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# The teller's tale : the role of the storyteller in the life of the story

Rachel Cummings Klein

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The University of San Francisco

THE TELLER'S TALE: THE ROLE OF THE STORYTELLER IN  
THE LIFE OF THE STORY

A Dissertation Presented  
to  
The Faculty of the School of Education  
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Rachel Cummings Klein  
San Francisco  
May 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

The Teller's Tale: The Role of the Storyteller

In the Life of the Story

Oral tradition has been a means to offer senior citizens the opportunity to share their stories and/or myths with future generations, and thus leaving a valued mark on society. There have been multiple studies highlighting the benefits of oral tradition in the preservation of history, but what remained to be studied were the specific stories that senior citizens passed down through oral tradition, the similarities and differences found among the stories, and the benefits to the community on a whole by utilizing intergenerational programs such as oral tradition.

The design of this study utilized narrative research, a qualitative methodology. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on data collection through interviews wherein the senior volunteers told their story or stories to the researcher as well as through written backgrounds. The study focused on 11 senior citizens who volunteered at a hospital in San Francisco. Two meetings were conducted to ensure the validity as intended by the participants.

Upon multiple reads and a thorough analysis of the 11 narratives, the researcher was able to isolate themes that occurred within the narratives. Four generative themes emerged including Community, Family, Human Rights and Immigration with 27

subthemes. In addition, eight types of oral tradition were present in the narratives alongside oral history.

Given that many of the stories told were oral history and revolved around personal experiences through historical atrocities, it was apparent that these seniors felt the need to share what they had experienced. Thus, oral history was a major component in all of the narratives. The researcher concluded that this inclusion of oral history highlighted the need for the storyteller to inject themselves and their relationship to the story into the telling. Therefore, it can be said that the storyteller became just as important as the story itself and this idea alone immortalizes the senior.

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Dr. Betty Taylor

Dr. Betty Taylor

Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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## Chapter I

*Here we have our present age... bent on the extermination of myth.  
Man today, stripped of myth, stands famished among all his pasts and  
must dig frantically for roots, be it among the most remote antiquities*  
—Frederick Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 136

*Background and Need*

Researchers and gerontologists agree that a generational gap exists between older and younger generations (Atkinson, 2000; Bornat, 1989; May, 1991; Serikaku, 1989). The senior citizens of our society need to feel appreciated and need to have their voice heard, especially in this later stage of life. Likewise, the youth of our generation need to hear the myths and the stories that have been passed down. Told in the past through oral tradition, these stories have served as guidelines for how to exist within society. Today, emphasis is placed on the individual rather than the community and, as a consequence, the community and the individuals within the community suffer. Our youth attempt to make sense of the world on their own rather than seek knowledge from those who have already experienced life and hold the very wisdom they so desire (May, 1991, p. 23).

By participating in oral history and oral tradition programs, communities might better understand how their past affects their present and thereby utilize these stories as tools to bring communities together. As Thompson (2000) described, oral history “brings history into, and out of, the community. It helps the less privileged, and especially the old, towards dignity and self-confidence. It makes for contact – and thence understanding – between social classes, and between generations” (p. 23). This researcher believed that oral tradition not only served to bring people together across generations and social classes, but also united those with different cultural backgrounds. Through the utilization of oral tradition, it was hoped that the senior citizens felt valued

and appreciated as the transmitters of cultural stories to future generations through a mutually beneficial discovery process. Further, if they did not already share their stories with family members and younger generations, senior citizens may be encouraged to do so in the future as a result of their participation in the study.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Gerontologists and scholars alike agree that the aged have a strong desire to leave their mark for future generations, and to feel appreciated and represented as a valuable part of society (Kikumura, 1981; Serikaku, 1989). In a society that continues to lean further towards narcissism and individualism, the detachment between older and younger generations has grown ever more prevalent. Contemporary American society values success and individual contribution over community, which often leads to depression, loneliness, and an overall lack of caring for others (May, 1991, p. 132). Oral tradition has been a means to offer senior citizens the opportunity to share their stories and/or myths with future generations, thus leaving a valued mark on society. Oral tradition is often used in the process of meaning making and is one means by which culture is transmitted; as Vansina (1985) has noted, the “mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation (p. xi). It is through oral tradition that senior citizens can share their folklore and thus their culture, in a mutually beneficial manner.

According to the British Columbia Folklore Society (2000),

Folklore is common to all people. Understanding, appreciating and sharing another culture's folklore transcends race, colour, class, and creed more effectively than any other single aspect of our lives and, as an element of our past and present society it is something we can all relate to. Its value

is no less than any other part of our history and heritage and as such must be documented and preserved as a legacy for our future. (¶4)

Given the importance of oral folklore in all cultures' history, oral tradition should be explored as a valuable resource insofar as it can function to both represent multiple cultures and as a tool to pass down wisdom from previous generations. In addition, it has served as a link to bind community, valuable to both senior citizens and youth alike. Multiple studies have highlighted the benefits of oral tradition in the preservation of history, but there have been no studies of the specific stories that senior citizens communicate through an oral tradition. Further, we have not explored the similarities and differences in stories from an oral tradition, nor have we investigated how the practice of intergenerational programs such as oral traditions can benefit the entire community.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

The intent of this study was to identify the stories that had been passed down through oral tradition from older generations of senior volunteers from a San Francisco hospital. In an effort to examine the story and the purpose of the story as it was intended to be passed down from the storyteller, the study focused on one to two stories from eleven seniors, ranging in ages from 65 to 90 years old, who volunteered at a San Francisco hospital.

The study also examined the similarities and/or differences among the stories as transmitted by the participants. It was hoped that through the telling of the stories and by reflection on their meanings in a comfortable setting, the inherent value of passing these stories down would become apparent. In addition, it was hoped that through the sharing

of the stories, the senior citizens reflected on the importance of the story as well as the act of storytelling and finally, that they felt as if they had a voice, empowered through the act of storytelling.

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions served as a guide to drive the research study. They assisted in identifying what role, if any, stories had in the lives of senior citizens who volunteered at a hospital in San Francisco. They were as follows:

1. To what extent were stories as told through oral tradition passed down through the generations of a select group of senior volunteers at a hospital in San Francisco?
2. To what extent did oral tradition stories portray the experiences of the participants?
3. How were the stories similar or dissimilar as transmitted by the participants?

### *Theoretical Rationale/Framework*

Carl Jung (1971) and Jan Vansina (1985) believed that oral tradition has served to shape mankind's history; therefore, the main theoretical framework of oral tradition guides this paper. Oral tradition has had a significant role in the shaping of every culture. The theories on oral tradition offered background and relevance of its use in current studies, and thus informed this study's method and analysis.

*Oral Tradition*

Jan Vansina, Professor of History and Anthropology at the University of Washington-Madison and author of numerous books on the subject of oral tradition, is considered a pioneer in the field. He offers a modern take on the relevance of oral tradition in today's society and in the contributed significant research to the field of oral tradition research. Vansina clearly defines oral tradition and the importance of its existence and sustainability for society. Significantly, he defends oral tradition's significance against those who do not view it as a reliable source of evidence.

Vansina (1985) refers to oral tradition in two contexts, as a process and as a product. He defines the products as "oral messages based on previous oral messages, at least a generation old and the process as the transmission of such messages by word of mouth over time until the disappearance of the message" (p. 3). That is, a story becomes part of an oral tradition as a result of the process of oral tradition.

There are different classes of oral tradition ranging from the very formal to the very casual. The classes are determined by the evolution of the message, whether they are based on factuality or fiction, and by the degree of importance they hold within their society (Vansina, 1985, pp. 13-14). A first class message includes memorized speech such as those utilized in religious ceremonies, for example, prayer. While the wording will change over the years, the message is intended to be memorized word for word. Accounts are generally fused from multiple tellings of the original account into a final story. The message remains



the same but the result becomes group tradition instead of personal tradition.

Epics are another example of oral tradition. They usually contain poetic language, have a historical background, and rely on stock phrases for the telling. The final type of oral tradition is steeped in everyday language and includes tales, proverbs and sayings; much of this type of oral tradition originates with historical gossip. This type of oral tradition encourages improvisation and is considered the lower class of oral tradition. There are little requirements and are usually considered fictitious (Vansina, 1985, pp. 13-27).

Vansina points out that not all oral sources are oral traditions. Oral traditions must be at least a generation old and transmitted via word of mouth. In addition, they are considered oral traditions if the oral statements have been “spoken, sung, or called out on musical instruments only” (1985, p. 27).

It should be noted that many historians, as well as scholars from various other fields, debate the validity and reliability of oral tradition (Perks and Thomson, 1998; Thompson, 2000; Vansina, 1985; Yow, 2005). These scholars argue that memory is not a reliable source of history, but Vansina disagrees. He claims that oral tradition can be historical evidence “if it can be linked back to the observation time” (1985, p. 29). Further, even if the link of transmission is comprised of multiple sources throughout the ages (which it mostly likely would be), it is still valuable and possibly even more valid in that “the information coming from more people to more people has greater built-in redundancy than if it were to flow in one channel of communication” (p. 31).

More importantly, oral tradition is not always about the message or an original observation but rather the values and traditions that the story encompasses. So often

what is important is not so much the event that happened but the generalizations made afterwards that reflect the opinions held by the community. Vansina (1985) states that oral tradition

is the product of a continuing reflection about the past, the goal of which was not to find out 'what really happened,' but to establish what in the past, believed to be real, was relevant to the present. It follows that oral traditions are not just a source about the past, but a historiology (one dare not write historiography!) of the past, an account of how people have interpreted it. (p. 196).

Vansina continues to defend the purpose of oral tradition in the place of historical evidence by highlighting the contributions to the field made by oral tradition. While he admits there are limitations and countless cases of unreliability, it is an irreplaceable source. Vansina attests to the importance of oral tradition in research today for the following reasons. First, what makes oral tradition unique is that it comes from the inside. This is especially important when talking about oral societies. Even if the oral traditions are biased or limited, they give a glimpse into the history of populations we might never have the opportunity to know. One just cannot get the same information from an outside source's observations, which, after all, contains its own set of biases. In addition, oral traditions also differ from the written word in that we cannot gain the storyteller's first hand interpretations or the story's relevance within the context of time and space. We can only interpret what makes sense to us today (Vansina, 1985, pp. 196-197).

Carl Jung, psychologist and eminent scholar in the field, presented an overarching theory regarding the place of myth and story in all people's history. He was among the first to attest that oral tradition is a way to discover and/or express truths about human life and nature. It is at the heart of who we are in relation to nature and society. He observed that folktales serve a society the way dreams serve an individual, symbolizing our deepest fears and wishes and pointing the way to order and happiness. To Jung, knowing our folk stories was a way of gaining wisdom and reassurances for meeting the challenges of life (cited in Martinez, Naylor, Temple, & Yokota, 2002). Jung (1971) maintained that myth is what is believed by everyone and if one lives without myth, one is "uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him, or yet with contemporary human society" (p. xxi). In essence, Jung believed that myth was man's true connection to the past, the present, and the future.

The current study delved into oral tradition as told from the stories of our senior citizens. Jung contended that a society's elderly population is meant to be the "guardians of the mysteries and laws" of a culture (Jung, 1971, p.18). In fact, the aged were considered to be the wise ones, as has been demonstrated by studies of primitive tribes. Jung believed that in modern times, the elderly population competes with the younger population. The elderly population no longer accepted age as dignified but rather attempted to find ways to turn back time (Jung, 1971, p. 18). It is important to note this observation because it defines the decline our society faces in relation to oral tradition and its continuance.

Jung (1971) also believed in the collective unconscious and that it "appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all

nations are its real exponents” (p. 39). He attested that mythology is basically a symbolic illustration of the collective unconscious and is common to all people. He agreed with Bronislaw Malinowski that myth was

a reality lived...These stories are not kept alive by vain curiosity, neither as tales that have been invented nor again as tales that are true. For the natives on the contrary they are the assertion of an original, greater, and more important reality through which the present life, fate, and work of mankind are governed, and the knowledge of which provides men on the one hand with motives for ritual and moral acts, on the other with directions for their performance. (Jung & Kerényi, 1949, p. 5)

#### *Background of the Researcher*

For three years during my doctoral studies, I was employed through a local non-profit organization that provides healthcare to the elderly. My main job function was to enroll qualified seniors into our program. One of the preliminary steps in determining the eligibility of the senior for the program required me to conduct a home visit with the potential participant and often times, their family members. As a result, I gained valuable experience in conducting interviews in a comfortable setting. A lot of the questions were of a highly sensitive nature and I found it helpful to begin with a casual and informal conversation. Sometimes I would ask the senior about pictures in their homes or about their experiences in San Francisco, even talk of the dreaded fog. This helped to lower any anxiety the senior might be feeling. I also found it beneficial to accept hospitality when offered. The sharing of food is common throughout many cultures and I believe this assisted in creating a more comfortable environment for the senior as well as for

myself. Patience and kindness throughout helped to build trust. In addition, I found active listening to be invaluable. It is necessary to build rapport through genuine means. I believe my compassion and my respect for the elderly population was and is apparent to those I meet and interacted with through my job.

My ties to oral tradition are familial and intergenerational. My mother was the youngest of eight children; she was raised on a farm in rural Arkansas. My grandparents met at a taffy pulling and married when my grandmother was only 15 years old. She never learned to drive, believed very much in ghosts and had a strong connection to the land. Her ancestry can be traced to Cherokee Indian and is in fact where her middle name Dewdrop originated.

My grandmother was a great storyteller and passed down many wonderful stories to her children and to her grandchildren. I can remember many nights in Arkansas when my cousins and I gathered at my grandmother's ankles while she rocked steadily in time to her own voice. My grandmother's house was surrounded by cotton fields and on those hot summer nights, we had to remain indoors lest we get eaten alive by the swarms of mosquitoes waiting just outside the door. The television was never turned on because being at Mawmaw's meant stories, games and hand-picked food from her bountiful garden.

Though my grandmother passed away in 1991, her stories are still told. My Aunt Loretta picked up the torch and continues to tell the stories to the next generation at our annual family reunions. I have a great fondness for the stories and will continue to tell them with my own children some day. Every one of my close friends knew the infamous story about the bear that carried off my great great grandmother Pearl. It is through these

stories that I learned who my grandmother was and what the world around her was like as she grew up. I have often reflected on those hot, still nights, listening intently as my grandmother scared her darling little grandchildren half to death with the old folklore. Though it caused many sleepless nights, I will always cherish those times.

#### *Delimitations and Limitations*

There were various limitations and delimitations addressed in this study. The first delimitation was the scope of the project. The participants were confined to senior citizens living in the San Francisco Bay Area who were volunteering at a San Francisco hospital at the time. As a result, the study was not representative of all senior citizens in the Bay Area and thus is not transferrable to other senior populations. A second delimitation was in the sole usage of participants who did not have a Durable Power of Attorney to make their health decisions for them. I chose this to release myself from any potential conflicts of interest with a Durable Power of Attorney, as I did not want to put the senior citizen at any sort of risk for emotional distress. As a result, this may have eliminated senior citizens who could have been potential candidates for the study.

Another limitation of the study had to do the senior citizens' cognitive abilities. Through my previous occupation, I knew that senior citizens could get easily confused, especially if any type of memory impairment. Therefore the information gathered through the interview process might have been skewed or inaccurate. In addition, senior citizens may not have clearly understood the difference between oral tradition and oral history and as a result, chose to tell

stories from their personal lives instead of stories that have been passed down in their families.

Finally, as a Caucasian female from the upper middle classes, I represented an organization at work and an institution through my studies. My position of privilege had the potential to create distrust among senior citizens of various socioeconomic backgrounds and races. Senior citizens who may have historically been repressed by the socio-political structure may have been reluctant to share their family stories with someone outside their trusted community. Therefore, the last limitation was the inability to account for the relevancy of this study for all classes and cultures. Further, the study was limited to 11 participants and so a comprehensive picture of different cultures and oral traditions might have been difficult to determine based on this study.

### *Significance of the Study*

A study of the importance of oral tradition in the development and continuity of a community is significant because of the function these stories have served to keep communities together and preserved. Multiple theories have suggested that oral tradition is a means for humans to discover truths about life (Campbell, 1988; Coles, 1986; Zipes, 1994). Oral tradition includes the past and should continue to document the present and future. It is a means for a culture to pass down beliefs and values and as such, a means to assist in the sustainability of that culture (Campbell, 1988; Serikaku, 1989). Ultimately, as schools and educators continue to face an even greater gap between generations, communities

will most likely look for alternative ways in which to bring our children and the knowledge of our elders together.

This study provides educators, parents, family members from the younger generations and/or caregivers with a valuable look at the importance of oral tradition in our society as a means of transmitting cultural stories. The acknowledgment of the stories from our elder population within our own communities not only offers the opportunity to incorporate multicultural material into the classroom, but also could link the children to their pasts, thereby offering a guide for accepted cultural norms through these stories. In addition, the study added value to the lives of senior citizens who, as gerontologist Robert Butler observes, “seem to have a very profound need to leave their mark (not in an egocentric sense) by sponsoring young people or ingraining some moral or lasting value for future generations” (as cited in Serikaku, 1989, p.74).

### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms should be understood as working definitions for the ideas involved in this study. Oral history, oral tradition and oral folklore are often used interchangeably, and in some cases, overlap. In addition, the following terms are used throughout the study:

*Account:* An account is the retelling of an event. Often accounts of events told in the present are passed down through the generations. The account may have pieces of the original story, but most often has been fused with multiple accounts of the story. There is no way to determine what has been added over time (Vansina, 1985).



*Feminist Theory and Oral History:* Oral history as a methodology has allowed those historically repressed to have a voice, including women. “It is a means of gathering information central to understanding women’s lives and viewpoints” (Etter-Lewis, 1991, p.43).

*Folklore:* Folklore includes social customs, oral literature, occupational folklore (such as farming and blacksmithing) and material culture. Examples of folklore include grandmother’s recipe, a song, or the art of quilting. For the purpose of this study, the focus will primarily be on the oral literature component (Ballantyne, 2000).

*Folktale:* “Folktales are stories of cleverness, adventure, or trickery, told sparsely with active plots but little development of setting or characters. Varieties of folktales include fairy tales, pourquoi tales, and tall tales” (Martinez, Naylor, Temple, & Yokota, 2002, p. 140).

*Myth:* The literal translation of “myth” is “word of mouth.” Myths began as oral tradition, though many are found in written form today. Myth is an ancient story that offers a way of “making sense in a senseless world,” basically a course to explain our existence and meaning (May, 1991, p. 15).

*Oral history:* Oral history is “the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction” (Perks and Thomson, 1998, p. iv). The events occur during the lifetime of the informants (Vansina, 1985, p. 12).

*Oral tradition:* Oral traditions are “verbal messages which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation. The message must be oral statements spoken, sung, or called out on musical instruments only. Not all

oral sources are oral traditions. There must be transmissions by word of mouth over at least a generation” (Vansina, 1985, pp. 27-28).

*Oral tradition of the oppressed:* Oppression is inclusive of traditions of diverse cultures. Oral tradition was often the only means for oppressed groups to pass down their culture and their history to younger generations (Perks & Thomson, 1998; Summerfield, 2005).

*Senior citizen/Senior:* An elder ranging in age from 65-80.

*Story:* The dictionary defines story as “an account or recital of an event or series of events either true or fictitious” (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/story>).

*Storyteller:* Storyteller refers to the senior citizen recounting the oral tradition.

*Traditional literature:* “Traditional literature consists of stories, songs, poems, and riddles from anonymous sources. Works of traditional literature were usually passed on by word of mouth before being written down” (Martinez, Naylor, Temple & Yokota, 2002, p. 139).

### *Summary*

This study explores the stories that have been passed down through oral tradition in the families of senior citizens who volunteered at a San Francisco hospital. They are examples of how cultures utilize narrative as a method of transmitting knowledge. Oral tradition provides a valuable means to understand the past and gave voice to those often neglected in society. This study's findings suggest that the practice of an oral tradition could bridge the generational gap in communities, and in turn add value to the lives of senior citizens. The process involved in collecting and analyzing the stories was intended to be mutually

beneficial to myself as a researcher as well as to the participants; together we created an authentic research experience. By examining the stories that are passed down, our society might stand to gain a better understanding of similarities and differences in the stories of senior citizens and the importance that they hold in the transmission of cultural beliefs and values.

## Chapter II: Review of the Literature

The literature review for this study focused on seven main areas, including 1) oral tradition and the oppressed 2) oral tradition and Feminist theory, 3) oral tradition and gerontology, 4) the usage of oral tradition to strengthen community, 5) oral history, 6) the purpose and function oral tradition (folklore) has served historically, and 7) the sustainability of oral tradition. These seven areas provide background information for the study in addition to discussing the function of oral tradition.

### *Oral Tradition and the Oppressed*

While there appears to be a decline in oral tradition, oral history has offered a valuable contribution to historical research and has witnessed a resurgence in its importance to researchers and scholars today. In fact, it is now viewed as a qualitative methodology ("What is", n.d.). It has given voice to those who have been overlooked or silenced throughout history "including women, the working-class, and cultural minorities" (Perks & Thomson, 1998, p. vii). It is a way to document historical injustices such as slavery and the Holocaust. It offers those who survived such atrocities a voice to share their knowledge and experiences. More importantly, it offers future generations the truth as told by those who experienced it and it is hoped that the stories will continue to be passed on. Every voice, not just those who played a major role in historical events, i.e., traditionally white males, can be heard, given life, and honored as a deserving part of history. Typically, record keeping had "few accounts from women, from minorities, from deviant groups and in content the bias neglected accounts of family life, social customs, working life, old age, neighbourhood, community and undocumented events

hidden from history” (Bornat, 1989, p. 190). Oral history is a means to uncover these lost accounts.

As a result of the social movements of the 1960's, oral history began to be utilized as a means to challenge political views in Britain and the U.S. These movements demanded that the ordinary person no longer be overlooked in the mainstream accounts of history. Oral historians began to focus on the voices of those previously unheard, including women, ethnic minorities, and anyone else who is traditionally “forgotten.” The intended purpose was to “give a voice to the voiceless, to raise consciousness, and to empower those who now found a place in history” (Summerfield, 2005, p. 48).

The power of oral tradition could not be exemplified more than through the stories and songs of African American slaves. When slaves were taken from Africa to America, they brought with them their culture, their heritage, their language and their customs (Papa, Gerber, & Mohamed, 1998). Many White slave owners did not allow their slaves to learn to read or write in an attempt to limit uprisings by suppressing communication and education. They were also forbidden to speak in their native languages. Slave owners went to great lengths to prove that slaves were the inferior race by attempting to keep them ignorant. As a result, slaves relied heavily on oral tradition as a means to educate as well as a means of expression in a time of great oppression (Ibid).

Many of the stories told by slaves were traditional folktales and thus served to explain natural phenomenon that humankind questioned. Those stories attempted to answer life's great mysteries, where we came from, etc. While stories were often times told to entertain, they were also used as “a teaching tool to convey ideals and morals and cultural values from one generation to another” (Papa, et al., ¶7). Oral tradition was the

means of continuing the African culture. Slavery unintentionally gave rise to oral tradition and thus, the transmission of culture. Though African people's were oral cultures before slavery, oral tradition served as a primary means to transmit culture during this oppressive time. The stories reflected their lives as slaves but they also incorporated their African heritage and so as the stories continued, they changed shape. When looking back at the stories today, the reader also gains knowledge about the values of African Americans. The stories portray the value of "their families, their children, society, and their natural world" (¶10). These stories continue to have great influence on African American art today. Authors, musicians and artists continue to reflect the stories in their own modern day work.

An example of the influence of this oral tradition can be seen in the work of Alex Haley, co-author of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) and author of *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976). In an article printed in the *Oral History Review*, Haley (1998) divulges the importance of oral tradition within his life. As a child he recounts hearing stories as told by his family on hot summer nights. Most of the stories were told on the front porch of his grandmother's house; of these stories Haley recalls hearing the most important one to him and to his grandmother, and refers to it as "the one about the African." His grandmother tells the story of their first known ancestor whom she fondly refers to as "the African." He remembers the telling of the story and how his grandmother "pumped that story into me as if it were plasma. It was by all odds the most precious thing in her life – the story which had come all the way down across the generations about the family going back to that original African" (Haley, 1973, p. 12).

The most remarkable aspect of Haley's telling of the importance of oral tradition is that he was able, with the help of researcher friends, to track down the African tribe from which "the African" came because of the few African words preserved in the story. When Haley went to Africa to meet the tribe, the griot, or the oral historian of the village, was able to duplicate Haley's grandmother's story. It touched the author in a way he cannot even describe. Haley's account serves to exemplify the truths that are often contained within a family's oral tradition, one that stems from evidence of history and as such began as oral history. As a result, Haley was reconnected with his distant past. He was able to reconnect with a part of himself that slavery attempted to eradicate. His story exemplifies the importance of oral tradition.

#### *Oral Tradition and Feminist Theory*

Oral history and oral tradition can aid in uncovering the voices of those usually silenced by the mainstream. Among these, women — and the feminist movement in general — have benefited greatly from utilizing oral history methods. In a series of essays focusing on oral history and women, Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack state, "Oral history interviews provide an invaluable means of generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their world" (1991, p. 11). It allows the woman a chance to tell her story in her own words. Further, men and women have different communication styles and by acknowledging both verbal and nonverbal cues, the interview can capture the true essence of the story.

When discussing women and communication, it is important to understand the learned communication skills have been imposed upon women for ages. Throughout history, it was powerful White men who were interviewed, and treated as the voices of

interest. Women were often muted, as were their experiences. This practice is apparent not only in the public sphere but also the private one; so it is that women, when talking about their lives, “may combine two separate, often conflicting, perspectives: one framed in concepts and values that reflect men’s dominant position in the culture, and one informed by the more immediate realities of a woman’s personal experience” (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 11). Women may choose to hide their own feelings in an effort to fit into the frame that has been deemed acceptable by their patriarchal culture.

In order to really understand all that a woman has to reveal, given the above-mentioned practice of hiding important aspects of the story, it is important to understand that men and women have different communication styles. Much of this revolves around power and it is negotiated through verbal and nonverbal communications. In fact, “many individuals learn unconsciously – and a few learn by direct study – direct strategies for tolerating, adapting to, or outmaneuvering others who attempt to gain control with the help of gendered i.e., socially acquired, verbal and nonverbal signs” (Minister, 1991, p. 27). Anthropologists have noticed that women attempting to climb the corporate ladder, which is still very much a man’s world, change their communication style to resemble men’s. The eye contact changes, they smile less often and they take up more physical space (Ibid).

Minister (1991) argues that a similar frame still exists in oral history interview techniques. Historically, oral interviews were conducted by men for men. These question and answer sessions are not sufficient to interview women, as Minister (1991) observes:



Although oral historians are at present cutting across class and ethnic lines in a new commitment to publish the voices of those who were once silent or silenced in the larger human community, oral history method continues to rest upon the assumption that interviewers will conduct interviews the way men conduct interviews. This means that women who do not participate in the male sociocommunication subculture will remain invisible as most of their white, middle- and upper-class sisters were until relatively recently. (p. 31)

Anderson and Jack (1991) agree; they conclude that, “we need to refine our methods for probing more deeply by listening to the levels on which the narrator responds to the original questions. We need to hear what women implied, suggested, and started to say but didn’t (p. 17). Essentially, the interviewer needs a different skills set when interviewing women. They must pay attention not only to what has been said, but also to what has not been said. Together, the interviewer can help the interviewee say what she wants to say on her own terms. The authors continue that the methodology needs to focus less on the information gathering for her own purposes and more on the process, leading to the revelation of the story (Minister, 1991).

Oral historians have found oral history a unique means to capture the stories of women, who among those groups of people traditionally overlooked. Add race to that equation and an even greater dimension of complexity has the potential for discovery. Black women in America, for example, find it hard to see themselves reflected in studies. Gwendolyn Etter-Lewis (1991) attests that they either find research on women as the “mythical male norm” or more recently as the norm for White females. As a result,

utilizing oral narratives “is not a mere compilation of idiosyncratic recollections only interesting to a specialized audience; rather, black women’s life stories enrich our understanding of issues of race and gender” (p. 43). She further states that by using the white middle-class woman as a norm (as it currently is), leaves out not only women of other races but the working-class woman. She continues that in order to understand a woman, you must understand the community from which she came (pp. 43-44). This is how one can gain an idea of self.

Black women in particular tend to see themselves in relation to their community, the group (Etter-Lewis, 1991). Much of this is due to the need to bind together in a racist society. This unity allows women to serve as an agent of change. This is not to say that the Black female dissolves her own sense of individualism into the group, but rather that she views herself as part of something larger (pp. 52-55). Therefore, when attempting to interview, the interviewer must take into account the notion of the Black female self if the interviewer wishes to be part of a transformative process. Etter-Lewis notes that Black women “do not have the privilege of *only* being women, or *only* being black Americans” (p. 56). Black women are faced with dual roles.

### *Oral Tradition and Gerontology*

Many scholarly fields have acknowledged the importance and significance of utilizing oral history to tell the stories of those who are often historically disregarded, but medical professionals have recently embraced oral history as a means to help their patients. Some medical professionals recognize the effectiveness in using oral history techniques to help a patient feel comfortable when discussing medical matters. In addition, gerontologists note that their elderly patients seem to have a need to leave their

mark on the world before departing (Serikaku, 1989, p. 74). Oral history and oral tradition are ways that allow seniors to leave their mark, by leaving their story. It is important and significant to the storyteller because they know they are leaving their voice behind through an interview or a story. It creates a sense of value and pride within the senior.

Joanna Bornat, Senior Lecturer at the Open University in Britain, discusses the emergence of oral history with the elderly population in Britain. She witnessed a disconnect that often occurred between the generations and the sense that seniors often experience loneliness and exclusion from the loss of value in society. She also attests that though there is a distance, the distance could be appreciated by the younger generations if they can attempt to understand the differences and to look for “continuities between generations” (1989, p. 189). So while it is acknowledged that there is a generational gap existing between the old and the young, these differences can be used to understand one another rather than as an excuse to dissociate.

In *Recording Oral History* (2005), Valerie Raleigh Yow discusses her research on the aging memory. While there has been a belief that memory declines with age, this decline actually varies depending on the situation. In fact, it depends more on the importance of the story and memory to the person. Seniors who are in good health have little difference “between them and younger adults in vividness of recall of details when the interviewer has given the narrator an open-ended question” (38). Important memories are repeated over the years by seniors “as they seek to reinforce meanings in their lives” (Ibid). Thus, people tend to remember the things that matter most to them in their lives.

Another advantage of the elderly as storytellers is that, in general, older adults are better storytellers than their younger counterparts. They tend to have richer vocabularies and have better associations so they make better sense of the story. The stories recited have been told countless numbers of times and this repetition also results in a better-told story. Young adults can typically remember more detail and more accurate facts but the older storytellers are better at the process of storytelling (Yow, 2005, p. 39).

Medical doctors, adult day health programs and others in the field of gerontology have begun to use storytelling to connect seniors to their communities as well as to connect with them. Valerie Villela, Director of the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Senior Center in San Francisco, at a breakout session of a conference in May 2008 on the aging brain, discussed new programming her center is incorporating to encourage life long learning including the usage of storytelling. The goal of the 30<sup>th</sup> Street Senior Center program is to help seniors remain independent in their communities for as long as possible. Valerie attests that “everybody has a story to tell” and storytelling is a way to “get involved in creative expression.” It is a way to socialize and to create community. Valerie believes that life long learning helps the seniors to remain inspired and leads to successful aging.

Professionals in the field of gerontology have also found storytelling to be a valuable rehabilitation method with seniors afflicted with dementia and Alzheimer's Disease. For example, TimeSlips, a program that helps patients reconnect with family and staff members through storytelling, has now been replicated across the States. Researchers who institute the TimeSlips method with their own patients have found that vocabulary skills have increased in many of the senior citizens. The founder of the

program, states that storytelling “helps people with dementia reaffirm their humanity” (Aging Today Editorial Staff, 2005, ¶3).

In the past ten years, quite a bit of research has focused on the impact of creativity and the aging mind. In the past, significant mental decline was viewed as the natural course for aging but today, “successful aging” has replaced the notion that dementia and senility are the norm and are not, in fact, the only alternative to aging. Successful aging refers to aging with a minimum amount of the typical aging decline present (Cohen, 2006). Folk art in particular has had a visible impact on the process of successful aging as it is typically older generations who dominate the field. Cohen observes that, “folk art makes a profoundly powerful statement about the inherent capacity for creative expression throughout the entire life cycle” (p. 8). Cohen’s research on creativity and the aging mind highlights four developmental phases in the aging adult including midlife reevaluation, liberation, summing-up, and encore. Most notably, in the summing-up phase (which occurs during one’s late 60’s and beyond) “plans and actions are shaped by the desire to find larger meaning in the story of one’s life as one looks back, reexamines, and sums up what has happened” (2006, p. 9). Essentially, this phase inspires senior citizens to share their accumulated wisdom, often through storytelling.

The positive effects of participating in multiple disciplines of the arts, including oral tradition, are not only seen in the mental state of the senior citizen but also in improvements in their physical health. For one thing, storytelling helps senior citizens to engage in social activities. These social engagements have proven to have a positive effect on health. Cohen (2006) states that, “social relationships in the second half of life have been associated with reduced blood pressure with reduced stress levels” which

ultimately improves the immune system (p. 10). In addition to positive health changes from social engagements, it has been found that “when an older person experiences a sense of control – that is, a sense of mastery in what they are doing – positive health outcomes are observed” (p. 11). Storytelling and oral history are powerful means by which the senior can feel a sense of mastery through the sharing of their wisdom; it can also create social situations for the senior citizen.

In 2005, Cohen initiated the Creativity and Aging Study at the George Washington University Center on Health, Aging & Humanities to examine the effect of art programs on their physical health, social interactions and their mental health (2006, p. 10). In addition to art programs including music, dance, poetry and drama, the study also incorporated oral history. The study concluded that, “these community-based cultural programs for older adults appear to be reducing risk factors that contribute to the need for long-term care” (p. 13). After a year of the study, the art groups (experimental group) actually showed stabilization or even improvement versus decline in the control group (p. 13).

It seems that *not* engaging in storytelling can have deleterious effects. For example, studies show that there is a high rate of depression among senior citizens. In fact, it has been estimated that, “Of the 35 million Americans age 65 and older, about 2 million suffer from full-blown depression. Another 5 million suffer from less severe forms of the illness” (“Depression,” 2007). Depression in older adults is often overlooked either due to isolation, the belief that depression is a natural part of aging or by physicians as a second thought to physical ailments. It is also worth noting that, “many depressed seniors are reluctant to talk about their feelings or ask for help” (Segal,

Jaffe, Davies & Smith, 2007, ¶4). This silence has contributed to the misunderstanding and stigmatization of mental illness

Depression in the elderly has become a significant topic in medical communities largely due to the fact that our population is aging at a rapid rate. People are living longer with a higher life expectancy than ever before. This also means that more people, women especially, are living alone longer. Women traditionally outlive men, which means more women are widowed and this often leads to isolation and depression. In addition, our society has become increasingly mobile. Grown children often leave in pursuit of a better career and as such, “older people increasingly live far from their grown children and grandchildren at precisely the time of life when other factors that also contribute to social isolation (such as retirement) are most common” (Segal, et al., 2000, ¶4). Seniors today often lack the familial support system that was present in earlier eras.

While depression can lead to multiple ailments and even death if not treated, we must also contend with the multiple causes of depression in the elderly including the loss of a loved one, medication, and illness. Most importantly perhaps, the elderly's sense of isolation and lack of social involvement, as well as a lack of a sense of purpose, highlights the need for adequate social support among the senior population. Doctors suggest that senior citizens can combat depression by remaining active physically, mentally and socially. Suggestions include getting out in the world, connecting to others in social settings, volunteering, telling stories, learning a new skill and exercising among others (Segal, et al., 2007). Social involvement not only keeps seniors active within their own communities, but it can give them the desired sense of purpose important to create a healthy whole life.

*Oral Tradition to Strengthen Community*

Oral tradition has traditionally been used to help build relationships within communities. Robert Atkinson, founder of the Center for the Study of Lives at the University of Southern Maine, affirms that, "Storytelling is in our blood. We are the storytelling species. Stories were once the center of community life" (2000, ¶4). He believes that oral tradition is still a part of us today and "life storytelling gives us direction, validates our own experiences, restores value to our lives, and strengthens community bonds" (Ibid).

Research studies show the significance oral history has had on seniors and youth alike. For example, Angela La Porte (1999) conducted a study to create relationships between Harlem teenagers and senior citizens through social services, oral history and art making. In a community rife with disease, crime, and poverty, seniors do not trust the youth of the community and the youth do not view the elderly population as valuable. The purpose of the study was to understand the interactions between teens and seniors in a visual art program in order to apply it to art education. The research was conducted over a seven month time period. The seniors were chosen from a list of 100 who were registered for Meals-on-Wheels and were 62 years old or older. The 10 to 12 teenagers ranged from ages 14 to 18, were from the same neighborhood, and received a \$200 stipend for their participation. The goal of the program was to create a sense of community by bridging the age gap. It was hoped that stereotypes would diminish and the building of relationships would ensue.

The oral history portion of the research involved the teenager creating a family tree and collecting oral history stories from seniors. As a result of the project, La Porte



(1999) found that “collecting oral histories and making art intensified the exchange or personal history and culture, reduced age-related stereotypes, and empowered young and older participants (p. 8). A sense of community was clearly visible and present. In addition, as a result of the sharing of the oral histories, seniors were given an opportunity to share their wisdom and experiences which brought them a sense of value and pride. Of the teenagers, La Porte observed that, “most acknowledged that they gained a better understanding of their community’s heritage through the unique voices of older adults” (p. 11). They were able to connect on many topics, including war, poverty, art and music. One student was astonished to learn that the senior he met with was a musician during the Harlem Renaissance. Thus, through this project, history became tangible for the teens. Another student revealed his preference for this style of learning. He appreciated learning directly from the seniors rather than from textbooks.

As a result of the study, La Porte (1999) realized “a shortcoming of traditional education, the exclusion of historical and cultural voices of minorities” (p. 14). This realization revealed a greater purpose for her study. The oral stories are valuable multicultural tools for the diverse community. She continues, “But when the lived experiences of the Hispanic and African American older adults in Harlem were shared with interested teenagers, they became significant to the teenagers, and this recognition was empowering to elders” (p. 14). Not only did the students benefit from the accumulated knowledge of the elders of the community, the seniors benefited from sharing their stories. The experience gave the elders a sense of purpose and this empowered them. La Porte felt that this project had helped to build community and diminished, and was thus a success. Following the completion of the study, La Porte

found that many of the students voluntarily continued their relationships with the seniors. This generational connection brought together seniors and youth in a struggling Harlem community.

In addition, oral history through oral tradition brings the history of the community back into the community. Thompson (2000) argues “the relationship between history and the community should not be one-sided in either direction, but rather a series of exchanges, a dialectic, between information and interpretation, between educationists and their localities, between classes and generations” (p. 23). Oral tradition is by nature a communicative process as is the nature of an oral approach. The dependence on the oral allows for more people to participate, especially those who cannot or are not comfortable with writing skills. Further, the emphasis is on individuals as well as the social and collective memories of a group. Through shared meaning oral tradition bridges the gap between groups, teachers and students, the young and the old, those of privilege and those without wealth (Thompson).

### *Oral History*

When writing about oral tradition and the usage of it as a means to pass on information from generation to generation, it is important to understand oral history in relation to oral tradition. Many specialists in fields outside of history, often “fuse oral history and the oral tradition” (Vanisa, 1985, p. 29). This happens when scholars do not understand the importance of the transmission of the message over time. However, there are differences. Oral history is the recent account of an event as told by someone who witnessed or participated in that event. It is told during the lifetime of that person. Oral tradition, on the other

hand, must be at least a generation old; essentially, it is no longer considered contemporary. Oral history can become oral tradition if it continues to be passed down through the generations (Vansina, 1985).

