

Primary Research Guidelines and Sample Field Reports

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FIELDWORK

Writing a Questionnaire

Everyone has strong preferences when it comes to what they like to read, what they hate, what they think is too sappy or gory or outright boring. And, since everyone knows what they like and why they like it, it's often difficult to imagine other people's preferences. Who reads those romance novels? What is the audience for cyberfiction? Does anybody, outside of English teachers and the students they force to, really still read *Silas Marner*? For pleasure?

One way to find out what people like to read is, quite simply, to ask them. For this assignment, you will be doing just that by designing and distributing a questionnaire that asks people what they read for pleasure and how their reading tastes have changed over the years.

Design this questionnaire on your own, with a small group of classmates, or as an entire class. If you do it on your own, try to get fifteen to twenty-five responses. If you work with a small group, each person should get ten responses to compile a fairly large sampling. If the entire class uses the same questionnaire, each person can get ten responses and have a substantial amount of information to sort through.

Even if you have only twenty-five responses to your questionnaire, you will have more than your own and your classmates' impressions from which to draw. That kind of information can help you broaden your own response and begin to account for the differences as well as the similarities that you see around you.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DESIGNING A QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Make it brief and readable.* It is best to put your questionnaire on one side of a page. The simpler it seems to your audience members, the more likely they will be to it. Make it readable as well. Don't try to crowd too many questions on the page or make instructions complicated. There should be plenty of white space, and the language should be simple and direct.
2. *Write different kinds of questions to get different kinds of answers.* The kind of questions that you ask will determine the kind of information that you receive. If you ask questions that can be answered with a yes or a no, then you will likely get more responses but less specific information. If you ask people to write quite a bit, you won't get as many participants and might have trouble summarizing your findings.
3. *Decide who will answer your questionnaire.* If you want to know what a certain age group is reading—middle school or high school or college age students, for example, target that audience.

You might, however, want to know what older adults are reading and how their reading interests have changed over the years.

Or you might want to know what women read or what men read.

You could also ask about a certain kind of reading. Stephen King says that people love a good scare, but not everyone does, just as not everyone is fond of romance novels or stories about superheroes or fantasy and science fiction. You can create one kind of questionnaire to focus on a particular kind of story—such as science fiction—and try to get at what it is in those stories that appeals to the audience.

It's probably best that you decide as a class or as a group what information you hope to get from your questionnaire. The sample questionnaire below is adapted from Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance*, a study of women whose favorite reading for pleasure is the romance novel.

Sample Questionnaire

1. At what age did you begin reading for pleasure?
 - a. ____ 5-10
 - b. ____ 11-20
 - c. ____ 21-30
 - d. ____ 30 or above
2. Age today:
 - a. ____ 18-21
 - b. ____ 22-30
 - c. ____ 30-45
 - d. ____ 45-55
 - e. ____ over 55
3. What kinds of books did you read for pleasure when you were a teenager?
 - a. ____ biography
 - b. ____ historical fiction
 - c. ____ romances
 - d. ____ westerns
 - e. ____ mysteries
 - f. ____ comic books
 - g. ____ sports stories
 - h. ____ other (specify)
4. What kind of book do you read for pleasure now?
 - a. ____ biography
 - b. ____ historical fiction
 - c. ____ romances
 - d. ____ westerns
 - e. ____ mysteries
 - f. ____ comic books
 - g. ____ sports stories
 - h. ____ other (specify)
5. What kinds of books do you never read for pleasure?
 - a. ____ biography
 - b. ____ historical fiction
 - c. ____ romances
 - d. ____ westerns
 - e. ____ mysteries
 - f. ____ comic books
 - g. ____ sports stories
 - h. ____ other (specify)
6. What book or story have you read most recently for pleasure?

Remember that your questionnaire should be designed to answer the questions you and your classmates have about reading for pleasure. Some or all of these questions might be useful, but be sure to target your audience, decide on what you want to know, and ask questions that can get at that information.

Report on Your Findings

Once you have completed your questionnaire, report your findings to the rest of the class. Write a report, give a presentation, or design a chart or graph that visually illustrates your findings.

