Second, exclusive use of oral traditions as understood by literature scholars has at times represented American Indians as static and ahistorical. Finally, the types of oral traditions usually examined by literature scholars have primarily

represented those people judged to have an elevated and honored status and thus have neglected average, representative Indian people and their voices. Greater use of oral histories to complement those oral sources already used by those in American Indian studies has the potential to mitigate these problems that can emerge from an exclusive reliance on oral traditions.

Most literature scholars studying American Indian oral texts and literature have thought about them in almost exclusively communal terms. In fact, despite recent scholarly interest in American Indian autobiography, those in this field have often shied away from the term itself and been ambivalent about thinking of Indians as expressing a classically western sense of individualism in their autobiographies. Some have gone so far as to suggest that the idea of Indian autobiography is a misnomer or oxymoron.

Literature scholars studying Indian oral traditions have usually given two reasons for their insistence on seeing American Indians in communal and not individual terms, the first theoretical and the second cultural and social. First, the popularity of structuralism as understood and practiced specifically among literature scholars has resulted in Indian people being examined on a very broad and sometimes almost impersonal scale. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, who have collected numerous autobiographies in several compilations of American Indian literature, acknowledge that "the Indian as an individual is not much examined" in their field's scholarship and that "structuralism, with its concern for principles of organization and function, has won out," leaving individual action and performance little studied.<sup>6</sup>

The second and more important explanation for the communal emphasis of most scholarship on Indian autobiography lies in the arena of social organization and world view. Overwhelmingly, practitioners have seen those in the modern West as individualistic and American Indians as communal. Hertha Wong, for example, has emphasized this point and found it necessary to develop a special terminology for American Indian autobiographies, calling them "communo-bio-oratories," or examples of "community-life-speaking."<sup>7</sup> David Brumble has found the walls standing between "the West" and American Indian cultures so imposing that he has predicted that preliterate autobiographies of American Indians will appear "foreign" to his readers living in "modern, individualistic societies."<sup>8</sup>



These scholars draw on a long line of studies on social organization and the relationship between the group and individual among Indian people. Working in the early twentieth century, anthropologist Robert Lowie suggested that societies or communities not experienced with modernization and industrialization—such as many American Indian tribes—tended to have stronger and more vital kin ties, and that the emergence of individualism in a society usually required industrialization. Jan Vansina, too, has emphasized the strong communal aspect of both African and American Indian societies and of their oral traditions. Defining culture as “what is common in the minds of a given group of people,” Vansina has written that communicating oral tradition involves “establishing collective representations.” And in an important and influential study of the Ute and Shoshone people, anthropologist Joseph Jorgensen argued that Indian people have generally been less individualistic and more likely to pool or share resources than whites. As people on the peripheries of economic power, Jorgensen suggested, many Indians have suffered from the shortcomings of individualism as forced on them by white Americans.<sup>9</sup>

Responses to this prominent theme in American Indian anthropology have come from both within anthropology and from other disciplines. In general, these rebuttals have suggested reasons for viewing individuals providing oral accounts not only as tradition-bearers or culture-bearers, but also as historical witnesses. Anthropologists Lawrence Watson and Maria-Barbara Watson-Franke have criticized their colleagues’ interest in cultures rather than in individuals. They have also criticized scholars who have collected personal histories in which “the personal accounts themselves were lost—summarized and dissected into the conventional cultural categories.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, recent work among historians examining various American immigrant groups bears a striking resemblance to Jorgensen’s description of the Shoshone-Ute worldview based on an indigenous type of collectivist ethic. Among immigrants as well as among the Shoshone and Ute people, leaders and spokesmen frequently urged people to follow a mutualistic and collectivist ethic and to look after one’s own people and their material needs first. However, historians of immigration have also recognized that not every member of immigrant communities subscribed equally or perfectly to community norms; some members supported them and some rebelled. Historians and anthropologists studying American Indi-

ans might take note of the range and diversity of responses that many economically-deprived immigrants gave to the socio-economic system they encountered. Perhaps a more symbiotic view of the relationship between individualism and communalism is warranted when thinking about twentieth-century Indian people and their history.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to resulting in an exclusively communal perspective, an overwhelming and exclusive emphasis on oral traditions can in some cases help perpetuate an ahistorical view of American Indians. In 1972, when Gordon Day suggested the then-novel idea of using oral tradition to “complement” more orthodox and traditional sources, his motivations were in part similar to those of early-twentieth-century anthropologists. He expressed concern that the time for collecting Indian oral traditions was rapidly drawing to a close, and admonished colleagues to begin work quickly with traditionalists to “salvage much valuable tradition.”<sup>12</sup> Other scholars, too, have expressed a preference for ancient traditions and myths over contemporary oral sources. For example, LaVonne Brown Ruoff has expressed hope that the study of oral literature will deepen students’ understanding of American Indian cultures—specifically those hundreds and even thousands of years old.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Jay Miller has emphasized oral traditions with attachments to long-past times. He contends that oral traditions “have historical interest because they reflect events and customs of the past,” speaking to such issues as kinship patterns and traditional religion, and states that the stories and oral testimonies of modern-day Pueblos and Sioux often reflect life as it was hundreds of years ago.<sup>14</sup> Hertha Wong, in striving to see the effects of pre-Columbian tradition first and foremost in all American Indian autobiographies since, also suggests a rather timeless perspective.<sup>15</sup> In this context, it is interesting that Arnold Krupat’s gradual acknowledgment of some sense of the self in Indian autobiographies has more to do with changes he perceives in theories of literary criticism than with historical changes in American Indian communities and society.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, when examining literature scholars’ use of American Indian oral sources, one notes that although this methodology admirably illuminates the perspectives of and gives voice to American Indians, it tends to focus on a select few. This approach privileges those individuals who have special status by means of religious or political leadership or artistic ability. Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, for example, have expressed their interest in