Oral history<sup>1</sup> differs from oral tradition not only in its timeframe but also in the means by which it is collected and studied. Oral historians gather the information through interview, often focusing on events of a dramatic nature. The intention is to gather firsthand accounts before they are lost. In the past, it was utilized as a means to document the voices of those of an elite group (Vanisa, 1985). Today, it is often used for quite a different purpose, that is, as a means to document the voices of those previously ignored. It is through oral tradition, that oral history might be considered evidence without written form in later generations.

### *Historical Significance and Functions of Traditional Literature*

This section will focus on the significance and the function that oral tradition has had throughout time. This study will concentrate on the oral stories as told by seniors, thus it is important to offer a foundation for the historical significance and functions of the body of traditional literature. It is through the understanding of the past that we can better understand its impact and place in the present and future.

Oral tradition began with traditional literature. According to Martinez, Naylor, Temple, and Yokota (2002), it is defined as “the body of stories and poem that came to us by oral transmission and whose authors are unknown. Traditional works are so appealing

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<sup>1</sup> To find out more about Oral History, see Appendix F.

and so memorable that they passed from generation to generation without the aid of writing” (p.137). These are the stories that cultures and families have passed down for generations. According to the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, “stories in the oral tradition are those in which the people formulate, pick up, and carry along as part of their cultural freight. It is common to all people” (Carthy, 1984, ¶5). This suggests that stories in the oral tradition are represented in all cultures and are part of everyone’s history. They have aided in the formulation of cultures over the years, including societal norms and the wisdom of the ways of the people.

Traditional literature includes “epics, myths, legends, fairytales, fables, proverbs, riddles, songs, jokes, insults, toasts and nursery rhymes” (Carthy, 1984, ¶4). Some characteristics of traditional literature include “strong plot, legendary characters, fantastic events, and the clear polarized qualities such as good and evil” (Martinez, et al., 2002, p. 138). Many stories rely on symbolism and encourage audiences to ponder real life truths. They also typically have “clear structures and rhymes or rhythms to be remembered” (Ibid). These aspects have made the stories especially appealing to children. Traditional literature is interactive, as stories “invite participation” (Ibid). If participation did not involve and engage the listener, the stories would have been forgotten. In addition, listeners had to learn the stories in order to pass them down to future generations, so stories were often told multiple times throughout life. It is a strong form of literature rooted in historical significance in human culture.

Traditional literature was created in order to answer many of life’s questions. This created an “accumulated wisdom as to what the young should know, aspire to, and believe, forging a cultural identity in the process” (Martinez, et al., 2002, p. 138).

Therefore, oral literature has had a very significant impact on cultures around the world and thus is an extremely important part of our history. It has served to create the culture of mankind by answering life's most basic questions and has been utilized as a guide for the future generations.

How did cultures decide which stories were worthy be passed on to younger generations? Carthy (1984) explains that, once an individual invented a story, it was either rejected or accepted by the group depending on if it filled a need. The story had to be compatible with "the accepted patterns and tradition of folklore of a culture as a whole" (¶6). If it filled a need and followed the patterns set by the group, it was accepted as a part of their culture.

According to Carthy (1984), no one has ever found a group of people who do not have folklore present in some sense in their culture. It is seen in both literate and non-literate groups (Ibid). However, with the advent of the written word and formal education, oral traditions declined. Education created a division between written knowledge and folk beliefs. People began to equate oral folklore with unreliable "old wives' tales" (Martinez, et al., 2002, p. 138). It was not until the middle of 19th century that it became the focus of serious academic study.

Stories that were generated hundreds of years ago still continue to affect people today. As Martinez, et al., observe, "Even after having been written down, traditional works, because they are not considered the property of any one author, continue to inspire storytellers, writers, and artists to produce new versions" (2002, p. 137). They are so rich in nature that the tradition has survived hundreds of years. Carthy (1984) has found that folklore validates certain aspects of culture, and justifies rituals and institutions. Some

cultures do this through explanatory tales or stories in the form of moral animal tales, myths, or legends that “validate doubted pattern or to warn of subsequent consequences if necessary when accepted practices are violated” (p. 9). In other words, they are often moral tales that let children know consequences to breaking rules or laws set by the people. They also provide rationalizations when institutions and conventions are challenged. These stories help to build a moral foundation as dictated by the cultural group.

In addition to this, oral tradition or folklore can serve as a controlling factor to maintain a culture's norms. They set examples for the accepted way of life. Many cultures incorporate folktales as educational tools. This is the means that many have taught the history of their people in regards to cultural norms, respect, perseverance, etc. (Carthy, 1984).

Folktales may also compensate for something lacking in reality. They can be an escape in fantasy from frustrations and repressions or from geographical environment and biological limitations. For example, folktales served “as a means of escape” in the case of slavery. While they told stories of how the world came to be, slaves were able to focus on something other than their dismal existence. Folktales became a way to educate the slaves as they taught the children survival skills and the values and customs of their heritages. This subverted slaveowner attempts to keep slaves ignorant. This practice was especially valuable for groups that had no access to formal education. Finally, slave folktales were also a way to “outsmart their owners. This clever tactic involved the passing of vital information concerning meeting places, plans, or dangers” masked within the stories or the songs (Papa, et al., 1998, ¶3).

Joseph Campbell (1988) believed we use myths and story patterns not only to understand literature, but also to understand the patterns of our lives. He contended that myths help us to put our minds in touch with the experience of being alive and offer a guide to understanding the experience itself. Myths link us to our social group, and the tribal myths affirm that we are part of the larger organism. Myths link the individual to a larger morphological structure, and reveal what human beings have in common. They are the search through the ages for meaning and significance in life. Campbell believed we all need to tell our story and to understand our story. According to Bill Moyers, Campbell noted myths “reveal what human beings have in common. Myths are stories of our search through the ages for truth, for meaning, for significance” (pg. 5). It is a way for people to cope with and explain the world around them. He claimed that we all have a story to tell and even more so, a need to tell that story to others. We need to feel that we have a purpose and myths serve as a way to understand the meaning of life, to explain the unexplainable, and to learn more about ourselves and our role in life. It fills a basic human need to gain an understanding about life in general. Myths can, in a sense, validate one's very existence. In addition, “Oral traditions are still stronger than written ones in many cultures. Therefore, traditional literature is a vital part of multicultural literature” (as cited in Martinez, et al., 2002, p. 137).

### *Sustainability of Oral Tradition*

As the spread of education and literacy has increased throughout the years, the practice of oral traditions has declined. This section of literature will attempt to understand what the decrease in oral tradition means to our world today as well as understand why we should struggle to preserve it. Aside from the fact that it is common

to all people and has been around since the beginning of mankind, it is a valuable part of who we are. It can trace us back to our roots and helps keep us in touch with our own heritages, our cultures, our beliefs. Thus, to lose this tradition might mean losing a piece of who we are and who we were.

Campbell (1988) asked the question, what happens when a society no longer embraces a powerful mythology? He believed the answer lies in watching the nightly news, detailing the destructive and violent acts committed by young people who do not know how to behave in a civilized society. He argued that, "Society has provided our youth with no rituals by which they become members of the tribe, of the community. All children need to be born twice, to learn to function rationally in the present world, leaving childhood behind" (p. 8).

In the past, children were taught Greek, Latin, and Biblical literature. Today, very few receive this through their formal education. As a result, a whole tradition of Occidental mythological information was lost. Campbell (1988) explained that,

It used to be that these stories were in the minds of people. When the story is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life...With the loss of that, we've really lost something because we don't have a comparable literature to take its place. (p. 4)

We are losing a part of ourselves by not continuing to pass down the teachings and stories from our society in the past. The tales from ancient times teach us information that supported life, built civilizations, and informed religions over the years. They solved mysteries of the world. Without these stories, there are no signs to follow; one is forced to figure things out on one's own. Many people want to know their origins and to



understand the teachings of the past to guide them along the way. Thompson (2000) affirms that “family history especially can give an individual a strong sense of a much longer personal lifespan, which will even survive their own death” (p. 2).

Campbell contended that, though it is minimal, there is still a mythology present today. Myth lies in the unwritten rules we have for how to use a fork or how to handle people; however, said Campbell (1988),

In America we have people from all kinds of backgrounds, all in a cluster, together, and consequently law has become very important in this country.

Lawyers and law are what holds us together. There is no ethos – a demythologized world. (p. 9)

This demythologization has led kids to attempt to create their own myths and their own initiations and morality but this can lead to dangerous situations because they are alienated from society, and they do not have the myths they need to understand the world they live in (Ibid).

Rollo May agrees with Campbell's argument that without myth, our society is in danger. May (1991) defines myth as “our self-interpretation of our inner selves in relation to the outside world” (p. 20). In *The Cry for Myth*, May cites the alarming numbers of suicides among the younger generation. He believes that society is to blame; in particular, he claims that our emphasis on money as the greatest goal in life, the lack of ethics taught in home or government, and the constant bombardment of sexual and aggressive images in the media have largely ruled our philosophies on life. He writes that, “as long as our world and society remain thus empty of myths which express beliefs and moral goals, there will be depression and suicide” (p. 21).

This loss of myth and the decline of the passing down of myths leads kids to join cults as they attempt to find answers and to fill a gap in their lives (May, 1991). They turn to astrologers and witchcraft, seeking superstitions in a time that revolves around rationalism. Science and technology have come to the forefront, replacing religion and mythology. In addition, many families live independent lives from one another. There is less time to spend with one another given the typical busy lifestyles embraced by the Western world. In addition, our society places emphasis on individual success versus community growth. All of these factors leave little time or desire to share stories among family members. We tend to try and figure things out for ourselves rather than seek advice from those who have already experienced life, those who hold the wisdom of days past. While we, as a society have become more informed, “without myth, we are like a race of brain-injured people unable to go beyond the word and hear the person who is speaking” (p. 23). We have lost human connection and the meaning in life.

May (1991) goes on to say that aside from adopting cults and mysticism, youth today have turned to more dangerous outlets such as drugs. Without a purpose in life, one finds the need to escape and that can be fulfilled through narcotics. May attests that he sees this phenomenon frequently in psychotherapy, “when the person finds his prospects overwhelmingly difficult, he may consider that at least he can participate in his own fate by overdosing or shooting himself” (p. 23).

Another obstacle in reviving myth in our society lies in the association with the term itself. Myth in our modern society<sup>2</sup> often denotes falsehood. Our society praises

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<sup>2</sup> May refers to the myths of America when speaking in relation to our society. He understands that the myths from Eastern countries vary greatly from Western culture.

rationalization and seeks the truth. May (1991) believes this idea only denotes our “refusal to confront our own reality and that of our society” (p. 25). He believes that science and mythology do not have to give way to one another, that throughout history the two have worked and complimented on another.

Americans in particular “cling to the myth of individualism” (May, 1991, p. 108). The myth gives power and prestige to those able to succeed on their own accord, those who can depend only on themselves, the lone wolves. He believes this accepted myth came about after the Civil War with the idea of the American Dream. The rise in the number of people who saw seeking wealth as their sole purpose in life was further propagated during the Regan administration. Reagan himself epitomizes the rags to riches story that every American has the right to achieve. In effect, it is up to each individual to determine whether or not they will be wealthy and encompass all that wealth has to offer. This idea creates self-blame for those unable or unwilling to do whatever necessary to attain this ideal.

May continues that after World War II, the rate of depression grew by ten times as that before the war. Studies show that this exponential rise in depression is directly related to the decline in psychological and spiritual guidance. The “I” in our society had replaced the culture of family. There were little resources available to those seeking help and in fact, “American people by and large, have few societal guides, no rituals, no myths to give them solace in time of need” (p. 122). May believes that by rekindling our belief in myth, we might find the “psychological structure necessary to confront this widespread depression” (p. 123).

*Summary*

Oral tradition is something that is common to people of all cultures. It is a means to pass down cultural beliefs and ideas about humanity and our existence. The older generations pass down their heritage to the younger generations through stories, songs, poetry and their own wisdom.

Oral history has become a valuable methodology often used as means to give voice to the oppressed. Traditionally, oral histories were only captured from those deemed most important in society, i.e., powerful White men, but as many families can attest, oral traditions often sprang from oral histories and so the history of the oppressed has been captured as well if not “officially.” Feminists gave rise to oral histories as they were able to give the lives of women a place in history, allowing them the chance to tell their stories in their own words.

Researchers in recent years have utilized oral history methodologies to work with senior citizens. It has been acknowledged that everyone has a story and that sharing one's story is a means to offer the senior empowerment and validity. We all need to feel like our lives mean something and as the wisdom bearers of society, our aged senior citizens need to be heard.

Finally, oral tradition is a means to build community. Storytelling has always served a purpose in communities. It was the way to learn the functioning of a community as well as build interpersonal relationships among the group. Oral tradition can be used to bridge generational gaps as well as build understanding among those who are different. If anything, oral tradition can help to bring people together through a validating participatory process.

### Chapter III: Methodology

This study identified the oral stories that were passed down through the generations as told by senior volunteers from a hospital in San Francisco. Through a collaborative effort between the researcher and the senior volunteers, they examined the specific stories that were passed down through oral tradition, the similarities and differences found among the stories of the participants, and the potential benefits to the community as a whole.

#### *Restatement of Purpose*

The purpose of this study was to identify the stories that had been passed down in the families of seniors who volunteered at a San Francisco hospital. Through the research questions, the study looked at the extent to which the stories were passed down, the similarities and/or differences among the stories and finally, and how the stories portrayed the experiences of the seniors. The study also looked at what kinds of stories the seniors held in their families and whether or not they continued to pass them down.

#### *Research Design*

The design of this study utilizes narrative research, a qualitative methodology. Narrative research is “the study of the life experiences of an individual as told to the researcher” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 427). It is a methodology that gives people the chance to tell their stories and utilizes the story as the final product of the research. It requires a more intimate relationship between the participant and the researcher with trust as a critical element (Gay, Mills, & Airasion, 2009, p. 385). It is also noted that, “Equality of voice is especially critical in the researcher-participant relationship because the participant must feel empowered to tell the story” (Ibid). In order to create the

required trust-based relationship, the researcher must remove them self from the control that is typically associated with the research process. In addition, it is considered “a pioneering effort that takes a skilled researcher committed to living an individual’s story and working in tandem with that individual” (Ibid).

Narrative research is an intimate methodology and as so during the research process, it was important to empower the participant so that the senior felt comfortable telling their story. This methodology emphasizes collaboration and respect.

Additionally, it suggests that the researcher commit to being a listener rather than an active participant, dedicated to encouraging the story by validating the storyteller’s voice (Ibid). Further, narrative research asks whether researchers have the “time, access, experience, personal style, and commitment to undertake this particular style of on-site research” (Ibid). I determined that this type of research was appropriate given both my background working in a similar setting with senior citizens and my predisposition towards active listening.

With narrative research, data is typically collected through “primary sources (e.g. the participant’s recollection) and secondary sources (e.g. written documents by the participant); data are collected primarily through interviews and written exchanges” (Gay, et al., 2009, p. 387). For the purpose of this study, data was collected in the form of interviews wherein the senior volunteers told their story or stories to the researcher as well as through written backgrounds that were collected before the interviews.

### *Research Setting*

One characteristic of this kind of qualitative research is conducting the research in a natural setting. This enables the researcher to gain a greater detailed account from the

participant, not only because the participant is in a place in which they are comfortable, but also because the participant's home is a reflection of the person (Creswell, 2003). For this reason, the research took place in the homes of the participants, a library or coffee shop close to the senior, or in a secluded location at the hospital, whatever was most comfortable for the participant. Due to liability issues, it was important to obtain permission from the hospital before attempting to conduct interviews there. Some interviews took place at the San Mateo library because of the proximity to some of the senior volunteers' homes as well as access to private study rooms. It was important that the research participants felt comfortable in their environment to foster a safe space to share their stories.

The study was conducted in each participant's community in an effort to build trust and rapport with the senior. The background questionnaire (See Appendix B) served as an attempt to learn more about the senior, where they were from, why they chose to volunteer at the hospital, and the role story played in their own lives. It was important to understand the senior by learning as much as possible about that person before the interview.

Light snacks were provided to facilitate comfort and promote a less formal environment. The sharing of food helped to create a relaxed environment and build community. Due to the sensitivity of the recording device, it was important to conduct the dialogues and interviews in a relatively quiet space without a lot of outside distractions. Preferably, we were in a place where the senior was not distracted by other family members, the television, or the telephone; though in some cases, this was not possible. Precautions were taken to have cell phones muted before beginning the

interview. Finally, the Volunteer Coordinator offered to accompany the researcher when meeting with the participants as a means to again add comfort and trust to the environment.

### *Population and Sample*

The study focused on 11 seniors from the volunteer pool at the San Francisco hospital. One of the steps of narrative researcher is to “identify an individual who can help you learn about the phenomenon” (Gay, et al., p.386). I gained access to the population through a former co-worker who was managing the senior citizen volunteers at the hospital as the Volunteer Coordinator. The Volunteer Coordinator helped me gain access to the volunteers in order to determine if any of the volunteers had interest in participating in the study. Many of the volunteers expressed interest in the study, recognized that they had oral traditions that had been passed down in their families, and were willing to participate.

The senior volunteers tended to be active seniors who had retired but desired to remain involved with their communities, ranging from 60-80 years old. The volunteer pool held a greater number of women volunteers, and this was also reflected in the study's participants. The seniors volunteered at the hospital between 8-16 hours a week and from 1-3 days a week. They represent diverse cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, as was reflective of San Francisco in general. The Volunteer Coordinator mentioned the study to the senior volunteers at a monthly meeting and asked those who might be interested to notify her so that I could contact the senior directly. Those who expressed interest were contacted directly through telephone to set up a meeting time. The preliminary phone conversation allowed me to ask questions to determine their



eligibility for the study, as well as to allow the senior the opportunity to ask any questions in return. Some of the seniors were hesitant at first because they did not know if they had the “right kind” of stories to share, and I attempted to be clear about the types of stories that were included in oral tradition. I also took great care to avoid pressuring the senior and reminded them that the study was voluntary and that their participation would be greatly appreciated.

Those who volunteered were asked to complete a background questionnaire (Appendix B) to determine if they met a select few requirements for the study. Ideally, participants were between the ages of 65 and 90, not employed full-time, able to speak English fluently, cognizant (in good health) and able to sign for themselves (did not need a Durable Power of Attorney), and recognized oral stories from their own families. It was necessary that the senior be proficient in English so as to avoid the loss of meaning in translation. I set an eighth grade level as the standard of English, in keeping with the practice at my former organization's policy. It is also a standard determined by the state and as such, was a good measurement for this study and its purposes.

The seniors were told that the stories could be myths or family stories that have been passed down from previous generations. If the seniors interpreted the questions to mean other than the intended goal (which many of them did) of finding myths and stories that have been passed down, their data was not disqualified from the study because it I believed that, regardless of their nature, the stories were relevant. It was important that the seniors recognize themselves as valuable researchers in the process and not merely research subjects. From the volunteer pool, 11 seniors chose to participate in the study.

*Instrumentation*

The first instrument used during the interviewing process was a Sansa 200 digital recorder. Technology made it much easier to record interviews with a small, high quality audio recording device. The device enabled easy conversion of the recording to an audio (mp3) file directly onto the computer that was later used to transcribe the narratives. Each of the audio files was named with the last name of the participant and the date. The Sansa recording device came with software to enable the file transfer. The software was installed onto the researcher's password protected laptop and a practice run using the recorder was conducted for quality assurance. It is important when using a recording device to gain a sense of the ideal distance between the recorder, the researcher and the interviewee, as well as to hear the effect of outside noise that might hamper the quality of the interview. In addition, all of the interviews were backed up onto an external hard drive to ensure that the data would not be lost. The participant was notified about the presence of the recording device and asked for their consent to record through the Informed Consent Form (See Appendix A); this consent was asked for again prior to the beginning of the interview.

It was important to take notes during the interviews to record visual observations as well as additional comments. It was also important to note changes in the participant's behavior if there were any or modifications through simple body language. A notebook and pen were used to record observations throughout the narratives.

Upon the completion of the interviews, I used my laptop computer to transcribe the audio files that had been converted from the interviews. High quality earphones enabled the most efficient and accurate transcriptions. All of the interviews were saved

as Microsoft Word files under the pseudonym assigned to the senior. I chose to transcribe each of the interviews without outside help as an opportunity to gather more information while listening to the interview, and to ensure a high rate of accuracy.

### *Data Collection*

The narratives were collected through two separate meetings. The first dialogue was utilized to gain the stories from the participants. Once the stories were transcribed and the participants had the opportunity to review them for accuracy, a second dialogue was initiated in order to allow the participant to make any changes to the narratives they desired.

#### *First Dialogue*

The purpose of the first dialogue was to gather the actual stories from the 11 senior volunteers from a San Francisco hospital. The first step in the data collection process was to gain entry into the community in order to hand out the background questionnaires (See Appendix B) to interested senior citizens. This was done through the Volunteer Coordinator at the hospital. She announced the study at a monthly meeting and handed out the background questionnaire (See Appendix B) to all those interested in possibly participating in the study. Once the background questionnaires (See Appendix B) that were handed out were received and reviewed, those who met the qualifications and expressed an interest in the study were contacted directly by the researcher.

The second step was to call the senior citizens to verify their participation and to schedule a time to meet. The senior was reminded of the purpose of the study as well as the information the researcher hoped to obtain, namely the oral traditions that had been passed down in his/her own families. At this time, the senior was also reminded that a

recording device would be present during the entire interview process. During the call, seniors were encouraged to bring any sentimental items or pictures that could help them to remember stories from their past. They were also encouraged to speak to family members to help them think about stories that they have told. If they acknowledged that they had something that could help them with their story or stories, it was suggested that they bring it with them to the interview. At the end of the phone call, the senior was asked to begin to think about stories they might want to share during the interview. The dates and times were then confirmed with the Volunteer Coordinator, as it was agreed that her presence would offer added value, and a sense of safety and trust for the seniors.

The third step was to conduct the interviews. The meetings were held at the place most comfortable for the seniors, their own homes, the hospital, or any other community location they preferred, such as the San Mateo Public Library. Before beginning the interview, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (See Appendix A) verifying that they understood both the intent and purpose of the project and their rights as a participant. The senior received a copy of the signed consent form (See Appendix A). At this time, the senior was reminded that the interview would be recorded and that they could stop the recording at any time. The researcher asked for their verbal consent before turning on the recorder, and reminded participants that notes would be taken during the process in order to accurately depict the interview and the stories in the research. Once the senior agreed that they were comfortable and consented to the recording and the interview, they were asked to begin to tell their story or stories to the researcher (See Appendix E for the Interview Protocol). The goal was to allow the senior the time and space to tell their stories without interruption, but I found it necessary to ask

a few questions intermittently to help the process. I attempted to keep the interview as informal as possible throughout and made an effort to remain an active listener and participant. After the seniors shared their story or stories, they were asked if they had anything else they'd like to share. If they did not, then the interview was concluded with sincere gratitude.

The fourth step of the process was to transcribe the completed interviews. This was done on the researcher's own password protected laptop over the course of three months. The researcher then mailed, e-mailed or hand-delivered the transcription to the senior for their review so that they could make changes if they felt that their voice was not accurately depicted. If they wanted to make changes, a second face-to-face meeting was set to discuss those changes, as well as allow the senior to add any follow-up information. If they did not have any changes, I met with the senior to review the transcription and again obtain their verbal consent to utilize the material that had been gathered.

### *Second Dialogue*

Only two of the participants Carlos and Margaret, asked for changes. Margaret wanted to change some of her dialogue to make it more cohesive and grammatically correct. She wanted to eliminate parts of the narrative that she felt did not make sense or did not flow with the remainder of the narrative. Margaret worked with me at her home to make some of the changes. Carlos, on the other hand, only wanted to complete the folktale he had told during the interview. Some parts were not correct. Once the corrections had been made, the two volunteers were sent an updated version of their transcription for another review. I met with the remaining nine seniors to ensure that they

were indeed content with the results of the transcriptions and that they felt their voices were accurately depicted.

The final step occurred once all of the seniors approved the transcription. The researcher reviewed the narratives to determine if there were any similarities or differences in the transferring of stories among the seniors. In addition to types of stories, the data was also examined for possible thematic content.

### *Data Analysis*

Once the transcriptions and the participants' final approval had been collected, the narratives were studied to see if there might be any common themes among the stories. The researcher utilized Creswell's guide in establishing steps to accurately categorize the narratives into generative themes. Creswell (2003) first suggested that the researcher read the transcriptions as a whole and write down their thoughts during the readings (p. 192). It was possible that there was a considerable chance there would be no recognizable similarities between any of the stories. For that reason, it was also important to analyze the data for any outstanding differences. Creswell then suggests that each narrative is examined for its "underlying meanings" (Ibid).

Creswell's (2003) third step was to "make a list of all topics. Cluster together similar topics. Form these topics into columns that might be arrayed as major topics, unique topics, and leftovers" (p.192). From the 11 narratives, 27 themes emerged, including: Immigration; Retaining Culture; Importance of Family; Grandparents as Caregivers; Live Home until Marriage; Community; Family Death; War; Government; Struggle; Cooking; Generational Gap; The Great Depression; Religion; Discrimination/Racism; Single Parenthood; Gender Roles/Sexuality; Punishment; Family

Vocation/Trade; Marriage; Superstition; Heritage; Morals; Friendship; and Children (See Appendix I).

The fourth step, according to Creswell (2003), was to return to the data and “abbreviate the topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text” (p. 192). The stories were organized utilizing a coding system based on the 27 themes, added to the matrix (See Appendix I) along with the names of the participants and the themes that corresponded to their stories.

The fifth step is to find ways to group the topics and reduce the number into categories “to show interrelationships” (Ibid). The categories were narrowed into four generative themes through this step, including: Immigration; Family; Human Rights; Community (See Table 4.2).

The sixth step was to “make a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetize these codes” and the seventh step was to “assemble the data material belonging to each category in one place and perform a preliminary analysis” (Creswell, 2003, p. 192). Coding abbreviations included “I” for Immigration, “C” for Community, “F” for Family and “HR” for Human Rights. The narratives were analyzed based on these categories or generative themes. The categories were based on the major findings within the narratives.

In addition to several themes, the research also revealed that many different types of stories, including: Oral History; Oral Tradition-Family History; Oral Tradition-Folktale; Oral Tradition-Nursery Rhyme/Poem/Song; Oral Tradition-Superstition; Oral Tradition- Recipe; Oral Tradition-Witticism/Saying; Oral Tradition-Cultural Customs/Rituals; Oral Tradition-History. A similar coding process determined the types

of stories that were told throughout the narratives (See Table 4.3), i.e., “OH” for Oral History, “OT-FH” for Oral Tradition-Family History, “OT-FT” for Oral Tradition-Folktale, “OT-NR” for Oral Tradition-Nursery Rhyme/Poem/Song, “OT-S” for Oral Tradition-Superstition, “OT-R” for Oral Tradition-Recipe, “OT-W” for Oral Tradition-Witticism/Saying, “OT-CC” for Oral Tradition-Cultural Customs/Rituals and “OT-H” for Oral Tradition-History.

Several strategies were used to ensure internal validity. The first strategy was the triangulation of data, or the inclusion of multiple sources of information. This information included the interviews, as well as background questionnaires and the personal memorabilia included by some of the participants so that it was possible to “examine evidence from the sources” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). The second strategy was member-checking, which refers to the process of taking the final transcriptions back to the participants so that they can check for accuracy. The third strategy was the usage of rich, thick description “to convey the findings. They may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences” (Ibid). The final strategy utilized was the clarification of researcher bias, an account of which was included at the beginning of the study so that such self-reflection could provide an open and honest portrait of the researcher. In fact, I provided the same information about myself as was asked of the senior volunteers.

#### *Protection of Human Subjects*

To protect the study's subjects, it was essential that the participants were fully aware of the study and its purpose. It was also important to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. The participants were notified both in writing



and verbally that the study was confidential. The identities of the participants were not revealed in the findings and fictitious names were used instead. The audio files of the interviews are stored on a password-protected laptop in a secure location, and will not be kept longer than five years after the study. This will also hold true for all transcripts, background questionnaires, consent forms, notes and other findings. Written materials will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will be destroyed after five years. In addition, HIPAA (Appendix G<sup>3</sup>) regulations were upheld when transferring data electronically. While HIPAA regulations are intended for medical privacy, the rules offer a good framework to follow when protecting participants. Finally, IRB approval was received for the study (Appendix C).

### *Summary*

This study followed a narrative research methodology utilizing interviews and written background questionnaires. The purpose of the study was to determine what stories have been passed down as told by senior citizens who volunteer at a local hospital in San Francisco. The setting and research design attempted to create a comfortable space for the senior citizen to share their stories. During the interview process, I made sure to listen attentively and help validate and empower the voice of the participants, keeping in mind that some seniors may be more reluctant to share themselves than others. The goal was to create a mutually beneficial study where the senior citizen had a voice

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix G is a summary of the HIPPA requirements that On Lok Lifeways enforces with their employees. It is not the full HIPPA documentation.

and control over the research while at the same time allowing the researcher access to valuable stories.

## Chapter IV: Findings

Interviews with 11 senior volunteers at a San Francisco hospital were conducted in order to identify stories that have been passed down in the families of the seniors through oral tradition. The study attempted to recognize the extent to which stories are passed down within the families, the extent to which the stories portray the experiences of the seniors and finally, any similarities or differences the stories held as transmitted by the seniors. All of the volunteers ranged in ages from 65 to 88 (See Table 4.1), and represented many ethnicities, including Russian, American, Chinese, Filipino, Italian, English, Portuguese and Jewish. The types of stories told ranged from oral history to folklore, often evoking emotional responses of joy, sorrow, pain and happiness. Upon concluding the interview, almost every volunteer thanked the researcher for taking the time to listen.

Once the senior volunteers agreed to participate in the study, the researcher called each one to determine a time and place to meet. The consent form (See Appendix A) and the background questionnaire (See Appendix B) were given to the volunteers beforehand. The forms were sent electronically to those who had an e-mail address, those who did not were given the forms by the Volunteer Coordinator during one of their shifts at the hospital. In an effort to ensure the safety and comfort of the seniors as well as to avoid liability issues with the hospital, the Volunteer Coordinator was invited to accompany the researcher. She agreed and was present for all but one of the interviews.

### *Profiles of the Participants*

Each of the senior volunteers completed a preliminary background questionnaire (See Appendix B). The intent of the questionnaire was to gather basic demographic

information about the senior, including where they were from, their former occupation, their marital status, and questions related to the importance of stories in their lives. A profile was created of each of the participants based on the background questionnaires. Due to the fact that some of the material gathered in the narratives was of a sensitive nature, the researcher assigned a pseudonym to each senior volunteer and continued to use it throughout the research and the findings. The seniors were assured of the protection and the confidentiality of their identities. The group of volunteers was comprised of nine women and two men. Women also greatly outnumbered the men as volunteers at the hospital so this outcome was expected. Seven countries of origin were represented. Four volunteers reported their socioeconomic background as working class, four as middle class, and three as upper middle class. Table 4.1 details the demographics.

**Table 4.1 Demographics of Senior Volunteers from a San Francisco Hospital**

Name	Gender	Age	Country of Origin	Socioeconomic Background
Rosa	Female	87	Mexico	Middle Class
James	Male	70	England	Working Class
Irene	Female	88	United States/China	Upper Middle Class
Lori	Female	88	Philippines	Middle Class
Carlos	Male	84	Portugal	Working Class
May Liu	Female	88	China	Middle Class
Annie	Female	65	United States	Upper Middle Class
Karina	Female	65	Russia	Working Class
Margaret	Female	71	United States	Working Class
Sarah	Female	77	United States	Middle Class
Maggie	Female	76	United States	Upper Middle Class

*Rosa*

Rosa is an 88-year-old female from Mexico. Her primary language is Spanish, and she also speaks English very well. She has been living in the United States for 64 years, and described her socioeconomic background as middle class. She has been married twice, had six children and 11 grandchildren. She was a homemaker but now considers herself to be retired. Rosa has volunteered at the hospital for over a year. She lives in a senior independent living apartment with her husband and she did not have a Durable Power of Attorney. She is able to walk without any assistive devices and is very active. With regards to oral tradition, she recognizes that oral tradition was a part of her childhood and was able to think of stories that had been passed down to her. She continues to tell the stories to her children and grandchildren. She remembered hearing stories in both Mexico and San Francisco, mainly during family gatherings.

*James*

James is a 70-year-old man originally from Gloucester, England. His primary language is English, he did not require a Durable Power of Attorney, and he considered his socioeconomic background to be working class. He had been in the United States for 25 years. Recently widowed, he has two children, a daughter in England and a son in Canada. He had five grandchildren. His former occupation was a Machine Shop Instructor and a Planetarium Tech. In fact, in addition to volunteering at the hospital, he continues to volunteer at a planetarium in a San Francisco museum and feeds the penguins at the same museum. He likes to keep himself busy, especially since his wife passed away. He lives alone in the Victorian house he shared with his wife. His home was full of life, complete with handmade cuckoo clocks that had been passed down in his

family. James was also a clockmaker in his spare time. James recognized that oral tradition was a large part of his childhood and was able to think of stories that were passed down to him. He continues to tell the stories to his children and grandchildren.

*Irene*

Irene is an 88-year-old Chinese woman. She was born in San Francisco but moved to Hong Kong when she was young. Her primary language is Cantonese and she speaks fluent English. She did not have a Durable Power of Attorney and lives in an independent senior housing facility in San Francisco. She is a widow with five children, twelve grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She was a housewife. Irene no longer volunteers at the hospital but had done so for two years. She considered her socioeconomic background to be upper middle class. Irene admitted that oral tradition was a part of her childhood though she said she did not hear the stories often.

*Lori*

Lori was an 88-year-old Filipina female whose primary language is Tagalog and who is also fluent in English. She grew up in Magdalena, Sorsogon, Philippines and has lived in the United States since 1982. Her family was middle class growing up. Lori was very recently widowed and mentioned her husband quite a bit throughout the interview. She was lucky in that she was surrounded by family. She is the mother of six children and has eleven grandchildren. She was a social worker and had volunteered at the hospital for over a year, though given her husband's recent death, she is not a current volunteer. She is a very healthy and active senior and did not require a Durable Power of Attorney. She is able to live at home alone in her own apartment. She was interested in this project because oral tradition was a big part of her childhood and a big part of her

culture. She continues to tell many of the tales and quips of folklore to her children and grandchildren, especially at family gatherings.

*Carlos*

Carlos is an 84-year-old man. He was born in Portugal, in the Azores Islands. His primary language is Portuguese but he also speaks English fluently. He has lived in the United States for 50 years. He is currently married to his second wife after having been widowed 30 years ago. He has one daughter who lives in San Francisco and two stepchildren from his current marriage. He also has two grandchildren from his current marriage. He considers his socioeconomic background to be working class. Carlos lives at home with his wife and did not have a Durable Power of Attorney. One of his wife's children lives next door, so they were surrounded by family. In an effort to stay busy, he had been volunteering at the hospital for about a year. Carlos recognized that oral tradition was a part of his childhood. He continues to tell stories and sing songs to his children and grandchildren. He also regularly attended Portuguese dances and wrote poetry. He had a health scare three years ago and as a result, lives every day to its fullest.

*May Liu*

An 88-year-old Chinese woman, May Liu was originally from Shanghai, China. Her primary language is Mandarin, and she is fluent in English. May Liu came from a middle class family and has been living in the United States for 21 years. A widow, she lives in a senior low-income housing facility in San Francisco. An active senior, she continues to volunteer at the hospital. She did not have a Durable Power of Attorney. She has been a volunteer for three years and said she volunteered to help people as well as to stay in contact with the friends she made there. Her previous occupation was as a

clerk. May Liu has two children and two grandchildren. May Liu noted that oral tradition was a part of her childhood though she said that stories were rarely told to her. She was able to recall a couple of stories to share. May Liu learned Chinese brush painting at her residence and had her art displayed throughout her room. She was a very talented artist.

*Annie*

Annie is a 65-year-old woman originally from Massachusetts with an Irish/English ethnic/cultural background. Her father was born in Newfoundland and her mother was born in Massachusetts. Her primary language is English. She did not have a Durable Power of Attorney and came from an upper middle class background. Annie is married, with two children and two grandchildren. She and her husband have just recently moved to San Francisco from Boston and are renting an apartment. She has been volunteering at the hospital for one month and loved it. Her former occupation was an Administrative Assistant and as a Hospital Administrator, so she wanted to volunteer at a hospital. Oral tradition was a part of her childhood and she was able to think of stories that had been passed down to her. She continues to tell stories to her children but admitted that she had not told as many stories to her grandchildren as she should. She usually heard stories at family gatherings either at her home or at relatives' homes. Storytelling was frequent and abundant in Annie's life.

*Karina*

Karina is a 65-year-old Russian woman originally from Moscow, Russia, and has been living in the United States for 15 years. She was from a working class background. She is married to her second husband. She and her first husband divorced immediately



after arriving in the United States. She never had children but she does have two nieces whom she adored. Karina has been volunteering as the Gift Shop Manager at the hospital for three years. She lives at home with her husband in the South Bay and does not require a Durable Power of Attorney. Oral tradition was a part of her childhood and she was able to think of stories that were told to her. She continues to tell these stories to her friends and family. Karina heard the stories when she was young, living in an orphanage with her siblings. Her teachers often told tales to the children.

*Margaret*

Margaret was a 70-year-old woman born in the United States on the East Coast. She did not know how to classify her ethnic/cultural background aside from Jewish, Russian, Polish, and possibly German. Her primary language is English and she does not have a Durable Power of Attorney. She was born in New York to a working class family. Her parents were divorced and they had to live on her mother's wages. Margaret started working at age 11 to help take care of her family. She lives at home with her domestic partner and has three children from her first marriage. She also has one godson, two biological children and seven grandchildren. She defines her previous occupation as an organizer, activist, and path seeker. She volunteered with the hospital for a few months and for a city project helping low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Margaret was a natural storyteller and oral tradition was a part of her childhood. She was able to think of stories that had been passed down to her but also acknowledged that she gained many of the stories from eavesdropping. She continues to tell her stories to her children and grandchildren and is working on an autobiography to leave for her family.

*Sarah*

Sarah was a 77-year-old Italian-American woman. She was born in the Bayview neighborhood of San Francisco. Both of her parents were from Italy and immigrated to the United States before she was born. Sarah did not know her grandparents because they remained in Italy. Her family lived with her aunt and uncle and their children in a communal home so she was essentially raised by two sets of parents. She describes her socioeconomic background as middle class. A widow, Sarah never had children and so does not have grandchildren. She does not require a Durable Power of Attorney. She was a bookkeeper and has been volunteering at the hospital for 22 years. She lives alone at home and recognized that oral tradition was a part of her childhood. Because she never had children, she had not passed the stories down.

*Maggie*

Born of middle class German and Italian parents, Maggie is a 76-year-old American woman who grew up in Woodland, California. Her parents were born in the United States but her grandparents were immigrants. A widow, she is currently divorced from her second husband, has four children and one grandchild. She was formerly a Registered Nurse and for the past 16 years has been volunteering at the hospital. She wanted to volunteer at this particular hospital because it is where she did her nurse's training. She lives alone at home and does not have a Durable Power of Attorney. She recognized that oral tradition was part of her childhood but said that it was limited. Maggie recalls hearing the stories at home in the kitchen or in the breakfast room. She continues to tell some of her stories to her children.

