


Working with oral history: epistemological, methodological, ethical and educational considerations

LA COLECCIÓN OPENLIVES: LAS MIGRACIONES EN LA ESPAÑA DE LA GUERRA CIVIL Y LA POSTGUERRA



Germinal Luis and Miguel Arrebola (University of Portsmouth) in Barcelona. OpenLIVES project (2012). An open collection of research data and teaching materials relating to Spanish migrant stories. JISC 

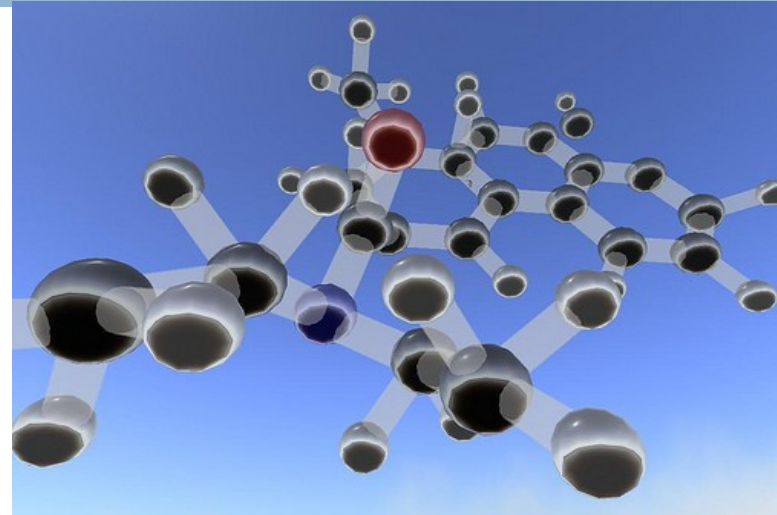
SPPO 1180. Skills and Issues in Spanish Portuguese and Latin American Studies

Objectives

- To gain an insight in oral history as a research method by comparing it with quantitative and qualitative research methods;

- To understand the epistemological potential of oral history in relation to traditional history;

- To reflect upon the roles of the oral history researchers and oral history users and their relationship with the “informant” and society.



Oral history - research methods

- The origins of oral history
- Qualitative versus quantitative

[Video](#)



•Since the 1970s there has been a shift from the expectation that oral history produces information, or ‘data’, to the understanding that oral history gives access to historical subjectivities

Penny Summerfield

- Implications of that shift:
 - New way of understanding knowledge construction
 - New roles for academic researchers and “research participants”
 - New ethical and practical considerations when doing and presenting oral history

Oral history - research methods

Oral history in relation to traditional history: an instrument or a peer academic discipline?



Germinal's interview



Interview with Germinal Luis Fernandez - Subtitled in English



Description

This is a videoed interview with Spanish child emigre, Germinal Luis Fernandez. It was produced by students and staff at the University of Portsmouth. Subtitles were planned and designed by students at the University of Southampton: Laura Davies, Wes Durdle, Chris Fish and Jonathan Gannon from the University of Southampton. Project generator: Irina Nelson, University of Southampton. All use and versions of this material should be attributed. Please cite this work as: OpenLIVES project (2012). An open collection of research data and teaching materials relating to Spanish migrant stories. JISC

Associated Groups

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Questions for you:

1. Under what circumstances would someone reveal that life experience publicly?
2. What do you think about Germinal's perception of his own past?

[...] El mayor tendría catorce, Claudio, me acordaré toda la vida porque ese era un gánster. Niños españoles. Y nos pusimos a robar comida en el Puerto de Marsella [Francia], a robar, a robar comida y qué hacíamos, cuando estaban descargando los barcos que venían de Argelia, qué se yo, y traían naranjas, dátiles, eso era lo que nos gustaba más a nosotros, otra cosa no nos interesaba, pero de vez en cuando se caía una caja de esto, un guacal, una caja de esas de madera, que tenía dátiles, tremendo, ¡pok! Se rompía y todos los dátiles al suelo, con un polvo, te puedes imaginar el piso de polvo del puerto, grasa y polvo, pues los hombres venían con una escoba de esas que usan los barrenderos y hacían un montón lleno de porquería y nosotros... estábamos como tigres al acecho para caerle encima y yo una cosa, lo pensé después, esos hombres dejaban caer a propósito, sí, eso siempre me ha emocionado [se emociona, llora] yo veía que de verdad no tenía por qué caerse la caja esa.

.Germinal Luis' Interview JISC OpenLIVES Project 2012



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Questions for you:

1. Under what circumstances would someone reveal that life experience publicly?
2. What do you think about Germinal's construction of his own past?

Answers from you (in the class):

Question 1

G: Acceptance of the past – G2: distance – time – perspective

S: altruistic – scientific – educational

N: Paid???

H: emotions- story- situation

Question 2:

Justify his own actions in the whole context of his life – He introduces his own narrative. He introduces effects

Epistemological considerations

1. Life story gives existence and meaning to the past. We live life forward but understand it backwards.

2. Composure: Life story allows the selves to compose their own identity through narrative and achieve a psychic equilibrium. (Summerfield)



3. *The story-of-a-life as told to a particular person is in some sense a joint product of the teller and the told. Selves [...] can only be revealed in a transaction between the teller and a told and, as Mishler reminds us, whatever topic one approaches by interviewing must be evaluated in the light of that transaction.*

Bruner in Goodmans and Sikes



Methodological implications

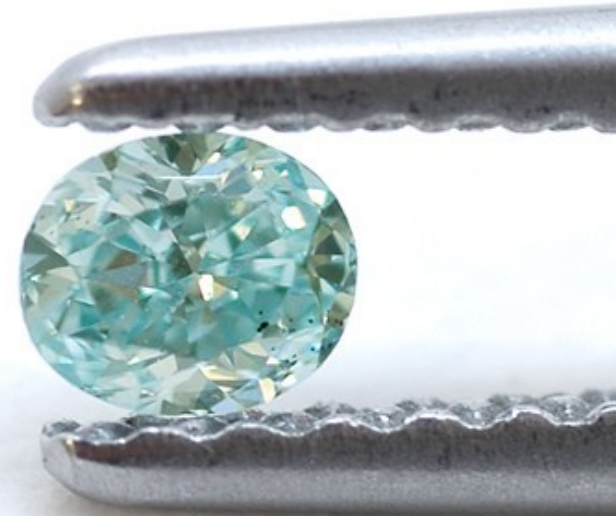


1. Interview methodology

2. Ethical protocols

3. Analysing the interview

4. Culture, context and
memory



Educational value and values

Autonomous Learning Activities
- Humanities as Life Learning

Socialising knowledge
construction



Democratisation of
education: empowering the
student and the “informants”:
sharing responsibilities

Attribution and references



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This presentation: Antonio Martínez-Arboleda. University of Leeds.
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Academic references:

Summerfield, P.. 'Oral History' (online video), [Methods@Manchester](http://www.methods.manchester.ac.uk/methods/oralhistory/)
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Goodson, Ivor F., *Life history research in educational settings : learning from Lives*. Buckingham : Open University Press, 2001.