"presenting the lives of Native Americans whom we know foremost as artists." Other recent collections of American Indian testimonies and autobiographies highlight prominent figures such as Tecumseh, Chief Joseph, and Carlos Montezuma from past times; and famous authors such as Gerald Vizenor, N. Scott Momaday, and Leslie Silko from the present day.<sup>17</sup> This emphasis is partly the result of scholars focusing on what roles or functions certain individuals play in an American Indian society. Drawing on this theory, one scholar has defended the worth of particular oral traditions because they were "passed on by an aged person carefully and deliberately training young children." Others, too, have emphasized the special and distinct role of the story-teller in different American Indian societies.<sup>18</sup>

But these studies raise an important question: To what extent do those playing the role of story-teller or elder represent all American Indian people? Unless one fully accepts the premise that a prominent individual can capably speak for the whole, it appears that oral tradition methodology can run the risk of neglecting common people. Furthermore, this practice may even interpret the people it does examine in somewhat narrow terms. In this vein, Vincent Crapanzano has noted "a conceptual disquiet that is rooted in part in the problems of representation and generalization" among anthropologists using oral tradition. In choosing individuals thought to be "typical of a culture," Crapanzano charges, these scholars reveal their "homogeneous" and even "distorted" views of culture, society, and the individual.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Tonkin has criticized scholars' tendency to see the producers of oral texts as "fitting slots in a predetermined system," an approach which she claims "fails to illuminate the choices and conflicts of actors."<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth Tonkin and David Cohen, both working in African history, advocate a "social" perspective of oral texts and traditions. They have both expressed opposition to the idea of encompassing large and complex groups of people in one story, myth, or any unitary oral text.<sup>21</sup> Using this kind of social approach to study Native American autobiographies and oral histories, it would appear that both the "western self" and the "Native American self" often mentioned both require greater specification, the type of specification that an oral history methodology may be able to provide.<sup>22</sup>

## EARLY ORAL HISTORY PRACTICES AND AMERICAN INDIAN ORAL SOURCES

In 1948, historian Allan Nevins created the professional and academic field of oral history by establishing a center for its study at Columbia University. Although large interview projects had certainly been undertaken before this time, especially during the New Deal's Works Progress Administration (WPA), it was not until the late 1940s that the practice of oral history became somewhat accepted among professional historians.<sup>23</sup> Nevins began by interviewing politicians, bankers, artists, and generals in the New York area. The so-called "Columbia model" prevailed through the 1960s and still influences the practice of oral history yet today to some extent. As developed by Nevins and followed by his many students, this approach to oral history has focused on elite subjects in politics, economics, the arts, and the military, and has attempted to establish a factual record of these individuals' thoughts. Usually concerned with objectivity, practitioners of the Columbia model often have advocated checking oral histories against historians' more traditional written sources in order to keep accuracy at as high a level as possible.

Soon after early oral history methodology and interviewing techniques began to be used by U.S. historians, those interested in American Indian history also began to make use of them. The Doris Duke collection in American Indian oral history, developed from 1966 to 1972, was the first significant large-scale oral history project to focus on American Indian people and their history. Interviews with American Indians were deposited in state universities in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Illinois, and Florida. At the time, those involved with the project emphasized that Indian history had too long been written from the white perspective. Now, they claimed, scholars could have access to "the Indian's point of view."<sup>24</sup>

Some of the studies that made use of the newly-collected Duke interviews were as pioneering in American Indian history as Nevins' earlier efforts were in United States history. Probably the most prominent and successful of the studies to emerge from the Duke project was Joseph H. Cash's and Herbert T. Hoover's *To Be an Indian: An Oral History*, originally published in 1971. This book introduced thousands of non-Indian readers to American Indian individuals and cultures for the first time. It included Indian people's own voices on subjects such as religion, reservation life,

and the Indian New Deal of the 1930s.<sup>25</sup>

Many of those who participated in the Doris Duke projects followed Nevins' approach. They often focused on interviewing prominent American Indian individuals in order to obtain a factual, authoritative record of the past. Moreover, they frequently expressed worry about dimmed memories and factual errors. The work of Cash and Hoover illustrates some of the connections between the beginnings of the oral history profession begun by Nevins and the early period of American Indian oral history. In interviewing Indian politicians who played a role in the Indian New Deal, for example, Cash and Hoover asked about such things as the implementation of government policy and rifts between political opponents.<sup>26</sup> Elsewhere, too, Hoover has urged would-be oral historians planning to work with American Indians to "observe proper protocol." In this category, Hoover includes "working through . . . established leaders" in the Indian community being studied.<sup>27</sup> Though not a participant in the Doris Duke project, Vine Deloria also tried to gain support for American Indian oral history during the 1970s in ways similar to Cash and Hoover. In calling for more attention to twentieth-century American Indian history during a time when it received little, Deloria mentioned the importance of interviewing Indian people who had lived during the twentieth century. He too, though, seemed to assume that most of these interviews would focus on policy and be conducted with Indian people who had been present at important meetings that addressed legal and political issues.<sup>28</sup> Nevins, his followers in U.S. oral history, and later those in American Indian oral history appear to have shared a general characteristic, then. They all tended to emphasize interviews with the powerful and prominent, and paid little attention to other more representative and average people.

#### RECENT ORAL HISTORY PRACTICES: SUBJECTIVITY AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MEMORY

Near the end of the 1960s, a few American and European historians influenced by the new social history began to apply the methodology of oral history to the study of more ordinary human subjects. Nevins' craft would never be the same. Immigration and labor history especially felt the effects of this trend. Where historians in these fields had once used written archival sources to

focus on institutions and leaders, in the 1970s and 1980s they increasingly began to use oral sources to focus on the rank and file and community life.<sup>29</sup>

American Indian history is perhaps ready for a similar sort of transformation. This essay has discussed how both oral traditions and early oral histories—in different ways—have tended to focus on those people judged to have important roles in art, religion, politics, and other prominent activities. There is also value, however, in conducting interviews with those individuals who do not have their artwork displayed in museums across the country or who do not hold positions of religious leadership in their tribes. Just as the use of oral history by American and European historians has shifted from focusing exclusively on diplomats, congressmen, and generals, so might the study of oral texts within American Indian history look at average folks as well as leaders.