*Narratives*

Narratives from 11 senior volunteers at a San Francisco hospital were gathered over the course of two months (See Appendix H) in various locations, including participants' homes, a public library, a bookstore, and the hospital where they volunteer. The narratives varied. Some seniors were confident in what they wanted to talk about and began immediately. Others needed encouragement and prompting questions. The length of time spent with the senior for the first dialogue varied from one hour to three hours and as a result, the lengths of the narratives varied as well. In the case of all of the seniors, once they began talking about their pasts, they all discovered that they had a lot more to say than they might have originally thought.

*Generative Themes*

Upon multiple reads and a thorough analysis of the 11 narratives (See Appendix H), the researcher was able to isolate themes that occurred within the narratives. The researcher followed Creswell's (2003) guide when analyzing the narratives for data. Each narrative was read through in great detail. The researcher then wrote a paragraph including a summary of the narrative as well as themes present within the narrative. The researcher made a list of all of the topics that came forth and created a grid with the resulting 27 themes (See Appendix I) and the corresponding senior. The resulting themes were regrouped into generative themes and the narratives were coded to result in a total of four generative themes with multiple subthemes.

Table 4.2 lists the four generative themes along with the subthemes that were derived from the 11 narratives. The themes correspond to the senior volunteers and the

stories that they told. They are listed in alphabetical order. Data for the subthemes can be found in Appendix I.

**Table 4.2 Generative Themes Within the Narratives**

	<i>Religion, Superstition, Morals, Friendship</i> <b>COMMUNITY</b>	<i>Importance of Family, Grandparents as Caregivers, Live Home until Marriage, Family Death, Cooking, Generational Gap, Single Parenthood, Gender roles/Sexuality, Punishment, Family Vocation/Trade, Marriage, Heritage, Children</i> <b>FAMILY</b>	<i>War, Government, Struggle, The Great Depression, Discrimination/ Racism, Punishment</i> <b>HUMAN RIGHTS</b>	<i>Retaining Culture</i> <b>IMMIGRA- TION</b>
Rosa	x	X	x	x
James	x	X	x	
Irene	x	X	x	x
Lori	x	X	x	x
Carlos	x	X	x	x
May Liu	x	X	x	x
Annie		X	x	x
Karina	x	X	x	x
Margaret	x	X	x	x
Sarah	x	x	x	x
Maggie	x	x	x	x

*Community*

Community was mentioned in all but one of the 11 narratives. Some of the seniors spoke about community in relation to their neighbors and their lives growing up, while others spoke to community in relation to religion, superstition, morals and friendship. While community was mentioned in all but one of the narratives, it was mentioned to a much lesser degree than the themes of Family and Immigration.

One example of community is when James mentioned that during the war, there were many air raids and the neighbors would all have to run for cover in one of the bomb shelters. This happened so often that the neighbors all became very close, telling stories

and playing games to keep the children entertained during a terrifying experience. They were forced to find light in a dark place and James even talked about this time as almost a fond memory. He could recount many of the tales and songs that they shared while in the bomb shelters. It was the community's closeness that kept them going during these moments.

James believed that superstition played had a large part in many of the stories he heard, and that it was part of the fabric of British culture. For example, he spoke of Prince Charles in England not becoming Charles III when he becomes king because the other two King Charles before him were executed. This superstitious belief affected even the king of England. James did not go into much detail about the role of superstition, only mentioning that superstition was a large part of society and the stories he grew up hearing.

Karina relied heavily on her community within the orphanage. The other children essentially became her family. She says that, to her, "friendship was more important than anything." They helped each other in the orphanage. They created a strong code of ethics among the children and they all followed it. Karina based her success on her friendships and repeats an old saying, "It's better to have 100 friends than 100 coins." She held her friends very dear and said that she keeps her friendships forever. Karina believes that she had a good life in the orphanage despite the absence of her mother and father. She believes that she developed her character through her struggles and the help of her upbringing within such a community. It was this strong sense of community that Karina exhibited when she mentioned her friends that she has today. She learned so

much from depending on others that she continued to create this type of community in her life. Karina imparted how essential her friends were to her.

Karina was very superstitious and owned up to it without hesitation. She grew up listening to tales of Baba Yaga, a Russian witch in the orphanage. All of the children believed that Baba Yaga roamed the forest and “If you not listen, Baby Yaga will come and take you.” She also believed that it was bad luck to whistle when you enter a room, that a black cat that passes you is unlucky, that an empty well was bad luck, etc. She had many rituals that she followed in order to avoid bad luck as well. She believed in curses and that it was a curse in fact that caused her first marriage to end in divorce. She continued with many other superstitions that she wholeheartedly believes in and follows.

Karina grew up without religion in her life and it appeared that these tales functioned similarly to how a religion would. They offered her guidance and a myth to believe in that is so important to humankind. Karina was the only participant who specifically mentioned her morals. While there was a strong code of ethics among her peers at the orphanage, she claimed she got her morals and values through books. She also believed that, “life teaches you morals.”

Sarah grew up in the Bayview district of San Francisco. Doors were always open to neighbors and it was customary for people to just drop by. She grew up surrounded by neighbors. She spoke of baseball games among the neighborhood children and of staying out past dark. She evinced a sense of nostalgia talking about those times and admitted that things were not like that today. The community where she grew up in is very different today than it was when she was a little girl.

Maggie grew up in Woodland, California, which she claimed was a tight knit community. She was close to her neighbors and in fact, that was where many of Maggie's stories originated. Her father was a very friendly man and drove a truck making deliveries and so many people in the community got to know him. She heard many stories from neighbors about who her father was and this seemed to hold great significance to Maggie. Her community brought her closer to her family. In fact, Maggie talked about her neighbor almost as a family member. She spent many days in the kitchen with her neighbor listening to stories about the old country. This was where she had her first drink and Maggie continued to meet her elderly neighbor after church to sip from her stash of wine. It was clear that Maggie gained a great appreciation for stories and her seniors within her community at a young age.

One of the stories Maggie told revolved around a superstition that had been passed down in her family due to a photograph that was taken of her grandmother and her six boys one year on Christmas Day. Within a year of the time the picture was taken, three of the six boys died. From that day on, none of the survivors in that picture would ever pose for a picture on Christmas. This superstition created a story within her family and it was clear that Christmas was never quite the same in her family as it was in other's because of their reluctance to capture the day in photos.

When discussing community, Lori mentioned her religion as well as superstitions that her culture and her religion practiced. Lori talked about her Catholic faith and detailed that Filipinos were "80% Catholic." She talked about Spain's 300 year rule of her country and the discovery of the island by Magellan, whom Lori claimed, "introduced Christianity" to the Philippines. The country's strong belief in Catholicism meant that

communities revolved around religious rituals. To this day, Lori said she prays the holy rosary at six o'clock. This was tradition in her home country and when the bell rang, you stopped what you were doing; otherwise, "the bad spirit will come when it's about to be dark so we have to pray." In addition, the level of religious studies one was placed in was based upon one's socioeconomic status. Lori's father learned to speak Spanish and Latin because he was able to attend the "formal studies of the elite." The community placed a great emphasis on status within the faith and this determined how far one was permitted to go. Lori still holds strong Catholic beliefs. Her senior independent living facility was primarily Filipino and so many of the activities within her new community also revolved around the Catholic faith. Lori's religion had been deeply ingrained in her and it was incredibly important to her from her childhood and throughout her adult life.

Lori had many superstitions. Some revolved around religion while others were customs in the Filipino culture that had been passed down. She prayed at six o'clock every day to "counter the evil spirits." Lori believed that "you cannot go out after dark because the bad spirits are also walking around and if you stop on it, you will get sick and you will not get well." There were many superstitions involving pregnant women. For example, a pregnant woman should not go out if there is a full moon; if she does, "there will be complications with the delivery." She should not bathe in a river because a bad spirit might take the baby. Also, if a pregnant woman hears a crying baby, she should go to the doctor because this means something is wrong. Perhaps there were so many superstitions around pregnancies due to a high rate of miscarriages in those days. Perhaps the community needed a way to explain the loss of a child when miscarriage



might have been commonplace as it often was without the kind of medical attention that exists today.

Lori also said that when you walked through a forest you should say “excuse me, excuse me” in case you step on the house of a dwarf or a fairy. If a dwarf should follow you home, you should build a house in the corner of your backyard and bring food to them. If you step on one of the houses, you must chop off the head of a chicken and pour the blood around. These were all stories that were passed down to Lori and she wholeheartedly believes in them, as do her children and her grandchildren.

Like the Philippines, Portugal was also considered a primarily Catholic country and it too was a very important part of the community. Carlos talked about his Catholic upbringing. He went to catechism school and even won money for reciting a passage. All of the friends he had also went to this same school so very much of his life and his community stemmed from religion. When talking about his time in school, he said that he won the money because he always told the truth.

Rosa spoke very little in relation to community. This was largely due to her father's strict rules that governed her childhood. He was so strict that he did not allow her to have friends. However, Rosa did have one friend who lived across the street and any time her father went to church, she would run to play with her friend. Her friend seemed to offer her a taste of freedom because this was the only time she had to do the things she really wanted. They created adventure by sneaking off downtown to buy buttons at a fabric store. This was one of the only happy memories Rosa mentioned about her childhood and it was clear that she valued her one friend. She essentially went from daughter to wife and mother with very little in between. It seemed that those few

days of adventure gave Rosa her only taste of freedom because the rest of her life involved caring for her family.

May Liu did not discuss community much except for the friendships she made and a brief retelling of superstitions that revolved around ghost stories. May Liu said that there are many ghost stories in the Chinese culture and said that “the old people are superstitious.” She believed the stories were a way for the older generations to give the children something to fear. It worked on May Liu because she admitted that she was scared.

In relation to community, the seniors varied in their discussions. Some seniors were tied to their communities and cultures through superstitions and religion. These practices played a significant role in the way that the seniors believed. In the case of Karina, her community at the orphanage became her family and she learned all of life's lessons from her experiences there. Few of the seniors talked about their friendships outside of Karina and Rosa.

### *Family*

Family was a common theme found within all of the narratives. Family ranged not only from the perspective of one's specific place within a family, such as their role of mother, child, father, male and female, but also the expectations placed upon the individual in relation to customs, rules, and beliefs. It encompassed the relationships between family members, the impact of death and birth upon a family, as well as the pain and happiness within a family. Family had the most subthemes of any of the other generative themes; these included: Importance of Family; Grandparents as Caregivers; Live Home until Marriage; Family Death; Cooking; Generational Gap; Single

Parenthood; Gender roles/Sexuality; Punishment; Family Vocation/Trade; Marriage; Heritage; Children. Some of the seniors attested that family was the most important thing in life; it was no wonder that so much of their narrative revolved around their duty to their family.

Rosa was mostly raised by her father and brothers and was only 15 years old when she married her husband. As a result, when she was married, she knew very little about the expectations of her new role as a wife. She lived next door to her in-laws and was very grateful to them because she said her mother-in-law and her sister-in-law taught her everything. They were very kind to her and helped her grow from a child into a woman. She said, "I have really good memories of them. My sister-in-law was a special person, you know because she is the one who teach me what I know and my mother didn't know." Rosa learned to cook once she became a wife. Her mother-in-law taught her during the day while her husband was at work. Her mother-in-law included Rosa in the preparation of special meals and took her shopping with her at the local market. Cooking was an expectation of the women within the families and it was also a bonding time for the females in the family. Rosa continued to cook the dishes as taught to her by the older members of her family. She passed down the dishes to her daughter, Rosa, because Rosa enjoyed cooking even when she was a child. Because she did not have her mother around, Rosa did not grow up knowing some of the basic skills expected of a wife. She felt fortunate that her in-laws embraced her and taught her to cook. Rosa regards the ability to cook as a necessity for a female. She mentioned in her narrative that her other daughter did not cook and this seemed to upset her. Perhaps Rosa viewed cooking as significant not only because she saw it as the duty of a woman and a wife, but

also because she had such fond memories of the times she cooked with her family. Perhaps she regrets that she did not have those times with her youngest daughter.

Within the family, there were a lot of cultural expectations placed on Rosa as a female in terms of dating and marriage. Rosa began her narrative with the mention of her marriage at the young age of 15. In her community, a young lady was not to be seen with a man on her own unless marriage was the ultimate plan. Her father and brothers did not allow her to have a boyfriend. Rosa only knew her husband for five or six months and married three to six months after that. As was the custom, she and her husband both lived at home until they were married. Rosa stated that in Mexico, "...customs say that children don't leave their house, their home until they get married." Rosa and her late husband lived with his parents for awhile after they got married until they were able to find their own home. Rosa carried those same expectations to her children and was upset when her daughter moved out before getting married. It appeared that it was difficult for Rosa to go outside of her customs that were instilled by her parents, especially her father. While Rosa made it a point that she gave her children more freedom, it was clear that she still held certain customs as very important.

Single parenthood had a great impact on Rosa's family. She was essentially raised only by her father and so always felt deprived by the lack of her mother's influence as a child. Coincidentally, Rosa stated that she raised her six children on her own. Even during the time that her husband was around, he did very little to help her. She was fully dedicated to her children, however, and believed that was the reason that they took such good care of her in her old age, "...that they're so good to me is my reward because I never leave them." Rosa was able to understand how difficult things were for her father

because of her own experiences raising children on her own but she feels very strongly that she persevered and her children had a solid family life despite the lack of their father's presence for much of it.

Irene also talked about the importance of family and the duty one has to their family. When discussing her role as caregiver to her grandchildren she stated, "You must do that [raise the grandchildren] because they are family and family is very important." She also mentioned that part of the Chinese culture was to have a large family. Irene exemplified her culture's customs through her own actions. She sacrificed in order to help her children raise her grandchildren and she took great pride in the fact that she was able to do that. This Chinese custom was very important to Irene. Irene talked about her duty as a grandmother to help raise her grandchildren. She mentioned all of the work she did, such as the cooking, the washing, "then take them to school and put them to bed." Irene said this was customary for the Chinese culture. The grandparents raise the grandchildren so that their children can continue to work. However, Irene never knew her own grandparents because her family immigrated to the United States. Her grandparents remained in China. The only thing she knew about her grandparents was that they worked very hard and saved money. Perhaps that was another reason that it was so important for Irene to have such a large role in her own grandchildren's lives. Perhaps she missed not having grandparents in her life.

While Irene was talking about her own childhood, she mentioned punishment from her parents in more than one instance. She relayed that her parents were very strict, especially if the children brought home a bad grade. She went so far as to say that they were cruel. Irene was afraid of her parents and believed that this was a Chinese trait. She

never wanted her own children to fear her and took extra precautions to use kindness with her own children and grandchildren. Irene told a story of a time that she and her sister went out and got lost. They didn't return until very late and were tired and hungry, but they soon found out they were in a lot of trouble. They were spanked and sent to bed without dinner. Irene had a very vivid memory of this and to this day, felt like it was wrong. Another time, Irene was blamed for a smoky room and her mom beat her. Irene was very upset by this because she did not start a fire and when her mom realized the truth, she apologized. Irene says, "There was a lot of punishment. I was not like that with my kids. I was very gentle and very kind." It seemed important to Irene to talk about her childhood and differentiate it from the one she hoped she gave to her own children. She seemed to still hold a lot of resentment towards her parents for what she felt was wrongful punishment. She used the opportunity of her interview to ensure that it was understood that her parenting style was far from the style her own parents practiced.

May Liu didn't explicitly mention the importance of family but she spoke about her family life quite a bit and it was clear that family was extremely important to her. She regrets that she was unable to spend more time with her children when they were growing up because she was forced to work in the countryside, far from her family during the Communist regime in China. She recounts that,

After the nine years, they [Communist] called us back and asked me whether I wanted to be a white collar clerk that would take me an hour and a half one way to get to the working place, or would I rather stay nearer to home, twenty minutes for a bus ride and do labor. Well, I chose the later one and they thought they did good washing my brain. I'd rather be closer. Three hours on my way, that's no

fun. Even when I worked before going to the countryside, I didn't get home until nine o'clock. I didn't get the chance to tell my children stories. At best, they'd smile and let me carry them to bed.

May Liu appeared to resent the fact that she was forced to be away from her children during their formative years. She held the government responsible but knew there was nothing she could do to protest it. She moved to the United States to be with her daughter when she was pregnant so that she could help raise her grandchildren. May Liu continued to return to Shanghai every year to see her family, including her son and many nieces and nephews, but it was clear that she wanted to be there while her grandchildren grew up.

May Liu was raised with her grandmother living in their home, helping to take care of her and her five siblings. Her mother stayed at home so her grandmother was just there to assist. Her role was not as prevalent as in the case of some of the other seniors, but her grandmother did quite a bit to aid in her childhood rearing. May Liu stated that she was raised by her grandmother as is customary in China. However, her grandmother lived with her family because her grandfather died when her mother was only three years old, causing her grandmother to struggle. Her grandparents on her father's side also died young and so her father was orphaned as a child. His aunt and uncle raised him. Death had a great impact on May Liu's parents. As a result, she only knew her one grandmother.

Carlos was the only boy in a family of seven children. He spoke very fondly of his mother and his sisters, especially one of his older sisters. It appeared that Carlos was in competition with his father. He compared his father to himself in the narrative and

stated that while his father was much stronger than him, he was a lot more successful than his father. One of the stories that Carlos told revolved around a time that he earned money and spent it on cigarettes as a boy. When his father found out, he spanked Carlos and threw the cigarettes into the fire. This must have been a very significant action to Carlos because he describes the experience as “breaking his will.” He did not even perform in a play that he had practiced because his father broke his will. Carlos mentioned in another instance that his father was very strict and once more when he boasts that he was able to succeed in life greater than his father. These stories involving his father seem to have an undertone of resentment. It was apparent that Carlos wanted the accomplishments he had achieved despite his father’s attempt to break his will. Carlos had a much closer relationship to his mother and his sisters, which was interesting, given that he was the only son of his father.

Annie’s extended family was very important to her. Her mother’s side all lived very close and helped one another through difficult situations. Annie says, “there was a lot of family closeness, they were lucky to have family so close.” She had a lot of cousins and they often had family get-togethers. Cooking was a big part of the family gatherings. Family events involved cooking and telling stories. She says her aunts were great cooks and remembers dishes such as cod’s tongues. Oftentimes, the best stories were told in the kitchen by the women who cooked the meals. Annie had fond memories of these times.

Annie had a very close relationship to her grandmother, who helped to raise her as a child. Annie’s grandmother lived with her family from the time she was born so her grandmother played a central role in her upbringing. She said that her grandmother



played an especially integral part in helping Annie when it was discovered at the age of two that she had dislocated hips. Annie had many fond memories of her grandmother and her grandmother's friends in the home.

Like many of the seniors, Annie also mentioned family deaths. Annie's grandfather on her father's side died when he was young and so she never met him. Her grandfather on her mother's side also died young from Diphtheria. One of her uncle's died at the age of two. She tells a heart breaking story about her Uncle Rual who died at the age of twenty-one trying to save her mother from drowning at a local swimming hole. He managed to save her mother but he got caught in the undertow and drowned. Annie believes that her family members are all survivors, "There were so many things that happened with diseases and they were just true survivors." There were many deaths that her family was forced to deal with, and even greater was the fact that there were many young deaths. She believed that this only made her family stronger. As a result of her grandfather's death, Annie's grandmother was widowed while she still had six or seven children living at home. She was in her 30's and had to raise her children on her own. To help the family, Annie's mother went to work in a sugar factory. Annie recognized and admired the strength her grandmother held in order to do provide for her family. Though gender roles at that time dictated that women were not to work, it was fortunate that Annie's grandmother had gone to secretarial school and was thus able to provide for her family when her husband died. Annie says that in Newfoundland, it was customary that "boys became fisherman and the girls got married, became mothers and so forth and so on." This was a time when "most young women at that time, you got married and that was it, so you didn't have a career." As a result, Annie's mother was also encouraged to

go to school and pursue a career rather than succumbing to society's rules dictating that a woman was to marry and have children, and forego a career and education.

Gender roles also influenced her father's chosen vocation. Annie's father was a fisherman, as was his father and his father before him. She said that in Newfoundland, the boys were just expected to become fishermen. He moved to the United States to work as a fisherman with his brother, but eventually he changed vocations due to tougher regulations and a decline in the industry, thus ending the family trade on his side. Annie had many fond memories of going out to sea with her father and her uncle and while they came to the United States to continue their profession, they soon found that they could not succeed if they remained fishermen.

Much like Irene, Annie never met her grandparents on her father's side because her father immigrated to the United States and never returned to Newfoundland. Her grandfather passed away at a young age and her grandmother never came to the United States to visit. She did have her grandmother on her mother's side but that was her only connection to grandparents. On the same note, Annie talked about the generational gap she has witnessed with her own grandchildren. She was very close to her grandmother who helped raise her but feels that her grandchildren live in their own world, "we text and whatever but it has changed." She believed that things are much different today because of technology. She remembered playing neighborhood games as a girl and staying out until late in the neighborhood, now "it's so different with computers and technology. Now, it's like with my grandkids, they just want to go to the mall." It seemed that Annie missed that closeness that she had with her own grandmother. She felt

disconnected from her grandchildren and did not seem to know how to get through to them.

Margaret did not spend much time talking about her family except to mention the harm caused by her abusive father and overbearing mother. Margaret was mostly raised by a single parent. Her father was very abusive to her and her mother and finally left. When her parents divorced, her mother became the sole provider for Margaret and her sister. In Margaret's opinion, her family was very broken and she did all that she could to distance herself from her childhood and her parents. In that same spirit of rebellion, Margaret fought against gender roles. She did not want to end up like her mother, married to an abusive man and left to raise her children on her own. She instead went to college for an education and actually divorced her husband because she chose her work and passion for fighting racism over her marriage. Her husband had a political career and felt that she should be by his side as a wife, but she thought otherwise. She participated in feminist movement bra burnings and says that "coming out as a lesbian was really a liberating time for me because it was also a liberating time." While she followed the "normal" path and married and raised children, she finally liberated herself when she came out as a lesbian. It seemed that the physical abuse she suffered from her father, as well as her oppression as a minority, served to ignite a fire in Margaret. While she spoke negatively about her family, her family appeared to be the driving force in her life's accomplishments and passions for equality.

When speaking about her own children, Margaret mentioned the generational gap that she has witnessed within her own family towards the very beginning of her narrative. She compared the modern technology to the ways that communication used to be relayed.

She believes that “[the gap between new technology] is the biggest change of these last twenty, thirty, maybe fifty, forty years.” She says it has even changed the way she and her granddaughter communicate and she’s afraid that texting and such was only “dumbing down” our children. Much like Annie, Margaret fears that technology is to blame for the disconnect present between the generations.

Margaret raised her children with a lot of freedom. She never wanted her children to feel like they had to “flee the way that I felt like I had to flee to get away from my mom.” She felt that her mother controlled her life and she never wanted that for her own children. Margaret also mentioned that when she was growing up, children were to be seen and not heard.

Throughout her life, Margaret made a great effort to distance herself from her own childhood. It was very important to her that her children have a different experience than the one she lived, however, she did admit that as a result, she might have given them too much freedom and as such, created an unintentional distance. It is interesting that she suffers a similar fate as her mother in that her own children live very separate lives from hers.

Family was extremely important when Sarah was growing up. In fact, her parents and her aunt and uncle shared a home. She was raised with her cousins who were like sisters to her. Her aunt stayed home while her mother worked so she felt like she had two mothers and two fathers and says “I wouldn’t change it for anything in the world.” When discussing her family, Sarah also claimed that in her generation, girls would “stay at home until they got married.” She said this was true of all of her girlfriends, though she

recognizes that this is no longer done today. However, it was expected of her family that girls would remain in their parents' home until marriage.

As in the case of Annie's father, gender roles also influenced Sarah's father's vocation. As a male, her father was expected to follow suit in the family trade, stone masonry. Her father was sent to Germany by his mother when he was just ten years old to learn the trade. He fought against it but did eventually learn it. The trade was also passed down to her brother who often had to work instead of play baseball with the kids in the community. It was expected that the men work in Sarah's family while the girls undertook the roles of mother and wife.

Family death also had a great impact on Sarah's family and she mentioned the difficulties death caused as a result. Sarah's grandfather on her father's side passed away while her father was in the service. As a result, the family had no one to support them so her father had to fill that role. Sarah never knew her grandparents. Her grandmother on her mother's side died fairly young. She did not know her grandparents on her mother's side because her family immigrated and she only saw her grandparents a few times in Italy so she never had a relationship with them either.

Distance and death caused the generation gap between her and her grandparents. Sarah also recognized that there was a generational gap between her and her grandchildren. She feels that they are not interested in hearing her stories but believed "they may want to hear it one day."

Sarah also talks about the impact that the death of three of her "second mothers" children (her cousins) had on her aunt. She said, "My aunt, she was quiet and I think

because she lost three children. It's very hard to lose children, it's the worst thing that can happen." Her aunt was never the same after the loss of one of her children.

The experience of family was very different for Karina than many of the other seniors. Karina's family was struck by death. Death was a defining theme throughout Karina's narrative because the death of her parents shaped her life forever. She grew up in Russia. Her father, after serving as a pilot during World War II, was imprisoned for treason for speaking against the Communist Party. Her family was forced to live in a concentration camp. Her father was executed and her mother died not long after leaving the camp with her new stepfather. He too passed away as a result of the diseases her mother and stepfather caught while in the camps.

Due to these deaths, Karina and her siblings were raised in an orphanage. The other displaced children became Karina's family. As a result, Karina cherished her friendships in the same way that others cherish close family members. She did not take friendship lightly, and treasured her marriage. However, marriage was an institution of contention for her. Karina has had polar opposite experiences with marriage. Her first marriage went south after four years. They moved to the United States, leaving behind a good life that Karina had made for herself. She was advanced with her career and had even bought her own apartment but their relationship went very bad. Marriage returned Karina to a place of hardship and struggle. It wasn't until she remarried years later, that for the first time in her life Karina learned what true love entailed. She was grateful to find a man who taught her to say "I love you."

Maggie mentioned that her grandmother lived with her family while she grew up but did not speak of her as a caregiver. Rather it appeared that her family took care of her

grandmother when her grandfather passed away. Maggie did admit that because her grandmother lived with them she was able to get very close to her grandmother as a child. Maggie often was included in the social engagements her grandmother hosted at their home and so she learned an appreciation for seniors. Maggie came from an Italian family and her grandfather taught her grandmother how to make ravioli. Her grandmother taught her mother how to make the ravioli and Maggie's mother taught her. Maggie said that her own daughter is a good cook and continues the family tradition. This tradition has held very strong in her family and is a source of great pride. The ravioli itself seemed to tell its own story and it was in fact how Maggie was able to relate to distant relatives in Italy when she visited.

Many of the seniors mentioned the impact that disease had on their families. Maggie's mother grew up on a farm. In those days, it was customary for immigrant family's to help newer immigrant families by offering them a place to stay as Maggie's grandparents did. Maggie's aunt's and uncle's caught Tuberculosis from some of the newly arrived immigrants and as a result, Maggie's mother's three older sisters and brother died from the disease. There were no antibiotics in those days to cure the disease. Maggie never knew either of her grandfathers because they died before she was born. Maggie's grandfather died when her father was 16, and because he was the eldest son, he had to take his place as the man of the house and support the family. Maggie's father was forced to quit school early to take his place as head of the household once his father passed away. He had to work to earn money for the family because "a woman didn't work. She kept the gardens going and the chickens going." Gender roles dictated the

direction her father had to take as those roles were very clearly defined by society and the family.

As with the Chinese culture, it was customary in Filipino culture for the grandmother to raise the grandchild until he or she was two or three years old. The grandparents “supervise how they raise the children.” Lori did this for her children and she was also raised by her grandparents for the first few years of her life. Additionally, when talking about family and the Filipino culture, Lori mentioned that children typically live at home until they are married . Oftentimes, the newlyweds continue to live with the parents until they are financially stable. She did not mention whether or not this custom would continue with her grandchildren who were born and raised in the United States.

In addition, cooking was an important custom in Filipino culture. Lori mentions the customs revolving around food in a few instances throughout the narrative. She talks about the tradition of filling the table with food on New Year's to ensure that you have something to eat. While visiting, Lori's daughter serves a traditional Filipino desert that her mother taught her to make. This tradition of cooking had been passed down in the generations and it appeared that Lori's daughter had taken up the reins as the head female cook in the family. Lori took pride in the fact that her daughter and grandchildren came to cook and eat with her almost every Sunday.

Gender roles were fairly prevalent within Lori's family and community. There were many customs around these roles including marriage and the courting process. The boys were expected to serenade the woman they fancied and it was up to the parents of the woman to determine whether or not to let him in. Lori participated in this custom when she met her husband.



Lori didn't talk as much about specific family deaths as she did the customs that surround the death of a loved one. In the Philippines, when someone dies, it is the role of the next of kin to make all of the arrangements. All distant relatives come for the funeral; it is a sign of respect. After someone dies, a rosary is held on the ninth day. After 40 days, there is a mass to help the spirit of the recently deceased move on. During the 40 days, the loved one's spirit is said to be on Earth. Lori's husband recently passed away and she tells of having seen her husband's spirit. After the Mass, family members were not to go directly home or else the spirit might follow them. Lori said that after her husband's funeral, they went to a coffee shop first before coming home. Death was a very fresh topic for Lori and it seemed to comfort her to talk about the customs rather than focus on the specifics around her husband's very recent death.

The very first thing that James mentioned in his narrative was the importance of story. He stated that, "Story is part of my culture. It's part of your tradition, your heritage." He attributed much of his knowledge about his heritage to story. He believed it was especially important for children as a way to "develop a kid's way to absorb and to listen and to take it in the way that they do." His family held story as an essential part of their lives. James spoke about his family including not only the lineage of clock makers but also the historical significance of having children during those olden times. James talked about his great grandfather, who had 20 children with his wife. Out of all of those children, only four survived. Many died in infancy and some in childhood due to typhoid fever and other diseases. James pointed out that infant mortality rates were high in those times because they did not have the medical knowledge available today.

Much of the talk about James's family was in a historical context. James came from a long line of clockmakers, four generations in fact. While James did not choose clockmaking as his profession, he did pick it up as a hobby. Many of his stories revolved around the clockmakers of the family. He heard a lot about his great grandfather, who would travel from village to village to construct the church clocks. There was still one of his clocks standing with two number 9's instead of a number 11.

This family trade was a great source of pride for James and though it was not his profession, he continues the trade and even showed off some of his handiwork. It was apparent that the art had been effectively passed down. More than this, the idea that his family had been known as the village clockmakers, seemed to give James a sense of pride and a strong sense of connection to his family heritage and lineage. He knew more about his family history than any of the other seniors and perhaps it was this trade that kept that history so alive.

Of all of the generative themes, family encompassed the greatest number of subthemes and was mentioned the most throughout the narratives. Families served as the focal point in many of the senior's lives. For some, it was the reason for existence while for others, family had other significance or was even a topic of disdain. Discussions included the roles of family members and the rules around those roles based on gender, title and expectations.

### *Human Rights*

As people who were from 60 to 90 years old, the participants grew up in a much different world. Their experience of human rights issues tended to be extremely personal, and evoked stories of challenges faced by themselves and their relatives. Many

lived through war, changes in government, and the Great Depression. These experiences sparked discussions around Discrimination/Racism, Punishment, and Struggle.

Karina first mentioned punishment in telling about her father's execution by the Communist government, but she also talked about the punishment that occurred at the orphanage. Interestingly, she did not see her childhood punishment as necessarily bad, but as natural a consequence of wrong actions. She said that because the children shared a room, there was a strong code of ethics. No one was to take from another because they all shared everything. If someone did "we punish very hard. How hard? If you are woman, we put blanket and cut her hair. You can't take it if it isn't yours."

Karina made it clear that her father, a war hero, had been unjustly accused of treason who paid for his criticism of the government with his life, She also made it clear that war affected everyone adversely, from soldiers to women and children. During war, one was declared guilty without a trial and the family became guilty by association. Karina's mother was pregnant with her at the time and so Karina never met her father. Her siblings were sent to an orphanage in the camp "and the gate on the orphanage was named Children for Enemies of the State." The Magadan camp claimed the lives of anywhere between 12-20 million people during World War II. Karina still finds it difficult to talk about her father's execution. During the interview, she became very emotional and it was clear that this was the defining moment in Karina's life.

While May Liu acknowledged her father was the strict one, her greatest fear of punishment came when the Communist party took office in China. She said that they spent three years "washing her brain." While she worked for the University, she was often questioned about what she did for the Americans. She feared punishment because

people who said anything against the government often disappeared. May Liu tried to follow the rules so as not to be in violation of government policy. However, she was especially vulnerable because she worked for an American company. She talked about how she got through the brainwashing sessions, saying that she chose to remain silent during these questioning periods because “If you say things, you might think it’s nothing but they could turn it around and say you were against them.” She was eventually sent to the countryside to do hard labor. She was married during this time and was only allowed to come home once a month for four days. Through it all, May Liu did not lose her spirit, she just learned to silence it. She was able to laugh at her own methods for surviving during these times and knew that above everything, she must remain silent and obedient in order to outsmart the government.

Irene was living in Hong Kong when the Japanese took over. She said it was a very hard time and with no rice, they often went without food. At 18, she was forced to marry for fear of “being ruined” by the Japanese. She lived in the countryside and was required to do manual labor. She had to return to Hong Kong and was barely able to feed her children. Irene did not go into further detail though it was clear through her story that this time was very difficult for her and her family and that she fully blamed the Communist regime. Much as May Liu had done, she spoke of this time in a matter-of-fact manner, but through her description, the fear and the resentment she felt was still present.

Struggle was not new to Irene, however. Irene’s parents came to the United States as immigrants and worked very hard doing laundry and ironing. Many times, she mentioned how hard they had to work to make ends meet. Her family was poor while

growing up in San Francisco. They lived in Chinatown where racism was prevalent. She remembered many times walking through North Beach to return home along Broadway Street, which was known to belong to the Italians, and she said that “they’d throw bottles at us because they don’t welcome the Chinese to Broadway Street.” She went on to say that the Italians were rude and that the Chinese didn’t go to North Beach and the Italians stayed away from Chinatown. She remembered them yelling things at her like “Go back to your community!” She said that the Americans and Italians “looked down” on the Chinese. She said her closest friends in school were black and that they were the only other race that was good to the Chinese. She believed it was because they were both minorities and they created an alliance of sorts. However, even though the children got along, she recounted a story where she was walking home with her black friend whose father told her not to walk with Irene because she was Chinese. It was clear that racism had a very large impact on Irene. She was just a little girl subjected to such an unjust time.

It was wartime during much of James’ childhood in England. He has many memories about American convoys going through his town and nightly air raids requiring the communities to take cover in underground bunkers. This was a storytelling time where neighbors told stories, sang songs and drank tea. James’ family home served as a post to house soldiers for awhile, and it seemed that he felt pride in having a role during the war. James did not speak much of the fear during those nightly air raids; as impossible as it sounds, it seemed that they just got used to it.

Sarah did not mention many struggles or hardships in her narrative. However, she did touch on the Great Depression. She admitted that her family didn’t talk much about it.

She knows that they got along because her mother worked at a cigar factory rolling cigars. She was the only one in the home working during that time. She said they were sustained by meals of polenta, three times a day. But like many of the other seniors, Sarah almost spoke about the hard times in passing.

Lori mentions the war as the sole factor for her late courtship. She had to wait until after the war to return to elementary school and by that time, she was already 14 years old. She did not start high school until she was 21, and so was of courting age during that time. Lori also talked about the war in 1906 between the Spanish and the United States and the United States won. As a result, everything was changed, "our tradition, education, we studied under the United States." Lori talks about the time her husband served in the military. During World War II, he fought for the United States against the Japanese. She talks about the Philippines' U.S. military base. She took great pride in her husband's role in defending their home country and fighting for the States. She did not talk about the hardships of the war, but rather the changes the war brought and the pride that she felt as a Filipino. In her culture, it was apparent that fighting for one's country was a great honor that Lori still takes pride in.

During World War II, Margaret grew up as a Jewish American. She was aware of the discrimination and extermination of the Jews in Europe and had heard many stories about the Nazis as a child. She would overhear the adults talking about who had made it out of the displaced persons' camps and celebrate along with them. During this time anti-Semitism was prevalent, and Margaret saw herself as an "other." She said that she and her sister constantly had to battle the anti-Semitic crowd. She very clearly remembered the death of the Rosenbergs. She said that the stories that made the greatest impression

on her as a child “were the stories of the Black-Jewish connection. That Jews were to Europe what Black people were to the United States, in terms of being an identifiable hated group.” She saw a parallel between the treatment of Black people in the United States and the treatment of the Jews in Europe. She felt a kindred spirit in the fight against oppression. Margaret talked about her “White skin privilege” but says she didn’t realize it until after she was married, largely because she grew up as part of a minority group that was often the target of discrimination. Margaret also recalled a time as a kindergartener, playing marriage as a game. She would pair up with a Black boy and one day the teacher called her mother in. Her mother made her stop playing the game with him. Margaret was very confused by this because her mother often took her along to NAACP meetings. At a very young age, Margaret understood the injustice.

Margaret mentioned the role that government had during this turbulent period. She felt that the American government disappointed American Jews by not taking more action to defend the Jews from the Nazis. She also mentioned the Joe McCarthy era and having to get rid of papers and books that might later be used to implicate her family. She remembered this time as one shrouded in doubt, fear, and mistrust. Government let Margaret down much like the institution of marriage did and she spent many years fighting the injustices she perceived in any institution. She was very involved with the Civil Rights Movement and actively participated in raising money for the NAACP Legal Education Fund.

It is interesting that both Margaret and Irene cited the Black community as their allies of sorts during these times of discrimination and racism. Both paralleled their experiences to those of African Americans, no doubt because they were the largest group

of people to face oppression, discrimination and racism in the United States in our history. It was so blatant against this community that one can assume other communities facing oppression felt a kindred spirit with those so unjustly targeted.

Sarah begins her narrative by talking about her father's service during the World War I. He served for seven years, as did his brother. During this time, his father passed away and the family had a lot of debt from the war. He moved to America to try and make money to pay off the debts. The war was the reason her family immigrated to the United States in search of opportunity.

Annie's father came to the United States during the Great Depression. During that time, the U.S. had capped the number of immigrants allowed in the country, but Annie's father was fortunate in that the immigration officer knew his brother; he was one of the few who was not turned away. Because his brother was already established, Annie's father had a place to stay and a job waiting for him and did not suffer during those hard times. The harder times came later due to the decline in the fishing industry. When she was a child, her father finally gave up and headed for the unemployment agency. Annie says that most of the fishermen lost their jobs and that "times were really rough." Life in Newfoundland was even harder. Annie says that the winters were very difficult; they planted a lot of potatoes because very little else would grow in the soil there. Meals consisted of potatoes and salted cod. Annie believed that accounted for her father and uncle's initial desire to move to the United States.

Many of the seniors survived historically renowned hardships, including war, oppressive government, racism and discrimination. Families struggled through these difficult times that were an affront to human rights. Though these occurrences were life



changing, many of the seniors mentioned them on a surface level. Some of the seniors admitted that their families chose not to remember these times. It seemed that for some, these difficulties were to be locked away and forgotten rather than discussed.

### *Immigration*

Mentioned by all but two of the participants, immigration was one of the most common topics within these narratives. Many of the seniors were immigrants, while others were children of immigrants. In any case, it was apparent that immigration had a large effect on almost all of the seniors. The immigration theme included the subtheme of retaining culture, which refers to retaining the original language and customs of the home country of the senior.

Immigration had a significant effect on Rosa's childhood. Her mother left Mexico to try to make a living in the United States to support the family after her husband lost his sight. Rosa's mother became the family earner and as a result, deeply resented her father. Her parents lived in separate countries with six children living between the two. Rosa was raised mostly by her father and mentions the lack of teaching she received without a mother around. Rosa herself immigrated to the United States once while she was a child to live with her mother but later returned to Mexico. The border separated her family forever and immigration quite literally separated her parents. When Rosa had to return to Mexico because of her father's demands to have his children with him, she was very confused by the two cultures. She said, "I used to cry to my aunt. I said I was going to go with the troops to the north. I wanted cornflakes and cupcakes." Rosa was raised with a dual identity and was confused by the separation. She is happy to

live in the United States but was very worried about her children and grandchildren losing their connection to Mexico and her home country.