As you have seen, oral histories, such as the chapter "Private First Class Reginald 'Malik' Edwards" from Wallace Terry's *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans*, offer the personal perspectives of people who are caught up in the history of their time. Oral history is a branch of historical studies that draws on the experience and memories of ordinary people to provide new insight into the meaning and texture of historical events. Sometimes referred to as "history from the bottom up," oral history is an organized effort to record the stories of people such as Malik Edwards who traditionally have been ignored by historians. In this sense, oral histories are important correctives to older versions of history that focus on "great men," geopolitics, and institutions of power.

This does not mean, however, that oral histories are any more useful or authoritative than traditional historical work that is based on archives, government documents, or the correspondence of national leaders. Their value depends on how the oral historian handles the material once it is collected.

This fieldwork project asks you to do an oral history. Follow these steps to get started.

1. *Choose a person and an event that will interest readers*—a Vietnam or Gulf War veteran; someone with experience in the antiwar movement or the counter-culture of the sixties; an older person who remembers the Great Depression, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the end of World War II; a trade unionist involved in an important organizing drive or strike. The events listed here are largely on the national or international scene, but you may also find informants to talk about an important and interesting local event.
2. *Prepare for the interview by familiarizing yourself with the event in question.* Do some background reading. Develop a list of leading questions that will elicit detailed and in-depth responses from your informant (but don't be tied rigidly to them in the interview if it takes another, potentially fruitful, direction). Set a time with your informant, bring a tape recorder, and conduct the interview.
3. *Type up a transcript from the interview that you can edit into an oral history.* Review point number three, "Writing the oral history," for advice on editing your interview.

Considerations in Doing an Oral History

1. **Selection.** Not every person will be a good interview subject, even if he or she was intimately involved in an historical event—some people just don't have interesting things to say. Therefore, oral historians usually select an informant who wants to share part of his or her past. Moreover, everyone's memory is selective in some sense. Oral historians expect to get one version of events, though it may be a perspective they didn't foresee.
2. **Interviewing.** The interview is not just a matter of turning on the tape recorder and allowing the informant to speak. The oral historian should let

the informant know the purpose for the interview and encourage the informant to tell his or her history in detail, but in keeping the informant on track, the historian should be careful not to provide too much direction. The informant may skip over what might be key information or tailor his or her recitation to what the historian seems to want to hear.

Once an interview begins, the historian faces many decisions —about, say, whether a rambling account is going somewhere or if it is time to intervene to redirect the informant, or if stopping an informant to clarify a point will risk interrupting the speaker's train of thought.

3. **Writing the oral history.** The transcript of an interview amounts to a kind of raw data that is likely to be filled with pauses, asides, fragmentary remarks, false starts, and undeveloped trains of thought. The oral historian's task is to fashion an account that is faithful to the informant as well as readable. There are several decisions that oral historians typically face at this point:

How much of the original transcript should be used? Oral historians rarely use all of the material in the transcript. In the Introduction to *Portraits in Steel* (1993), a collection of photographs and oral histories of Buffalo steel workers, the oral historian Michael Frisch says he used as little as twenty percent of an original transcript and in no case more than sixty percent. When they decide to omit material from the transcript, oral historians are careful to make sure that their editing does not distort the informant's views or suppress important information.

How should the material in the transcript be arranged? Oral historians often decide to rearrange some of the material in the original transcript so that related points appear together and the final version has a coherence that may be missing from the taped interview. The oral historian is by no means obliged to follow the chronological order of the transcript but needs to make sure that any restructuring is faithful to the informant.

Should the interviewer's questions appear? In many long oral histories, such as in Wallace Terry's *Bloods* and the many oral histories by Studs Terkel (*Working, The Good War, American Dreams*), the oral historian crafts the interview into a narrative that is told through the informant's voice. The oral historian stays out of the way, and readers get the sense that the informant is speaking directly to them. In other cases, however, the oral historian may decide to appear in the final text as an interviewer, and the question-and-answer format gives the oral history more of a conversational character, with a greater sense of dialogue and give-and-take.