As oral historians in U.S. and European history have begun to look at new and more representative subjects since the late 1970s, many have also changed their analytical approach and the way they thought about memory. Whereas Nevins and his followers for years attempted in different ways to refine the reliability and “truthfulness” of oral sources, this new wave of oral historians boldly turned this project on its head, arguing that the value of oral histories lay in their very subjectivity. In 1975, Ronald Grele indicated that this shift required new ways of thinking about the interview, which he said should be “conducted in an unstructured manner allowing for spontaneous discourse.” He also advised practitioners of the new oral history to “go beyond mere verification of facts.”<sup>30</sup> Italian historian Alessandro Portelli moved further in the direction toward subjectivity when in 1981, he claimed that “the first thing that makes oral history different . . . is that it tells us less about events as such than about their meaning.” Rather than condemning or worrying about the speaker’s subjectivity, Portelli judged this a “precious element” unique to oral sources.<sup>31</sup> Later, Portelli explained that he understood subjectivity not as the mere whim of the researcher, but rather “the study of the cultural forms and processes by which individuals express their sense of themselves in history.” Others have described it as how people “perceive their roles in the context of historical time” and as “popular historical consciousness.”<sup>32</sup>

Those exploring the subjective quality of oral histories have emphasized the socially constructed nature of memory. Unlike

early oral historians who labored to perfect the accuracy of memory, those in this camp have argued that individuals shape and organize their memories in relationship to other people and to structures of power and authority. They see memory not as merely a simple, unidirectional process (from remembering the facts to forgetting them), but rather as a complex, multi-directional process shaped and driven by social and political relationships. Exemplifying this perspective, Portelli has written that "memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings."<sup>33</sup> One of the ways in which recent oral historians have seen individuals create meaning from the past involves organizing events into patterns or plots that serve present-day needs. John Bodnar has suggested that oral material is often revealing "not so much for what was remembered or said as for the manner in which memory was organized." In many cases, memories are organized in terms of the structures of power and authority—such as family, community, workplace or nation—impinging on the individual. This results, Bodnar contends, in oral histories interacting with structures of power.<sup>34</sup>

Not all have been won over to this way of using oral histories, however. Portelli writes about the fear among some academics that "once the floodgates of orality are opened, writing (and rationality along with it) will be swept out as if by a spontaneous uncontrollable mass of fluid, amorphous material."<sup>35</sup> Those who value the subjective nature of oral sources, however, have responded that what some might see as the "problem" of faulty memory in fact can be a boon, as it helps reveal the constructed identity of the narrator and presents the opportunity for the narrator to interpret earlier events in the context of later developments.<sup>36</sup> What is most important in this context is not the existence of faulty memory itself, but the scholar's full awareness of the subjectivity of oral histories. Thus, Grele has suggested that oral historians devise a "science of the subjective" and Portelli that they keep oral sources "as methodologically distinct as possible from straight factual information and intermediate forms."<sup>37</sup> Portelli does just this in a fascinating examination of how a group of working-class Italians remembered the death of a friend. Years after, this group began to ignore the rather ordinary circumstances of their friend's death and instead began to remember him dying a noble death while fighting for a political cause. The young man became a martyr as his death "became the ground upon which collective memory and imagination built a cluster of tales,

symbols, legends and imaginary reconstructions." Details, people, and even dates were changed in order that the story of his death would make sense in the town's public memory. Portelli demonstrates here how the presence of errors in oral testimonies can potentially reveal much about the people giving them—including their interests, dreams, and desires.<sup>38</sup>

Most early practitioners in American Indian oral history—along with most oral historians in general—followed a very different course than that pursued by Portelli, Bodnar, and other recent oral historians. They emphasized the gathering of factual information from distinguished individuals holding powerful positions while all the time worrying about the problem of the deterioration of memory. Still, some of those who worked with American Indian oral histories did provide a foreshadowing of what was to come in the broader field of oral history. For example, Mary Patrick in the course of interviewing Indians who lived in Dallas during the early 1970s noticed that "the Indians liked to talk about themselves," and that they would often make connections between their autobiographical sketches and current problems in culture, religion, or politics. Patrick did not actively pursue the implications of this observation or explicitly state that the individual accounts she had collected were interacting with larger forces and groups. She used oral testimonies more often to mine for facts than to explore Indian identity and how a notion of self had been constructed. Nevertheless, her early work in an almost non-existent field—including her use of broad, open-ended questions—paved the way for later efforts.<sup>39</sup> Julia Jordan, writing in 1971 about the contents of the Doris Duke collection at the University of Oklahoma, also showed a willingness to explore the connections between past and present and to look for more than factual information in American Indian oral histories. Referring to what she called "folk histories" in the Doris Duke collections, Jordan contended that they "expressed beliefs, hopes, fears, and longings which spring from present day conditions and problems."<sup>40</sup>

K. Tsianina Lomawaima's recent study of an Indian boarding school during the early-twentieth century demonstrates further the progress that has been made in American Indian oral history in the last two decades. At the same time, however, it points out avenues for further work and study. By examining the relationships formed between teachers and students, Lomawaima admirably incorporates power relations into her analysis of oral histo-



ries. She also demonstrates how notions of self-identity were formed in the interaction between not only teachers and students, but also between students from different tribal, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. Lomawaima suggests that attendance at boarding school functioned as an "important marker of ethnic and social identity" for her subjects. She recognizes both the particular and the general significance of the stories her subjects tell, contending that they are "powerful symbols of identity today not because of some Indian cultural content (in some externally defined ethnographic sense), but because they are the chronicles of Indian experiences told by Indian people."<sup>41</sup>

Yet Lomawaima still appears somewhat uncomfortable as an advocate of oral history. In the process of refuting the idea that history and memory must always be enemies, she proposes only a tentative "truce" between them in suggesting that the oral histories she examines carry a figurative historical weight. Her study does not address at much length whether and in what ways her informants may have presented subjective views of the past.<sup>42</sup> Future studies in American Indian oral history will be able to build upon this and other recent efforts, and in the process come to terms with the theoretical and methodological literature produced by recent oral historians studying American Indians and other people as well. Such work will be able to more fully profit from the subjective nature of oral history and explore the ways in which the memory of Indian people has been socially constructed.