Rosa chose to immigrate to the U.S. at a young age but she believed it was very important to pass down her Mexican culture to her children and grandchildren. She tells her grandchildren stories about the way she was brought up so that they will not forget. It was very important to Rosa that her grandchildren speak Spanish. She feared that when she dies, the language will also die in her family: "When I'm gone, who is going to speak Spanish to this family?" Rosa talked about the customs from Mexico quite a bit throughout her narrative, highlighting such practices as not leaving the home until marriage, respecting parents, keeping one's father's last name, the style of dress, dance and language. These customs were very important to Rosa; during the interview, she made a point of talking about them in front of her youngest daughter. Immigration sparked a lot of emotion in Rosa, especially the sadness she felt from losing her family as she knew it. Her parents were separated and she was raised without her mother for the majority of her childhood.

Irene's parents immigrated to the United States before she was born, and she lived here until she was 14 years old. Her parents worked very hard in the laundry business and though they were able to save money, they could not buy a home because they were Chinese. They had to return to Hong Kong in order to buy a house. Irene was clearly upset by the discrimination, especially given how hard her parents worked. Hard work was an essential lesson that Irene's parents made very sure to teach their young children but Irene's frustration suggests that she was taught very early that hard work did not always pay off. As immigrants, Irene learned that her parents were not treated as first

class citizens and as a result, had to return to Hong Kong. This discrimination affected Irene and she mentioned it throughout her narrative. The discrimination against her family caused her a lot of pain.

Carlos mentioned that his father worked in the United States for eight years before returning to Portugal. He also talked a little bit about his own move to the United States and used that opportunity to mention how much better he was able to fare in comparison to his father. Carlos felt very proud that he was able to succeed in the United States. Carlos's immigration yielded great success and he held that success in high esteem. Carlos seemed to resent his father and seemed to feel that his experience in the United States allowed him to rise above his father. While he worked very hard, he was able to provide everything for a happy life for his family. He stayed close to his "home" culture by living in a Portuguese community in San Jose. It appears that Carlos was able to successfully combine his two cultures and did not see his immigrant status as a detriment in any way. In fact, he appeared to see it as merely an obstacle he overcame in order to prove he was the better man in comparison to his father.

May Liu immigrated to the U.S. after her sister sponsored her daughter to come live in California. May Liu applied "three times at the American Embassy" to be able to come when her daughter was pregnant. She feels lucky that she was able to come, but returns to Shanghai each year. May Liu mentioned immigration almost as matter-of-fact. She feels fortunate that she can be with her children and grandchildren and still return home every year. May Liu's immigration occurred later in life and so perhaps she was more stable and had an easier time of it because she had family already established in the United States.

Annie tells how her father immigrated to the United States from Newfoundland. He was a fisherman like his older brother who was already living in Boston. Like May Liu, he had a much easier time immigrating to the United States because he had family already established in Boston. It appeared that her father left Newfoundland and never looked back. Outside of the stories she heard about her father's childhood, Annie knew very little about Newfoundland. Immigration served as an escape and opportunity for her father. He did not find it necessary to go back to his home country and he did not make it a point to pass down the culture of his home country to his children. His children have assumed fully American identities and the connection to Newfoundland was essentially broken. Until these interviews, Annie had given very little thought to the fact that she had never visited her father's birthplace.

When she was 35 years old, Karina immigrated to the United States with her husband. She left behind a good job, an apartment in Moscow, and self-sufficiency. Immigration was a great struggle for her; she did not speak English and soon after her arrival, her husband left her with no money and no job. However, Karina was used to strife and found a way to make a living in the United States. She learned the language and she found a job. Karina admitted that many of her relatives in Russia had no employment opportunities and led a dismal life. She used her own resources to send aid to her relatives in her home country. Karina viewed immigration as a hurdle that she overcame. It was clear that Karina had experienced far worse things in her life and made a point to not allow herself to be painted as a victim.

Margaret is a second-generation American. Her grandparents immigrated from Russia due to the threat of violence in the area. They lived in a place where "the Kazak's

would pillage the villages and rape the women and make life absolute hell.” Margaret recognized that immigration was difficult for her family but, like Annie, is far removed from the countries from which they came. Her family saw America as an opportunity to make a better life for themselves, and as a result, they also moved on without looking back. Margaret, the grandchild, was left knowing little about the home countries of her grandparents and mentioned nothing about having a desire to visit those places. It is possible that to those who fled their homelands for greater opportunity have little desire to ever return either physically or mentally.

Sarah's father immigrated to the United States after completing his service during World War I. He moved to the U.S. as a stone mason to help his family pay back their debts, and was able to return to Italy for Christmas. The U.S. government allowed the workers to bring their families, so he brought Sarah's mother, who was pregnant with her brother and her uncle. Though her parents often talked about Italy, and her mother wanted to return, they stayed in the United States. Sarah admitted that, as a child, she had little interest in Italy. However, her parents held their home country close to their hearts and perhaps that is why Sarah later gained an appreciation for it. She even made it a point to return every year. So, while her family immigrated to the United States, they never lost touch with their homeland. Unlike some of the other families of the senior volunteers, Sarah's family did not flee Italy but rather left in order to provide for their families. They left seeking opportunity, not out of disdain for or fear of their home countries.

Maggie's grandparents immigrated from Germany. Her grandfather was a farmer in the feudal system and her grandmother was a milliner's assistant, making hats. Her

grandparents each used other people's papers under different last names to get on two separate ships headed for the United States. They had no way of knowing whether the other had made it through until they both landed at Ellis Island. Maggie's grandparents helped other German immigrants, often offering housing and food until they got their feet on the ground. Their own transition was aided by the German communities in the U.S. As a result of having one set of German grandparents and one set of Italian grandparents, Maggie also made an effort to understand her Italian culture and had made a point to return to Italy to learn more about her family history. She recognized the ravioli in the town where her family originated as being much like the one's her mother taught her to make. The family recipe had been passed down for many generations. She was able to discover her own connection to the country where her family originated. It was important to her that she was able to recognize something as small as the style of ravioli as part of who she was. It was important to her grandparents on both sides that Maggie know something about her culture and the land from which they had come.

Lori did not mention immigration explicitly, but she did talk about how she continued many of the traditions of her country and religion with her own family. Her children and grandchildren respected the rules around the dead such as the 40-day Mass and the ninth day rosary. Her children also continue to cook the traditional Filipino meals such as merienda. Lori had a lot of family around her in the United States but it was apparent that she did not want her grandchildren to grow up without knowing their homeland. She utilized story to connect her grandchildren to life in the Philippines.

Many of the seniors were themselves immigrants or children of immigrants and mentioned immigration throughout the narratives. For some, immigration was not an

easy transition such as with May Liu's family and Karina. For others, immigration was an opportunity for a better life, as in the cases of Carlos and Annie's father. For Irene, it was an opportunity to be near her grandchildren. She moved later in life and though it was hard to gain official permission to enter the U.S., she did not go into more detail about the transition of living in a foreign country. For those who had families and communities already established in the United States, the transition seemed to be much easier and the seniors were able to succeed without as many hardships as some of the others who came out of necessity and without any connection to established roots. Those who fled their countries did so in both mind and body; thus, very little information about the home country was passed down the next generations. Immigration served as an opportunity for a clean slate.

**Table 4.3 Type of Story Told by Senior Volunteers**

	Oral History	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition	Oral Tradition
	Personal	Family History	Folk-tale	Nursery Rhyme/ Poem/ Song	Super- stition	Recipe	Wit- ticism/ Saying	Cultural Customs/ Rituals	History
Rosa	x	x				x		x	
James	x	x		x	x				x
Irene	x				x			x	
Lori	x				x			x	x
Carlos	x		x	x					
May Liu	x	x			x				
Annie	x	x							
Karina	x		x		x			x	
Margaret	x	x					x		
Sarah	x	x					x		
Maggie	x	x		x	x	x	x		x

*Types of Stories Told*

While the background questionnaire asked the senior volunteers to tell one or two stories that had been passed down through the generations in their families, the researcher found that not only did the oral tradition stories range from folktales, family history, nursery rhymes/poems/songs, superstitions, recipes, witticisms/sayings, cultural customs/rituals and history, it was also found that every single senior volunteer designated a significant part of their narratives to include oral history (See Table 4.3).

*Oral History*

To some extent, all narratives incorporated oral history. Every senior volunteer told a story or a memory from their own lives. Some mentioned their own lives briefly, such as Annie and Maggie, while others relied primarily on oral history throughout their narratives, such as with Karina, Irene, May Liu, Rosa, and Margaret. The narratives of the remaining seniors James, Lori, Sarah, and Carlos had a greater balance of oral tradition and oral history.

Annie and Maggie both mentioned their childhoods in the narrative but they both focused on their extended families such as their parents and grandparents. Annie talked about her grandmother living with the family and the role she played in her upbringing. Maggie also talked about her childhood in relation to her grandmother who also lived with her family. Annie and Maggie both knew quite a bit of their family's histories and so were able to recount many stories that had been passed down. They tended to focus on these more than on stories about their own lives.

Rosa focused on her own childhood and her immigration to the United States. Her mother moved to the States when she was young to help support her family, and the



dual cultures caused a lot of confusion for Rosa. She did not know her grandparents and so her stories relied primarily on her own memory. Her knowledge of her family history was limited. Karina's narrative also focused on her own life as she was raised as an orphan. Both of her parents died when she was young and she only met one of her grandmothers on one occasion. Like Rosa, she had limited knowledge of her extended family and relied primarily on oral history and folktales and superstitions that were told to her in the orphanage.

Irene also never knew her grandparents and so her stories also relied on her own personal history. Like Rosa, she focused on the hardships of living in a new country and the role that immigration had in her life. Margaret had an estranged relationship with her grandmother and her remaining grandparents died young. She knew very little about her family history and so she too focused on stories in her own life. She did mention the importance of oral tradition but preferred to share the stories of her life and her struggle to become an independent woman free from abuse and discrimination. The interviews provided her with an opportunity to share what she felt was important to share. While May Liu was raised with her grandmother, she acknowledged that her grandmother had a very rough life and May Liu told most of her stories about her own childhood in Shanghai, her struggle with Communism, and her separation from her children.

James, Lori, Sarah and Carlos had a balance of oral history and oral tradition throughout their narratives. James did talk about his childhood and growing up during wartime. Lori also talked about her childhood during wartime and in relation to her courtship with her husband. Sarah was raised by both her parents and her aunt and uncle,

and had essentially two sets of parents. She talked a lot about her childhood. Carlos utilized oral history to talk about his immigration from Portugal to the United States.

*Oral Tradition – Family History*

A majority of the seniors relied on their family history to relay the oral tradition that had been passed down through the generations. Rosa, James, May Liu, Annie, Margaret, Sarah and Maggie were all able to tell stories about their own families. James and Annie were both able to go back several generations, having heard stories about distant relatives. James knew as far back as the 1600's and could talk about four generations of clock makers. Annie knew that her family was directly related to Benjamin Franklin. She knew the story about her father's immigration from Newfoundland very well. Christmas time was cherished in her family so Annie heard many stories about Christmas in Newfoundland.

Rosa, May Liu, Sarah, Margaret and Maggie were able to go back at least two generations within their families. Margaret only knew a very little bit about her grandparents. She knew some about why they immigrated to the United States but three of her four grandparents died young and she had an estranged relationship with her grandmother on her father's side. Sarah also knew little about her grandparents because her parents immigrated to the United States while her extended family stayed behind in Italy. She did know stories about her parents and told one particular story about her father's childhood. Rosa also did not know her grandparents but she did know a little bit about them. She knows that her grandmother moved to Mexico from Spain and married a Mexican man but her parents never talked about their parents much. May Liu also knew very little about her grandparents. Her father's parents died when he was very young but

she did talk about her father's childhood. Maggie, on the other hand, knew a lot about her grandparents largely because her grandmother lived with her family when she grew up. She told stories about her grandparents' immigration to the United States.

*Oral Tradition – Folktale*

Out of the 11, only two of the senior volunteers told folktales. Carlos told a folktale from his childhood in Portugal. In his background questionnaire, he mentioned that oral tradition had been a large part of his childhood and that he continues to tell these stories to his children and grandchildren. Karina also told a folktale about a witch named Baba Yaga. She heard the folktales from her teachers in the orphanage and said that many nights were spent huddled around the fire while listening to these tales about the old witch who would eat little children. She had a very vivid memory of the tales about Baba Yaga and even drew me a picture of what her house looked like. according to the lore, her house walked through the woods on chicken legs.

*Oral Tradition – Nursery Rhyme/Poem/Song*

James was the only senior volunteer to tell a nursery rhyme in his narrative. He began talking about the times of Cromwell, which led to the telling of the common nursery rhyme *Humpty Dumpty*. James claims that the nursery rhyme was based on an event that occurred in Gloucester, his hometown. He also told the nursery rhyme *Ring Around the Rosy* though parts of it were different than the American version of the nursery rhyme. In addition to the nursery rhymes, he also recited a poem he had memorized when he was young about the Battle of Waterloo. It was a fairly lengthy poem and he was able to remember it almost without pause.

Two of the senior volunteers, Carlos and Maggie, sang songs that were taught to them as children. Carlos sang a song in the middle of the narrative, one that he learned in Portugal as well as the Portuguese version of *Ring Around the Rosy*. Maggie sang a song that her grandmother taught her in German. They both remembered hearing the songs as children. Maggie also recited a poem/game that involved using one's hands to create a church, full of people and empty.

*Oral Tradition – Superstition*

James, Irene, Lori, May Liu, Karina and Maggie all mentioned superstitions in their narratives. James, Irene and May Liu mentioned superstitions almost in passing. Irene mentioned that she didn't believe in the devil but in the next sentence mentioned how to avoid being followed by one in life. James talked about superstition as part of oral tradition and gave an example involving the monarchy. May Liu mentioned at the end of her narrative that there were many ghost stories in the Chinese culture and though she could not remember any of them, she believed that the elders in her culture are superstitious and they told these stories to give the younger children something to fear.

Lori, Karina and Maggie placed a greater emphasis on superstitions and the role that they played in the stories that they heard. Lori and Karina were both extremely superstitious and many of the superstitious beliefs and rituals were passed down to them as children. Lori shared many of the superstitions ranging from vampires and evil spirits to old wives' tales regarding the health of a pregnant woman. She told these not as mere folklore but as truth. She believed in dwarves and takes many precautions to ensure their happiness so that she can avoid bad luck. Karina also grew up hearing many superstitions and continued to follow many of the rituals from the way she leaves a house

to placing a cat in a new home for good luck. She believed that an ex-girlfriend of her brother's placed a curse on her and her husband and that is the reason for their divorce. She did not like to be complimented for fear of something bad happening.

Maggie herself didn't mention her own superstitions but did mention a superstition involving her family. One Christmas, a picture was taken of her grandmother and her six sons, and within a year, three of the boys had died. As a result, none of the survivors ever let their picture be taken on Christmas Day.

#### *Oral Tradition – Recipe*

Rosa and Maggie mentioned family recipes that they learned and later passed down to their own children. Rosa learned how to cook as a young newlywed from her in-laws and continues to cook those same recipes today. She taught them to her daughter. Maggie learned how to cook Italian ravioli, whose shape comes from a particular region of Italy, from her mother, who learned from her mother, who learned from her husband. Maggie taught the recipe to her daughter.

#### *Oral Tradition – Witticism/Saying*

Margaret, Sarah and Maggie all recited a witticism or saying that had been passed down in their families. Margaret mentioned that her mother used to say the witticism about leopards not changing their spots. While Margaret doesn't relate to this witticism, she did mention it in her narrative. Sarah mentioned a saying that her aunt made up one day while out with her suitor. It was considered to be crude but it has been passed down through the generations and Sarah continues to say it herself. Maggie attested that her mother used to say, "I've lost my rabbit" when she forgot something and "Now where in the Sam Hill is that" in lieu of swearing.

*Oral Tradition – Cultural Customs/Rituals*

Rosa, Irene, Lori and Karina all discussed cultural customs or rituals that were passed down in their families. Rosa was very much tied to her Mexican heritage and brought up Mexican customs many times throughout her narrative. She talked about traditional dances that she learned and brought out the traditional style of dress for me to see. Rosa was making a concerted effort to ensure that her American-born children and grandchildren learn the language of her culture, Spanish. She talked about the importance of family to her culture and the custom of remaining at home until marriage.

Irene also mentioned her culture and customs and rituals within it that have been passed down. She said that it was Chinese custom for the grandparents to help raise the grandchildren so that the children could work. For this reason, she helped to raise her grandchildren. Like Rosa, she talked about the importance of family to the Chinese culture and the need to create a large family by having many children.

It was custom in the Filipino culture for children to remain at home, at least until marriage, if not until after a child is born. Lori said that she was brought up in this way and that many families continue this custom. She also spoke of Filipino courting rituals where a young man would serenade the woman they fancied and it was up to the parents to decide whether or not to allow him to enter. This was how Lori and her husband began their own courtship. Lori also mentioned many rituals around death, birth, and religious practices.

Karina talked about cultural customs in Russia as well. She learned many of the Georgian folk dances and songs while living in the orphanage. While this was not

something that was passed down to her through her family, it was important to Russian culture and Karina has since passed down the songs to her niece.

#### *Oral Tradition – History*

James, Lori, and Maggie discussed history through oral tradition. James knew quite a bit of English history, especially if it involved his hometown of Gloucester. He was able to speak about events as far back as Cromwell and William the Conqueror. He knew that the nursery rhymes he told me were based on history and was able to tell me their history. He also knew a lot of history about some of the buildings in Gloucester that were pictured in his home. Lori discussed the history of the Philippines and the discovery of the country by Magellan. Maggie learned about history when she went to Italy and learned more about her family that went back to Caesar's time. She learned about some of the history of the town where her family came from.

**Table 4.4 Research Questions**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Generative Themes Aided to Answer RQ?</b>	<b>Types of Stories Told Aided to Answer RQ?</b>
Question #1: To what extent were stories as told through oral tradition passed down through the generations of a select group of senior volunteers at a hospital in San Francisco?	Yes	Yes
Question #2: To what extent do oral tradition stories portray the experiences of the participants?	Yes	Yes
Question #3: How are the stories similar or dissimilar as transmitted by the participants?	Yes	No

*Research Questions*

The narratives were analyzed to determine how they related to all three research questions. The generative themes that emerged, as well as the types of stories told, aided in answering all three questions. Research Question 1 was answered mostly by the types of stories told. The generative themes served as explanation for why or why not these types of stories were told. Research Question 2 was answered primarily by the generative themes and further explained by the types of stories today. Lastly, Research Question 3 specifically asked for the similarities and dissimilarities among the stories. The answer was used to define the themes.

*Research Question 1*

To what extent were stories as told through oral tradition passed down through the generations of a select group of senior volunteers at a hospital in San Francisco? This research question was answered primarily by the types of stories told, although the generative themes also offered explanations for why the stories did or did not continue to be passed down. The extent varied by participant and by the situation in which they grew up. For example, Margaret had very little oral tradition passed down in her family largely due to the physical separation and lack of access to her grandparents. In other cases such as with Rosa, Karina, Irene and Sarah, the extent to which stories were passed down in their families was also restricted due to the lack of influence of or access to grandparents in their lives. Rosa essentially grew up without her mother and only met one grandmother who lived in the United States while she was in Mexico. She knew very little about her extended family beyond her parents; much like Karina and Margaret, she depended on oral history as her main form of story in the narrative. Rosa continued



to tell her stories to her children largely so that they will come to know the heritage of the culture from which they came. Similarly, Irene never knew her grandparents. She was born in the United States while her grandparents were still in China. Her stories were primarily oral history as well.

Physical distance and death played significant roles in these seniors' narratives, and in determining the stories that had been passed down. While Sarah did not know her grandparents, her family lived with her aunt and uncle and their children when they immigrated to the United States and so she had family close who continued to pass down the stories. However, she still favored oral history, and did not continue to pass the stories down because she did not believe that her grandchildren would want to hear the stories. Both physical distance and the trend for families to leave their birthplace for better opportunities were integral to the sustainability of oral tradition. In addition, many families live independent lives from one another making it difficult to share such stories and thus, the stories begin to fade. Without myth, May attested that society loses purpose and a sense of who they are (May, 1991). May believed that we as a society need these stories if we are to experience life as he believes it is intended. We need these myths as guides and the further we live from those who can provide those guides, the further we distance ourselves from myth.

Maggie, Annie, Lori, and May Liu grew up with their grandparents either living in the home with them or as in the case of Lori, as caregivers at some point in her childhood. All four had stories that had been passed down or at least recognized that they had stories. Annie knew quite a bit about her family's history on both sides and she said it was largely due to the presence of her grandmother. Annie continued to pass down the

stories to her daughter but admitted she needed to do a better job of telling them to her grandchildren and in fact vowed to do so after this experience. She gained a better understanding of how important the stories she held were to her and wanted to pass down that legacy.

Maggie also grew up with her grandmother in her home and was able to talk a lot about her family's history. In addition, she was very close to her neighbor growing up and heard many stories from her. She has continued to tell the stories to her daughter. Lori was partially raised by her grandmother, as was custom in the Philippines. She had countless oral traditions to share and was very active in continuing the traditions with her children and grandchildren; this was evident in their presence during the interview. This passage of knowledge was very clearly of great importance to Lori. May Liu admits that her grandmother had a big impact on her life as she also lived with her family. She says that she remembers her mother and grandmother telling her fairy tales as a child but did not pass them to her own children as she was forced to work for the Communists while her children grew up. As a result, she had forgotten the stories.

James grew up in a town in England that had been the home of many generations of his family before him. He probably knew the most about his family and immediately recognized the importance of the stories that had been passed down. He was close to his grandparents and even continued the family trade. He also passed down these stories, the folktales, the nursery rhymes and the family history to his own children and grandchildren. Carlos grew up in the village where his family had lived for many years in the Azores off the coast of Portugal. He lived close to his grandparents and was able to sing songs that had been passed down. Though he knew his grandparents, it was his

sister who typically told him stories. He continues to tell the stories to his daughter and grandchildren.

In all, the findings showed that those seniors who grew up close to grandparents or other extended family tended to know more about their family histories and were able to tell stories that had been passed down. Those who had been separated by distance (usually as a result of immigration) or death relied more on their own personal oral history. Most continue to tell stories to the younger generations. Annie, Margaret and Sarah expressed the desire to pass down more stories to their children and grandchildren but they did not want the stories to seem forced upon the younger generations. Annie and Sarah both mentioned that they were not sure that their grandchildren were interested because they seemed to care more about going to the mall and playing video games. This backs up May's (1991) declaration that previous myth and religions have given way to science and technology when, in the past, the two worked in conjunction.

### *Research Question 2*

To what extent do oral tradition stories portray the experiences of the participants? The second research question is a bit more complex; it attempts to determine the extent to which oral tradition stories portray life experiences. The emerged generative themes which so clearly affected the lives of the participants shed light on the answer. The types of stories that the senior told often reflected the aforementioned themes. James' stories proved the most obvious in reflecting his experiences because many of the stories involved his family trade that he continued to practice and by the depth of knowledge he had about family members. Many of the other stories stemmed from his hometown and the history that originated there. As immigration was the most

common theme, it became clear to the researcher that the journey to the States whether as experienced by the senior or by generations past, played a significant role in their lives. Again, this offered the outsider a glimpse into the history of populations that they might never have had the opportunity to learn about. Oral history and oral tradition allow those who might not have otherwise been given a voice to share their account of their place in history (Vansina, 1985).

Similarly, many of the stories included cultural norms or customs, such as waiting to leave the home until marriage and the responsibility of the grandparents to care for the grandchildren. Oral tradition has been described as “accumulated wisdom as to what the young should know, aspire to, and believe, forging a cultural identity in the process” (Martinez, et al., 2002, p. 138). Thus, it could be said that the stories that families passed down to the younger generations included cultural norms, which help youth to understand their place in society and the expectations others have of them.

Superstition also played a large part in the stories and many of the seniors continue to believe in and practice the superstitions as a result. Research revealed that folklore validates certain aspects of culture, as well as justifies rituals and institutions. It was no surprise that Lori and Karina believed so strongly in the superstitions they recounted in their narrative (Carthy, 1984). In many of the cases, the senior adopted these customs learned through oral tradition as social norms. It was clear to that these stories have had an impact on all of the seniors' lives, whether as a roadmap directing them far away from the things that they knew they did not want in their own lives or as guidance for how to live a happy life.

Given Jung's (1971) theory that myth is what is believed by everyone and that one who lives without myth is "uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him, or yet with contemporary human society" (p.xxi), it was no surprise that these stories had such an impact on the lives of the seniors. In essence, Jung believed that myth was man's true connection to the past, the present, and the future. So while Karina had very little connection to her own family's history, she acquired a mythology from society, thus connecting her to a broader past.

Quite possibly the most significant finding from the process and the narratives was the inclusion of each senior's own story alongside oral tradition. This perhaps exemplifies gerontologist Robert Butler's claim that senior citizens have a desire to leave their mark on the world (Serikaku, 1989). Every senior volunteer found their own experiences important enough to mention without prompting. They wanted to talk about their own lives and their stories regardless of gender, socioeconomic background, or culture. May (1991) defined myth as "our self-interpretation of our inner selves in relation to the outside world" (p. 20). It was not unexpected then that the seniors felt a desire to explain how they themselves related to the stories that they told. They needed to communicate how they fit into the story.

In addition, seniors who had survived monumental historical events wanted to share their experiences. Oral history has been determined as a means to allow those who were previously overlooked to share their voice (Perks & Thomson, 1998, p. vii). Those traditionally overlooked included women, minorities, and people from the lower classes. Many of the seniors told stories based on their experiences as members of one of the aforementioned groups. Those who experienced racism and discrimination used the

narratives as an opportunity to share their knowledge as firsthand participants. Vansina (1985) declared that this type of personal glimpse into historical events is what makes oral tradition unique.

Many of the senior volunteers were grateful to have been involved in the project. Sarah put it best when she stated, "It's nice just to have someone ask me about my life and take the time to listen, so thank you." It was a call to action for at least four of the seniors who recognized that they needed to do a better job of telling these tales to the younger generations. This was especially important given the impact that oral tradition and oral history appeared to have on the seniors. Those who thought they had no stories to tell discovered that this was not true. These stories need to continue; as Campbell (1988) explains,

It used to be that these stories were in the minds of people. When the story is in your mind, then you see its relevance to something happening in your own life...With the loss of that, we've really lost something because we don't have a comparable literature to take its place. (p. 4)

Without myth and these stories, the younger generations are wandering on their own without a roadmap to guide them.

### *Research Question 3*

How are the stories similar or dissimilar as transmitted by the participants? Four generative themes surfaced which answered this third research question, including: Community, Family, Human Rights, and Immigration. Immigration and Family occurred most frequently and served as the focal points for many of the stories within in the narratives.

There was a great emphasis on Immigration either as experienced by the senior or their parents and/or grandparents. In many of the stories, the immigrant wanted to pass down the culture and ideals from their home country, while others left their old ways of life far behind in an attempt for a better opportunity. Immigration separated many of the family members and as a result, some of the transmittal of oral tradition also ceased. Many of the participants never knew their grandparents and as such, never heard their stories.

Human Rights issues were common with seniors who had experienced major historical atrocities such as the Communist reign of power in China, World War II, discrimination, and racism. Many of the seniors utilized the opportunity of the narrative to offer an account of their experiences. Again, it was important for the senior to be given the opportunity to share their voice and in turn, increase the wealth of knowledge of a historical event. Vansina (1985) states that oral tradition, reflects the past and guides us to understanding how that affects the present. It does not so much depend on the accuracy of the account of the past but rather, the interpretation of it by the people. For every individual, the experience, while a shared part of history, offered a unique perspective and lived understanding.

### *Summary*

The first part of this chapter utilized the background questionnaire (See Appendix B), which served to elicit responses regarding the participants' demographics and background. The questionnaire also ensured that the participants had stories that had been passed down in their families and that they were willing to share them.

The second part of the chapter included the generative themes that emerged from the narratives, and there were distinct similarities among them.. Some of the volunteers were ready and began telling their stories immediately while others needed a bit more prompting. All of the seniors had more than one tale to tell. Some relied on personal histories of the family while others recounted folktales, songs, poems, etc. The participants recognized the importance that the stories had in their lives and the importance of passing them down. Many were called to action and resolved to continue to pass the stories down if they had not already. From the narratives, four themes emerged including Community, Family, Human Rights and Immigration.

The narratives also incorporated a variety of oral tradition genres, including Folktales, Family History, Superstition, and Nursery Rhymes/Poems/Songs, among many others. Interestingly, though the study asked for oral traditions, oral history was utilized in each narrative. Almost every volunteer appreciated being involved in the project and found the process to be enjoyable, reminding some of them of the stories they had almost forgotten and others of their own desire to share their story.

In relation to the research questions, the results determined that the extent to which stories have been and continue to be passed down varied by person and circumstance. Those who had direct access to grandparents tended to have a greater knowledge of oral tradition within their families. All of the research questions were answered by the generative themes that emerged and/or the types of stories that were told. Some participants disclosed that they had not passed down the oral traditions because they did not feel the younger generations wanted to hear the stories. For the



most part, however, the majority of the participants do continue to pass down stories, if not those that had been passed down to them, then stories from their own lives.

The experiences portrayed by the seniors' stories also varied. Immigration and Human Rights issues had a large impact on the participants. It was evident that the sharing of one's own story was important to all of the participants. Finally, the results showed many similarities and a few differences among the types of stories told as well as the themes that emerged. There were many commonalities across the narratives, particularly the inclusion of self in the narratives, a reminder that a story cannot exist without the storyteller.

## Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Vansina (1985) once wrote that, “The mind through memory carries culture from generation to generation” (p. xi). He believes that the study of oral tradition is one of the most important aspects of history that we as a society can study. It is from these memories that Vansina argues that we “spin complex ideas, messages, and instructions for living, which manifest continuity over time” (Ibid).

The purpose of this study was to identify the stories that have been passed down through oral tradition from older generations of senior volunteers from a San Francisco hospital to determine if there were any similarities and/or differences among the narratives. The researcher requested the senior volunteers to tell one to two stories each in an effort to determine: 1) To what extent are stories as told through oral tradition passed down through the generations of a select group of participants; 2) To what extent do oral tradition stories portray the experiences of the participants; and 3) How are the stories similar or dissimilar as transmitted by the participants?

### *Discussion*

Eleven senior volunteers from a local San Francisco hospital recognized that they had stories that had been passed down to them from previous generations and agreed to participate in the study. Each senior was asked to complete a background questionnaire (See Appendix B) that included demographics and questions about the importance of stories in their lives. They were also asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix A) of which they were each given a copy. The interviews were conducted in a location of the senior's choice and they ranged in length from 50 minutes to over three hours. Some of the seniors knew exactly what they wanted to share while others needed more

clarification and/or prompting. The recordings were transcribed and the participants had an opportunity to make any changes or additions to ensure that their intended message was accurately conveyed. The corrected narratives were then examined for possible generative themes as well as the types of stories that were told. The analysis yielded four main generative themes: Immigration, Family, Human Rights, and Community.

The narratives were also studied to determine what types of oral tradition were employed. Though the researcher only asked for one or two stories from the senior volunteers, almost all of the participants opted to share more. As a result, eight styles of oral tradition were identified in addition to oral history. The types of oral tradition included: Family History, Folktale, Nursery Rhyme/Poem/Song, Superstition, Recipe, Witticism/Saying, Cultural Custom/Ritual, and History. It is significant that even though the definition of oral tradition was fully discussed and defined on more than one occasion with the participants, everyone included oral history in their narrative. All of the seniors talked about their own lives either in passing or as the primary type of story told. This suggests that being afforded the opportunity to share their own story was of great importance to the seniors, perhaps especially when sharing stories that have been passed down to them.

Other than oral history, the most common type of story told was the recounting of family history. Some seniors were able to tell stories reaching many generations back while others were only able to recall stories about a parent's childhood. The depth of knowledge often depended on the accessibility to grandparents. For the most part, those who never knew their grandparents knew very little about their family history.

Tales revolving around superstitions including ghost stories were told by six of the seniors. The researcher was surprised by the frequency of such tales while also delighted as superstitions often make for great stories. Only two folktales were told, which was surprising because folktales are typically the most common type of oral tradition found in the research. It was interesting to hear the remaining types of stories such as embedded recipes and sayings/witticisms because those may not always come to the forefront when considering oral tradition.

Upon further study of the results, it seems that those who were unable to recount their family's history through oral tradition were the ones who had been separated from their grandparents by either death or distance. As the narratives conveyed, it is important to understand the role of immigration in the transmission of oral tradition. Though Annie and Sarah did not know their grandparents, they had other family members in close proximity who passed down the oral traditions of their family. As for the continuation of the oral traditions to younger generations, a majority of the participants mentioned that they either continue to tell the oral traditions or they desired to tell the oral traditions to younger generations in their family.

### *Conclusions*

The project goal was to allow the seniors an opportunity to be heard and it was hoped that, through the telling of stories that had been passed down, both the participant and the researcher would collaborate in a mutually beneficial process. The study detailed that oral tradition and oral history have had a great impact on those traditionally overlooked or silenced in history, specifically, "women, the working-class, and cultural minorities" (Perks & Thompson, 1998, p. vii). It allowed those who survived atrocities in

history a voice and an opportunity to share their experiences. Since many of the stories told were oral history and revolved around personal experiences through difficult times, it was apparent that these seniors felt the need to share what they had experienced. For example, Karina and her siblings survived a work camp during World War II when millions of people perished; this project afforded her the opportunity to recount the truth of that time. In fact, it was apparent that Karina needed to do so, to tell the story of what she had witnessed and survived. May Liu and Irene both mentioned the hardships and struggles they survived when the Communist government took over China. May Liu endured countless hours of brain washing and interrogation by the government but found a way to remain strong. As a result, May Liu has regrets about missing much of her children's youth and those bedtimes when a mother might convey oral tradition to her children. Her circumstances deprived her of sharing this type of experience with her children and she needed to explain why oral tradition was not in her family. James told his story of nightly air raids when he was a young boy in England. Carlos and Rosa, both immigrants to the United States, overcame many obstacles to ensure a better life for their families. Margaret and Irene openly discussed the impact of growing up as minority children and facing discrimination and racism in a very unforgiving time. All of these seniors utilized the opportunity to tell the stories they felt needed to be told and in turn, contributed firsthand knowledge about events many may only read about in history books.

The stories collected in this study reveal the reliance on both oral tradition and oral history within the narratives; indeed, it is clear from the analysis of these narratives that the two are in fact tied. While it was easy to abstract the two in theory, the

interviewing process made it clear that this was not always the case in practice. This inclusion of oral history in all of the narratives highlights the need for the storyteller to inject themselves and their relationship to the story into the telling. Perhaps it could even be said that this was in some cases the incentive to tell stories.

It is also possible that many seniors view the storytelling process as a means to preserve their own experiences. This idea was exemplified by the beginning of each narrative. At the start of the meeting, we reviewed the definition of oral tradition and provided examples of what was considered oral tradition. The senior was then asked if they had stories to tell and then if they were ready to tell the stories. In all of the interviews, the seniors began with oral history. Not one senior jumped into a story as had been suggested. For example, Karina began with the story about her father and her life in the orphanage. Lori began with the customs she was raised learning in the Philippines. Annie mentioned her parents and the setting where she was raised. Margaret began by offering her ideas on oral tradition and then went in to discuss her upbringing. Sarah and Maggie both started with their family's immigration to the United States. Rosa, Carlos, James, Irene, and May Liu began with a recap on their childhood. This suggests that there is personal history associated with the story and the seniors needed to reveal how they were tied to the story before they began. They needed their audience to understand it within their own context. This makes sense when considering the differences in the way people tell the same story. There are many versions of common folktales, especially if they are told through oral narrative. If a folktale is written down, there is some finality to the way in which the story is read, but if the story only relies on memory then it is fair to assume that story will continue to change a little bit each time it is told. This can only

be explained by the fact that different people told the same story and so it makes sense that different people will inject a little bit of themselves or what they believe to be important in the stories when retelling them. This study suggests that this must be especially true when telling one's family history. By reminiscing about their lives, the storyteller was taken back to the time when they heard the story themselves. This could easily reflect the need for the senior to have the listener first understand who they are as a storyteller before they would begin to tell the stories. Therefore, it can be said that the storyteller became just as important as the story itself and this idea alone immortalizes the senior. Not only are they sharing the stories that have been passed down in their families but they are now sharing a piece of themselves as a part of that story.

This study has demonstrated that, perhaps not surprisingly, seniors have a need to leave their mark on this world and oral tradition and oral history offer ways to do that. Often senior may suffer from depression, and feel isolated and lack a sense of purpose (Segal, et al., 2007). This study suggests that this malaise can be countered by the practice of an oral tradition. For example, when the senior allowed themselves to reminisce and talk about their memories of their childhoods and their families, a therapeutic situation often arose. The senior was empowered to share their reality through the collaborative storytelling experience. This project offered each senior a voice and as a result, the experience brought up many emotions, happy memories, sorrow, and anger. However, the most significant emotion was gratitude. Through the act of storytelling, each senior faced their past, and was grateful for the opportunity to be heard. This fact supports Cohen's (2006) assertion that during the summing-up phase of one's life, "plans and actions are shaped by the desire to find larger meaning in the story

of one's life as one looks back, reexamines, and sums up what has happened" (p. 9). Again, this points to seniors' need to be included as part of the stories. That is, they needed the stories to be told within the boundaries of their own relationships to them.

Another conclusion from the project was the way in which oral tradition enabled a sense of community among the participants, conveyed both in the energy and lightness at the conclusion of each narrative and in the strong connection between storyteller and audience. This affirmed that storytelling can in fact build community. In the past, stories were what brought communities together. This project has demonstrated that the storytelling act still has this power. As Thompson (2000) explains, the practice of oral tradition allows for "the relationship between history and the community should not be one-sided in either direction, but rather a series of exchanges, a dialectic, between information and interpretation, between educationists and their localities, between classes and generations" (p. 23). There is so much to learn from the older generations; communities stand to gain a wealth of knowledge, friendship, trust and a greater sense of self by participating in such an experience.

A final conclusion from the project concerns the silence around emotions. Human rights was a major theme throughout the narratives, and many participants discussed issues such as discrimination/racism, death, war, punishment, and gender roles. All of these topics invoke significant emotions and people's experiences of them are almost invariably life altering. However, in the process of telling their story, there was surprisingly little discussion around the emotions one presumes were attendant to these situations. Karina was the only one who had a strong reaction to her tale; at one point in the interview she began to cry. However, she was clearly upset with herself for having



allowed herself to show weakness and quickly assured us that she did in fact have a good childhood. She saw her tears as weakness and needed to convince us, and most likely herself, that she was okay. At the interview's conclusion, Karina mentioned that she did not understand why Americans complained so much when they had so little to complain about. She compared her own experiences to other people's but while she acknowledged indirectly that she had suffered far more than most people do in a lifetime, she still had a sense of shame in verbalizing her pain. She believed that one needed to be stronger than the pain.