How much editing should be done at the sentence level? Oral historians face the task of turning the transcript into readable prose that retains the distinctive qualities of the informant's voice. Notice, for example, how Wallace Terry has edited Malik Edwards's oral history so that it appears in complete, grammatically correct sentences, but uses a few exceptions ("people be marchin' into swamps," "'cause it was nothin' to shoot through the walls"), along with slang and profanity, to suggest Edwards's particular way of speaking.

③

Here are some suggestions to help you examine how a film represents youth culture:

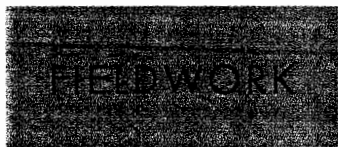
How does the film portray young people? What in particular marks them as "youth"? Pay particular attention to the characters' clothing, hairstyles, body posture, and ways of speaking.

How does the film mark young people generationally? Are the characters part of a distinctive youth subculture? How would you characterize the group's collective identity? What is the relation of the group to the adult world and its institutions? What intergenerational conflicts figure in the film?

How does the film portray a particular historical moment or decade? What visual clues enable viewers to locate the era of the film? What historical events, if any, enter into the film?

How does the sound track contribute to the representation of youth culture that is projected by the film?

How do the stars of the film influence viewers' perceptions of youth culture? Do they enhance viewers' sympathies? Are the main characters cultural icons like James Dean or Marlon Brando?



Ethnographic Interviews

Music is one of the keys to generational identities. Songs carry the emotional power to define for their listeners what it means to be alive at a particular moment. Singers and musicians evoke generations and decades—Frank Sinatra's emergence as a teen idol in the big band era of the 1940s; Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Buddy Holly, and early rock and roll in the 1950s; the Beatles, Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Motown, and the Memphis sound of Aretha Franklin and Otis Redding in the 1960s; the funk of Parliament and War, disco, and punk bands such as the Clash and Sex Pistols in the 1970s; the megastars Bruce Springsteen, Madonna, and Michael Jackson, the rap of Public Enemy and NWA, alternative, and the grunge groups of the 1980s and 1990s.

One way to figure out how people experience their lives as part of a generation is to investigate what music means to them. The fieldwork project in this chapter investigates how people across generations use music daily to create, maintain, or subvert individual and collective identities. The method is the ethnographic interview, a nondirective approach that asks people to explain how they make sense of music in their lives. "Ethnographic" means literally graphing—getting down in the record—the values and practices of the ethnos, the tribe or group.

MY MUSIC



Susan D. Craft, Daniel Cavicchi, and Charles Keil

The following three ethnographic interviews come from the Music in Daily Life Project in the American Studies program at the State University of New York at Buffalo. The project's goal was to use open-ended ethnographic interviews to find out what music means to people and how they integrate music into their lives and identities. Two undergraduate classes conducted

the interviews and began with the question, "What is music about for you?" (The classes settled on this question "so as not to prejudge the situation" and to give the respondents "room to define music of all kinds in their lives.") Then the interviews were edited, organized by age group, and published in the book *My Music* (1993). The interviews that follow come from people from three generations—ages fifteen, thirty-three, and fifty-seven, respectively.

SUGGESTION FOR READING Keep in mind that the interviews you are reading were not scripted but are the result of interviewers' on-the-spot decisions. As you read, notice how the interviewers ask questions and when they ask for more details or redirect the conversation.

EDUARDO

Edwardo is fifteen years old and is enrolled in an auto mechanics program at a vocational high school.

Q: What kind of music do you like to listen to?

A: Basically, I listen to anything. I prefer rap and regular...R and B and rock.

Q: What groups do you listen to when you get a choice?

A: When I'm by myself, I listen to rap like Eric B, MC Hammer, and KRS I. People like that. When I'm with my friends, I listen to Ozzie, and Pink Floyd, Iron Maiden, Metallica. You know, groups like that.

Q: Why do you listen to different stuff when you're by yourself? Different than when you're with your friends?

A: Usually when I'm over at their house they have control of the radio, and they don't like to listen to rap that much.

Q: What kind of things do you do when you are listening to music by yourself?

A: I lip-synch it in the mirror. I pretend I'm doing a movie. Kind of embarrassing, but I do that. And I listen to it while I'm in the shower. And...that's about all.

Q: Would you like to be a professional musician?