#### RECENT ORAL HISTORY PRACTICES: SELF-REPRESENTATION AND THE PLAYING OF ROLES

A second broad area of interest and study in recent oral history work has been the examination of how narrators often reveal identities by gathering themes across a broad span of time that combine to provide a "thread of stability and permanence" to their lives.<sup>43</sup> Many oral histories present a carefully constructed self to the listener. Luisa Passerini has argued that these self-representations "show a strong degree of stereotypicality." She also contends that unlike the classic written autobiography that focuses on the development and growth of the individual, oral histories provide fixed forms of autobiographical representation. Some examples of fixed identities she found among her subjects included the rebel, the provider, the comic, and the self-sufficient

individual. These self-representations, however, are not mere personal concerns according to Passerini. Rather, she sees them as arising out of the individual's relationship to various forms of authority, such as the family, state, and workplace.<sup>44</sup> This scholarly approach of finding self-identity expressed in oral histories has been used profitably on subjects ranging from a poor Venezuelan Indian woman to Polish immigrants to the United States. In all cases, scholars have found, self-identity depended heavily on relationships to structures of power within a community.<sup>45</sup>

Here, too, the beginnings of a project that holds promise for the study of twentieth-century American Indian history can be seen in earlier literature. Past interviews with Indian people for which partial transcripts exist in published form are generally more valuable than those in which the interviewer has paraphrased. This is true despite the problems involved in capturing the spoken word in transcribed form, and despite the errors that can crop up in the process of transcribing interviews.<sup>46</sup> One sees the benefits that may often accrue from a generous use of quotations, for instance, in Mary Patrick's account of the Indian community in Dallas. She writes about a man who claimed that his fellow tribesmen had made limited progress in the area of money management. "He pointed out," Patrick writes, "that the Indians were accustomed to being taken care of by the government."<sup>47</sup> Sharing this man's words with her readers would have enabled Patrick to explore more fully how this man presented himself—in relationship to other Indians, to whites, and to the government.

In contrast, Cash and Hoover's practice of publishing partial transcripts of the interviews they use allows readers to test various theories and interpretations. For example, two interviews—with a Winnebago man and woman—appear to demonstrate Passerini's point that individuals tend to present themselves in a fixed and consistent role. A Winnebago man quoted by Cash and Hoover presents himself as curious and inquisitive everywhere he has been. No matter what authority figures said, he did what he wanted, including in his job at a power plant:

"There was this red button, and there was a reset button on the circuit breaker, and I got curious. I always was a curious one. So I said to myself, 'Well, I'm here by myself; I'll push the button.' And something didn't work over there. I'm going to start finding out about these things. The next thing, I was an electrical engineer. But I was denied that privilege at

Haskell."<sup>48</sup>

A Winnebago woman interviewed by Cash and Hoover by contrast presented herself as a dutiful, obedient figure. This was the case with boarding school about which she said, "I have no regrets. I had three square meals a day. The Government helped me there again. They helped all the time." In her marriage too, she portrayed herself as following the decrees of others—in this case those of her parents who arranged her marriage when she was a young girl. "Well, I listened to my father and mother. They picked my partner for life and we celebrated our fiftieth wedding anniversary." Finally, in her relationship to the government this woman again represented herself as consistently dutiful and satisfied with her lot in life. "Had the Government hospital, and yeah, ol' Uncle Sam, he was pretty good to us. Some kicked, but I don't."<sup>49</sup>

One also sees the moralistic and didactic characteristics of oral history on display in the published transcripts of some American Indian oral histories in which narrators use the past to teach lessons in the present. This theme, which has been explored in studies of the American immigrant working-class, also appears to hold true for American Indian people.<sup>50</sup> An elderly Sioux man in 1969 talked about the sense of community he remembered among his people as a boy and the changes he perceived since this time:

"That's the way the people got along. Everybody would help each other; and the men were just like brothers and the ladies all like sisters. Everybody helped each other. If somebody wanted to do something he couldn't handle, they would all go over and finish that for him. They didn't charge him a dollar an hour either. It was free. Well, that's the way we got along until we got mixed up with the white folks; then Sundays went away. The white men went to work on Sundays. And they would bring this whiskey, and whiskey put us where we are now."<sup>51</sup>

Just as future studies in American Indian oral history will be able to examine the social construction of memory, they will also be able to recognize the fixed identities Indian narrators seem to frequently convey, and also try to explain their development.

## RECENT ORAL HISTORY PRACTICES AND AMERICAN INDIAN ORAL SOURCES: TWO EXAMPLES

Although some of the theoretical and methodological issues discussed in this essay may be examined in the context of previously conducted interviews with Indian people, the conducting of new interviews will reveal the maximum benefits of an oral history methodology in the study of twentieth-century American Indian history. In these, recent findings of oral historians may be taken into account and influence the sort of questions the interviewer asks. The oral histories of two American Indians living in a metropolitan area demonstrate two benefits of oral history methodology.<sup>52</sup> First, these oral histories reveal factual data on which written sources may not exist or else are silent. The interviews provide information about such things as the employment of Indian men on railroads after World War II and the layoffs that came as a result of many businesses moving from downtown areas to suburbs in the 1970s and 1980s. The oral histories of Lucie Bear, a Sioux woman, and Ted Lawrence, a Mesquakie man, are more important, however, in the ways they show the practice of presenting a consistent identity, the didactic and moralistic use of the past, and the impact of social authorities and relations on individual memory.