This silence about the emotional content of the stories was also seen with some of the other seniors, including Carlos, Irene, Margaret, and Rosa. It was interesting that Irene mentioned the punishment her parents often doled out to her and her sister in situations when Irene felt she had done nothing wrong. She mentioned that her parents were cruel and strict and made it a point to say that she did not raise her children like that. It was very important for her to differentiate her parenting style from her parents. However, she did not talk about how that punishment affected her and even contradicted herself by calling her father "kind." The punishments were clearly significant to her as she mentioned such incidents at least three times in her short narrative. Irene also discussed the prevalence of racism and discrimination as a Chinese American in San Francisco as a child. She was obviously hurt by the racism, but did not talk about the emotions she experienced or the effect of growing up with this kind of affront to her human rights. Such difficulties must have had a great impact on her as a small child and yet, she only talked about it as a story.

The interview setting, while informal, was still a conversation between strangers, and may account for some of this silence. However, because these topics were part of the narratives at all suggests that this silence is significant. Even when speaking about the Great Depression, an event that is part of the American cultural conversation, very few talked about it in an emotional manner, preferring a more matter-of-fact tone. It is possible that this silence around emotions might be a generational phenomenon. The participants' generation survived war, a much higher mortality rate at much younger ages, discrimination/racism, immigration, and the restraints of strict gender roles. Perhaps the silence functioned as a coping mechanism to handle such struggles.

Still, the high rate of depression among senior citizens might be reason enough to suggest that the participants' internalization of emotion was contributing to this condition. According to the National Institute for Mental Health, a considerable number of senior citizens 65 years and older suffer from some form of depression ("Depression," 2007). Given that seniors are often reluctant to speak about their emotions (especially with regard to depression due to the perceived stigmata around mental illness), the outcomes of this research suggests that oral tradition and the sharing of stories might serve as a means to help the senior begin to open up and talk about themselves.

Additionally, the practice of oral tradition can provide a way for seniors to connect with others, a key recommendation of Cohen and others for combating the depression that many experience as they age.

#### *Recommendations for Further Research*

Due to the limitations in the scope of the project, particularly with regard to the small population sample, many of the recommendations highlight future research

opportunities that might verify the themes found in this study. In addition to future studies, it is recommended that educators include such stories in their classrooms as a means to involve the senior community, while at the same time providing invaluable information, history, and cultural relevance to students. The following future studies are recommended:

1. A study that focuses on a particular culture to determine whether there is more or less thematic similarities. Many of the participants mentioned the themes as representative of their particular culture, so it would be interesting to see if others from the same culture shared the same themes.
2. This study was open to all of the senior volunteers at the hospital. Participants self-selected, and there was no attempt to have an equal number of males and females. It is recommended that a study be done with either an equal number of male and female participants, or two different studies focusing on only one gender to determine if there are greater similarities/dissimilarities among the sexes and the themes that are emphasized within the narratives.
3. This study focused on senior volunteers at a hospital. It is recommended that a similar study be conducted focusing on the younger generations, perhaps the grandchildren of the participants, to determine whether and how the stories have continued to be passed down. Many of the participants had been separated from their extended families because of immigration. It would be interesting to see if, with greater access to transportation and other technology, families have greater access to their grandparents in this day and age.

4. It is recommended that a follow-up study be conducted to interview this study's participants to determine if any of them have thought of additional stories since the interview. It was apparent that many of the seniors were attempting to recall stories during the interview, and now that they have had some time to think about it, perhaps they remembered more. Additionally, it would be interesting to find out if any of the seniors did make an effort to pass down the stories upon the completion of the study. Finally, it is recommended that participants' responses to the sharing of the stories be documented to determine if there any health benefits or mental state elevations are among the outcomes of the project.

#### *Recommendations for Professional Practice*

In response to recommendations for professional practice, there are multiple areas that can benefit from the sharing of stories that have been passed down, both through oral tradition and oral history. As an individual, one can benefit from hearing their family stories as a means to connect them to their past. Stories help individuals learn who they are by grounding them in a sense of where they came from. Stories can connect them to their cultures and to teach cultural and family values. Additionally, individuals can benefit from the telling of their story. It is important that people feel valued and that they feel that they have been able to leave a mark on this world in some form or fashion. As this study has demonstrated, a story is one way to do that, to share a piece of oneself. The oral tradition stories can include songs, poems, folktales, and many other variations that continue to entertain and educate through the generations. As the storyteller, one is the knowledge bearer. It is an important role. Additionally, the telling of one's own story through oral history also creates bonds and understanding across the generations.

School-aged people can also greatly benefit from the practice of oral tradition. In such a culturally diverse city as San Francisco, the inclusion of multicultural materials is essential. The addition of oral tradition from community members offers an authentic learning experience for the students. Seniors can present their wisdom through their stories recounting anything from the original *Humpty Dumpty* verse to the experience of living in China during the Communist takeover. Children can learn history through someone who has lived it versus “knowing” through typical text-based learning strategies. Educators can create community projects to bring children together with a valuable resource (our seniors). Children would have the opportunity to understand other cultures, the history of others, and gain an appreciation for the elder population.

Storytelling as an art is widely utilized in senior day health centers and assisted living facilities in the United States. Often seniors are encouraged to write their memoirs. While it is wonderful for the seniors to do this, there is a great opportunity for an intergenerational community to form. Directors and activity directors of these establishments could add value to their programs and to the lives of the seniors by creating oral tradition projects in their community working with the youth. The seniors may be given the opportunity to change the lives of a young person through story.

### *Summary*

The research suggests that oral tradition is a part of every culture and has served as a means to teach values and customs of a society. Oral tradition is relevant to all ages and all cultures. A society's elders have traditionally served as the knowledge bearers, the ones to turn to for guidance. Much of that knowledge was transferred through oral tradition. Though this practice has been in decline, scholars such as Joseph Campbell

have convincingly demonstrated that we all need a mythology to follow. Finally, oral tradition has given a voice to those who historically lacked a place in society, including women, the working class and ethnic minorities.

The purpose of this study was to identify the stories that had been passed down through oral tradition from older generations of senior volunteers from a San Francisco hospital. Three research questions guided the research, including: 1) To what extent are stories as told through oral tradition passed down through the generations of a select group of senior volunteers at a hospital in San Francisco; 2) To what extent do oral tradition stories portray the experiences of the participants; and 3) How are the stories similar or dissimilar as transmitted by the participants?

The participants in this study realized that they had stories that had been passed down in their families and agreed to participate in the project. Each was asked to tell one to two stories, though in the process, told many more. A study of the narratives revealed 27 generative themes; these themes provided answers to all three research questions. The narratives were also studied to determine the types of stories told. Along with oral history, eight types of oral traditions were identified. The story types provided answers to research questions one and two. All of the seniors included oral history in their narrative. This proved to be an unexpected focal point of the findings as it showed the seniors' need to tell their own stories alongside those passed down in their families, and demonstrated that the teller's tale as an essential component of oral tradition.

In conclusion, the project proved to be an incredibly satisfying experience for all who were involved. Each senior was empowered by their own voice, as well as by their ability to leave some of their knowledge and experience behind. Many seniors were

grateful for the opportunity to share their story, and many felt compelled to do a better job of passing down the stories to the younger generations. Each participant gained a greater appreciation for the importance of these stories to every individual, most notably, themselves.

### *Reflections of the Researcher*

About three years ago, when I was still reviewing literature and attempting to decide if this was in fact the topic for me, I remember discussing my dissertation with a friend of mine from my doctoral program. When she told me she could see my passion and love for oral tradition in my eyes when I talked about the project, she helped me to make up my mind right there. She also suggested I keep a journal to document my own experiences as I went through the process. Much of that journal is filled with my own stories and the memories that were sparked from the seniors I met. Many of the entries marveled at the new knowledge I had gained just by listening to a senior who had experienced things I had only previously read about in books. I met some of the kindest people I have ever met and was left speechless when they thanked me.

As I reflect on the experience of listening to the seniors, I think of it in two ways, externally, as the observer, and internally, as a self-reflective individual. Externally, it was a pleasure to sit in the seat as an outsider and be granted a glimpse of another's life, to be able to share in a stranger's happiness as they talk about loved ones from long ago and to witness the sorrow and raw emotion that can only be defined as genuine human connectedness. Internally, I could not help but think that this type of interaction, this type of listening, is so vital. How often do seniors get the opportunity to sit and tell someone about their experiences? To share the happiness that life has brought, the

struggles overcome, the people they knew and the overall wisdom gained just from having lived a full life? How many times do we truly grant someone the gift of listening? How much do we really know about our past and about the past lives of our parents and our grandparents? Even more to the point, do we really understand what we are missing by not seeking this type of experience? Humankind is a social species; we long that closeness, that connectedness. I gained from this experience the knowledge that I already suspected to be the underlying momentum beneath the research questions: that we all need to tell our story and we all yearn to know the stories of prior generations.

More than ever, I believe that everyone truly does have a story to tell and that our society could benefit greatly from listening and from telling these stories to one another. Storytelling is a communal and personal experience, a rare gift of knowledge that is seldom discovered in this age of mass-mediated technology. For example, through these stories, I learned about the Russian work camps. While I had known of their existence, I never understood the horror of guilty by association or worse, guilty without a trial. I learned about the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong and the difficulties in living with the new Communist government. I learned more about immigration and the struggles that immigrants faced and still face from those who experienced it firsthand. History does not come alive until it has been told by those who took part in it.

It was interesting to hear how many of the seniors regretted that they didn't know more about their own family's history; I can only hope that this project helped to ignite a fire under those who have never shared their knowledge with the younger generations in their family. My own desire to connect with my roots instigated this project and I believe that every one of us needs to know where we came from, either through the sharing of



cultural folktales or one's own family history. Those few hours during which I listened to the narratives were inspiring. I left feeling grateful and fulfilled and while many of my colleagues began to detest their topic, I only loved mine more. This project is the beginning of my life's work, and I am eternally grateful to each senior who opened up their minds and their hearts to me during this process.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH SUBJECT**

**Purpose and Background**

Mrs. Rachel Cummings Klein, a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco is conducting a study on the stories that seniors of diverse cultural backgrounds pass down through oral tradition. The researcher is interested in determining if there are any similarities and/or differences among the stories of the various cultural backgrounds.

I am being asked to participate because I am a senior citizen at least 65 years of age, am able to sign documents without a Durable Power of Attorney and have oral stories that I recognize in my family that have been passed down to me.

**Procedures**

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will complete a short questionnaire giving basic information about me including: name, age, ethnicity, gender, and if I have oral stories in my family that have been passed down to me.
2. I will participate in two face-to-face interviews with the researcher and a translator when necessary. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes. During the first interview, I will be asked to tell 2-3 oral stories that have been passed down in my family. I will answer questions about the stories themselves.
3. During the second interview, I will answer follow-up questions and revise the transcription of the first interview if necessary.
4. I will complete the questionnaire and participate in the interview at a place of my own convenience.

**Risks and/or Discomforts**

1. I am free to decline to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer or that make me feel uncomfortable.
2. If I am uncomfortable, I can stop the interview at any time.
3. Confidentiality will be maintained as I participate in the study. Records will be kept confidential and no individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study. Study information will be kept in locked files at all times and destroyed five years after the research has been conducted.
4. Interviews may take up to two hours depending on the length of the stories. I may become tired and/or restless.



**Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding about the effects of oral stories passed down in families on individuals and the potential benefit these shared stories have for the community. The benefit of the study will also be a better understanding of the differences and/or similarities of the stories of various cultures.

**Cost/Financial Consideration**

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

**Payment/Reimbursement**

I will not be paid for my participation in this study.

**Questions**

I have talked to Rachel Cummings Klein about this study and have had my questions answered. If I have further questions about the study, I may contact her at 415-292-8876 or 415-828-6759.

If I have questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first talk to the researcher. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling 415-422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing [IRBPHS@usfca.edu](mailto:IRBPHS@usfca.edu), or by writing to the IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

**Consent**

I have been given a copy of the "Research Subject's Bill of Rights" and I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. My decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on my present or future status as a participant in outreach events with the researcher. My signature below indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

---

 Subject's Signature

---

 Date of Signature

---

 Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

 Date of Signature

Appendix B: Background Questionnaire<sup>4</sup>

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. Ethnicity/Cultural Background \_\_\_\_\_
4. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
5. Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_
6. Primary language \_\_\_\_\_
7. Do you have a Durable Power of Attorney? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Where are you from originally? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How would you describe your socioeconomic background growing up? Working Class/Middle Class/Upper Middle Class/Wealthy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. If you are not originally from the United States, how long have you been living here? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Are you married/divorced/widowed/never married? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Do you have children? How many? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you have grandchildren? How many? \_\_\_\_\_
14. What was your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
15. How long have you been volunteering at the hospital? \_\_\_\_\_
16. How often to you volunteer at the hospital? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Why did you choose to volunteer at the hospital? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Do you live at home/in an Assisted Living/Board and Care? \_\_\_\_\_
19. Was oral tradition a part of your childhood? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>4</sup> The Background Questionnaire was given to the seniors in 14 font for easier readability.

20. Can you think of oral stories that were passed down to you?

---

21. Do you continue to tell any of these stories to younger generations? If so, to who?

---

22. When you heard the stories, where were you? How often were they told?

---

---

23. Would you be willing to share 1-2 of your family's oral stories with Rachel Cummings Klein? \_\_\_\_\_

24. Please check one of the following:

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to participate in the study and it is okay for Rachel Cummings Klein to contact me.

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I do not want to participate in the study. Please do not contact me.

Appendix C: IRB Approval

October 3, 2008

Dear Ms. Cummings:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #08-066). Please note the following:

\*\*\* You may only commence research at a given site after having obtained written consent from an administrator authorizing you to proceed. The IRB has received written consent from St. Francis Memorial Hospital and expects that you will submit consent from other institutions to the IRB before starting research at any other sites.

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091. On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

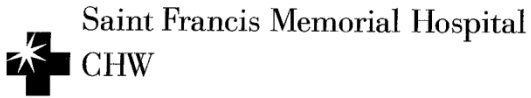
Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

-----  
IRBPHS University of San Francisco  
Counseling Psychology Department  
Education Building - 017  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080  
(415) 422-6091 (Message)  
(415) 422-5528 (Fax)  
[irbphs@usfca.edu](mailto:irbphs@usfca.edu)

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<http://www.usfca.edu/humansubjects/>

Appendix D: Approval Letter to Conduct Research



900 Hyde Street  
San Francisco, CA 94109  
(415) 353-6000 Telephone

2 October 2008

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
University of San Francisco  
2130 Fulton Street  
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Community and Volunteers Service Department at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Mrs. Rachel Cummings, a student at USF. We are aware that Mrs. Cummings intends to conduct her research by interviewing some of the seniors that volunteer here at, Saint Francis.

I am the Chinese Guest Relations and Outreach Coordinator and am responsible for supervising the senior volunteers at Saint Francis Memorial Hospital. I give Mrs. Cummings permission to conduct her research at our hospital and with our seniors.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at 415-353-6655.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Loi".

Amy Loi

Chinese Guest Relations and Outreach Coordinator, Saint Francis Memorial Hospital

## Appendix E: Interview Protocol

**Introduction:**

I want to thank you for agreeing to share your stories with me. I am very interested in hearing the stories that have been passed down through the generations. Before we begin, I'd like to remind you that the interview will be kept confidential and that if you experience discomfort, you are free to decline or stop at any time. I want to make sure that you are comfortable at all times and think of this more as a dialogue versus a formal interview. As I mentioned on the phone, this will be recorded. Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Questions:**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the stories you are going to share, where you heard them, how often they were told?
2. What was the setting like?
3. Are you ready to tell me your stories?

**Follow-up Question after the story/stories are told:**

1. Is there anything else you would like to add about the stories or your experiences with the stories?

**Conclusion:**

Thank you for sharing your stories with me. I really appreciate your openness and willingness to contribute to my project but also to your community. After I transcribe your stories, I will send you a copy to look over. At that time you can make any changes that you feel are necessary. We will meet one more time to make sure there aren't any changes and to discuss any follow-up questions. Thank you again.

## Appendix F: The History of Oral History

Paul Thompson, research professor at the University of Essex, was a pioneer of oral history as a methodology within sociology and social history. He began conducting oral history projects in England during the 1960's, a time when the term oral history was non-existent in England. Through the years of utilizing oral history, he has found that it "can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history" (1988, p. 21). In addition, oral history can overcome hurdles between generations and teachers and students as it allows those who created the history, a voice within their own history (Ibid).

Thompson's research into the field of history revealed an emphasis on political power. History documented the major events including wars, the economy and religion as told by those in positions of power, the White male. For the most part, the common man or woman was left out of the history books. Historians documented what they felt mattered most, and they too placed themselves in a higher class (1988, p. 22). As a result, the ordinary voice, the voice of minorities, and the voice of women were not included in history.

In contrast to the documenting of history by historians, oral history offers a more even playing field. Accounts can be recorded from "the under-classes, the unprivileged, and the defeated" (Thompson, 1988, p. 24). This creates an entirely new account of history, one that is more realistic, more just, and often with "radical implications for the social message of history as a whole" (p. 25).

Thompson acknowledges the potential danger in oral history. It is important to understand that the oral historian still has some place of privilege in that they can choose

whom they interview. A selected group might not, or most likely will not, be a true representation of an entire community. It is thus important to acknowledge a researcher's potential political standpoint. Researchers can, however, utilize oral history in various fields to gain knowledge of the truth in the experiences of all kinds of people from all kinds of backgrounds. Thompson (1988) believes that it is important for the researcher to minimize their own place of advantage in order to "encourage self-confidence and the writing of history from within the community" (p. 27). Much of the purpose of oral history projects revolves around revealing the truths of society and offering voice to the voiceless. Thompson argues that "a history is required which leads to action: not to confirm but to change the world" (Ibid). Therefore, as a researcher, it is important to not only to help reveal a richer history, but to help the community to transform.

Thompson (1988) argues that by bringing to the table the voices of the historically ignored, transformation can begin. History can become more democratic by changing assumptions and challenging judgments (p. 26). In addition, history is no longer preserved solely by historians and institutions. It is now open to the outside world. Oral history requires a collaborative effort by both the researcher and the researched.

Thompson (1988) attests that oral history has created a new relationship with the community. He states that, "historical information need not be taken away from the community for interpretation and presentation by the professional historian. Through oral history the community can, and should, be given the confidence to write its own history" (p. 26). The purpose of oral history is not one-sided, nor is it used solely as a means to help the researcher to collect data, but it is a social movement in a sense. It is a mutually beneficial act based on dialogue and exploration and "equally, oral history offers a



challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgment inherent in its tradition” (p. 28). Thompson believes that oral history is a new methodology where the researcher and the researched strive for a common goal, i.e., to bring truth to history.

As told orally, the initial message creates a link between the generations as it continues to be passed down. Vanisa (1985) explains that, “a tradition should be seen as a series of successive historical documents all lost except for the last one and usually interpreted by every link in the chain of transmission” (p. 29). It shows that the messages do continue though cannot be seen as evidence of that event unless they ends on the same statement from which it began, but it can be seen as evidence for later events. For example, when studying the sayings of the Prophet, Islamists accepted or rejected messages based on the evaluation of the “links in the chain of transmission” (p. 30). Therefore, in order for oral tradition to be considered evidence, one must know the links in the chain of transmission. However, Vanisa argues that if the message was passed down through a very accurate link, it might actually have more distortion than that which has been passed down through multiple sources due to a “greater built-in redundancy” (p. 31). Vanisa suggests that historians should look for an accurate story by finding multiple recordings of that story rather than accepting the last one that was recorded.

As revealed in the previous paragraphs, oral history can and often does become oral tradition. By encourage the telling of the stories of the oppressed and those traditionally ignored, future generations may greatly benefit from previous knowledge. Therefore, oral tradition might also be viewed as a transformative means for a community not only in the present but also by using the past for the future.

## Appendix G: HIPAA Reminders

The following are some key points to remember and practice to ensure On Lok's compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

### Everyday HIPAA Practices

Please remember the following practices in your day-to-day work to take reasonable measures to protect our participants' PHI and always use your best professional judgment.

- **INTERNAL Email:**
  - For internal emails among staff, use the On Lok participant ID number when communicating via email about a participant's PHI, related to treatment, payment or operations. Staff may also include the participant's last name, separated with a comma, followed by first and middle initial, e.g. Jane Margaret Smith would be "#1234, Smith, J M."
- **EXTERNAL Email:**
  - For emails that include PHI to external addresses, send the email through the secured email system by typing the word, "secure," in the subject line. For additional instructions for securing emails, contact the HelpDesk. Ensure the PHI content of the email, including the participant ID number and name, is limited to the minimum necessary and only disclosed to those with a need to know.
- When printing documents containing PHI or receiving faxes with PHI, pick up the document immediately. Do not leave the document on the printer or fax machine.
- Verify the identity of the requestor of PHI before disclosing PHI via phone, fax, or email.
- Use or disclose PHI only for purposes related to administration of On Lok, e.g. treatment, payment or operations.
- Use or disclose Medi-Cal PHI only for purposes related to administration of the Medi-Cal program.
- Emails sent via On Lok's Webmail and handheld devices are not secure. Prior to replying to an email that contained PHI, delete any PHI in the original email prior to sending your reply via the Webmail or using a handheld device.
- Wear your photo ID name badges at all times when on On Lok premises.
- Lock your computer screen manually when you leave your computer terminal by hitting "Ctrl+Alt+Delete." Repeat the same key strokes to unlock your screen.
- Minimize the screen if you are working at your terminal and are approached by someone without authorization to view participants' PHI.
- Use cover sheets to place over records/documents, if records and other participant information are kept in an unsecured area (i.e. clinic, staff offices).
- Use a cover sheet with the confidentiality disclaimer for faxes.
- Minimize use of postings (hanging on walls, bulletin boards) with participants' PHI.
- If you have a private office and store PHI, please close and lock the door when your office is unoccupied.

- Dispose of documents containing PHI only in designated containers for documents that are to be shredded.
- Use discretion and lower your speaking volume when discussing PHI on the phone or in an open area. When possible, use a conference/meeting room.
- When possible, convert PHI into de-identified information or limited data sets prior to use or disclosure.
- Adhere to the On Lok Notice of Privacy Practices.
- Keep PHI-related documentation for at least 10 years.

### **Review of Key Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Points**

Congress passed the Administrative Simplification provisions of HIPAA, among other things, to protect the privacy and security of certain health information, and promote efficiency in the health care industry through the use of standardized electronic transactions.

The Privacy Rule sets the standards for, among other things, who may have access to PHI, while the Security Rule sets the standards for ensuring that only those who should have access to electronic protected health information (EPHI) actually have access. With the increased use of electronic health records, protecting the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of EPHI becomes even more critical.

### **Protected Health Information (PHI) is**

- any information maintained by On Lok, which is created or received by On Lok AND
- relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health condition of an individual; or the past, present, or future payment for the provision of health care to an individual; and
- identifies the individual or in which there is a reasonable basis to believe that the information can be used to identify the individual.

### **Demographic Data that are Covered:**

- Names
- Street address, city, county, zip code
- Dates (except year)
- Phone and fax numbers
- E-mail, web site (URL) and Internet Protocol addresses
- Social security number
- Medical record number
- Plan/Participant number
- Certificate/license numbers
- Full face photos, finger and voice prints
- Unique numbers, characteristics or codes
- Participants' financial information

**In any form:**

- Written, oral or electronic

Use: To share, employ, apply, utilize, examine or analyze PHI within On Lok.

Example: Sharing of PHI between On Lok departments for case management

Disclose: To release, transfer, provide access to, or divulge in any way PHI to anyone outside of On Lok. Example: Sharing of PHI with a hospital for a participant's treatment.

Minimum Necessary: Use, disclosure, and request of only the minimum amount of PHI needed to accomplish the intended purpose of the use, disclosure, or request.

## Appendix H: Narratives

*Rosa*

The researcher met Rosa at her home with her daughter and husband present. The Volunteer Coordinator was also present. After she was reminded of the purpose of the study, she began her story.

I was only 15 years old when I married. The father of Sylvia was only 23 years old, so we thought he already had a job. And I was only working naturally at 15 years old that I was, and I don't have my mother to teach me, so I don't know practically nothing. You know from when I got there, my mother-in-law and my brothers-in-law they were really good to me. I have really good memories of them.

I asked her if she lived with them (her in-laws).

No we stayed there for a while until we found a place to live. It was in Mexico City. I was born in one town. I was born in Enita Quatro, it is the state of Bonquatro. They called it El Barcero, probably because Mexico City is way up, 7,000 feet up from the ocean, so we are in the Bacero, and this is where I come from. But he went to work temporarily there. And then he met me so we get together. I know him not too very well. Because in that time they don't let you go out with the boyfriend. My father was very strict, my father and brothers. So we marry after six or five months that I knew him, and in three to six months we marry. And then he has a job in Mexico, see so we had to move and I have to go with him. And for the moment, he was living in his house, because you see over there customs say that children don't leave their house, their home until they get married. So he was still living with the parents. So they have to stay there. We stayed there for probably three or six months until we find something. We settled and he had to buy little bits of necessary things for everyday but he had a job. He was working all of the time and this is the way it started. And then I go with my in-laws and then we move next to them. There was an apartment available so we move over there so every day he went to work, I go with my in-laws. My sister-in-law was a special person, you know because she is the one who taught me what I know and my mother didn't know. I was very lucky. And they really liked me but they knew I liked to do that you can tell when a little girl start growing up. I was 15. They don't know much, especially when you grow up without both parents. I don't know nothing. So, I went and I stayed there every afternoon. My sister-in-law, Chiciita, they call her Chicita, but her name was Esperanza.

I asked Rosa to clarify what Chicita was as I was unfamiliar with the term.

Chicita is a nickname. Esperanza – they didn't want to say the name, the full name, you know like my name is Rosa Maria but they called me nickname Rosita. They called me Rosita, you know most of my friends called me Rosita. My mother called me Rosita. Only when she was mad she says "Rosa Maria." If there was something she didn't like, she shout, "Rosa Maria!" But from there I went afternoons and my mother-in-law taught me how to cook because I loved to cook. See, she knew that I liked to cook when I moved next door, and when she was going to do special dishes she just knock on the door in the morning or we went to the market together every morning and she says today I am going to cook this. She saw the interest that I had to cook. I started cooking because my aunts in my hometown taught me, usually in the evening. But really I didn't know much. Anyway she was teaching me and I learned to cook all the dishes that she taught me. And I never forget the dishes she taught me to cook.

I asked Rosa if she taught those dishes to her daughter.

Well Sylvia's sister, Rosa but Sylvia was completely different. And you know when they're all little girls, the mom knows what is going to be and this was true and this is true in life. My daughter Rosa (Rosa Maria's namesake) went to the kitchen and she left all kinds of toys and she go straight to the kitchen and starts playing with the pots and pans. What do you do with that? Don't put everything in the closet. She sat down on the floor and she was twirling and she was trying to, she sees me cooking and she starts to do the same thing I do, pretending. So, she is a great cook. She have a very good *sasuan*, which is what we all it in Spanish. Sylvia start growing and she says mom don't give me responsibility in the kitchen because I am not going to do it. The day it was her turn to do something in the kitchen, she'd burn it. One time she's supposed to do pork chops and her sister says, "Why me, why me?" When they were growing you know, I'd say, "Well now it is your turn." When I'd come from work you know because I was alone. I was a single mother with six kids.

I came in 1945. Oh, it is a long time ago. And I was pregnant with my first child when I came from Mexico, with Arthur. But everybody was born here. Some from L.A., where he was born. I have a relative there, my aunt. I stayed until his birth, and then when he was about seven months, I came here to San Francisco. My mom was living here, in San Francisco. So this is the reason I want to move, you know because it was my grandmother in L.A., and she loved me and she was very unhappy when I told her I want to move to San Francisco. She said, "Well I don't blame you, you want to go near to your mom. That's fine." So I came here and Arturo was three years old when I have the second child. Because I have a baby so that there was the two, so I had to have a big operation. So I just have the one kid at that time. Sylvia is strong and has a lot of energy. I used to be like that and I start having my kids every year apart. She is only one year apart from Rosa. I kept two girls and my four boys. Oh, oh my tips. I like to spend my time on my magazines, Mexican magazines. I always buy and look for recipes, to steal for recipes. I love to learn what is in everyday recipes and I put it in the computer,

because I am learning the computer. I'm not very good at it. But you know she [Sylvia] started to teach me. One time I stay overnight with her [Sylvia].

Sylvia then chimes in, "She couldn't believe IM and Allen was in Singapore. It was morning, but it was his night, and then it comes, and she says. "How did it happen?

That's not really him!" And so I called him. And she said, "How does that work?" So I had her send an email message to all my brothers and..." Rosa then picks up the story.

"I tell you how Mom, you sit down here and I am going to teach you, come on, the first letters that I knew." Well, she tell me how, you leave me alone, I don't know nothing. But you know I still like to learn. I wish I knew more. I went for three weeks to school. The computers, it is different than what I have. It was the mother, it was called the mother of the computer or something you know, they don't ...

Sylvia chimes in one more time to help her mother with the name, "The motherboard."

Yeah, motherboard. I always tell my grandchildren a lot of stories. My customs, I always talk about the way I was brought up. I don't want them to forget their customs. I want them to speak Spanish. This is number one for what I want with my kids. It doesn't hurt to learn another language. But you know, they don't practice. They only speak Spanish when they come to me. They married a person who doesn't speak the language. This is one of the problems. Like Alberto [grandson], Alberto and her [pointing to daughter], they understand but all the time when I talk on the phone, I don't speak English. You better practice [directed to Sylvia]. When I'm gone, who is going to speak Spanish to this family? Nobody. You will forget language. We are married thirty years, but he hasn't learned it [referring to her husband]. He could but maybe he doesn't like it? It's not a matter of smart, it's what you want. The families, they always are number one. Number two, they never leave the house of the parents until they are married. Once they get married, this is your life, it's fine. Unless like, we come and live with the parents of the father like if you have a sickness or don't have a place to live. But they are supposed to get their own place. The kids aren't, "Okay Mom, I'm eighteen, goodbye." No way, uh uh. She [pointing to Sylvia] was eighteen when she left the house that's cause she was eighteen but there was a reason, her job was in Palo Alto so she has to live near her job. I think she didn't have a car yet. She's a good girl. She never leave me. I was all by myself because I don't have my husband. I was alone. I was only with Albert, my youngest. She didn't just leave me. They're good kids, all of them. Very good. I'm lucky. This is my reward for all I went through by myself, raising them. It was very hard. These days, they have a baby, one baby and they give it up! They give up the baby or they give it to somebody or they start leaving the kid alone with the babysitters. I never do that. They were always with me. This is one of the customs, that you have to be there for your family. It's like that in any

country, good mothers and bad mothers. In all the world. And I think I deserve to be, that they're so good to me is my reward because I never leave them. I used to like to dance, to sing, to have friends to go out. But I give up everything for them. I'm eighty-seven! I'll be eighty-eight. I would feel very happy in my age now, if I just had my health like before. My life was very different than when I'm sick. I got it in 2003. Doctors give you a lot. I don't believe in syrups. It will ruin the stomach of a baby forever.

I ask Rosa what it was like growing up in Mexico.

In my hometown, it was the best strawberries in the whole world. I used to pick up jicama's. I was with my sister-in-law. The one's like I buy here, they're like milk. Noooooo. It should be like water. I had a lemon tree but in that time, the bedrooms, were so you have to jump to the other part of the house. Look at what I did. A person could get there and fall. And I would run and I jumped to the tree, eeee, my dad said, "You never do this! You could break your body if you go down." It was the second floor. I used to take the salt with me. I loved it. I was full of time. I don't know why I liked so much the lemons. I cut the lemons and I put the salt. They were mild lemons, from the tree you know? How many brothers I have at that time there? I think four. Joe was here, in San Francisco already. Three, three boys. I always have a dog. My father, he was blind. But he still work. He used to deliver packs of cigarettes in the same pueblo, to the stores, all the little stores. Now they have a big market. He'd leave about seven o'clock and then back by three. My parents grew up in that town. I never knew my grandparents. Both, they were dead. The mother of my mother, my grandma, was very white, very black hair, and blue eyes like yours, from Spain. When my mother came to this country she was blonde. It changed. My mother died at 83 years old. Beautiful skin. She had the build of Sylvia, taller than her. Rosita is like me, little.

We obeyed our father. We always had somebody that cooks with us, a lady and she has to take care of us. He was there. Saturday and Sunday's I have to take him to church. One week, my brother Michael, the youngest in the family took him to church. He was very, very Catholic, my father. I used to do folklorio dancing. I knew those dances growing up. I always love it because I always see it. I learned. I love to dance, I love to dance. And still I do. Sometimes when they put the music on [giggling]. These are from your memories. My grandmother, she came from Spain. She have Spanish blood but she married a Mexican. So my mother is Mexican. Half. I don't say that I'm Spanish. My mother have half. They never talk about their parents. They never tell me nothing. My father said that she married with a Mexican, my grandfather. My father is a little dark. He married my mom, fairer than me. My brothers are dark, like my papa. Oh my mother was so mad because he's so dark. But they make me white. At that time, they can't go to the hospitals. At that time, when my mother have babies, in the 20's, they only go to the clinics unless you are very rich. But you know, my mother, was like me. The midwife come to the house. And over there, the first baby my mother had was Gabrielle. I was dark compared



to my mother. She was blue, blue, blue eyes. Very pretty. But they never talk about their parents. I know my grandmother come from Spain but I don't know how old she was because they were there for years. Then my grandfather, the father of my mother, married so this is Mexican. In Mexico, another thing, a person that is married, they never lose the name of the father. I was Rosita Lopez de Jasso. It shows I'm married. You never lose the name of the dad. You have to put the de. You never lose your name. This is a custom of Mexico.

The stories of folklore, you can see it every Sunday on channel 19. They give you every Sunday. They show Guanajuato. They show you how they dress. All the parts of Mexico have states, little towns. I don't know all of them. Remember, I came here when I was in my twenties. I didn't have time. When I was growing they didn't take me out to places. My town have, just a plain skirt, pleated. And then robozo is like a shawl. I have mine still. I'm going to bring you the dresses [she gets up to get the dresses.] Mira [look]. This is one of them.

Rosa went to her bedroom to bring out the clothing from her native culture. She was proud of them and I asked if I could take a picture.

Oh, mira. I'm going to show you this. This is Mexican custom. Just don't take a picture of my pants. They make it by hand in my town. They usually, in the little towns, this is how they dress. And sandals. In Oaxaca, you covered, they wear this as the custom. In Vera Cruz they wear all white and they have a fan. I danced that one. I know it and also of Chiapas too. It's the most beautiful. I was only twenty when I came here so I didn't learn too much of Mexico. I couldn't tell too many stories because I have so many kids at the same time. I was so busy. Diapers, no pampers. The cloth. Every day, every day. By the time I finished breakfast, it's lunch time. Then wash the dishes and start the dinner. Oh no, it's a lot of work when you do everything and no help. Their father didn't like to help. He working. Then he just sit down and eat. My father, I think he was more older than my mom when they got married. My mom wasn't raised by her mother. She was raised by the aunts. The father's sisters. So then they put her in like a college, boarding house, where you learn everything. Because my aunt's were already old and my grandfather was all alone with the baby. Her mother died when she was born. She never knew her mother. She never knew what it was to have a mom. My mother graduated. She knew how to play the piano beautifully and paint. It was nuns. She was raised by nuns. She come out when she was eighteen. When she was a baby, she was with the aunts and then my aunts that raised my mom, she died when she was 103, and she raised me. She was very tall, and very blonde. Beautiful. When I born in 1921, it was the revolution. There was a lot of mix. Like here an American that goes to Asia and married there. There was a lot of mix. All I know is that my grandfather was very tall and blue eyes like my mom, and very light. I wish I knew.

Oh my pants, they're so big. I'm shrinking. Pretty soon, I'm shrinking so much you won't be able to find me. The shrinking woman (Laughing). You're going to say, where are you?

We all started laughing. We took a break for tea and then Rosa continued.

I grew up without my mom. I have my mom but grew up without her. My mom came here. She dropped the kids off and then she left. It's a very sad story. My father was blind, remember. My mother used to work and sell new clothes door to door, door to door. She has this man, you don't have a cart, this man had to carry the bunch of clothes. And she got tired of this life. And my father used to have his sister, and then he wrote her that he needs help. We were six [siblings]. One died. He died here in L.A. He asked for help. In that time it was not typical to come to this country. If you have property and as long as you have a job that's all you need. My father was living over there and he was very sorry that things went so bad. He was very intelligent. Before he married, he was working in a hacienda and he was a manager of the hacienda. And the owner of that hacienda, he was such a good worker and very loyal to him, so when he got married he gave a piece of land to him. When my father married my mother he bought the house, he bought the furniture, the best wedding you could ever have because they give him a big bonus there. He could see then. Every kid that was born, he would put a nanny. My mother never took care of kids. He had servants over there. But the money, he has the money you know, but then it came the bad time when he went blind. Then he still was doing the paperwork for one year and he didn't say nothing to my mom that he was losing his sight.

Then one day my mom went into the library, they have a beautiful home, big with the library and everything. She went to see what he was doing and she saw that he was writing and the lines where we was writing the paper, he was writing in the middle. And then she says to him, "What's the matter with you? Look at what you're doing?" And he says, "I guess I fall asleep or something." He was lying to my mom, I guess to keep up his job that he has. But, we lost everything. They lose everything, they had to sell everything. The sister of him helped us. She says, "The only way I can help you, bring the three kids, the little ones. And then you stay with the older." Then Maria, that was the name of my mom, Maria go to work here [California], I promise she's going to be working in no time. It was really easy to get work the people at that time, and she will save up the money and send it here. But then when the year is up, my mother used to give all the check to her because all the expenses were on her. We don't pay nothing. And then my mother came with me, my older brother, the second and he stayed with my dad. He has to stay with my dad. The second was coming with us and the third stay with my father. Three and three. Three stay here and three go with my father.

Then, everything go to the drain because in one year, my mother was tired. Both of giving the money and then she has \$.25 for the bus there and \$.25 back because remember she was working just to save the money. And then she has to save it.

It's a very sad story. And then when the time was up, my father already has the money and she says you come. My mother told my father, "I have everything done, you have the passport everything." But at the border, they don't let him pass because he was blind. Everybody was thinking, my aunt, and they say there's no problems with the papers. At that time it was two or three days with the letters. Now, it's a month to send the letters to Mexico. So, he had to wait. And he sold everything he had, the furniture, everything because remember he was going to be leaving for good. So, he stayed in a hotel because they don't let them come. Then my mother was writing right away to my father. At that time, there was no phones, not like now. Not like you send an email, no caramaba! He stay in that hotel for twenty-one days. My father told me that. He didn't know what to do. He was running crazy with the three kids. You know in my home town, he could handle it but the kids, they have to play and make noises in the hotel. He was blind! So my father says, "I can't go so you come back." And my mother says, "I am not sending one year of my money just to go back." An American guy at the border says it's okay, you just have to have somebody from your family there to pick you up. But you know my mother, she didn't even go to the corner by herself. My mother was very naive. She was afraid, the way she was raised to never do anything by herself. She was not alone when she came. So she can go no place, she can go nowhere. She didn't know English. How in the world was she going to go to the border, and knowing the way and the train? She doesn't even know how to speak. My aunt can't leave her job. We were three kids and my mom. So anyway, my father went back. I don't blame him. I would run crazy! He couldn't handle the kids. So he never came over here.

My father went back with the three kids. We were still here with my mom. We were three, the little ones. When they send me back, I didn't speak Spanish. I speak English. I was seven. My father says, "I want my kids." My father was very strong in the way he thinks, very stubborn. You know when he says one thing has to be done, that's the way it is. She says, "What do you care? It's not costing you nothing. I'm the one supporting them." Oh she got mad and they never talk again. You don't divorce at that time. They separate. My father told me you have to send my kids. And his sister left the house. He want them back. My aunt, you know it's too much responsibility. I was in school already here and then they send me back and I don't even know how to speak Spanish.

