BOOK REVIEW

Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher: Choreographing the Story

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Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher: Choreographing the Story
Valerie J. Janesick
The Guilford Press © 2010
271 pages
$60.00

Valerie J. Janesick’s, recent publication Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher: Choreographing the Story, provides examples, resources, and interactive approach offering a balance between theory and application. Through teaching qualitative research methods classes for over 25 years, Dr. Janesick has sustained a research and writing agenda which makes her work accessible, original, and valuable. As she also teaches curriculum classes focused on authentic assessment and the social issues surrounding high stakes testing, she has creatively managed to use both strands of her research work to incorporate social justice awareness and practices. She has made consistent and formidable contributions to the advancement of the field through research, leadership roles, mentoring, and breaking some new ground with a poetry blog on critical approaches to curriculum and research. This wealth of experience is reflected in the Oral History text and is sure to enhance readers’ knowledge and practice of qualitative research.

Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher: Choreographing the Story (2010) demonstrates the value and importance of oral history as a qualitative technique rich in insight and historical meaning and at the same time positioned as a social justice project and viable in a postmodern context. By incorporating her historical knowledge, her arts based framework and her social justice framework, Professor Janesick is using in her research and writing, new representations in the service of understanding the human condition. Since her qualitative oral history projects reveal people in a context, she strives to break open the space for understanding the lived experiences of participants through those artistic forms previously forgotten.

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though always present for researchers. These forms, poetry, music, drama, storytelling, and representations of these forms on the internet can only assist us in the democratization of research and the demystification of research methods. Furthermore, the artistic treatment of language for description and explanation that Janesick draws upon in her work and as a mentor of emerging scholars, can only help to meet her vision of widening that repertoire of possibilities for describing and explaining research to the wider society. These guidelines philosophies are reflected throughout the Oral History text.

*Oral History for the Qualitative Researcher* introduces the qualitative researcher to the value and power of Oral History. Learn how to create poetry from interview data. See case examples of stories from ordinary individuals on the outskirts of society for a social justice perspective in oral history and its uses. Learn about the technology available for facilitating oral history projects and the various online oral histories already available for study. Reawaken your imagination as you learn about storytelling through the metaphor of dance and choreography through interviews, documents and observations. Reawaken your narrative writing skills through a research reflective journal. Oral history is a way to capture the lived experience of a person and this text helps to open the repertoire of options to document that experience through the use of technology, poetry, and with an eye toward social justice. Part 1 of the book can also be viewed at: http://www.guilford.com/excerpts/janesick.pdf.