Lucie Bear portrays herself as above all self-sufficient and capable. Beyond this, she also represents herself at points as somewhat of a rebel in her resistance to tribal, familial, religious, and workplace authorities. Born in rural South Dakota, she never knew her mother and was raised by her grandparents until the age of twenty when she moved to the city. Already as a child, she resisted the authority of Catholic teachers at the boarding school she attended. "They were pressuring me to become Catholic," she explains, "and that wasn't my choice." She later tells of how she moved to the city despite strong opposition from her grandparents who went so far as to take her out of high school during the last week of classes to try to scuttle her plans. Lucie explains: "They really didn't like it that I was going away, because I think what they wanted was for me to take care of them for the rest of their lives—for me to be there and take care of them."<sup>53</sup>

Lucie evidently also sees herself as resisting tribal authority. At one point, she contrasts the Sioux reservation on which she grew up and her husband's home reservation where they were about to move. In her mind, the Sioux fared poorly in comparison with her

husband's people who were much more educationally-minded. "My reservation—it's just the opposite. Their only thing is that casino." The moralistic and didactic mood of this statement continues when she contrasts herself with other Sioux migrants. The passage serves to convey an identity of assertiveness and persistence:

"A lot of relatives that came from my reservation here couldn't make it so they went back home—because it was overwhelming. But I was *bound and determined* [emphasis] that I was going to make it no matter what because I knew that there was nothing back there. There were no jobs; no nothing. And I wasn't about to go back to the res and just sit there and become a drunk or whatever [disgusted tone]. So I stuck it out. And it took me ten years before I went home. *Ten years.*"<sup>54</sup>

Finally, Lucie in her narrative of resistance tells of an incident with a supervisor in which she refused to back down. Left alone to answer dozens of phones by her boss who was on a three-hour lunch break, Lucie confronted him after he finally returned:

"When he came back—and he came back like nothing happened—he knew I was steamed. I said, 'I'm going to talk to you.' So he said, 'O.K. Let's go.' And I told him. I said, 'You know, that's very unfair to me. You went out. You didn't tell me what time you were coming back.' And then he made a nasty remark about Indians. And I said to him, 'Are you insinuating that Indians are lazy and stupid?' And he said, 'Oh, no, no, no. It's the way it came out.' I said, 'That's the way I interpreted it.'"

After Lucie told her boss she was quitting, he called the organization that had referred her to try to get her to come back, but she refused because she wouldn't put up with being demeaned. "It doesn't work that way," she explains forcefully.<sup>55</sup>

Despite telling the interviewer of this blowup, Lucie portrays herself throughout her narrative as a hard and conscientious worker—which is consistent with the construction of her self-sufficient identity. She explains:

But one thing about me: I'm happy that I did not start in the Indian community first because I wouldn't want to fall in the

same way they are job-wise. I mean, they come and go as they please. They don't have a set time to be at work. And that's what I like because I started in the non-Indian community. I started in the white world, job-wise. And that's where I learned that you have to be there at a certain time and on time. No taking days off. So in a sense that's a plus for me."<sup>56</sup>

At many of the places she has worked, she tells of moving up the ladder despite obstacles. At one factory where she worked, she notes that even with heavy cutbacks, "They kept me." Later she tells of consistently arriving at another job half an hour early every morning, and proudly notes, "I was the only one working already." She even tells of using her hard work and promptness to win over someone who initially did not like her. "I guess she saw that I was a good worker, you know, I work every day on time. And then her attitude changed about me." Eventually, Lucie explains, this woman left her position and offered it to Lucie.<sup>57</sup>

Lucie contrasts her own can-do, self-sufficient, capable persona with some of those around her whom she suggests fall short in these areas. She subtly but clearly suggests that her children have not had to endure what she has, and as a result are not as self-sufficient. She criticizes the younger generation as a whole for being spoiled, giving the example of kids demanding the most fashionable, expensive tennis shoes:

"But me, when I was growing up, it was different. I had a pair of canvas tennis shoes—*one pair*—that I had to sew because I had no money. My grandparents had no money. They had me on public aid, but I never saw that money. I don't know where it went. But I was happy and I learned the value of things. I guess that's what boarding school taught me is how to take care of things, and respect things, and respect other people. The kids nowadays, they don't respect anything. They think everything has to be given to them."<sup>58</sup>

Lucie explains that she is constantly baby-sitting her children's children, and that one of her daughters is even living with her. "So in a way," she explains, "I'm raising a second family." Compared to her life as a young woman when she had to work alone to raise her children, Lucie claims her kids "have it made." Now ready to move, she says that she tells her kids they are "going to feel it" when she leaves and can't help them all the time:

"I think they will grow up. . . . This is the only way. Because if I was to continue to stay here, they would never grow up. They would still be living with me and never experience how it is to live on your own, and to struggle like we had to do when we first came here. We had nobody to help us. No family. No nothing. And we made it on our own."<sup>59</sup>

This statement is significant for it contradicts an earlier statement that a woman her family considered as "grandmother" already lived in the city to which she moved.<sup>60</sup> As recent theorists and practitioners of oral history have described, Lucie is here constructing a subjective and not completely factual account of the past to serve needs in the present. In this case, she attempts to portray herself as strong and self-sufficient by de-emphasizing any help she might have received in her transition from life in South Dakota to life in the city.

Finally, Lucie demonstrates her assertiveness and strong sense of self when she discusses other urban Indian people questioning her about her heritage. Being somewhat light-skinned, she explains that she has often had to defend her "Indianess":

"I said to people, 'I don't have to prove to anybody that I'm American Indian as long as I know it right here [points to her heart]. That's all that counts.' You know, there's people that would say [sounding haughty], 'Oh, I'm traditional,' and this and that, but in a sense, they're really not. . . . An Indian person never brags about what they have or who they are. That's one thing—they don't brag."<sup>61</sup>

Looking at Lucie Bear's oral history in the context of the underlying social relations it speaks to, it appears that her experience of having limited ties to family, tribe, and to the urban Indian community has resulted in her narrative of self-sufficiency.