This story, if I was a writer, I would write a book. Nobody can believe what happened. I used to cry to my aunt. I said I was going to go with the troops to the north. I wanted cornflakes and cupcakes. Everything that she give me, I throw it out. I never forget the cornflakes, the cupcakes, the hotdogs. They give me things I never seen in my life and I just throw it. She was so worried for me. She didn't know what to do with me because I didn't eat nothing. My aunt used to cry. I didn't like it and I would cry and cry and cry. All my life when I was young, I dream that I was flying and I never took a plane, you travel at that time on the train. I told her I would go with the soldiers. My aunt was very, very sad for me. She loved my mom. She said that in me, she used to see my mom. She got so mad when she married my father. But now, I like it better here. In Mexico, you

have a lot of respect for the parents. You never go out without telling them, even the boys. Imagine with me? He was strict. He wouldn't even let me have a friend. My brothers said you're going to be sorry one day. This girl [looking at Sylvia] is not going to last long in this family, she's going to leave. And when I met her father, I was out. I was ready to go. You should give a little bit but not too much. I didn't even have a friend. This girl across the street, she likes me so much and I like her. And when my father go somewhere with my brother, I'd call her, "Come on Luz! Come over!" And we'd talk and have fun. We were friends. So when he go to the church with my brother, she would come. I never got caught. She was holding my hand and we were running! We'd go to the store to buy buttons at the fabric store. There was a downtown, with the arch. Like the town square. And we'd see the church where my father was and we'd go around the town square, with the bench and the birds. One time, it was drizzling, raining a little bit. I just have a dress. We never put sweaters or anything because it was so hot. I didn't even comb my hair. I was afraid I'd get wet and wouldn't have time to change that dress. And no pants, you don't see a girl with pants. No woman. This is the style. This is the customs of my hometown. This is the way I met Robert. I was passing by and when a guy likes a girl and sees her, they don't go because they told him, "You don't do here like you do in the city, in Mexico city. Here in the town it's different." You know he has friends in the town so he learned that the city is different, they let the girls go out. They said, "Don't you dare invite her to go out because the brothers will kill you!" The brothers, they're always after you, you know. The brothers, not my father.

*James*

James asked that the Volunteer Coordinator and I meet him at his house. He promised homemade shortbread and tea. He lives in a Victorian house in the city that he shared with his wife. One cannot help but notice the multitude of clocks he had all around the home. I reviewed the purpose of the project and James was very comfortable immediately. He was prepared with some stories he had been thinking about.

Story is part of my culture. You can remember it that way. If you put it in story form, it's not just dates and facts. It's part of your tradition, your heritage. I learned a lot about my heritage through story. Definitely. I suppose in a way it helps develop a kid's way to absorb and to listen and to take it in the way that they do. Superstition comes in a lot too. For example, Prince Charles now, when he becomes King, he's not going to be Charles the III, he's going to go by one of his other names because the two previous Charles' lost their heads. Superstition!

I come from the city of Gloucester. (Multiple clocks chiming in the back). Are they going to bother you?

As many of the clocks struck, chimed and cuckooed six o'clock, I responded that they did not bother me and in fact thought they were beautiful.

They always start ringing. The cathedral in that big picture right there, (points to a picture), that's the inside of the Gloucester Cathedral. It was built in 900 AD and in 1122, the roof at that stage was timber, and it caught fire and came down and burned all those marks on those big pillars. So that's from 1122. And when I was a school boy we used to go down there quite a lot, and it used to take five of us with our arms outstretched to go around one pillar. It took so long to build that. You can see the pillars there are circular with rounded arches at the top and that was early English style. The back part where the camera is, the pillars are fluted and they're pointed and they're Norman arches. So the period and the architecture changed as they were building it. And then our civil war was in 1643, when Oliver Cromwell (cuckoo clocks in the background) was (laughing), he was for Parliament against the monarchy and then of course King Charles. Well, Gloucester declared for Parliament, so Charles brought his army down and they besieged the city. Now Gloucester was an old Roman city so it was walled, so it was easy to defend it. And the 5000 inhabitants kept 30,000 of Charles' troops out for 9 months. Now he brought this great big war machine, which was a trebuchet, one of these catapults that hurls big rocks to break down the city walls and gates. Well, the Roman roads there are raised you know, so you've got the part that you travel on... (Phone ringing). Excuse me.

Sorry about that. Well, uh, so he brought this trebuchet and it was up on the road and it fell off the road and all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put him together again.

I could only respond with an, "Oh!" when I realized he told me the nursery rhyme I grew up hearing as a child.

And that's where the nursery rhyme *Humpty Dumpty* comes from. Yep, so *Humpty Dumpty* sat on a wall, that's the story as a rhyme but it is based on the history of the city declaring for Parliament.

I asked James if that was an important fact in Gloucester.

Yup, yup. And of course Gloucester, again if you think in terms of Peter Rabbit and the Beatrix Potter stories, *The Tale of Gloucester*. The actual story was there. All her little diagrams and sketches were based on actual places, locations, front doors, they were all houses in the village. And uh, oh, another story, what's another story? Ring around the rosy, pocket full of posy was from the plague in the 1400's. They thought that if they had flower heads and rose petals on them, it would ward the plague away from them. And so they had a pocket full of posy's and then a tissue, tissue all fall down, was because the very first sign that you

were getting it was that you started sneezing. Over here you say ashes, ashes you all fall down but in England it's a tissue, tissue, you all fall down.

I commented that I wondered why it changed.

I have no idea. They didn't cremate them so they weren't turned into ashes. I don't know where ashes come from, unless it's Ashoo, Ashoo and the pronunciation has gradually been modified and so it becomes ashes, ashes.

I asked James if his parents were storytellers.

Yeah, they did and grandmother and grandfather did quite a bit. Now, my grandmother, my Nan, she was one of six girls and they had one brother. And this brother, he used to torment those girls. He told them, I guess when they were teensy, that if they got their toothbrush and stuck it up the chimney and got some soot on it, it would really make their teeth white. So they all did it. And he used to pull the big church bells, and this is the kind that goes upside down and stays upside down and holds there. And at the end of the bell, the shaft, you have this big cartwheel with a rope wrapped around it so when its turned this way, all the rope comes down to the bell ringer, that's down below it, a couple of floors down below. And then when he just gives it a little nudge, it comes off its rest, it comes down round and back up again. Well, what it has done is taken all that rope back up again so he would hang on as it was coming down and it would take him riiiiiiight up to the ceiling.

I started laughing.

What else can I tell you? Some of it may be useless for you and some of it may be interesting.

I assured James that none of it was useless and so he continued.

Families get into squabbles and fights and my dad was put into a foster care because they could not look after him when my grandmother was very young and so they put him in a foster care. Now when he became thirteen, he could then work and he would become useful to the family so they came down to Gloucester to pick him up, to take him home and put him to work. He did not want to go. So my, what turned out to be his mother-in-law, my grandmother on my mother's side, said, "No, he can't go." They already knew each other, they had already established this relationship. Even though he was a little kiddie he was always knocking around the house. They weren't girlfriend-boyfriend yet and she just detested my dad at the time, but he didn't want to go so my grandmother said, no he's not going. It became a big argument and fighting and they took off. Well, I guess, I don't know how many months, it could have been a year even, but later they wanted to make up and have a relationship again, so they came back and they opened my grandmother's front door and they shouted in, "It's Sid and Sis. I'm going to throw my hat in the house. If you want us to come in, keep the hat. If

you want us to go away throw the hat out and we'll go away. We won't bother you anymore." And of course my grandmother did not throw the hat back out and so the two halves of the family came back together again.

I reconfirmed the fact that his father knew his wife when he was thirteen years old.

Yeah he did but she did not like him at that stage. Then later on, she had two boyfriends, my dad and this guy who was an opera singer, a baritone singer and my grandmother said to my mom one day this was when she was about nineteen, "Now look. I can't have each of you guys coming around all the time." She says, "I'm going away this weekend and when I come back, you've got to make a decision." So, Nan went away I guess and when she came back mom said, "it's Harold," and he became my dad. Yeah, quite interesting. And of course during my growing up as a toddler, it was wartime so we were going through all that situation over there at that time. And towards the end of the war there was a convoy, an American convoy going by and all us boys would line up on the side of the road and there'd be all this gum and candy being thrown off the trucks and we'd be there trying to catch it. To boys of course, soldiers, guns, tanks, airplanes, ah, this was good and exciting. Now of course I know different but at the time it was..... Around this time of night you'd start to hear a low drone and it'd start to get louder and louder and louder and you'd start to see the sky filling up with these V formations of bombers. And they were all heading out going Southeast going over to Germany, which was our lot going out. By eleven o'clock at night the sirens would go and you'd have to get up. If you were in bed, you'd have to get up and go to the end of the street to the communal air shelters, which were half buried in the ground and earthed over with grass so they couldn't be seen easily from the air. You'd have to go down there and wait for it to be all clear and they'd brew up tea down there. You know they'd have a little fire going and tea and they'd sing songs down there, I can remember all that.

Just to pass the time they'd do anything and I was just a nipper. And my dad would say, "I want you to go shopping. I want you to get me a quarter pound of tea, I want a pint of milk." And I'd have to remember this and bring it back to him you know. And of course all the neighbors sat around listening and I'd forget something. And I'd say, "I forgot Daddy, 'mack my bottom." And he'd put his hand there, (James claps three times). And of course they'd all laugh like crazy. And then you'd hear the all clear and you'd come back out. Once, our windows and our doors were gone because they hit the ground. And then the early hours of the morning you'd hear the drone again. It was all hours and you'd have to go back. So in between times they crossed paths somewhere.

I asked James if it was every night and then asked if that made the community get pretty close.

Oh yeah, you did. You really did. My dad didn't go into the services because he was working on the railway, so he was taking ammunition trains down to the

south coast and all the ambulance trains back up with the wounded. We had some guys stationed with us from Plymouth and Plymouth was a big port where there was a lot of the Royal Navy. They got hit, I tell you what, just decimated. So these three guys were allocated to live with us and they were archers. When they left they gave my dad a big long bow and arrows.

And my dad, being clever, said, "I need you to show me how a bow and arrow works." We had a long Victorian house and where you had the front door, you had a long hall to the back. Then if you opened that door, you had a kitchen, and then if you opened that door you had a scullery, and if you opened that door you had a back scullery and if you opened all the doors it was one straight line. So he got right down at the end and he just pulled this thing, this bow back a little bit and he went, fwwwwwt and the arrow went straight down the corridor and we had a big front door with heavy glass and it hit the glass paneling, went straight through the glass, crossed the road and hit a tree on the other side. And there was this tiny little hole with a star where it cracked the glass but it didn't break the glass. And you know, if anyone had been walking outside they might have really gone on, the wars are coming? After we sold the house we'd go back and look and that tiny little hole with the starred glass that still there and we thought if we went and told them how that got there, they'd never believe us. How can you tell a story like that? Oh yeah, sure, sure.

I asked James if he still tells these stories to his grandchildren.

Oh yeah, yeah. They all know these. My grandkids didn't get them from me, I've been away 25 years, but they get them from their mom. We had four generations of clock makers. Henry who was born in 1799 and then there was my dad. He was mad on steam locomotives so he went his own way. I repair them, I have a shop downstairs. I'm making them right there. I always heard about my grandmother and her father and we'd hear about the stories that he would make church clocks. It would take 12 months to go to a town, build the clock, install it in the church and then they'd move on to another town and do it again. You know, a different church. The clocks are huge. And he and his wife had twenty children. Same wife. There were only four survivors. They all died in infancy or childhood but they had twenty kids. A couple of pairs of twins. Some of them had typhoid fever. All the things we have cures for now but one of them must have been dropped on the kitchen floor because it died of a concussion.

Of course they were all born in different towns. So when you look at the family tree, and they all come from different towns.

I mentioned that it must have been very traumatic losing children like that.

Oh yeah. And then there's one village, a little town with the church clock he made there. It's a nice stone tower and it's got a lovely azure blue dial with gold Roman numerals on it. He must have gone to the pub the day he made this because the Roman number eleven is turned upside down so there's two number



nine's. There's two IX's instead of one XI and in England, elevens' is the time, eleven o'clock in the morning, when the housewives have a cup of coffee. It's called elevenses so in our village, they didn't have elevenses but the village would not let him change it so it's still like that. There's still two number 9's on the dial.

I asked James if that was his great grandfather, for clarity.

Yeah, that was Henry Edmond. So that was the last one. My family goes back to the 1640's which is kind of nice. I've got a dotted line that goes back to the 1400's but there's no documents so how do you prove it? There's very little in documentation. One of the girls in the family married a William King and William King suggested to Robert Rakes, they worked hard and on Sunday they would roam the streets and they would cause havoc. And so this William King suggested to Robert Rakes who became the founder of Sunday schools not for religious teaching but to teach them a little about reading and a little about writing and to get them off the streets, on a Sunday morning. And William King, this part of his nose was very enlarged so he was called the King with Three Noses. I've got a picture of him. I don't know if any of this is useful to you.

I assure him that this is exactly what I am looking for, the stories that have been passed down.

What else can I tell about Gloucester? That picture up there, the black and white building in front is called Parliament House. You may not know too much about English History but in 1066, William the Conqueror came over from France, Normandy and conquered England. And in 1089 he went down and he held Parliament in that building. He declared that he wanted a census taken of this new kingdom he got. He wanted to know, "How many people I've got, how much land do they own, how much cattle they've got, how many sheep they've got, everything and that became the doomsday book. And they still call that Parliament House because that was Parliament House of 1089. It's still there. Marvelous. Now just below it there's another picture of the Lady Chapel in the Cathedral and behind the altar there, there are huge iron hoops and this is where Oliver Cromwell tethered his horses. In the church. Because Parliament did take over, there was no monarchy for about 11 years and they call it the Interim because Charles had taken off to France. He was in hiding in France until the monarchy came back. My grandparents told me stories and back then people stayed in the village, they grew up in. They died there so the dialects stayed very strong. Now, people move around a lot so they're gradually softening so it's not as strong as it used to be.

I asked James if the language was a big part of it.

Yeah, yeah. And then they used to tell stories in monologue fashion. Have you ever heard of, have you ever seen the film My Fair Lady?

I replied that I had.

Eliza Doolittle's father, he used to do a monologue about the Battle of Waterloo, when Napoleon fought the Duke of Wellington. I may not remember the last few verses but it's supposed to have taken place the eve of the battle. And it starts off:

It occurred the evening of Waterloo  
 The troops were lined up on parade  
 And Sergeant inspecting them, he was a terror  
 Of whom every man was afraid  
 All except one who was in the front row  
 A man by the name of Sam Small  
 And he and the Sergeant were like daggers drawn  
 They thought not of each other at all  
 The Sergeant walked by, he was swinging his arms  
 And he happened to bump against Sam  
 And knocking his musket right out of his hand  
 It went to the ground with a slam  
 "Pick it up," said the Sergeant abrupt like but sharp  
 But Sam with a shake of his head  
 Said, "seeing as thou knocked it out of my hand,  
 Why inst thou pick it up instead?"  
 "SAM, Sam, pick up thy musket!"  
 The Sergeant exclaimed with a roar.  
 "Thou knocked it down, shall thou pick it up  
 Or it stays where it is on the floor."  
 The sound of high words  
 Attracted the attention of an officer, Lieutenant Bird  
 Who marching across, said, "now what's all this here?"  
 The Sergeant told him what had occurred  
 "Sam, Sam, pick up thy musket"  
 He said with some heat  
 He said, "he knocked it down, so he picks it up  
 Or it stays where it is at my feet."

It goes on. Some more officers become involved but I've lost the tail end of it now. Some more officers become involved and then at the very last the Duke of Wellington himself on a beautiful white horse comes up. "What's all this?" So they tell the Duke and the Duke says, "Come on Sam, just for me, be a good lad, pick it up." "Alright Duke, just for thee," Sam says, "to show thee no offense, I'll pick it up." And then the Duke says, "Alright lads, let the battle commence." And they started the Battle of Waterloo.

I asked James how he remembered that. James responded, "Oh I don't know, I just do.

You'd hear it and you just start to remember it. It's been so nice just sit and talking with

you.” I thanked James for his time and for the delicious shortbread. He gave me a tour of his home and pointed out more pictures of his family. He left me with a copy of an old family picture of some of the relatives he mentioned in the narrative.

*Irene*

Irene lives in a senior housing facility in San Francisco. She asked to conduct the narrative at the facility after her dinner one evening. The Volunteer Coordinator accompanied me. Her room was small but she did a great job making it feel like home. Irene admitted that she had a harder time remembering the stories than she thought but believed she still had some things to tell. She did not need a lot of prompting and spoke freely about her childhood.

I was born in San Francisco. When I was a child, I followed my parents back to Hong Kong, at the age of fourteen. So I settled down in Hong Kong, to get married and have children. I have five children and I sent my children to U.S.A. for education. All of them. I was here in 1986 and I think I was about sixty. I did a lot of work. I had to take care of my grandchildren. I do the cooking, I do the washing and then take them to school and put them to bed. Because my daughter and son-in-law have to go to work, so I had to take care of the family. In the Chinese culture, grandparents help to raise the grandchildren. You must do that because they are family and family is very important. My parents are from Hong Kong originally and they came here many, many years ago. No airplane then. They came by ship. And my father was working so hard, doing the laundry, the ironing, everything. My mom had five children, now they are all gone. They passed away, only my sister is still alive. I'm older than her by four years. She's still living, only one sister. In the Chinese culture, we have to grow the family, bigger and bigger. A lot of children. I have two great grandchildren. One boy and one girl. I have a great grandson and a great granddaughter.

My parents were strict, very strict. If you were bad or brought home a bad grade, they would punish you. They look very cruel. I never would get near unless I had to ask them for money or for food. This is Chinese character. But I was not strict with my children. I never did that. I had three girls and two boys. I have to take care of three families. Not the boys, but the girls. One by one I have to take care of their children. I was very happy. I did what they want. I told my children stories about how my Mom and my Papa worked. We were very poor. It was a very hard job, doing the washing. They would be like American and save money

but we can't buy a house because we are Chinese. So we saved money and they went back to Hong Kong to buy a house in Hong Kong.

I don't remember my grandparents. My grandparents didn't help raise me. My parents only told me stories about how hard they worked and how you have to save money. Don't waste money. You know when I moved to San Francisco, it was five cents for a hot dog and five cents for a root beer, and ten cents for a root beer and a hot dog. Only ten cents. I can't believe it. Ten cents for a very big hot dog. You know we would go to a Pharmacy just like Walgreens to get the hot dog. My sister and I would go together to Market Street. We lived on Washington Street. From Montgomery Street we'd walk aaaaaalllllllll the way and we'd take five cents each and get on a streetcar and we went very far away and we got lost, and couldn't find how to get home. When we got home, it was late. It's about eight o'clock. We were punished. They spanked us. We had to kneel down and say sorry to my mom and she said, "No dinner." We had to go to bed. We got lost! We took a streetcar on Market Street a very long way but I don't know which way to get back. We were whipped. I remember that.

But my daddy was very kind. He would give us a nickel and that was a lot of money in San Francisco in that time. At school you would get free orange juice or a free cup of milk. And everything is free. A pencil and a book are free. I don't think it's like that now. I remember when I was a child, upstairs we had a chimney and we had a chimney on the second floor and the smoke would come down to our flat. The room was smoky. My mom came from the kitchen, "Irene! Did you play with fire?" No, I didn't play with fire. She beat me and I cried the whole day. At last she was sitting there and the smoke came back and she said, "Oh I'm sorry. I should not have beat you." There was a lot of punishment. I was not like that with my kids. I was very gentle and very kind. And my mom, I remember when I was a child there was a big cat. She had four kitties, very small. My mom wanted to get rid of them. So she put them in a bag and gave them to us and told us to go down near the riverside and put it down anywhere. But we dared not because we loved the kitties. We tried to put them through a hole in the backyard and put them there. If they ever found out that we did not get rid of the kitties, they would spank us but they never found out. We let the kitties live, four kitties. The mom, the big cat, she knew how to go to the toilet, just like humans, sit up on the toilet (laughing). So good you know, very nice, that cat. We loved it.

We both laughed. I told her I wished my cat would learn to do that.

I am Catholic and in the Catholic faith there is a Devil. I was safe. Nothing happened. I'm not so scared of the Devil. But I don't believe in the Devil. Be kind, be good, there's no Devil follow you. If you hurt somebody, or do bad things, they will follow you.

I love to go out with my grandchildren, to take them out for Dim Sum. I love children. You know when I was a child, I saw snow in San Francisco. It melted

when it hit the ground but I saw it in the sky. That day was so cold. I have seen the city change a lot. There used to not be so much traffic in the street. There would be a pony and the man would bring us every day, donuts, and a box of bread. They have a car but he would bring the pony, only the pony. When I went back to Hong Kong I was happy. This is my motherland.

I remember my mom took me to Broadway Street and back then Broadway Street belonged to the Italians. We had to get through that street to buy a pair of shoes. That shop was called "Parrot" and they had a parrot outside the doorway. And whenever anyone goes near it, he'd say, "hello, hello, hello." And the Italians get angry at us, the Chinese. They'd throw bottles at us because they don't welcome the Chinese to Broadway Street. Nobody liked to go through Broadway Street because of the Italians. They are rude, they throw something at us. They did not go to Chinatown. Now everybody goes through their place because the Chinese bought their houses and bought their place. It's getting strong. The Italians have no way. There's a church, I don't remember the name, and we have to park the car outside and a woman come to me and said, "You are blocking my way. Why don't you go back to your community? Why you come here?" Well, we've got the children, why not be here? And then her husband pulled her away, back in the car. Stop saying anything. Why can't we be there? We've got children, we have to be here. I don't care about that. [Laughing] But her husband pulled her back in the car. Americans looked down on Chinese. Before, Asians, Chinese were not allowed to buy homes in America. My dad posted Hoover's picture in his store to show American pride. My sister-in-law lived in the hills and Italians smashed out their windows. It was only the Italians. I had many schoolmates that were black. They were good to us. We would play together. We were both minorities. The whites didn't like either of us. One girl, we used to walk home from school together and her dad was a driver, he drove a truck. Her dad yelled, "Don't go with her. Go back." Because I was Chinese, he didn't let her to walk with me.

I told her that it must have been very hard. She continued.

Now, I wouldn't want to live in Hong Kong. Before I liked it but now it's too loud, too crowded. I was there about twenty-five years. I was there when the Japanese took over Hong Kong. We had to starve. There was no rice. I was about eighteen. My mom said we better get married or the Japanese would ruin us. So I got married when I was eighteen. We left to the country in China, Canton. I lived in the countryside for four years. I did a lot of work. I had to carry the wheat and I'd have to put it on a scale. Once the Communist came, they screwed it up. We went back to Hong Kong. We were very poor in Canton because of the Communists. I had two children, a boy and a girl and we had to live off of nothing. We took a train back to Hong Kong.

The conversation naturally comes to a lull and Irene uses this opportunity to offer us a Chinese dessert. I turn the recorder off and we all enjoy dessert and talk.

*Lori*

Lori asked to be met at her at her home on a Sunday evening. I brought cookies and tea. The Volunteer Coordinator met me there. She lives in a senior facility in San Francisco for healthier seniors. Upon arrival, many of her family members were in her home, as was typical for a Sunday evening at Lori's house. Her daughter was cooking and her grandchildren and their husbands were watching a basketball game. Her home was warm and inviting. With wonderful smells all around in the kitchen, Lori began.

You know, in the Philippians the man pays for everything and the woman is just invited for a wedding. It's the opposite as here. The man shoulders everything. You know, we are like Chinese, very clannish. Sometimes they are already married but still live with the parents. They do not let them leave on their own until they are stable. That's why most of the married couples, they already have kids, they are still with the parents, until they are financially stable. During courtship times, the boys, they got together and they sing songs to the lady and the lady opens the window with her parents. If the parents like them, they come in, if not they have to go. They serenade and the parents decide. If the man likes the lady they will just serenade. It's one way of showing that they like the daughter. Their songs are very meaningful. My husband did that. But they did not open the door. They just look through the window. My sister usually would open it for me and she was the one to scrutinize the people. If she didn't like the people she would say, "Oh, my sister is too tired. She cannot entertain you. Come some other time." But if she likes it, "Okay, the door is open for you." And they would come in for some drinks. After singing several songs, they will call me and then I will come out and entertain them. While they were still singing, you just listen. Some had such beautiful voices. In our country there was no competition yet like this American Idol. We don't have that yet but by nature, they have a very nice voice. After awhile my sister would make them go and those boys would go home. They would form a sort of entertainment and some would organize a dance and invite me. They'd announce it and say it would be in honor of our guest. After the war, I was not yet dancing. But I did go. I liked the boy. After the war, we are already mature because we were trapped by the war. I was only nine years old during the war. It was four years so I was already fourteen years old and we were still in elementary. So when I was twenty-one, I was just starting high school. So I was in high school and people were already

serenading us. My mother said it was too early, that I was still a kid. That is the tradition.

Before you get married, the people on the other side of the man, they will do a presentation. They will set a date to come back for a final decision and then the final stage is the proposal. Then after another year you get married. By the time you get married, sometimes you're already old enough, matured, rather than marry very young. You're allowed also at the age of twenty-one but you don't live on your own until you have one kid. Then the grandmother takes care of the children, not the husband and wife. They get them when the child is two years old, three years old. The grandmother or grandfather, they still supervise how they raise the children. We always respect the elderly. We cannot answer back the parents or you'd get in trouble. When visitors were around, you cannot pass in between the visitors. You have to wait until the visitors go home because if you pass by then my mother will look at me, so we know we are not allowed to go out. So we wait.

Another thing, if there is a dead man in the family, or someone dies the nearest kin assembles everything. Not like in other places. The whole generation, even people you didn't know were your relatives, everyone comes. It happened when my husband died. I found out that we have so many relatives. I was very glad there were so many people. I was relieved. In our dialect we have many words for sister, they are a sign of respect. There were many people calling me sister.

Also, we are still growing as a country but our tradition is to go from the ancestors to the nearest kin. Unless they leave and go somewhere like Israel or something and they come back with another religion. But in our country, we are practically all Christian. 80% is Catholic because we were under Spanish for three hundred years. It was discovered by Magellan and Magellan was the one who introduced Christianity. Magellan was sent by the Spaniards to colonize, so we were colonized by the Spanish for three hundred years. Then here comes another war. The United States happened to know that they want to colonize the Philippians so they had a war between United States and the Spanish. The United States won so we were under the United States. We were taken from the Spanish. So they changed our tradition, education, and we studied under the United States. I think that was 1906. Some people resisted, they formed a guerilla so they were fighting with the Spaniards and siding with the U.S. That's why the U.S. won. That was the time when they changed our custom and tradition. They brought their books and all the education and the teachers were all American. My husband was in the military, and he was very smart. He was always honors. His teachers liked him very much. He had very many pen pals with his teachers here. When the war came, Japan and the United States, that was different. We were under the United States so there was a military base there and all the ammunition was there. We were not the one to have war with the Japanese but we had the base there so we were involved. My husband was an army doctor so he joined with the U.S. and they won the war. That is why some people are asking for some compensation for what they have done but still we have this tradition that

whenever you fight, you fight to the last. That is what Filipino's are, they do not turn back. Obama signed the compensation the other day for the guerilla. My husband is unlucky because he died one month ago and the money was just approved. I'm not regretting because I am entitled for a certain amount.

At this point, her daughter brings out a picture of her father, Lori's recently deceased husband. He is in uniform, very young and very handsome. Lori tells me about the picture and then continues.

Some of the customs with the family are saying grace before meals. Also, intermarriages. We'd rather marry our own tribes than go to another. We have multicultural influence from the Eastern side, the Chinese. They'd rather marry their own kin than go to another family. We are very clannish. At six o'clock we pray the holy rosary when the bell rings. If you are doing something, you have to stop, no matter what you are doing. Every day at six o'clock because they believe the spirit, the bad spirit will come when its about to be dark so we have to pray. This is to counter the evil spirits. That's been followed in modern times today. They would say it in Latin. You have to enroll in Latin Bible Study before grade one. We are taught how to pray. My father can speak Spanish and Latin. He attended the formal studies for the elite. Depends on what socioeconomic status you have. Your parents can send you to the church. We have this tradition, any time you go home you bless your parents (she places the back of her hand to her forehead). If your elder is still alive, you can't just go inside and pass over them. It's respect. I was raised by my grandparents. My parents were very young but my grandparents still raised me because they are not yet well trained.

Some other things that we believe are, you cannot go out after dark because the bad spirits are also walking around and if you step on it, you will get sick and you will not get well. And when the full moon is out, we are not allowed to go out because the bad spirits are roaming around. If there is an eclipse, a pregnant woman cannot go out because there will be complications in the delivery. Also there's a vampire that goes to the roof and if you are pregnant he will get your baby. If you find half of a body, then you put salt on it so that it cannot connect again. Like a witch. There is also a cat, a black cat and it will cross and something bad will happen to you. You have to back off and go home. Never run over a black cat because something will happen to you. If there's believed to be a witch or vampire, even if they are human beings, but because of rumors that they are a witch, nobody will go there anymore. One time they had a party and no one went because they think what they serve is human being.

We start laughing. At this point, Lori's daughter and grandchildren gather around to listen to Lori.



Whenever somebody is dying, the witch or vampire will go and change the body. It looks like the original body and they will take the dead one and they eat it (giggling). It's very scary. When we were still young, when we knew that a family was a witch, we would never pass by. There were people that would tell you these stories, that's how you knew. Then, when you are pregnant you cannot take a shower in the river, because there is a bad spirit there and it's very hard for you to deliver because the baby is not there. They always tell us this. You know when you're about to get married, there are so many stories about pregnancy. Like when you are pregnant, sometimes if you walk along the beach, you will hear this crying baby. You must be very careful and get a checkup because that means your baby is not normal. It's the unborn children that died without baptizing, they are condemning the baby. They will not go to the doctor they go to the quack doctor<sup>5</sup> because they say that the doctor doesn't know anything about that. They have to go to the quack doctor, like a medicine man, a witch doctor. I don't know what they did but sometimes they mix up something to drive the witch or bad spirits out. Sometimes they have a chicken and bring it to the mountain and they ask for the baby back in return for the chicken. Like a sacrifice. There were two of these doctors in my town. They had more patients than the real doctors. I remember going but sometimes you believe also because they have so many herbs, they'd massage all your body so sometimes you feel good when you're wrapped in all of that. Many of the medicines come from herbs. They'd use like ginger, even for my arthritis one time, they bought some oil and wrapped it and it helped. I did not have to get an operation.

We have this tradition with the dead, on the 9<sup>th</sup> day we have a rosary and then after 40 days we have a mass. Until the 40 days, the spirit is still on Earth. He is not in heaven or wherever they're going so we have to follow the tradition. There must be a mass so he will go now wherever he is going (her husband's 40 day was the Thursday before this meeting). But still, I cannot forget him. After the body dies, the spirit is here on Earth for 40 days so we need to celebrate that life but also that spirit is here looking over the loved ones to make sure they're coping okay. You feel their presence. Little things they help you with. There are some signs that I believe because I have not been through this before. I believe that the spirit is still here because sometimes I was just alone and all of a sudden, something moved this or the pen is rolling and I know that he is around helping me. So many things happened. You also pray to help them to get to heaven. After a burial, you can't just go home. You have to stop. You can get coffee or something but you can't go home or the spirit will follow you home. And with the rosary, you have to break it or someone else will die in your family. And the

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<sup>5</sup> I looked up the definition of a quack doctor in the Philippines and found that a quack doctor is not a quack as in Western culture, like a fake, but rather a doctor that practice alternative medicine using herbs, chants, etc.

first one to be born after the death in the family, will inherit all of the good talents of the deceased.

Lori pauses while her daughter brings us merienda, a Filipino gelatinous dish that they serve as a snack before dinner. It has coconut milk and fresh fruit and is delicious.

The older generations still practiced the arranged marriage. My grandparents were arranged. So my mother is looking for somebody, and then here comes my grandfather, "I have a handsome man." My mother is not so pretty but my father has Italian blood. He looks Italian. My mother had a different man, someone else was courting her. She told her parents that she was committed. They told her that they wanted her to marry him because that's who they liked. On the way to the church she was crying. But then every time she looked at that handsome man, she was convinced. And they had thirteen kids but we are unlucky because only one looks like him (laughing).

After my first child, I wasn't able to take a shower for one month. They worried about infection. They would boil lemon grass and I'd have to sit on it. It was hot! You cannot take a shower unless it was from the head down. What a relief after one month! You could do a sponge bath but never take a shower.

I told Lori that I couldn't even imagine.

Let's see, what else can I tell you? On New Year's you have coins and you lay them out and throw it and make loud noises to make the spirits go away. And you have coins around to bring money in for the new year. During New Year, the tradition is that the table is filled with food. That's all throughout the year you have something to eat. If you are walking in a forest with a lot of little trees and you're walking on stuff and such, you're supposed to say "tabi po, tabi po" which means "excuse me, excuse me." Because there's little dwarves living everywhere and fairies and if you step on their houses you should say sorry. It means I'm walking through. If you think you're being followed by dwarfs or if you think dwarfs are following your family, you should build a little house in the corner of your backyard and feed them. There's a certain tree in the Philippines that you buy for them to feed them. They're supposed to be lucky. Some would cook for them. You have to make sure you make a way for them to get in there. If you hit one of the houses, you have to chop off the head of a chicken and pour the blood around the house.

I could see that dinner was ready so I excused herself so that they could eat. They graciously invited me and the Volunteer Coordinator to stay. The grandchildren began to talk to about some of the stories. They knew them well and believed every word,

superstitions and all. It was a very warm and loving family and it was clear that the younger generations respected their grandmother and loved her very much.

*Carlos*

Carlos lives at home with his wife in the house they have owned for many years. His stepchildren lived next door. Carlos loved to garden and brought me some vegetables he grew to the meeting. Carlos has volunteered at the hospital for a little less than a year. The narrative was conducted at a local bookstore outside on a patio to enjoy the unusually warm day. The Volunteer Coordinator was present for the beginning of the interview. The interview began by asking Carlos where he grew up.

In Portugal, Pedro Miguel, the village. It was the Azures. When I grew up, I was the only boy in the family. Six girls, one boy. It's not too good. I had a friend who played with me. He was thirteen years old and I was ten. He was my second cousin. In school, in the three years of school, we used to make plays. According to them, I was good at that, singing and playing. And also after school, they asked me to make a play.

In the meantime, back to the beginning of my life, my mother sent five kids to school, every day. Four girls and we have twins. Two girls, twins. And one older than me, she is a nun. She's eighty-six or something, living in Portugal. The other one was a teacher but she died, in Canada. I was going to school, Catechism. My mother would take us, me and the two young sisters, the other one's were a little older. My father was in this country eight years, from twelve to twenty, 1912. My parents were from the 1800's. My father was born in 1888 and my mother was born in 1884. So my mother, I admire that girl. There's no electricity, kerosene, the lights were kerosene. For some reason people have good eyes, we'd read and do things by kerosene. I'm supposed to tell you, I will initiate to tell you this thing, so I'm going to tell you. My mother, would take us to the church and after mass we'd go to Catechism, to learn. After that, the priest said, "boys and girls, after you are done with the catechism, you come to the rhetoric" and when we got there he says, "I bring you over here because I want you, some of you explain the gospel of today." I won fifty cents. I said the truth and that's what I've been doing since then. I don't know. Sometimes the truth hurts. And what happened, my sister and the boys, the boys and the girls they become jealous of me, because fifty cents was a lot of money. I had a friend, he was not too good, but he was a friend and we'd walk home. It was 1,300 meters from the church to our house. On our way home there was a store and a guy told

me, "Hey Sousa, Sousa, we can buy cigarettes there." I was less than ten. We bought the cigarettes. It was forty cents. I had ten cents left over.

When they told my father that I bought the cigarettes, he spanked me. Not good. I wanted to do a play in church, I was prepared to do it but he decreased my will. He destroyed my will. Yeah, because I had a godmother, my sister, seventeen years older than me. Because they were already alive when my father come to this country. So I was the last one in the family. My sister was my godmother, she loves me so much. She heard I was crying. She said come over here. My father put the cigarettes in the fire but she came and she took it out. And she stopped my father from spanking me.

Do you know this saying, "There is no wounds that God doesn't cure?" God cures everything. My mom, she tells me a lot of stories like this. "Not all the way the truth should be said." She was not educated but she was so smart. My father worked so hard, very strict. He was a tall man, very tall. Taller than me. I'm like my mother, very small. I see him go to the field to get wood to cook the bread. The dry wood, they cut it when it's green. Throughout the summer they dry and my parents go there and pick up the wood. My father was very strong. I was not a strong man but I was maybe six years married and I did more than he did his entire life. When I came to this country, I was getting the salary of two teachers. I produced so much milk, he never did in his life. Milk is important everywhere, milk is life.

My father was a farmer. He worked here in America. He worked in Sacramento making irrigation. You know like they do in the Panama Canal? The Panama Canal was over fifty years ago but they still do the dredges because the erosion of the water, and the dirt slides and builds up in the bottom. Panama Canal is forty miles across but there's fifty miles to go around. It's beautiful. That system, the lochs. You go up eighty-one feet. Maybe higher than that. I think there's six outlets bringing the water in. I saw it. The Pacific is higher than the Atlantic by three feet. We went down there and near Guyana. You know Guyana? That was a terrible year. 1978, 900 people killed. And there was a guy, in politics that went down there and he was killed on the runway. That same month, Harvey Milk and Mascone was killed by Don White. He killed them both, here in San Francisco. Same year, it was terrible that year.

My grandparents, my mother side. I just saw my grandmother, she was blind. She married twice. And my mother has a sister from another father. My father's father lived up to ninety-seven. (He then breaks into a song in Portuguese.) It's a song about making wool when you make sweaters. My grandfather asked my sisters to help him write a letter to send to this country to my father. He asked them to put that he was dead. They were surprised, my sisters, "Oh grandpa, you're not dead!" But that time, sometimes it takes a month, two, three months for the letters to come over here, 6000 miles. And he said, "By the time that letter gets there, I will be dead." That's my grandparents.

At this point, Carlos broke into another song. He sang *Ring Around the Rosy* in Portuguese. He then opened a book that he brought with him. It was a book filled with his writings. He said, "My daughter gave me this book in 2004." He then began to read the writings in Portuguese and then translated them into English.

If I know how to sing, the way I know how to make the rhymes, I make the rocks to cry. Here's another, the time I loved you, I did love you. It's gone. But, if I'm still looking at you, I am still turning my neck, still looking for you. And this one, if my eyes bother you when I am in front of you, I promise to take them out and to love you blindly.

*May Liu*

May Liu lives in a senior housing facility in San Francisco. She lives in the same building as Irene and they have become close friends. Her interview took place the same evening as Irene's. Irene came to listen to May Liu's narrative. The Volunteer Coordinator was also present. May Liu's room was covered in framed art on all of her walls. When asked about them, she admitted that she was the artist. They were beautiful and she gave me a picture of one of her paintings to take. May Liu was reminded about the project before she began.

My father was quite a scholar. He taught my mother some karate, Chinese and supervised her calligraphy writing. My mother wrote really well, in Chinese characters. And when we were little, studying primary school, my mother always had a bowl of Chinese ink ready and when we came back from school we had to sit around the table and write at least one sheet. That would be about sixteen Chinese characters. I was the naughty one. I was the eldest. I couldn't concentrate. But my sister, one year younger than I was, wrote quite well. And later she studied art. And she's really an artist. I didn't start that (pointing to a painting on her wall) until 2004. When I was young, I was an outdoor girl. I played sports, softball. I played pitcher. Can you imagine that? (Laughing)

I laughed along with her and then asked her if this was in China and what part of China.

Shanghai. We had six siblings. I have three younger sisters and two younger brothers. And my father was quite strict with us, demanded everything perfect. If anything went wrong, I got the blame, "You are the oldest, you should set example for them. You should see what's wrong with what they are doing."