The oral history of Ted Lawrence offers a striking contrast to that of Lucie Bear. Unlike her, Ted Lawrence came to the city with his entire family when he was ten years old. Also unlike Lucie, Ted is very outer-directed, framing his oral history as a story of fulfilling his duties to family, tribe, community, and nation. Although many aspects of both his and Lucie Bear's oral histories are unique and directly influenced by their American Indian and tribal heritage, in a general sense they fall into a pattern noted by other scholars. An oral history practitioner recently studying

Jewish and Italian immigrants in New York has noted that the former group “generally portrayed themselves as active, autonomous agents” while the latter “typically recalled not political interaction but rather personal qualities and personal time,” and made family relationships a “frequent leitmotif.” In terms of this model, then, Lucie’s oral history resembles those of the Jewish immigrants studied by this scholar while Ted’s closely approximates those of the Italian immigrants.<sup>62</sup>

Ted, when asked about his first experiences in the city, responds by telling of the first time he entered the Indian center where he now works. In fact, his entire oral history revolves around the Indian center and the ways in which he fulfills his duties there. The first time he entered the center as a boy, he explains that it was to participate in a pow-wow, which he used to enjoy doing back home among his fellow Mesquakies. Here, however, things seemed different:

“When the pow-wow began, we had come down to the dance arena, and lo and behold, the song that was being sung, I didn’t know it. I did not know it. And I’m going around the drum trying to pick it up. Being ten years old, I had learned all my tribal songs before I came here—songs that we needed to know back there.”<sup>63</sup>

Running into Indian people who were singing different songs, though, confused Ted. He explains that the songs were unfamiliar because in his new urban Indian community, many different tribal traditions were often expressed at community pow-wows. Undaunted, however, he emphasizes that he discretely and reverently tried to learn the songs of these different tribes. Directed by his father toward some of the elders at the pow-wow, Ted approached them cautiously and asked them about the songs, dances, and histories of different tribes. He explains how he continued this learning process for many years after, always emphasizing how grateful he was to the elders:

“I’d be very courteous to the elders that I met and ask them if I could have a few minutes of their time. Sometimes they had it and sometimes they didn’t, but they let you know. You grew to know them, and be acquainted with them, and be able to ask them, ‘I’ve seen this done at this pow wow.’ And they’d explain what you had observed. So in my growing years here, it was a tremendous experience to sit with many



elders through the years."<sup>64</sup>

Besides revering the tribal elders, Ted also portrays himself as dutiful and grateful toward his father and grandfather who were "inspirational" in showing Ted how to be a part of the modern world while still remaining committed to his native culture and traditions. "My dad was valuable in his life experience," he explains. Part of this experience involved Ted watching his father spend great amounts of time with his family. Although he realizes that some examples might strike the interviewer as unusual—such as chaperoning his kids through the age of eighteen—Ted insists, "I'm not ashamed," and demonstrates that he believes his father was right by now having his adult sons frequently chaperone his teenage daughter.<sup>65</sup>

Even Ted's experience with the military is linked to following traditions and to fulfilling duties to tribal members and elders. He explains: "We come from a tribe where primarily all the veterans are Marines, and I always envisioned myself a Marine." However, a week before his Marine physical, he wrenched his knee playing football and failed his physical despite trying to trick the doctor into letting him pass it. He emphasizes his sorrow and agony after the doctor broke the bad news to him. He said to the doctor, "I was *born* to be a Marine. I was *supposed* to be a Marine. . . . Every one of my people have been Marines." Eventually ending up in the Army, he again emphasizes his respect for and deference toward his father's authority. He tells of how immediately after joining the Army, he was planning to head to Germany for a long period of training. Ted's father, though, told him that he was deluding himself and that he would go straight to Vietnam. Almost twenty years later, Ted's response to his father's prediction is a simple and humble acknowledgment: "He was right."<sup>66</sup>

Ted especially emphasizes his work with children in his job at the center. In this, he sees himself fulfilling his new duty to his new urban Indian community. Explaining that before reaching his current post he served as a youth counselor for many years, Ted states, "I think I'm very well-qualified as a parent to speak on issues of our children." He sees himself as giving and sacrificing of himself for the Indian center and for others. "I'm very concerned about their welfare—not only mine—but more so the kids who come here." He stresses how much time he spends at the center, how he's been involved in "every aspect" of it, and claims that his family jokingly refers to it as his "second home." When

Ted thinks about the future, he makes clear that he hopes one day to play the same role as the elders who helped him when he first came to the city as a boy:

"I'm just hoping that in the future that our children stay focused on their identity, and not be wrapped up in today's times. We can easily get into that. . . . I'm glad I had that opportunity to be with all the different tribal elders. That's a need. That's something I do on a daily basis. Sometimes kids don't want to hear it, but it's important. Later on down the line they'll figure it out, and they'll come back and say, 'Hey, I need to know.' Hopefully, I'm still an old-timer here, and I can take a few minutes with them."<sup>67</sup>

Ted, like Lucie, occasionally uses his oral history for moralistic, didactic purposes. Referring to the street gangs that he constantly worries about, Ted says they have developed because children are ignored and too often left alone. Although he does all he can to make the center a "sanctuary" from gangs, he criticizes parents for allowing gangs to infiltrate into society and his very own neighborhood. Parents, Ted charges, do not spend enough time with their children any more. In making this claim, he explicitly contrasts these delinquent parents with both his own parents and with himself and his wife. He talks about how his family makes every effort to spend time together—whether it be at the center, bowling, or just watching a basketball game on television. "We still have that camaraderie," he claims. Later, he calls one of their outings "a family thing."<sup>68</sup>

The distinct differences between Lucie's and Ted's oral histories are in part due to the different ways they have experienced urban life. Ted, who came to the city with his family as a young boy and who later became an employee of an urban Indian center, feels very connected to the community. Lucie, whose experience coming to the city alone has influenced her, does not feel as connected and emphasizes her self-sufficiency. In a broader and more significant sense, though, these two oral histories demonstrate that many Indian people during the twentieth century have lived in constant interaction with many different groups and political and social structures of authority. American Indians, it seems, have not lived in uniquely consensual communities in the twentieth century where they would all necessarily agree on a particular oral tradition or its meaning. Rather, Indian peoples'

differing experiences with family, clan, tribe, community, and nation have shaped their historical consciousness and the construction of their memories.

### CONCLUSION

This examination of two oral histories from contemporary Indian people provides only a modest demonstration of the benefits of an oral history methodology for twentieth-century American Indian history. No perfect “representativeness” is being suggested—either for Indian people in general or for urban dwellers, many of whom did not stay in the city permanently. Hopefully, these two oral histories do help point the way toward future work, though. For in a general sense, they show the benefits of interviewing ordinary Indian people and of using methodologies and questioning strategies that illustrate the socially constructed character of memory and the differences that can occur among Indian people in this respect. Lucie Bear and Ted Lawrence are neither recognized storytellers nor specially-trained recounters of oral traditions. Nonetheless (and in some ways, because of this), what they have to say about their lives, experiences, and the world around them is significant.

When looking at potential oral history projects in twentieth-century American Indian history, numerous possibilities and ideas emerge. Many projects can be imagined for urban Indians, a group that has constituted a majority of Indian people since the 1980.<sup>69</sup> Reservation-dwelling Indian people in many cases have had quite different experiences, and also should have the opportunity of providing their oral histories. Scholars might take a page from U.S. labor historians who have used oral history, and begin to ask American Indian people—in both reservation and urban communities—about their experiences with wage labor in the twentieth-century.<sup>70</sup> In the area of theory, scholars might examine the role of literacy in the creation of Indian oral histories and other forms of autobiography. The list of ideas and possibilities for oral history projects on twentieth-century American Indian people and communities could stretch on almost endlessly. The task of planning and then carrying out these projects, this essay suggests, is important and laudable. It should also be acknowledged that it is complicated and even intimidating, though. Just a few of the many issues that must be confronted concern methodology, theory,

developing questions, choosing interviewers and narrators, and finding funding to record, transcribe, and finally store oral histories.<sup>71</sup> But the potential rewards are great—both for scholars and for various Indian communities across the country.

In time, perhaps, oral histories will take a prominent position alongside oral traditions in the large circle of oral sources used by those studying American Indian history and culture. Just as the words of ancient tribal tales have great meaning and power, so do the words of American Indians in the twentieth century and yet today. Those studying twentieth-century American Indian history should listen to the voices of their subjects, and treat with care theories of oral sources that obscure Indian peoples' status as three-dimensional human beings with varied interests, perspectives, hopes, and dreams. Those undertaking oral history projects with Indian people will discover figures with rich and complex personalities and with interpretations about the past that they want others to listen to in the present. Only when scholars and others listen to these voices will they be able to discern how twentieth-century Indian people have understood themselves and the institutions and forces at work around them.

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### NOTES

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2. This essay's understanding of oral history and historical memory draws on and benefits from: Paul R. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 2d ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), whose definition of oral history appears on page 143; Ronald J. Grele, ed., *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, 2d ed (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1991); Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994); Douglas DeNatale, "Oral History," in Mary Kupiec Cayton, Elliot J. Gorn, and Peter W. Williams, ed., *Encyclopedia of American Social History* (New York: Scribner, 1993), 397-408; Alessandro Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," *History Workshop* 12 (Autumn 1981): 96-107; Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991); Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); John Bodnar, "Power and Memory in Oral History: Workers and Managers at Studebaker," *Journal of American History* 75 (March 1989): 1201-1221; John Bodnar, "Reworking Reality: Oral Histories and the Meaning of the Polish Immigrant Experience," in Ronald J. Grele, ed., *International Annual of Oral History, 1990: Subjectivity and Multiculturalism in Oral History* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1992), 59-68; John Bodnar, "Remembering the Immigrant Experience in American Culture," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 15 (Fall 1995): 3-27; John Bodnar, "Generational Memory in an American Town," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 26 (Spring 1996): 619-637; John Bodnar, "Moral Patriotism and Collective Memory in Whiting, Indiana, 1920-1992," in John Bodnar, ed., *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 290-304; David Thelen, "Memory and American History," *Journal of American History* 75 (March 1989): 1117-1129; Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990); Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Metaphors of Self in

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10. Lawrence C. Watson and Maria-Barbara Watson-Franke, *Interpreting Life Histories: An Anthropological Inquiry* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univer-

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19. Vincent Crapanzano, "Life Histories: A Review Article," *American Anthropologist* 86 (December 1984): 953-960, esp. 954.

20. Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 86-88.

21. Cohen has criticized the functionalist approach in many studies that demonstrate the conflicted nature of "tradition" and the lack of consensus among African tribes, clans, and even individuals. See his *The Historical Tradition of Busoga: Mukama and Kintu* (Oxford, 1972); *Womunafu's Bunafu: A Study of Authority in a Nineteenth-Century African Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); "The Undefined of Oral Tradition," *Ethnohistory* 36 (Winter 1989): 9-18; *Burying SM: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992).

22. These terms appear in Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 209.

23. Theda Perdue makes use of WPA interviews conducted with Indian people in Oklahoma during the 1930s in *Nations Remembered: An Oral History of the Five Civilized Tribes, 1865-1907* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

24. On the Doris Duke collections in American Indian oral history, see Julia A. Jordan, "Oklahoma's Oral History Collection: New Source for Indian History," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 49 (Summer 1971): 150-172; Richard N. Ellis, "The Duke Indian Oral History Collection at the University of New Mexico," *New Mexico Historical Review* 48 (July 1973): 259-263; C. Gregory Crampton, "The Archives of the Duke Projects in American Indian Oral History," in Jane F. Smith and Robert M. Kvasnicka, eds., *Indian-White Relations: A Persistent Paradox* (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1981), 119-128; Herbert T. Hoover, "Oral History in the United States," in Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States* (Ithaca, NY:

Cornell University Press, 1980), 396-397.