Well, we were taught to obey the elders so I couldn't argue. On the whole we had quite the pleasant childhood. My grandmother was living with us, taking care of us. My mother didn't go out to work, but she was a housewife. Father was strict but we got from him, that whatever we did, we aim to be perfect. He checked our homework and mother was the gentle one. She likes to have kids around. Six of us weren't enough for her. We had cousins next door. Whenever she cooked something good, she had all of them come over. We usually had supper at night, and we'd have more than eight kids eat with us. There were a lot of people. My mother loved that. My grandmother would never stop her mending. You know at that time we didn't have nylons, we had those cotton socks. She was always doing mending. She liked to make snacks. She didn't have to cook the meals, but she'd make snacks for us. Before bedtime she always had something small to give us. Grandmother had a hard time. When my mother was a kid, they lived with my grandmother's mother. Well for food, she didn't have to worry but to bring up a child, she did it all by herself. No man. He passed away when my mother was three.

My impression for my childhood is every Chinese New Year, all of us had to go to pay respect to my father's aunt. My father's uncle was the Emperor of the Navy, a big shot. So the aunt had a high standard. My father's parents died young so he was an orphan. The aunt and uncle took care of him. The aunt, one amends she made was to keep her company, he would play mahjong. He wasn't allowed to win! To please her, he would try and let her win. I didn't like the idea. So every year we had to go for Chinese New Year to pay respect to her. I was the one reluctant to go. We had to go. That's one thing, even now, I don't like the idea. But at that time we didn't have to bow our head to the ground because Father was once sent out by the Navy to the States to learn submarine. He learned all the customs here and brought that back. So we had bread and he had coffee and he let us sip a little. By the time we went to school, I went to boarding school to get more used to Western customs.

I went to missionary school in Shanghai. I lived in school for four years and then the Japanese occupation came and we didn't have any boarding school. We had day school. The Japanese Occupation was in 1937. I was seventeen. It was scary. From 1939 to 1940, my last year in senior school, we had to go through a park to our school and there was Japanese gentlemen in the front gate and the back gate. We had to pass them. Twice one way and then twice back, so there was four times passing them. We were scared but we had to go through. At that time our high school had a building inside the University. The University is at the back of the park so we had to go through that. Scary. We just pretended not to see them, walk through, we didn't say anything. But inside, you know how we felt. That was a hard time to go through.

I married late. I married after the Communist came in. So they grew more or less under Communist. We didn't get to say anything. I like English because my first job was working as the secretary in the University. I knew my English wasn't good but I had a chance at the staff at the University. I could take courses that

didn't affect my work. So I got to like English but I couldn't teach the kids. When the Communist came in, it was all changed. The office was changed to Chinese. No English. I even had to learn Chinese typing. But we were more or less trying to be cautious, not to violate any of those rules. You'd get into trouble. Can you imagine? I hate to go through that part of the story but you don't have the right to talk freely. If you say anything against the Communist, next time you might disappear. Nobody would find you. The worst was, everyday, most of the time they'd call a meeting to wash your brain. They'd want you to tell them what you did, especially where I was working. At the time I was working for a Shanghai company, it was actually an American enterprise. I was being called, Running Duck of the Interior. I had to be very careful. At that time the living condition was, one family, one room and the house had seven rooms so there are seven families in the house. If you talked anything against the Communist, it was reported. Then you'd have to sit there and they'd say, "What did you say? What is wrong? How could you say those things?" And you'd really have a hard time. I was careful when I say anything but still, they wanted me to say what I did for the Americans. I'd just keep quiet, routine work I'd tell them. But anything about how I feel, I didn't say anything. I'd just keep quiet. They hated me. Well, that's one way out. If you say things, you might think it's nothing but they could turn it around and say you were against them. I was sent to the countryside, living with farmers, doing farm work for three years. Another three years in a construction site building for a power plant. I have to do labor, hard work, carrying bricks. Physical. And then another three years, just sitting there, let them wash my brain. Nine years out of the house. During those periods I could only come home once a month for four days. I was married. My children, actually, I didn't have much time to spend with them. They had three aunts. Lucky, the three aunts took care of them. Telling them bedtime stories and fed them, dressed them. So, in a way I was lucky. After the nine years, they called us back and asked me whether I wanted to be a white collar clerk that would take me an hour and a half one way to get to the working place, or would I rather stay nearer to home, twenty minutes for a bus ride and do labor. Well, I chose the later one and they thought they did good washing my brain. I'd rather be closer. Three hours on my way, that's no fun. Even when I worked before going to the countryside, I didn't get home until nine o'clock. I didn't get the chance to tell my children stories. At best, they'd smile and let me carry them to bed.

My sister left Shanghai earlier. She got a job as a stewardess in an airplane company and she sponsored my daughter to come over. My daughter got pregnant, expecting, so I applied three times at the American Embassy to let me come. I got here ten days before my granddaughter was born. I was lucky that day. I've been here ever since but I go back to Shanghai every year. I'm leaving the day after tomorrow. My daughter is going to go with me. She hasn't been there for twenty-three years. I have my son and his family in Shanghai. I still have a sister-in-law who is ninety-six years old over there and I have plenty of nieces and nephews. They come here too. I'm excited this time because my daughter is going with me. Now there are so many new buildings. I don't remember the name of the streets. My niece takes me out.

My mom used to tell me old, old stories about kings and princes but I don't remember them. My grandmother did too. I didn't tell those to my kids because I was working. My father used to tell us about Red Riding Hood. I think he told me the American story. There are a lot of ghost stories in Chinese culture. They're scary but I don't remember the details. But we have very many ghost stories. The old people are superstitious. Something comes down from older people to try to let kids have something to fear so that they behave. I was scared.

*Annie*

Annie asked that the interview be conducted one weekend day at the hospital.

The Volunteer Coordinator agreed to meet with us as well so that it could take place in her office for some privacy.

My father was a very good storyteller so I have a lot of memories or some of them, that are very clear. My mother wasn't as good of a storyteller but my grandmother lived with us, forever, since I was born and she was a little bit of a storyteller. So I've got history from both sides, which is great, you know, which is great. So, stories are in my mind, absolutely. After this process I'm going to pass them on a little clearer. I was born in Somerville, we lived in Somerville for a couple of years and then moved to Redding. My father was, he came from Newfoundland, he was a fisherman when he came here and so that is truly one of my fun stories in how he got to America and met my mother and that whole thing. But yeah, he came from Newfoundland when he was in his early twenties and came down here. I don't know, do I just go into the story?

I tell her that she should absolutely just go into it.

Okay, okay (laughing). So, he grew up in Newfoundland in a city called Bellageriant, a fishing town and fishing village, and just everybody, the boys became fisherman and that was it. The girls got married became mothers and so forth and so on. His brother, his older brother Leo had come to the United States and lived in Boston, lived in actually Somerville, Powder House Square in Somerville, a few years before my father came down. And then my father decided he wanted to come to America, and it was during the Depression. It was like late thirties so they were not letting anyone in the United States that did not have a job, they were just very, very picky on immigrants coming into the United States. He had his just a little bit of money, he had my uncle, his brother's name and address for where they lived and everything. My uncle was a captain of a fishing vessel out of Gloucester at the time called *The Adventure*. So my father came from Newfoundland into the Boston Harbor through immigration and again they weren't letting anybody, they were mainly sending people back. But the person that interviewed him at immigration, knew my uncle. And so, they said, Leo Hines, my father's last name was Hines, and they said, "I know Leo Hines, you're going to stay with him?" "Yes, I am. So they let him in. And so Leo



Hines and his wife, my Aunt Lil, lived in, they rented from my mother and grandmother who owned the house in Somerville, Powder House Square on Bay State Ave. So my Aunt Lil and Leo lived downstairs and my father moved in with them and you know that's how he got to America. He started off fishing with my uncle, continued fishing and from there they kind of met my mother and was living upstairs and kind of became sweethearts and that's another story. But that's a first story that I think is kind of fate, that someone would be there that let him in, that knew him and let him in when no one else was coming in. Because of my uncle being here, it was certainly a lot easier, certainly a lot easier. He left the rest of the family. He had a sister and another brother that were still back in Newfoundland but I never heard him say it was hard. Probably because of my Uncle Leo.

He was definitely a hard worker. One of the other stories, kind of a segeway still on my father's side, is for again many, many years he was a fisherman on The Adventure. My uncle was the captain, my Uncle Leo. And the fishing stories that he would tell and this was even after I was born, he was still a fisherman. They would go out for weeks and weeks at a time and go to Georgia's bank and do a lot of fishing. We have a movie that was made of my uncle's boat, my uncle's ship, schooner. And that, The Adventure, it just showed how rough it was you know, they would go out in these little two man dories for a mile away from the ship and they would go out like at 2 a.m. so I mean, pitch black and they would throw the lines and then bring them in, clean the fish, tie the lines. I don't know how they did it. I do not know how they did it. The times when fog would roll in and you know, they've lost men so lots of wonderful stories. Again, my father and my uncle and my aunt, all on my father's side, they were all storytellers. I think from Newfoundland, that's part of you. It's in your genes that you're a storyteller.

So, the fishing industry really got harder and harder. This was again when I was a little older, maybe seven or eight, something like that because I remember going to the big fishing wharfs even in Boston when the catches would come in. The industry was getting harder and harder and there were more regulations on fishermen. My uncle retired and my father, they all kind of lost their jobs. You know times were really rough. He had signed up to go to unemployment and he was walking home. They had moved to Redding, my mother, they were married and had us and moved to Redding. And he was on his way home, walking from the unemployment agency to our house in Redding which was quite a way. Someone stopped and asked him if he wanted a ride and it turned out that this man owned his company. He was a contractor, a carpenter, built houses and whatever. He asked my father if he wanted just a little job and to help him out, he was a little short of help. My father, knowing nothing about carpentry, I mean my father, I don't think he even made it through the fourth grade. That's just how it was, you went off fishing. So he took the job with this carpenter and the carpenter showed him a number of things, what to do and the tricks of his trade and everything. That carpenter went away on vacation for a month or so and people wanted their business so they asked my father if he'd work on projects. Well, he really was very good at it and turned out that was the rest of his career.

He built probably twenty houses in Redding and other towns and he was a natural at this and never trained or anything. He just was a very, very hard worker. Even through our childhood he was just very committed to his job. That's the second story.

You know it helps telling stories because of my father and my aunt. They're hysterical, some of the stories from Newfoundland. My Aunt Liz and the mean tricks that they'd play on Aunt Liz. It just was fascinating and I loved hearing them, loved hearing them. My Aunt Liz lived up in Newfoundland, this was when they were all little kids up in Newfoundland and the tricks that they'd play and the Christmases, how they'd go house to house. It was funny, just hearing them all talk. His sister, one of his other sisters, my Aunt Jo, eventually came to the United States so there was the two brothers and the sister here in the United States and they all lived fairly close. So it was great. I never met my grandfather or grandmother on my father's side. My grandfather on my father's side passed away pretty early and my grandmother, she never came down to the United States so I never met her.

On my mother's side, shifting stories...my mother's side is a whole different ballgame. My grandmother lived with us forever. My grandmother lost her husband, my grandfather, when he was forty and she had I think six, seven kids at the time so she was like late thirties and in those days, there was no social security, she was on her own. He died from Diphtheria and he used to work in a shoe factory and they had these six kids. Rual was the oldest, my mother Clarisse was the second oldest then there was Aunt Marian, there were three others. There was a baby that was born and he died at two. These are all survivors in my mind. There were so many things that happened with diseases and they were just true survivors. They just went on. So, my mother, one of the stories, my mother was probably eighteen and her brother Rual was probably twenty-one and he worked at a bank and even from constantly from what my grandmother, because she lived with us, from what she'd say, anytime anyone would mention Rual it was like he was the best. He was the best man, the best boy, everybody loved him. There was just an aura around Rual. And my mother and Rual had gone to swim down at, I don't know, I know she mentioned, they took the trolley in those days, not a car or anything, they took a trolley down to some beach that was south of Somerville. They were swimming and my mother started drowning, and he went in the water to save my mother and he died. He was taken in with the undertow and so my mother had to take the trolley home and tell her mother that her favorite son had died. It was really, you know? My mother never, she'd talk about it a little bit but, my mother is, well if there was closest to a saint in anyone's life, it would be her. I do not remember her ever yelling at anybody or just being argumentative or talking badly about anybody. She just was a remarkable woman.

So anyway, she had to go home and tell her mother that her favorite son was, you know. He received a medal for it, for saving her life and I still have that medal at home which is something. So, the whole family, between the baby, there was a

lot of tragedy. But I think it was like every family, the Diphtheria and all the diseases. So my grandmother, when her husband passed away, my grandfather who I never knew, she was older at the time and had gone to secretarial school. She always felt that she was very lucky for having done that because most young women at that time, you got married and that was it so you didn't have a career. As a result, my mother would go and work. She worked at the sugar factory in Boston and a couple of different places and really loved it. She would come home and turn her whole paycheck over to my grandmother. So they made it. They made it. After my mother got married, and my mother and father started dating again when they were in Somerville. Truth be told, I think my mother had to get married and I didn't find that out until like decades and decades. I finally figured that out. My sister was born first, I had an older sister and so they moved to Redding, the whole family moved to Redding after that and just lived with us just forever.

Even for my mother, with my grandmother, I think there was some resentment from my father that my grandmother lived with them forever. I'm sure there was a lot of privacy issues. I'm sure that's why he worked a little bit extra you know, staying out or whatever. He's always go out to sea. It's funny, my sister and I were both born while he was out to sea. My mother's sister who lived nearby drove her to the hospital. There was a lot of family closeness, they were lucky to have family so close. There was a lot of cousins and uncles on both sides who got together a lot and again, she had stories and you would hear it. Good memories. We did tape my father before he passed away and I can't find that tape. I'm bound and determined to find that tape. It was a long time before I could listen to that tape. It was his voice and I just couldn't do it. My mother, she was absolutely amazing, her organizational skills and everything, I think I got that from her. She just kept everything and I inherited them. We have the piece of paper from the day my father came to the United States, his immigration paper. We have the bill from the hospital when I was born. Seven dollars a day for seven days. My mother dangled for five days after I was born, they let her dangle. A lot of written down history on my mother's side. Not as much on my father's side and I regret that, I absolutely regret that. When my mother passed away we had from a book, from Robert Fulcrum's book, he had written, "All I Wanted to Know I Learned in Kindergarten." He had written a number of other books and there was one book that just absolutely touched me, um, the person was on like the passages of life and when it got to the death there was one woman who wanted, she decided what she wanted when she died at her eulogy. One was the history of her life, one was from her early days, her professional days to speak and the other was a family member. And I took that when my mother passed away and so I did write down precise dates and what people died from and their names and everything. I did bring a copy.

Annie hands me a copy of her family history. I told her that it was great that she did that and thanked her for bringing it to share with me. She says, "And I'm thinking of doing that for my father, you spurred me on." Excitedly, I tell her that I think it's wonderful.

Yeah, yeah. I can't imagine that this wouldn't spur people on. It just comes to your mind. And these things are, like even hearing my daughter say, "Gee I don't remember you ever saying that." And it's interesting, my husband was going to come today and we were talking about it and his father never shared anything from memories, anything from his past and his mother didn't either. So he didn't have any stories that he could even come up with. But, he has a gazillion stories from his life that are funny and whatever, all his brothers and sisters. He's going to start writing it down for him. Yeah, because he's more of a storyteller. I'm not great.

I assure her that she's an excellent storyteller.

Well, I'm going to get better. There was one story, again regarding my father being a fisherman. He was out fishing and it became very foggy and he was on one of the dories. I didn't catch if there was another man on the dory with him or not, but he got separated from the ship and it was about a month later and the ship went home and they told my grandmother and all the brothers and sisters that he was lost at sea. And about a month later, he knocked on the door. It was like, oh my gosh, a ghost. That was pretty much as close to a ghost story that I can think of. Everybody should have ghost stories.

I ask Annie when she remembers hearing the stories.

Oh, let's see. These stories were just constantly being told, mostly when they got together, my father's sister and brother and the old expressions, the Newfoundland expressions. They had so many jokes. I was trying to think of them, they were really witty. Really witty. And these accents, these Newfoundland accents. The cooking, there was just always a lot of stories told around family events, dinner table type of thing. Same with my mother. She didn't share too, too much but every once in awhile she would have a story that would kind of surprise you. One of my cousins, my grandmother had two sisters that lived down the Cape, Cape Cod. One lived in Redding and another lived with us. The one that lived down the Cape, had a daughter who also lived down the Cape and we used to go down there quite a bit for summer vacations and Florence was kind of always sick, that I remember. She eventually went into a wheelchair. She always had all these boyfriends. I remember one of them, Pete, the last one who kind of lived there and everything. We'd go there summers and stay for two weeks, and my father, if he was lucky, would come for some of it but it was mainly my mother and grandmother who brought us down for the summer. One day after Florence died and everything, Pete went off to a mental institution. I don't know what that was all about. He wasn't a relative, so I don't know, there

were just all these stories about him. One day my mother is sitting with my daughter and I, and we started asking more about Florence, you know what she was like. She was always kind of a hellion growing up and my mother said, "Oh, she had Syphilis." And I'm saying, "Oh my God!" I can't even imagine my mother saying that word, number one. But every once in awhile there would be something that flew out about her history. Anyway, that's Aunt Florence.

Um, let me think. Talking about Newfoundland, the stories again about the brothers and all the kids, how they would get together. They had these really hard winters, snowy, snowy, snowy and they would just settle in for the winter. The Christmas's. They would go to each other's houses and everything and just stay two or three days. My father and his brother, my Uncle Leo would always be kind of hellions and torture this Aunt Liz, who I wish I had met, but they would have cold stoves to keep them warm and each kid was in charge of stoking it in the night and keep it going. They would go over to Aunt Liz's house and throw in a wet sock and there'd be smoke everywhere and they just tortured this woman. And I guess she was so good. At Christmas time, the only thing they would get was probably a pair of mittens that the mother had knitted. My uncle would talk about how they would do the twelve days of Christmas and each day they would just go house to house and stay a few days and then they'd go to the next house and get a tiny little treat, I don't know, a little candy or something. So a lot of talking about just surviving Newfoundland. I remember my father saying about fishing, because I think he started at fourteen. There was a rite of passage when you were old enough to go out fishing and you had to go up and touch the top of the mast pole and that kind of indoctrinated you into becoming a fisherman. It just was very rough times. They used to plant a lot of potatoes and practically nothing could grow in that soil but they would plant potatoes. They would get the salt cod and put it in vats of salt and that would keep it all winter. So when you took it out and soaked it, it would take salt and that would last all winter, kind of a preservative. A lot around that. Both of my aunts were excellent cooks and my father loved all sorts of fish. I remember cods tongues cooking in the oven. My grandfather was also a fisherman. If you were a man you were a fisherman. I think my father came to America because he saw his brother and wanted a different way of living, to break away. He had a good life, he had some medical problems. He had one kidney and some stomach surgery but always the hardest worker and very committed. My sister and I, he just loved us to pieces. I was probably the favorite, I was the youngest. I had dislocated hips when I was born but I was just the favorite. My sister would say that too. I just loved him to pieces.

I can't think of anything else. Not as many stories on my mother's side. Some with my grandmother. She had two sisters. I don't know much about my grandmother's parents. I know a little bit. My grandmother's grandmother, was a Folger and born in Nantucket and so there was even fishermen. I'm not sure if it was my great great grandparents but some reason they were in Nantucket and Folger is a huge name in Nantucket. I have genealogy that I should pay attention to more. Benjamin Franklin is relative of mine, on the legitimate side. I guess he

had a lot on the illegitimate side (laughing). He was a Folger. His mother was a Folger so there was a tie there. I love that! We discovered that, my grandmother started talking about her grandmother from Nantucket, so after she died we went over and looked at the books, the logs in the City Hall and found the birth and death dates. But I don't know too much about any of the fine details. I kind of inherited a lot of the genealogy, the written down information. I know a lot of the dates and places. I know a lot came from England so I have even some places. I've never gone back to explore but I have all that written down and locked up in a safe place. That will be passed on to my daughter and grandkids which is good. I've never been to Newfoundland. I need to go! I still have a couple of cousins up there. Anyone who has ever gone to Newfoundland they just welcome you beyond welcome you and take you in. I don't know why, I don't know why. I think I've just always been drawn to cities which is why I'm in San Francisco. Newfoundland is not a city but I really should go. I really should go.

You know, my grandmother helped to raise me. My mother was a secretary at an elementary school for most of her adult life so, especially having dislocated hips when I was born. I wasn't even diagnosed until I was two. No one knew what it was until I finally couldn't walk or walked funny or whatever, so, I had an operation when I was two and when I was seven and during those times my mother did work but my grandmother was always there. She played a big part of my growing up. I just loved her to pieces. I'm the tall one in the family at 5'1. My grandmother was maybe 4'9, tiny, tiny and my mother was maybe 4'10 so she cared for me, my grandmother. There was always someone there. It was neat to have her. You know, I see families, because my grandchildren are back East. They are pretty much in their own world. We text and whatever but it has changed. We were there when they were small and to help them grow up and feel like family. My sister is still in Redding. Hopefully, they will feel like they've had that family connection. You know with my mother, I never fought with her. You didn't fight, you didn't argue. As a side result of that, there wasn't a lot of sharing of feelings. If I was angry about something I didn't feel like I could say I'm angry. But, I do not remember ever having a fight with my mother which is like, how strange is that? I can't say that I wasn't angry inside or disappointed but I just never fought with her, I just never did. Again, there were a lot of things that weren't shared. My mother, because of her upbringing, you didn't share feelings too much. You didn't share a lot of sadness or whatever, I'm sure I shared some or disappointment. There just was an awful lot of keeping things in. Just not knowing what to do with all these feelings. I got from her, just a positive attitude, things work out. A lot of good qualities from my mother and father. Especially my mother and grandmother. Now with my daughter, it was like, what do I do with this girl? She had the teenage attitude and I had no idea what to do with this monster but we became best of friends. I just love her to pieces. Now watching her raising her children, she's wise. She knows just how to handle these kids and these attitudes and looks. She talks to them and lays it right down on the table. She's an absolute great mother. I just think I grew up so naive. And I still am naive, even at my age. Very protected. She's much more worldly than I ever was. It's a good thing. Today it's so different with the computers and

technology. I'm afraid the games get lost. We used to play marbles and had those skates with the key. We'd play Red Rover and all those neighborhood games. Now, it's like with my grandkids, they just want to go to the mall. A lot of that is lost. I'm very sad about that. It was a much simpler time. There were no walls, you just stayed in the neighborhood, you'd sit out on the front porch until it was really late in the summer. You were just having too much fun talking and singing songs. Much simpler then. My daughter wants me to start taping, to start interviewing. She says you've got to write it down. It's absolutely true, let alone stories from my father, but stories from me. Hopefully, this gives you a little bit to help you. Thank you for thinking of me!

The experience seemed to spark something in Annie. She had said that she called her daughter before coming to the interview to ask her what stories she remembered. Her daughter did not remember many of them. Annie felt like she needed to tell these stories to her daughter and her grandchildren. She recognized how important they are to her and that they should be passed down.

### *Karina*

The Volunteer Coordinator and I agreed to meet Karina at the San Mateo Public Library on a rainy Saturday. Karina brought her husband along because she feared that her English was not very good and might need help. However, her English was excellent and once Karina began, she needed absolutely no assistance. The interview took place on a covered balcony outside with hot tea. Throughout the recording, the sound of rain falling could be heard. It seemed fitting for Karina's tale.

My parents died when I was little girl. My mother's relatives told me what happened to them. My father, participated in the second war, he was pilot. And he provide for the second war but he even flew to Alaska. They picked up some plane, it's like a heavy plane with bombs. He survived the second war but he didn't survive the Stalin time. It's 1948, in that time in Russia, usually you live together like one kitchen, one bathroom and a few families live there. It's called communal, a few families live in one place. Usually all celebrations they come together and celebrate. It was New Year when my father drink too much and he talked about Stalin and he was saying like why it's happened, the second war, why we go, you know like... and the first year the German's came to Moscow, and he blamed Stalin and I believe some neighbor contacted KGB. After while,

they come and took him. He was mostly delivering the Air Cobra, a fighter plane. But this was in the interval. In the beginning, he participated even in the Spanish War, 1939, I think. My mother was at that time, pregnant with me when my father was taken. My mother had already, four children. Three sisters and one brother. And all family was sent to Siberia. At that time, we used to live in Moscow, and at that time the whole family was sent to Siberia, Magadan<sup>6</sup>. Magadan is on the coast. Now it is a city but at that time it was a lot of political prisoners sent there. My father was in jail but all the family live like normal. They work, they do something, but they have to come every day to be counted. You can't go around, there was no way out because you're in the middle of nowhere. But you have to work. My sister and brother was sent to a different kind of orphanage. Because my mother was pregnant, she live in one place, and them in another place. And the gate on the orphanage was named Children for Enemies of the State. It was very seldom that my mother could see her children. It was the same Magadan place but a different compound. And um, my father was killed, executed without any trial. He was there months, very short. I never met my father. My mother met another guy in that camp, he was very very intelligent guy. He was at the University working in a very high position. But because he was a brother had a very high position in Communist Partisans, they are different. Different language and culture. He speaks perfect Russian and English, German.

So, because he's supposed to go to another country to negotiate or something, he's very, very intelligent. Because his brother was killed he was sent to prison in Magadan. It's how my mother got there. He was working to make furniture because he understands all the socioeconomic stuff. He was more like, not prison, he'd wear nice clothes and everything but he had to be counted. Work was not supposed to be like real work. His time was finished and he loved my mother and he said there was only one way to leave from here with your children, to get married to me. And my mother married him and they came to Sahumi. It's a beautiful place like California. There's the Black Sea and the water, mountains in the back. My mother was sick after staying a long time in Magadan, she was in the hospital. My father, second father, he was sick too. He had TB from working so hard. He was in the hospital too. We, the five children, no four children, my older sister stayed in Moscow with my mother's sister. They put us

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<sup>6</sup> Magadan was a Gulag, or a concentration camp during the Stalin Era. Hundreds of thousands of political prisoners were sent here to work at the labor camp and many of the charges brought against people were largely exaggerated. Political prisoners also included intellectuals, artists, homeless, minorities and a few common criminals. The average temperature in the winter is -72°. It is estimated that a total of 30 million people went through the camps from 1939-1945 including women and children. It is estimated that anywhere from 12-20 million people perished in the Gulag camps (Michaels, 2002, p.39).



in orphanage but different orphanages. I was six years old. The orphanage was together but we slept in different buildings. You know, I remember, my orphanage, it was, I think it was really in great condition. It was everything, like one time to wake up, one time to eat, structured and nobody smoked, nobody drank, no drugs, everybody was so healthy. We didn't have shoes, all summer we walked without shoes but everybody was healthy.

At this time, I developed my character. Friendship was more important than anything. To help each other, share everything with each other. In an orphanage, not all children was there for adopting. Most were orphans of people who had been executed. Nobody was there because they were abandoned. It was from the war. You never hear about someone abandoning a child. If the parent's can't then the relatives take the child. So, in this time, for example, if you have far away relatives, sometimes they come and they bring cake and everybody, there was twelve people in one room, and everybody has to share. You can't take anything. If somebody steal from you, it doesn't matter what, we punish very hard. How hard? If you are woman, we put blanket and cut her hair. You can't take it if it isn't yours. We didn't have anyone like servants, we did everything ourselves. Only one thing, I remember, nobody said I love you or hug you. When it was summer, and you wanted to go somewhere...

At this point, Karina got very emotional and began to cry. I could tell that she was not one to allow her tears to flow freely so I remained quiet to give her some time. Her husband held her hand. When I saw that she was ready to continue, I told her how sorry I was and that I understood this must be very difficult for her to talk about. I reminded her that she did not have to tell me anything that she did not feel comfortable talking about. It was a heart-wrenching moment for all of us to witness this strong woman confront the hardships of her childhood.

We had a lot of good things. We'd sing songs and my brother played the trumpet. I danced, they taught us the Georgian folk dances. All the time we would play. The only time you were in the room was to sleep and to study. The other time we would be outside. That's why the children were very healthy. I don't remember anyone was sick. The only time we'd get sick was when the people that lived outside the orphanage would come out to our school. We had a very good school. They'd bring infection. This was a very memorable time. Another memorable time was when I came here. I had a very good job in Moscow. I got married to a guy who wanted to come to America and I had my apartment, I bought my apartment when I was thirty years old, I had a good education, I had a good job. But when I came here, it all changed. Now I am happy to be here. I was thirty-five when I came. I did not speak one word of English. When I came here I

didn't have a chance to go to school because we divorced after we came here, after four months. We lived together four years and then it was very hard when we came here. I was on my own but I survived. I didn't have money, I didn't have a place to live, it was a very hard time but I am happy now. I was in the orphanage from six until sixteen years old. My sister and brother was with me. I don't know anybody who had bad situation in the orphanage. The only thing is we didn't know about money. I know how to sew, to clean, to communicate with a lot of different kind of people but I didn't know anything about money. I had trouble in the first time. We can survive through any kind of difficult situation. I remember we have breakfast, lunch, dinner, supper. Four times but still we were hungry. We always went to a farm to pick the fruit and we'd eat. Nobody was sick because it was natural. We'd take a carrot from the ground, brush it off and eat. But here, it's not like that. I know nobody had sex, nobody got pregnant. Absolutely healthy relationship.

My morals and values though, I took mostly from books. I read a lot of classical books. Life teaches you morals. If you are bad, you will be punished, they won't respect you. You can't tell on someone else, or betray someone else. It is life teach you. We have a few teachers that we liked. I don't remember anybody we don't like. Everybody likes the teachers. Another thing, we say, it's better to have 100 friends than 100 coins. We always have. I was success in my life. If I have friends, I have forever. If I feel like you're not honest with me, then just go away. I am lucky. I saw my grandparents only one time. My mother took us to Moscow, and my grandfather already died at that time. My grandmother, I remember she was absolutely amazing woman. Very kind. She did the snuff. She have huge skirts and I remember she always hide tobacco from her daughter, not my mother. There was one time I remember my mother and her sister, she made dough and she put on a chair and cover and my grandmother sit, "So warm!" She never became mad, always smile. Same my mother. My aunt she told me, she used to bring all poor people and everything she had she shared with them. Now everybody separates. Nobody is jealous, what you have or don't have. Now everything is different. If you have something maybe someone would steal it. Sunday's they used to come and eat and a lot of intelligent conversation and it was fun. We danced, we did everything together. Here we have a neighbor. I was living in San Francisco, ten years in the same place and nobody ever talked to me. In Moscow, we meet everybody, we talk, we eat, it was participation. I need this part. We help each other. I didn't have a long time telephone, but my neighbor had one because she was doctor. It was very hard to get one, a long line you have to wait. It doesn't matter, all night all day, I could come. She always open door and I use the phone. I have a friend here, I met her in Italy, when we were waiting for permission to come to the United States.

At that time, it was very bad situation with me and my husband. He didn't give me money and I was absolutely hungry and she has two children and was so limited with money to buy food. Sometimes we went to market and after they close they leave some bad fruit. We'd pick up. She always shared with me. It's how I met my new friend here. All those years. She's my best friend.

It's bad now in Russia. Used to, if you got sick, the doctor would come to your house and the government would pay for it. And you don't have to go to work and make everyone else sick. You stay home and the government pay. But not now. My sister is there. I have a brother from my stepfather. But he was sick. He had the TB from my stepfather in his bones. So they took him to a special place. I saw him, for the first time when he was ten years old. He lives here. I have a niece and a grandniece. I love children.

I wanted to steer Karina back towards the stories so I told her I had read some really great Russian folktales and wondered if she ever heard stories like that while living in the orphanage.

Baba Yaga. We have a lot. We made even like plays or some holiday, we'd make in the stage fairytales and at that time, because we didn't have any toys, everything that we read we had a lot of imagination. We'd put it on the stage or talk. Every day when we go to bed, everybody would tells stories. We'd have like twelve people that live together. Especially in winter we have, it's like a fireplace, its Russian kitchka it was called. It was like long and in the middle it was smoke when you open. Like a stove (she draws a picture of it). The smoke went up. When you open the door and the hot is coming outside and everybody is sitting around, it is cold, and the light is coming from it "Whooo!" Somebody would scare you. We would laugh so much. We would talk story about Baba Yaga, who fly from her stupa, how can I describe? She lives in the forest and she would roll through the forest on stupa. She lived on the inside and she had brooms. And her hair, she had gray and white and she have huge nose, big teeth and she liked small children. We always scared of Baba Yaga. If you not listen, Baba Yaga will come and take you. She's coming from here (points to the front of the kitchka) and everybody is like, "Eeeek!" Nobody wants to sit close to there. Baba Yaga's house I like, (she draws another picture of the house on chicken legs). It's like this, the chicken legs. And house move! It's chicken feet and she always come inside on a stupa. She sit on a stupa. She use the broom, sometimes, she sits here and she fly in the forest. This was most scary for children because it was, because she'd come inside and she'd get the children. She'd fly on the broom and go inside and take small children and she eat them. It's a lot of stories. I remember when we have this teacher, a nice teacher. Sometimes we come and we sit and we talk, talk, talk. They tell a lot of fairytales and stories. The most memorable time. Everybody quiet. Nobody is talking. We'd say, "Oh no, no, please continue, please continue." And she'd say, "No, it's late, you have to sleep to get up very early." We loved stories, any kind of stories. Imagination was overruled. When you sleep and when you woke up, you'd share your bad dream about Baba Yaga, sometimes you'd wake up and boom, they're in your bed because they are afraid. You'd say, "What are you doing here?" And they'd say, "Oh I'm afraid, I'm afraid!" But I think it was good. Now I return and I think it was a very good, healthy time.

The only thing that we needed that we didn't have was a mother and father. I don't know how I can explain why the house would move. It was power. The house would move around. She could hide herself. The broom was used to cover her tracks in the forest. I am superstitious, very superstitious. When somebody comes into my store (she volunteers in the gift shop) and they whistle I hate this. I can't tell, it's not polite. It's very unpolite when you come to some place and you whistle. I can't say it's not polite, it's bad luck. In Russia, if you want to make some big deal and somebody whistle it means bad luck, no money and something if you want that's a big deal, it won't happen. It's the same if a black cat pass you, it's very bad. If somebody, in Russia, if you go to some place and you take water from the well and you go and it's empty, it means bad luck. And I believe in dreams, completely.

Ah, if you go leave the house you have to go to the door and make a turn and go, "phewt, phewt, phewt" (spitting) and look in a mirror and count one, two, three, four, five, six, seven and look in the mirror and then go. If you go on a long trip you have to sit, and everybody is supposed to keep silent and get up. There's a lot of superstitions. I heard those when I was younger and I still do it. Some people believe you can put curses on people. My brother, he dated this one woman and we worked together and I introduced him, unfortunately. And um, she was very sexy and smart but she got a man to teach her to curse and to do something. And I always knew this but I never thought she'd do it with me. When she break up with my brother, she blamed me, she don't blame herself. It's always somebody else, it's never you. Every birthday, the morning I opened the door, I open the door and under the rug I have huge salt, it's like rock, something special I've never seen (she shows me how big with her hands). I told my husband and he said maybe somebody wiped the sidewalk and it put there, and I was like, yeah, right, at eight o'clock in the morning somebody wipe and there it is. And so okay, next birthday should be the same. She wanted to break up me and my husband and after that we have a very bad relationship and I was thinking it was because she cursed me. The second time, my husband was at home and I opened the rug and it was there and my husband smiled and he said, "Okay, next time you have to put there a note "Olga, you are stupid." The next birthday we left. I'm afraid to touch the salt. I knew what she told me before because she did for ex and she told me. She is now in Los Angeles and the people come and she help to keep boyfriend, to find boyfriend. She did some stuff unbelievable. It's not like a witch, like psychic. But she didn't predict my brother will have son and she didn't know until someone told her. But what she did, I don't know.

I am superstitious about small stuff. When you break a mirror, it's not good. When you come to a new place you have to put a cat before you come inside the house. If you bought a new house, you have to put a cat, not black cat, nice cat, it's good luck for your life. There's a lot of superstitious. They say it is not good, when you see a child to say it's so cute. It's not good to attract attention. I hate when somebody give me compliment, "they say, oh you look so nice today." And I say, "Oh, now I will be sick tomorrow!" You can talk about my job, that's different, something good that's okay. I don't say, "Oh thank you, that's so nice."

I'm afraid something will happen. I'm very critical of myself. Whenever you say, "you look good" and you're not. I hate that. I just keep silent. I never will lie. We learn this from child, never lie. I never lie to my husband, only one thing but it will be my secret. Nothing bad.

You know it's funny, I brought this (she pulls out a piece of paper from her purse). When I went to the school here, I wrote this. Before I wrote much better than now because I don't practice. It's about love. This was my, for me it is most important, about love. You can read it out loud.

*I take pleasure in all I know to be you. Your courage, your warmth, your intelligence. I have much enjoyment in my adventures with you. The last time you asked me about love, how I am thinking and understanding about this subject in general. It is not very easy question, but I'm try to answer it for you. As I grow older, I learn that while there is one love, there are many ways that it is manifested. I love my brothers and sisters one way, I love my friends, it is another way. I love my country a third way. I love Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart a fourth way. I love Kandinsky a fifth way. I love children, etc. No way, however, are they better or more important than the other. Love is love. It is the finest force in the universe. It deserves to be deeply respected, treasured, nurtured, protected and nourished. For me, loving a person is feeling a profound appreciation and respect and delight in that person. That loving can be expressed in many ways, but it is always loving. It is precious, sacred, intimate and a source of the greatest happiness. With this note, I invite you and me to live and appreciate and nurture and honor each other to the fullest extent each one of us are capable. It will be another way, loving.*

This is what I write about and why I want you to see is because when I grow up, for a long time I couldn't say I love you. I don't remember when I said to my first husband I love you because when I grow, I felt a lot of love for people but I never could express it. It was, because nobody talk with me. I start to talk about love only because he (pointing to her husband now), he teach me to express and say I love you. It's for me to say I love you, it's so difficult. I don't know. I could say it to a child but to people I could never say it. My brother, I never could say, my sister, I never could say it, my ex-husband. When people ask what do you think about love, it's not only one way, it's different. I couldn't express what this means, real love. You love child, you love men, you love sister, brother. It's different kinds of love but it is sometimes it's easy to put it in writings to express. The teacher ask us to write if this is Mr. Wonderful, not a real person. But you think about how you can express yourself. It was ten years ago and I could write better then and I forgot. At my age you have no more memory, especially when you have menopause. This is the way it was when you grow up in an orphanage, you can't express yourself because nobody was, nobody tell you "I love you." This is another about my dreams.

*Very often I have dreams in my head, very seldom do my dreams come true. When I have a weekend and stay at home, I think the weather is not good. A most*

*suitable day for a country ride. It's a shame to stay in town when the air is so nice and the sky so cloudless. There is no wind, no breeze, I'm dying for a breath of fresh, clean and pure air. Not polluted by cars. I'm all for it, let's go. But it is only a dream. I can't go anywhere alone. I have another unusual dream. I would like to find a place where there will be many conifers. For me, fir trees and pine trees are forever connected with Christmas cards. Of course, they look better when they are covered with snow and frost. Needles smell faintly, but I like them in every season. But I have another vain dream. My dream to come to my country and go to the suburbs of Moscow. Here I can find Snowdrops and Lily's of the Valley in the vicinity of Moscow. But it is in April or May when snow hasn't melted, but more I like the Autumn season. When the trees around, purple silver gold and patches of green and the air is transparent. In my country we call this season Indian Summer, the most gorgeous time. I like when the leaves start to fall and rustle under your feet, birds prepare to leave their nest, beasts getting ready at the winter. The forests are crawling with mushroom and berry pickers with holiday makers. There is nothing like this period of time. Period of beauty, ripe and mature. My dream is to fry potatoes over the coals, take some fishing rods and try my luck in some pool. I'm going to go to my country and see my favorite places. I like so much nature and really miss my nature in my dreams.*

Unfortunately, I didn't continue to go to school because I find job. I was like three months in school.

We heard that the library was closing over the loud speaker and so we concluded the interview. I promised to send Karina the transcript and thanked her again for sharing her remarkable story.

### *Margaret*

Margaret was a volunteer at the hospital and a very active member of the community. I had actually worked with her on a project funded by the City to help bring resources to low-income senior housing residents and people with disabilities. She had a lot of energy and passion for what she did. Because I knew her previously, it was agreed that the interview would take place at her home without the Volunteer Coordinator. The meeting tended to be more conversational because there was already a level of comfort established and she was very interested in the project from the beginning. Margaret lived in a co-op with her partner and had been there for many years. Her home was warm, full

of art and plants. When I pulled out the tiny recorder she was amazed, “Amazing. Used to be a big clunk tape recorder. Mine is fairly advanced from that but this is amazing.”

Margaret had been thinking about what she wanted to talk about so she dove right in.

So, I want to say this about oral stories, oral histories. There's at least two different kinds of oral histories, oral stories, uh families history. One is what the child eavesdrops on. It's the talk between like my mom and sisters that I would hear these stories. Or with my, uh, paternal grandmother um, stories would be told at different times about her but didn't come from her because she never learned to speak English. And, so there's the eavesdropping of a curious kid wondering what those adults are up to. Then there's the intentional oral history, the intentional storytelling. And it doesn't even have to be super high consciousness but it's intentional and I want you to know this, that kind of passion that sometimes a grandparent or parent would say to a kid.

I agreed that this is a very good point.

It just came to me when I was thinking about it because it [background questionnaire] asked about your oral histories and I wrote these two different kinds and I thought I would mention it because I think that it should be looked at again.

I told her that I had not thought about it like that but it did make me remember things with my own mom and what I used to overhear and that was some of the most exciting stuff. I mentioned that it could be gossip and then Margaret chimes in, “Aunt Hazel's, babababbaba.” I told her that a lot of oral tradition was based on gossip. Something that happened, so and so's wife doing something or what not. Margaret was intrigued by this. I continued adding that this was a lot of what oral tradition stems from because then the collective created one story out of that. She agreed, “Uh huh, to figure out what happened.” This was it exactly.

That's so interesting. I wish we had something like that in the culture, in the way that I had been brought up. That's very tribal. That's very um, advanced thinking. And usually people think of tribal as being backward, but not at all. I mean tribal, the deep respect that those wisdoms that they had were like in the case of a funeral, for example. Mom died or grandma died so we have to get the word out. People would take their donkey's or their horses or their camels, or whatever, and go to the next village and pass the news on. And the funeral would

take place when everyone arrives. That's when we'll have the funeral, that's when we'll have the wedding that's when we'll have whatever it is. It's not 2:30 on Sunday afternoon, August 17<sup>th</sup>. It is not thought about that way. It is when people can show up. It's such an advanced notion. And it's so alien to this competitive society where you buy a Nano or you buy something and in a month or two, the gap between new technology has widened. I think that's the biggest change of these last twenty, thirty, maybe fifty, forty years, since the 60's. It's just taken off, scientific understanding and discoveries. Good and bad.

To confirm what Margaret is saying, I told her about an article I had just read about just that and how it was affecting our communication skills with the way people were now texting instead of not even emailing, it's texting. And its abbreviated words and it's all this new jargon and then that's translating into your everyday speak. She said, "That's right. My granddaughter will say something to me and I go, okay, what's that?" We both laughed. Margaret said, "Talk about something that can dumb them down." At that point I steered the conversation to the stories. I began by asking her where she grew up.

In a small town in New York state, outside of New York City. Now it's considered a suburb. At that time it was a big deal. It was a town. It wasn't country but it sure wasn't urban. Now it's what we know as a suburb. It was a fairly diverse community, wealth wise and we were at the lower end of it. So it was a small town and I had a mean spirited childhood and I thought, someday I'm going to get out of here and I'll never live in a small town again. Never, never. I've always lived in cities. Always. The five years I lived in San Rafael were like...well, I learned to like it. I liked a lot of parts of it. Eating breakfast outside and things like that. It's not sirens all the time but uh, you pay for that too. So, I've not been one of these people who wanted to move to suburbia. Give me a city.

I asked her what she would say is her cultural background.

I would say, it is a political Jewish secular background with a functionally literate mother, a father who was abusive and who abandoned us. Being of that configuration in a small town, made it a very difficult place. My Jewish culture did not really help. There was some comfort there but there wasn't a sense of protection so my sister and I really had a battle on a daily basis with the anti-Semitic crowd.

I asked her if she considers herself a minority.



Oh absolutely. Absolutely. Being Jewish is not inconsequential. With it, whether secular or religious, there is a deep commitment to life and love and learning. You know for me, it's my ethnicity. I was shocked when I realized I was a Russian Jew. I had never put that together. We're not sure where my grandparents came from, if it is Russia, Poland, or Germany, but it is somewhere in that area. Both sides. I'm second generation born in this country.

My eavesdropping was a big part of my childhood. I started to hear stories from adults around the time when the Rosenberg's were being murdered in 1953. All of a sudden, they wouldn't send me away in the conversation. I would literally sit posed to listen because children weren't supposed to be part of this, they shouldn't know, they didn't need to know. We were a commodity. We had no feelings, no sensibilities, I was just a child. At that point, I started to hear more about people like Paul Robeson. I started to hear about my mother talking. We went to a meeting when I was a little girl, it was an NAACP meeting when it was illegal to exist in New York state, or that county, I don't know which one. My father had all brothers and my mother had three sisters and two brothers. When my mother's sisters were around we would laugh so hard we'd end up peeing in our pants (laughing). It was that level of absolute pandemonium when those women would get together and tell their stories.

They never explained anything to us but you know I could infer that Aunt Sally, was a flapper, she was out there. Sure enough her oldest, her first child knew it. That was my cousin Marilyn, and it is just a torment for her. She doesn't know who her father was. So it occurred to me, well, maybe she had messed around with enough men, that she didn't know. There were stories in the family told in different ways. The stories that made the biggest impressions on me were the stories of the black, Jewish connection. I found that Jews were to Europe what black people were to the United States in terms of being an identifiable hated group.

This happens in every European country just like the treatment of black people in every state in this country. I was taught very early that there was a strong connection and that we were fighting oppression and fighting for our rights. There was great tragedy in terms of learning what happened in World War II, which, a lot of American Jews were told through an underground. There was nothing they could do. Roosevelt wouldn't do a thing. Chamberlain wouldn't do a thing, Churchill, they all gave up. They gave up on millions of people. IBM did business with the Nazi's all through World War II. They're the ones who developed all the technological ways of keeping track of who went to which camp and all the things that computers did back then.

So, those are the kinds of stories I would hear about. I would hear, did you hear so and so's cousin made it through the refugee centers when people would get visas to get out of there. That's what happened. They were all held in these displaced persons camps. They were like other concentration camps. It was not a loving atmosphere. So whenever anyone could get out of there, it was like YES!

You know I didn't realize about my white skin privilege until much later in life. I was a married woman by then. I didn't get that I'm Jewish. It was part of believing some of what Hitler was saying, that Jews are a race. What Hitler didn't know and most of us don't know, in fact I'm reading a book about it right now, is the different colors of Jews. Jews are everywhere. We are everywhere and white skin Jews, European Jews, we're like 11% of the total Jewish population amongst Africans and Asians and the Middle East. We know there's a lot of Jews, and a lot of Arab Jews.

I agreed that it is very interesting.

Oh it is! The whole thing is like a mind blower when I think about it all. So those kinds of stories came through and when the Rosenberg's were murdered, they were each executed one after another at Sing-Sing and that was right across the river from us. It was one of those immaculately clear skies and we would watch as the sky would light up from the electricity being thrown and we all wept and it was just a horrible, horrible, horrible time. This heated war against anti-Semitism was right at our back door. That was quite an awakening for me and I started to read more. I bought political books to understand better. I had to do a vocabulary building book first to understand because I had a very limited vocabulary because my mother talked disjointed and non-grammatical English. English grammar is very different from Yiddish. That's what my mother knew and that's what she spoke.

I was thirteen in the early 50's. At that time, the Joe McCarthy period was happening and we had to dispose of books and papers and I had that experience. I had the experience in kindergarten of marrying. We would play "marriage" in kindergarten. There was a black boy, Raymond and he and I would always pair up and get married. The teacher was appalled. She called in my mother. This is the same woman who took me to the NAACP meeting when they were illegal, underground. She told the teacher that I wouldn't do that anymore and went with the teacher against me on that.

I affirmed that she was receiving two different messages.

Yes. Yes. So that's my background. With the Jewish culture, stories provide entertainment. Jewish comedians are also historians. We see ourselves, not because we want to but because that's the truth, as other. That's the real deal. My Jewish background influenced everything. It is part of who I am today and I didn't bring up my children steeped in Jewish religion, but my son was bar mitzvahed. He was one of the only boys that, according to the Rabbi that bar mitzvahed him, who came all the time. The Rabbi knew I was working but my son went on his own. He was the only one who went on his own. All the other kids were dragged in kicking and screaming.

I asked her then if she had continued to tell some of the stories that she heard to younger generations?

Pretty much, and my mother did. My mother lived long enough to tell, at least the three oldest children. She would tell them different stories, in fact, I taped her myself because I want to write her story. I'd tell my kids stories but not in an intentional way you know, sit down I have something important to tell you. It's more like, do you want to hear about, the time that I babababa? (Laughing). I ask them if they want to hear it because I want it to be wanted. I had not been terribly conscious about these family stories. I do have a piece that I'm working on of when I die, this is what I want you to know, for my children, and I haven't visited that in a long time. I don't seem to be getting any younger. It might be worthwhile to take another look at it.

We both laughed and I told her that I thought it would be great.

I think that is how all culture's get the knowledge, to keep telling people what's going on and these family stories. The way I'm thinking of it is not so much what stories have been told to me but stories in my life. As I'm aging, I am more conscious about everything. With my mother's death fifteen months ago, I've really been able to think more on my own, not having somebody more powerful, and older and sometimes wiser and sometimes infuriating, present. To think about some stories that I would like to tell about, there are so many stories. In 1967, 68, there was a movement going on in this country that was just phenomenal, as a direct reaction to Joe McCarthy. All the spirit came through for black people in the South to really speak up and that was very, very inspiring to me because I believed deep in my heart that I had to rebel against the way I was brought up because it was not community building. It was not humanity building. I joined all the movements from the time I entered college. I went to Hillel and there was a Jewish organization on campus and I didn't fit in there. I went to an inter-faith, but it was only Christian inter-faith and I knew I didn't belong there so I started a Human Rights Council. I found a guy, I don't remember John's last name even but I found another student and he and I organized meetings, pretty abstract. We were mostly trying to educate ourselves about what it means to be prejudice. It was seen from the damage we were doing to black people, not the damage we were doing to ourselves. It was that kind of story.

So, we had this Human Rights council and we were bopping along and then February of 1960 the Greensboro students sat in at a Howards Johnson's. They were college students, just like we were. There were four of them. All they wanted literally, was a glass of water as some kind of token of seeing themselves as part of humanity. Four men did this and one woman. Well that ignited me. This is big, this is really, really big. It was my last year because I had already student taught. There were a lot of things that didn't interest me, courses, but this did interest me. The movement interested me. At that time, I hadn't heard about Rosa Parks. I learned more about her in the 60's. Anyhow, I was going to

Buffalo State Teacher's College in Buffalo New York. It was the only college in the city, in the State university college system which is similar to what State campuses are here, San Francisco State, San Jose State. It's that kind of system.

I made the time and we developed pickets on the campus. The idea was to protest racism and to be in solidarity with the four that had sat down at this Howard Johnson's (it's kind of like IHOP is today). We raised money for the NAACP Legal Education Fund to defend the young men and to foster what later became the Civil Rights Movement in '64. So it was to build momentum towards that. We picketed and we raised a little bit of hell with our picketing and all this while I was working. I worked 20 hours a week every semester whether I was student teaching to stay in school. We were making picket signs and collecting money and all of a sudden we realized we had five hundred dollars. This was April and we were both graduating in June of 1960 so we were thrilled. We wrote to the NAACP and we told them what we had done. Thurgood Marshall who was their lead attorney, flew up to Buffalo.

There's a photograph of me shaking hands with him and of me handing him the check. That was very deep. I felt very humble. What I was so excited about was that people were fighting back. I couldn't stand how my mother and my sister let my father be so abusive to them. Of course, he was molesting me so you know, it was a real horrible mind altering situation that was very confusing for me as a youngster. But these political aspirations, these political hopes, that was something very concrete and it was a great way of fighting back. It's a way of saying, it's not okay. It is not okay.

That was a very moving experience for me.

Then Governor Rockefeller of New York State, was coming to the campus to give a speech, some kid of rally. I don't even remember what it was about. He was running for something, or wanted to be Senator, or something. All I know is we were on fire because we were mad as hell at him. I forget what the issues were, but you know you're a college kid, you're mad at somebody. (Both laughing) You know what I mean? If you're awake, if you're paying attention, you get mad at somebody. So, we were talking about developing a protest at the Rockefeller speech and the Chancellor of the college got wind of this. He called John and me in to his office. Now remember, I'm the second person in my family to graduate college. So, the Chancellor said we understand that you are planning a demonstration when Governor Rockefeller comes and we looked at each other, "No." (Laughing) "Well, I want you to know that if you're in those demonstrations, you're not walking across that stage." Well, I said, "okay." I want to walk across the stage. John, said, "well, okay." So we made the flyers and we got everyone organized (laughing) and we told them we can't be there but give them hell! That was a period he was in favor of a draft or something. There were a lot of young people really, really fired up about him. Not even because he was a Rockefeller, not from a social class place which would have been natural,

but just from understanding this guy had a lot of power and he was being pretty destructive with us about it. So, that's one of my favorite stories.

I told her that it was an amazing story.

Talking about that period, it was a very exciting period.

I asked Margaret how many people were involved with the picket.

About 25 of us. We had specific hours of the day that three or four of us would picket. We never did it alone. We'd picket, but we all had classes and we all had jobs. Anyhow, that's always been a big part of my life, in my work life as well as in my private life. I've never been someone that wanted to learn golf. I've never been someone who wanted to crochet. I've never been someone that wants to bird watch. You know those things had no interest to me then. Now they interest me. There's a joy in being around beauty. And you know, coming out as a lesbian was really a liberating time for me because it was also a liberating time. This was after burning my bra, after being in heterosexual consciousness raising groups, talking about abortion after while realizing that's not my issue. Though I did have an illegal abortion but that's a whole other story.

So there's all these stories and you know some of it I don't know how to share with my children. I'm hoping now that I'll be in my seventies that maybe they'll listen to me more. Not listening to believe anything, but listening to let me tell my story because it always gets clearer every time I tell my story. I get more clarity about what happened to me and why. Today, fast forward, I feel very energetic. In a way, I never dreamed I'd live this long with my family history. My mother's mother and father died in her late 20's and early 40's. My father's mother and father died in their 50's. My father died when he was 75.

I asked her if she knew anything else about her grandparents and why they moved to the United States.

All of my grandparents immigrated here because of violence in that area. It was where the Kazak's would pillage the villages and rape the women and make life absolute hell. And people literally escaped with the clothes on their back. I only knew one grandmother. My mother and father divorced but my mother and his mother were very dear to each other so we stayed there until they kicked us out. My mother had a very sweet relationship with her. I never really liked her very much. I'll tell you what I figured out was the reason. I was mad at her for raising such a shithead son and not protecting me so I had feelings of alienation from her that were pretty deep. My sister was adored by her and she adored her. She was very Jewish and very much steeped in her rigid family culture. We used to have Passovers that would last 4 or 5 hours. They were brutal. I remember one time she went to buy napkins and they sold her sanitary napkins. I think they played a trick on her. She was an old woman.

My mom, I don't think she even finished fourth grade. She was hard of hearing and they were in a one room schoolhouse. They moved all the time. So she had this terrible operation and was left deaf in one ear. When she tried to return to school, she couldn't do it. She never got over that. Her favorite witticism about it was leopards don't change their spots. But I'm not a leopard. It feels good to know that my children didn't have to flee the way I felt like I had to flee to get away from my mom. She just did boundary pushing things. You know, I feel grateful that I'm being asked these things, so thank you. You know even in talking to you, I realized things I hadn't before. I think these stories are a way to feel appreciated. I think it's a very important tradition to continue. Everyone's a book, everyone has a story and I've carried that with me. So in my work, I feel so grateful to serve the elders. I think storytelling is an art and I think everyone's got stories and we don't ask each other enough.

I couldn't have said it better myself. I left Margaret in awe of her passion for helping others and risking herself to help fight for what is right. I appreciated her input regarding the importance of these stories. She made me think about them in a way I had not.

### *Sarah*

The Volunteer Coordinator and I agreed to meet both Sarah and Maggie at the San Mateo Public Library. They were good friends and wanted to hear each other's stories. The narratives were conducted in a private room. There were snacks, coffee and tea and Sarah offered to go first so that Maggie could have a sandwich.

My dad was twenty when he was going to be in the service and the first World War broke out. So he was in the service for seven years. His brother went into the service also and while he was in the service, his dad passed away. So his mother and three sisters really had no one to support them. When the war was over, they had a lot of debts to pay. My dad was a stone mason so my dad came to America at that point. Well, I don't know exactly what point, but he came to America, basically for money, to pay off the debts. In 1928, these men used to do this all the time, go back for the holidays. At Christmas time they would go back and then come again. In 1928 the government said, I believe it's the America government, said, you could bring your families. So at that point, my dad brought my mom and she was pregnant with my brother and my uncle brought his family. He had a wife and two daughters. Until I was fifteen years old, we all lived together like one big family. So that's just the start of my family in America.

My uncle was a contractor and he always came back and forth, to America. He came to San Francisco because he built wood houses, but my dad who was a stone

mason, built with stones and bricks and things and so he always stayed back East. When he first came, my uncle came straight out here with his family but my dad went to Baltimore. We had a distant family member or something out there. My mother didn't like it at all. It was hot and they had a room up in the top where the heat always rises. She said, "Oh if I have to live like this, I'm going to go back to Italy." So that's when they came out here, shortly after. They got here in May and my brother was born in San Francisco.

I acknowledged that they were not in Baltimore long. I asked her if it was important for her parents to teach her about Italy given that she was born in the States.

Yes. They talked a lot about Italy. 1950 was the first time they went back. It was after the war. I went with them and I liked it, I liked it, I mean I didn't fall in love with it. I didn't go back until 1966 and fell in love with it and I've been back almost every other year. Fortunately, when I was married my husband enjoyed it too so we were able to go back often.

I told her that I didn't know anyone who doesn't enjoy Italy. We both laugh.

I liked the area, I have cousins there, I speak the language. I can speak to them and I've kept up with them. Basically, my mother, how she grew up there and I don't know if it was the time or what, because now when kids graduate they either go off to college or they get a job, or they get married, or move out. Well, in my generation, my friends, most of them didn't go to college. They would stay at home until they got married. That isn't done anymore. All of my friends both males and females, it was the same thing, they either went off or got married. So that might be interesting for you to know.

There wasn't very much for them to do, but in Italy my mother had at the church a *ciccolo*, which is circle. And they had plays and singing and things like that. My mother had a very nice voice so she used to sing a lot. The home that we lived in had a very big kitchen and we actually lived down there even though the bedrooms were upstairs. I grew up in Bayview. They call it Bayview Hunter's Point, well we never called it Hunter's Point. It was Bayview. Our garage door was open day and night. We never closed the garage door. Many mornings we would come down and our neighbor was there, helped himself to the paper. It was just like that. There was always a lot of people. People just came. You didn't phone first.

I asked her if it seemed like it was more of a community then.

Yeah. When my father was ten years old, he was taken to Germany to work, to learn the trade of stone masonry. The first time my grandmother took him. She said that when she got back home, he was already back home. He didn't want to go. He was a little boy. But then he went again and he learned the trade. Now he sort of brought that tradition, or the family sort of brought it. During summer

vacations, my brother, didn't go out and play baseball and stuff like that, he would go when the men were building a house close, he would go there and help and watch them. He learned to be a finished carpenter and as soon as he went to work he got into the Union right away, he was so good. He was a very good finished carpenter. So it wasn't much fun for him, maybe he resented it, but he never said, "I could have gone out and played baseball and kick the can and all that."

Oh, my mother learned how to tailor. The women there, they'd go out in the field and cut grass in the mountains. They all had land. And they had a pig probably, and maybe a cow. And they'd cut the grass and bring it in the dudlene, it's a woven basket like a backpack. One thing I'll never forget that she told me, an aunt who was the oldest in the family, when she had her son, she said, "I have to go home." She went home, had her son and then came back. So yeah, she gave birth and then went back that day. It was their own field. And it wasn't like they went two blocks. They had to walk quite a ways to get up there. I took my mother back about 1974 and she was very disappointed because she said nobody takes care of the land anymore. Now see, I could have brought these pictures of the family cooking polenta outside! I didn't even think of it. I don't know anymore that I could tell you.

I asked Sarah if there was there anything else about her parents or grandparents.

Well, I don't know too much about my grandparents. My mother's mother died young, in her 50's. And her husband, my grandfather, he lived longer. He died after they came to America but I never knew him. And I don't know anything about my father's side. I never had that relationship with grandparents but I had a close relationship with my cousins, they were like sisters to me since we all lived together. In fact, my mother worked and my aunt stayed home so my brother and I always called my aunt, Mama Mina and my mother Mama Rosa and same with our fathers, Papa Gigo and Papa Johnny. And nobody resented it, it was just normal.

This prompted me to ask her if she felt like she was raised by two families.

Yeah. And I wouldn't change it for anything in the world. When they came it was The Depression and at one point, I know that the only one that was working was my mother and she was working on Broadway in a cigar factory, rolling cigars. They never really talked much about The Depression. They seemed to get along alright. We always ate and they never really complained how terrible it was or anything like that. We always had polenta, all you needed was cornmeal. They had it three times a day, it was like their bread.

I asked her if she tells her grandchildren stories.

They're not interested, they're not too interested. They may want to hear it one day. You know I've never traced my family's history. I don't have very Italian



names because this is very close to the Austrian border. My mother's maiden name was Murer and my maiden name was Gantz. Sounds German, Austrian. So I'm sure if I traced it back, it has to go back to some kind of German, Austrian influence. I know my grandmother on my father's side, her maiden name was even Gantz. So Gantz married Gantz but in that town in 1950, there were a lot of Gantz's and a lot of Murer's and not all of them were related. I found out that when my parents came to America. I always thought they stopped in New York. They didn't stop in New York, they went to Baltimore. When I saw the passport, it said Baltimore. That was 1928. I think when my father and uncle came alone, they didn't have to have sponsors because they came to work and they needed workers. My father would go home at Christmas and my mother had a child, a daughter and my father never even saw the little girl. He would go back and forth almost every year. My father was newly married. This is funny. My father had gone back and he always went to visit my mother and her family because, my uncle who had died was my father's best friend. He was the one who died as a prisoner and so he went and I guess he kind of, I don't know. My mother didn't say they had gone out or anything but when he got back to America he wrote her a letter and asked her to marry him. She said, "Why didn't he ask me while he was here?" (Laughing). So he asked her in a letter. And she did. I guess maybe she waited until he came back home and asked her. It wasn't an easy life but they always seemed very happy, never complained. I never felt deprived in any way but I know that I didn't always get what I wanted. You know what I wanted so bad? Those majorette boots. Oh I wanted those white boots so bad. I wasn't a majorette but everyone was wearing those and I thought, "Oh gee, I wish I had a pair of those boots." And finally, in sixth grade, I got a pair and I must have looked stupid because I wore them with everything.

My parents told us a lot of little Italian rhymes but they're in Italian. You know, my aunt who lived with us, she didn't tell us much. My aunt, she was quiet and I think it's because she lost three children. It's very hard to lose children, it's the worst thing that can happen. I wasn't even aware until my cousin died in November and in her obituary, I thought they made a mistake. But they didn't, I didn't know about the other brother. So my aunt lost two boys and one girl. The one girl was fourteen years old and the boy was six. The boy died from Meningitis. We have a saying that has gone down in the generations. This comes down from my mother's sister. Her husband-to-be, he was courting her, and they were out in Focade and he tripped over a stone. They were going for a walk and he tripped on a stone. And she said, "Cupate corona." And now when we do something like that, we always tell each other "cuapte corona" which is not very nice. Cupate means kill yourself and corona is not a very nice word. I don't know, it's not a nice word, even worse than jerk. And here she said it to this guy who was courting her. And I'm sure he understood it. He could have been offended. But that's something that has carried through, and the next generation is saying it too. I still say it to myself. It's very easy to say.

*Maggie*

Sarah and Maggie opted to be present during each other's narratives. The interviews were conducted in a private room at the San Mateo Public Library. The Volunteer Coordinator was also present. After a short break following Sarah's narrative and a refill on drinks, Maggie began.

My grandmother and grandfather got married in Germany, in a town up near Hamburg and he was a farmer but he farmed, the feudal system. You bought some land or had some land, but everything you made went to the landowner. He was actually a year younger than my grandmother. My grandmother was a Milliner's Assistant, she made hats. There was a time in this world when a woman would not go out without a hat. She did beautiful stitching and taught me to sew, which I don't do anymore but I was able to pick up some of that hand work. I prefer it to the sewing machine even today. So, she posed as the daughter of another couple and had papers to come over. And my grandfather got somebody else's discharge papers and posed as somebody else, having already served sea. In those days they used to take ships in tandem. They'd take two or three ships and all leave at the same time. I don't know, that was just the way it was done. It was in the 1880's. My grandmother was born in 1859. And she was on one ship, standing on the deck watching him in line to be checked by whoever, and she never knew until she got to Ellis Island whether he got on or not. They were married but they weren't using their correct names, so I could never find them on any of the roles on Ellis Island. And of course they didn't have any contact with people in Germany after they got here because you know they were afraid of something happening, or being put in jail, or whatever. So, this was the chance they took because my grandfather said he'd never get anywhere if he stayed over there. He had no options. He was going to have to go into the service anyway. But they got over here and hooked up and eventually they made their way to Wisconsin and got into farming. According to my mother he was an excellent farmer. Everything was clean and perfect. And eventually they got to Kiehl and there's a Kiehl, Germany right up near Hamburg and I'm sure the people from Germany when they came, named this town because there are a lot of Germans. So they went to Kiehl and eventually went to South Dakota. She had three older sisters and an older brother. My grandmother was 42 when my mother came along so she was a little afterthought which was to her advantage because all of the older daughters had to do all the work. When they lived on this farm, and this was tradition, when they got established, people from Europe would come over and stay with them until they got established. It was just how it was done. And this one family came over, some of the people had TB and she could remember her sisters taking care of these people coughing up blood, and it wasn't treated the way it is now. There was no antibiotics, no chest x-rays. So eventually through the years, my mother's three older sisters and brother all died

of TB. And my mother, from a free test somewhere, was found to have a spot on her lung and she was treated. She lived to be 86 but she had problems with her lungs her entire life.

Anyway, back to the grandparents. So they lived on these farms and that was when people were not well. My grandfather got a job with the Union Pacific Railway so he became a railway man, which in those days was a good job, a substantial job with good pay. Eventually they moved to Moscow, Idaho and then eventually got to Woodland, California where there was a Union Pacific station. They lived in Woodland and my uncle, my mother's brother died in Woodland when he was like 29 years old and then eventually her father. But my little grandmother, she was like 4'11" just a bit of a woman, but she was a trooper and never complained. Anyway, that was her story. My grandmother was cute she would teach me little songs and dances. She spoke German, both high and low German, a couple of different dialects. She learned whichever one was the Aristocrat one when she was dealing with these ladies when she made their hats. I guess a different way of speaking it. She lived with us. I never knew my grandfather. Both my grandfathers were dead before I was born but she lived with us until I was about in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade and after that we had to put her in a residential home. She loved me, I was so precious. I was the one. She had a lot of little old lady friends, one was Danish and they all had these thick, thick, accents. My mother was so good to them and they would have these little card parties and sewing circles, things like that. They were a kick. They'd sit around and chew the fat. They played a lot of cards. I have really good memories about her, and the relationship. My father, was not a talker, I wouldn't say he was unkind, but he wasn't gentle. He never said an unkind thing about my grandmother and she lived with us a long time.

My neighbor's, the DiMarini's, she will be 99 in March, she still lives next door to our old house. Full-blooded Italian too. They had stories galore. Her mother was here during the earthquake on Pacific Avenue and she had wonderful stories. She was a domestic. She came down here to work as a domestic and she said they had a big potato bin and she said she woke up and the potatoes were bouncing. And the gentleman for whom she worked and the big family, he got them on a barge and went to Sausalito and sat on the hill and watched the whole city burn. She used to tell that story and I was fascinated about it. She watched the Palace hotel go and everything. They went to Sausalito, that's where they went. Where else were they going to go? There were no bridges. They were fortunate enough to have gotten out. They didn't have to live in Golden Gate Park or anything.

I asked Maggie if they ended up going back to San Francisco.

Eventually, yeah. Then, on the other side, on my father's side, not too much is known but I have a wonderful picture of what would be his grandmother. She had six sons and she looked like a commanding general, I mean she was a big woman. There's a picture taken of her on Christmas day with her sons standing behind her. One was in the Union army, he fought for the Union and they all had strange

names, Louie and Henry, Chester. When I went to Italy and met a Nardinelli there, I kept saying my father was Louie, he said, "Louie? Why you not call him Luigi?" I really didn't know much about them but the name was so unusual, Nardinelli, there just aren't any. But my guide found this one family and they agreed to meet me over in Luca where they came from. I went over there and they took me around the town.

My father never spoke any Italian because his father, when they came here, was a truck farmer. They lived a little out of Woodland where the Contandina Cannery is now and that's where their little house was until they moved further into town. But he was a truck farmer and he'd load up his little wagon, I mean his horses, you know they didn't have gas or anything and he'd go up to this Kaipei Valley and that's how people knew him. That's how my next door neighbors knew him. They used to call him Ja Junni. I think it means funny man or something in Italian. They said he was really funny and when he'd come he'd tell them stories. But see, I never knew because he had passed. But how he hooked up with my grandmother who was German from Wisconsin, I really don't know. Her maiden name was Cook and I know at one point she lived in Illinois but I don't know. She was an old Mother Hubbard kind of gal. She'd make her clothes practically out of old flour sacks. Just nothing to them but a seam here and a seam here. She had a little farm and garden with chickens and I'd go out there with her. I'd ride my bike over to see her, she was on the other side of town, and she'd load me up with flowers and onions and everything that she had. Thank God she never gave me eggs because I never would have made it home with them. (Laughing). She was a homebody. My grandfather taught her how to make ravioli and then she taught my mother and my mother taught me. I can't do it anymore, it's too hard to roll that dough out. I don't do that stuff anymore but my daughter taught cooking at San Francisco State for one semester.

Back to Grandma Nardenelli. So there is this picture and its classic, I tell you of these six boys. It was taken on Christmas Day and in a year of its time, three of those boys had died from different things. They were all young. So all my life, my father, my uncles, nobody would let them take a picture of them or be in family pictures on Christmas Day. It was just a superstition but it was interesting. When my grandfather came, they went to San Francisco first. There were some Baldalki's that they could stay with. Somebody had a restaurant on Broadway. My father never had much to say about all that. He was the oldest and when he was fifteen or sixteen, he was a freshman in high school because they didn't start school until about eight because they lived out a ways. And, his father died so my father had to take over raising the family or being the money earner because a woman didn't work. She kept the gardens going, and the chickens going. He never had much of an education but he was very bright. He was very good in math and eventually he got on as a plumber. Some man knew about him and knew he was a good worker. In a little town like that, everyone knows everyone. He asked him, the man that owned this business, if he would come work for him and he said sure. It was the Woodland Plumbing and Hardware and my father

was the plumber and there was another man who worked with sheet metal and another fellow that had the hardware store.

Eventually, my father bought them all out and owned the whole thing and did well. I can remember him sitting in his den with blueprints because he did these big projects, you know schools and hospitals and things like that all over the valley. In fact, one summer we went up to Redding because he was working on the school up there and he brought a couple of guys up there. We had a comfy little apartment. They were building the Shasta Dam and every day we'd go, my mother would pack a little lunch with Kool-Aid and we'd go to that part of the river and that's where we learned to swim. He lived to be 91. So did my grandmother. My other grandmother lived to be 86 so I plan to be 100. So anyway, that was my grandfather. I wish I had known him but that's what my 99 year old neighbor says, that he was a funny guy. I think most Italians are happy people, in spite of it all. They always have a sense of humor and they always can make music and comedy. They even went through The Depression. I didn't hear too much but we had this house, which was a good thing. It was a three bedroom, 1 bath house in the best part of town. The grammar school was at one end, the high school was half a block away. There were a lot of big Victorians around. In fact, they call it a California Bungalow. They have a tour every year and our house is on it. It has a little plague. It didn't happen when my folks were alive. I wish it had. Woodland's a neat little town. There's a little opera house that was closed up because someone fell off the stage during a graduation. The Hershey Sisters, they never married because they were worried people were after their money. But they had a sweet beet factory there and then of course the tomato factory. At one time, it was the richest agricultural county per capita in the U.S. Big county fairs and state fairs. So close to Sacramento.

You know back in my dad's day, they did a lot of bartering for service. My dad wanted an Oldsmobile so he got an Oldsmobile and the owner of the dealership got new air conditioning. That's what a small town could do. Getting back to The Depression though, I had a cousin. My father's sister lived in San Francisco. In fact, there was restaurant next to St. Francis Hospital and he was the chef there. It was called Ernie's. The doctors would go over there and get a high ball every so often. (Laughing). My Aunt May had this daughter, my cousin Delores, and she would make her beautiful, beautiful clothes. She thought she was going to be the next Shirley Temple. Poor old Delores never made it but I used to get her hand-me-downs and they were beautiful clothes. I wore them because there was nothing else to wear. My mother made a lot of my clothes too. I still have my grandmother's old treadle machine, the old white treadle machine.

Oh, when I went to Italy, when I found those Nardenelli's, they wanted to take us out to a place. It was a Monday and I guess even there they have places that are closed on Monday, because he called the people and I guess they were very good patrons so he agreed to open it so we could go up there and eat. And we went. This was maybe eight or nine miles out of Luca and we went across this river and I said, "What is this river?" and he says, "The Sacramento." And I went, "Holy

crap.” All the Nardenelli’s came and lived in the Sacramento Valley and in Sacramento. My uncles, I had met before they passed away, one of them came back from Italy and had this story that there was a Senator in Caesar’s time that was a Nardenelli. And I thought, yeah yeah, they’ll tell you anything. Well this Nardenelli said, “This building here was the Roman summer of Caesar, blah, blah, blah” and I thought, “ohhhh, this is really true stuff.” I was kind of surprised. Anyway, they took us up to this little place and well nothing is pretentious, it’s just a square building but we had ravioli and they’re round which is how my grandmother made them, which is how my grandfather taught her. They used to cut them out with a glass. We made ours with beef and spinach, no cheese. Lots of herbs. My mom grew everything.

My grandmother Nardenelli was an interesting person. A very plain lady, the salt of the earth. All she did was grow those vegetable, take care of those chickens and raise her kids. She had three sons and two daughters. My father was the oldest. All the siblings died of some form of cancer but my father never had any. He lived the longest which I find interesting. Neither of my parents were big drinkers, not even wine. The Dimaria’s next door though, they had a barrel of wine. They had wine all the time. My mother was a wonderful baker but a crappie cook. My father liked everything well done. So, I’d go over and sit on a stool and watch Mrs. Dimaria. She’d make everything from scratch. So I learned more just sitting and watching her. She’d keep the big things of olive oil underneath the kitchen sink. In fact, after I had gotten married and moved away, she gave me a big thing of olive oil and a bottle of DuBonais because I always liked that. And they also taught me to drink. I’d take her to Mass, because she never learned to drive, so I’d take her and we’d always go to the latest Mass. So afterward, I’d take her home and she’d say, “Come on over and have a drink.” So I’d say okay. I was fifteen years old and she’d fix me a drink and I’d get kind of wasted. And she taught me how to make a Pousse Café, the seven layers of liquor.

I asked her about the little songs she said her grandmother taught her.

Yeah, there was one. We’d hold hands and go “ein, zwei, drei,” which is one, two, three. And then we’d go, “über” which is over and we’d turn our arms over the shoulders and then we’d do it the other way. We’d do it over and over again and just laugh. But I remember that one very clearly. And she’s go to the store with my mom and buy some candy and keep it in her room. She’d give us a little candy, that was her treat. She had this beautiful silver hair that hung all the way down her back. It was so fine that she’d put it all up and it would be a tiny little bun. My hair is fine like that. She had her own room in our house, the front bedroom. She’d help my mother, she’d darn.

I asked her what darning was. Maggie and Sarah laugh.

Darning, it’s mending holes in socks. There’s a trick to it, otherwise you’d have a knot. You have to know how. And they’d embroider. That was their

entertainment. Ladies would meet and they'd always have their coffee and their sweets. It was every afternoon at about four o'clock. But I never liked coffee. I used to come down and stay with my godmother. She was 97 years old when she died, the younger sister of my 99 year old neighbor. She would bring me down to this Swedish woman's house and she would teach classes and spinning. But she had a rule, you'd have to come to one of her dinners and you had to come dressed in Swedish clothing. So my grandmother made me an outfit and we'd go to the dinner. After dinner, she'd take everyone down to the basement and she'd teach everyone Swedish folk dancing. It was very neat. She'd take me on the cable cars and to North Beach. That was when North Beach was really North Beach. But it was fun, and I knew I always wanted to come back to San Francisco. That just gave me a taste. So I went to nursing school here and got married nine days after I graduated. Everyone did, the whole class got married right after graduation.

Going back to Italy, when I was there, they showed me this Santa Maria area of Luca and that's apparently where all the Nardenelli's always lived. And there was this insane asylum, they used to call them though that's not an acceptable term anymore. One of the Nardenelli's, apparently had something to do with that place, worked there or managed it or something and they had a son who was a policeman in Luca.

My parents used to do this one (folding hands together). Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors, where's all the people? (folding hands again with the fingers on the inside). Here's the church, here's the steeple, open the doors, there's all the people. Oh, my kids loved that one. What was I going to say about that? Hmm, my mom would say, "I've lost my rabbit." If you forget something you'd say, "I've lost my rabbit." I like that better than a senior moment. The other thing my mother used to say, my mother never swore, ever, ever, ever, unlike myself, I got that part from my father I guess. My mother would say, "Now where in the Sam Hill is that?"

Appendix I: Themes Within the Narratives

Themes	Rosa	James	Irene	Lori	Carlos	May Lin	Annie	Karina	Margaret	Sarah	Maggie
Immigration	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Remaining Cultural	X			X							X
Importance of Family	X		X		X	X	X			X	
Grandparents as Caregivers			X	X		X	X				
Love Home and Marriage	X			X						X	
Community		X						X		X	X
Family Death		X		X		X	X	X		X	X
War		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	
Socialism			X	X		X		X	X		
Struggle	X		X			X	X	X	X		
Working	X			X			X				X
Generational Gap			X				X		X	X	
Great Depression							X				X
Religion			X	X	X				X		
Discrimination: Race			X						X		
Single Parenting	X					X	X		X		
Gender role Search				X			X		X	X	X
Parasite			X		X	X		X			
Family Vacation Trick		X					X			X	
Marriage	X			X				X			
Superstition		X		X		X		X			X
Heritage		X									
Morals								X			
Friendship	X				X			X			
Confession	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		