25. Joseph H. Cash and Herbert T. Hoover, eds., *To Be an Indian: An Oral History*, reprint (Minneapolis: Borealis, Minnesota Historical Society, 1995). Donald L. Fixico expresses well how valuable and innovative the book was when first published in 1971 in his introduction to the reprint edition (pp. ix-xvii).

26. Joseph H. Cash and Herbert T. Hoover, "The Indian New Deal and the Years that Followed: Three Interviews," in Peter Iverson, ed., *The Plains Indians of the Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 107-132.

27. Hoover, "Oral History in the United States," 402.

28. Vine Deloria Jr., "The Twentieth Century," in Daniel Tyler, ed., *Red Men and Hat Wearers: Viewpoints in Indian History* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing Co., 1976), 155-166.

29. For brief overviews of the uses of oral history, see Charles L. Briggs, *Learning How To Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 13-15; Yans-McLaughlin, "Metaphors of Self in History," 254-290; Grele, ed., *Envelopes of Sound*, 1-9; Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 47-49; DeNatale, "Oral History," 397-408. Thompson, an early trailblazer in oral history, looks back on some of his work in *The Voice of the Past*. Examples of scholarship in U.S. labor and immigration history using oral history methodology includes: Peter Friedlander, *The Emergence of a UAW Local, 1936-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975); Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); John Bodnar, *Workers' World: Kinship, Community, and Protest in an Industrial Society, 1900-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982); Tamara K. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship Between the Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Jacqueline Dowd Hall et. al., *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987). Also see the pathbreaking and sometimes popularly-acclaimed work of Oscar Lewis and Studs Terkel published during the 1960s and 1970s, including Lewis' *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* (New York: Random House, 1961) and Terkel's *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

30. Ronald J. Grele, "A Surmiseable Variety: Interdisciplinary and Oral Testimony," *American Quarterly* 27 (August 1975): 285.

31. Portelli, "The Peculiarities of Oral History," 99.

32. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, ix; Tamara K. Hareven, "From Amoskeag to Nishijin: Reflections on Life History Interviewing in Two Cultures," in Grele, ed., *International Annual of Oral History, 1990*, 9; Yans-McLaughlin, "Metaphors of Self in History," 263.

33. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 52. For similar developments towards recognizing subjectivity and the social construction of memory in anthropology, see Watson and Watson-Franke, *Interpreting Life Histories*, 58-97;



and Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*, 2, 112-117.

34. Bodnar, "Power and Memory in Oral History," 1219, 1202.
35. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 46.
36. Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, 113-114; Tamara K. Hareven, "From Amoskeag to Nishijin: Reflections on Life History Interviewing in Two Cultures," in Grele, ed., *International Annual of Oral History*, 1990, 10.
37. Grele, ed., *Envelopes of Sound*, 245; Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 256.
38. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 1-26.
39. Mary Patrick, "Indian Urbanization in Dallas: A Second Trail of Tears?" *Oral History Review* (1973): 48-65, esp. 54.
40. Jordan, "Oklahoma's Oral History Collection," 171.
41. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), xvi, 98-99.
42. *Ibid.*, 159.
43. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, 63, 125-137.
44. Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, 17.
45. Watson and Watson-Franke, *Interpreting Life Histories*, 81-82; Bodnar, "Reworking Reality," 59-68.
46. Charles L. Briggs asks scholars to devote greater attention to transcripts of interviews, and to quote at greater length from them in *Learning How To Ask*, 111.
47. Mary Patrick, "Indian Urbanization in Dallas," 62.
48. Cash and Hoover, eds., *To Be an Indian*, 55-56.
49. *Ibid.*, 86-88.
50. Bodnar, "Generational Memory," 619-637; Bodnar, "Moral Patriotism and Collective Memory," 290-304."
51. Cash and Hoover, eds., *To Be an Indian*, 90.
52. The use of oral history in twentieth-century Native American history may see some of its biggest dividends when studying urban Indians, an increasingly large and important group that has had majority status since 1980. In an essay directed to historians of urban Indians, Blue Clark urges the use of a wide range of sources and methodologies, including oral history. See "Bury My Lungs in Smog: Assessing Urban Indian Studies," in Donald L. Fixico, ed., *Native Views of Indian-White Historical Relations* (Chicago: The Newberry Library, 1989), 157-165. Edmund Jefferson Danziger's *Survival and Regeneration: Detroit's American Indian Community* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991) includes interviews with Indian people in Detroit.
53. Author's personal interview with Lucie Bear (pseudonym), 10/26/93.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*

61. Ibid. Lomawaima also discusses the issue of skin color and provides interviews with Indian children at Chilocco boarding school who were light-skinned. Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*, 148-159.

62. Yans-McLaughlin, "Metaphors of Self in History," 275-279. Lomawaima also notes that "there is nothing inherently 'Indian'" about some of the stories told by her subjects that nonetheless are of great importance for them. See Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light*, 98.

63. Author's personal interview with Ted Lawrence (pseudonym), 10/27/93.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Clark, "Bury My Lungs in Smog," 157-165.

70. Patricia C. Albers, "From Legend to Land to Labor: Changing Perspectives on Native American Work," in Alice Littlefield and Martha C. Knack, eds., *Native Americans and Wage Labor: Ethnohistorical Perspectives* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 259. For examples of oral history used in U.S. labor history, see the works by Friedlander, Yans-McLaughlin, Bodnar, Hareven, and Hall cited in note 29 above.

71. Some of the difficulties and challenges in undertaking oral history projects are outlined in Hoover, "Oral History in the United States," 391-407. For those interested in American Indian oral history projects there is a wealth of helpful literature available, including many of the works cited above in note 2 above. Numerous manuals on oral history also exist, including: Ramon I. Harris, Joseph H. Cash, Herbert T. Hoover, and Stephen Ward, *The Practice of Oral History: A Handbook* (Glen Rock, NJ: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1975); James Hoopes, *Oral History: An Introduction for Students* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979); Willa K. Baum, *Oral History for the Local Historical Society*, 3d ed (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History, 1987).