A: Kind of. Yeah.

Q: If you pictured yourself as a musician, how would you picture yourself? What kind of music would you play?

A: I'd probably rap. If I didn't, I'd like to play the saxophone.

Q: When you're walking along, do you ever have a song going through your head? Do you have specific songs that you listen to and, if not, do you ever make up songs?

A: Yes. I rap a lot to myself. I make up rhymes and have one of my friends give it a beat. Sometimes we put it on tape. Sometimes we don't.

Q: Could you give me an example of some of the stuff you have put together on your own?

A: I made up one that goes something like, "Now I have many mikes/stepped on many floors./Shattered all the windows/knocked down all the doors." That's just a little part of it. This is hard for me. I'm nervous.

Q: So what kind of things do you try to put together in your songs? What kinds of things do you try to talk about in your songs?

A: I make up different stories. Like people running around. Sometimes I talk about drugs and drinking. Most of the time I just brag about myself.

Q: Do you have any brothers and sisters who listen to the same sort of stuff?

A: Yes. My older brother...he's the one who got me into rap. We're originally from the Bronx, in New York, and he doesn't listen to anything else. My cousin, he listens to heavy metal but he's kind of switched to late-seventies, early-seventies rock. He listens to Pink Floyd and all them, so I listen with him sometimes. I listen with my friends. That's about all.

Q: How long have you been listening to rap?

A: For about seven or eight years.

Q: What kind of stuff were you listening to before that?

A: Actually, I don't remember. Oh yeah. We used to live in California and I was listening to oldies...like the Four Tops and all them. In California...the Mexicans down there, they only listen to the oldies and stuff like that.

Q: Why would you say you changed to rap?

A: When I came down here, everything changed. People were listening to different kinds of music and I was, you know, behind times. So I just had to switch to catch up.

Q: So you would say that your friends really influence you and the kind of music you listen to by yourself?

A: Yeah. I would say that.

Q: When you're listening to music by yourself, what kinds of things go through your mind? Are you concentrating on the words or what?

A: Sometimes I think about life, and all the problems I have. Sometimes I just dwell on the lyrics and just listen to the music.

Q: Do you ever use music as a way to change your mood? If you're really depressed, is there a record you put on?

A: No. Usually when I listen to music and it changes me is when I'm bored and I don't have anything to do or I just get that certain urge to listen to music.

RALPH

Ralph is thirty-three years old, an experienced truck driver working as a bus driver for a city transit authority when he was interviewed by a male friend.

I was weaned on the music of the fifties. My musical taste began to form in about...well, my first record album was Chubby Checker's "Let's Do the Twist"...that was 1961. I begged my mom for it. I saw it up at a grocery store here; I had to have it. So she bought it for me. I really dug that.

I still really dig those old rhythm and blues bands back then. I was mainly a product of the Beatles–Rolling Stones–Dave Clark Five era. You know, I never really cared for the Rolling Stones when they first came out. My big group was the Dave Clark Five. I thought they were it until I heard they died in a plane crash somewhere in France, which was a big rumor of the day; but two or three weeks later we found out they didn't die.

I was a Beatles generation kid. I can still remember most of the lyrics of most of the songs they put out. It's a result of constant repetition of

it being drummed into my head constantly...just as I'm sure that like somebody who was born in the seventies...David Bowie...I'm sure that a teenager in the seventies would know the words to his songs—"Ziggy Stardust," the early Bowie stuff.

Did the Beatles direct me? Yes, they had some influence on my life. I hate to admit it, but they did. They always painted a rosy picture when I was growing up. It was all love and peace, the flower-child movement. But at that time someone who had a big influence on my musical life was my big brother. He was bringing home stuff like the Supremes at the A-Go-Go...blues...which I really think is the Lord's music. Today you can't find it anymore; there is very little of it coming out, if any.

Today's music just depresses me; it's like the doldrums between 1973 to about 1978...before the new pop or new wave scene arrived...the punkies, the pop stars. I can see things leading that way now too with all this techno-pop. Basically I was into jazz at the time; that's when I got my jazz influences with Monk, Bird, and Coltrane. I used to listen to those people heavily back in the early 1970s. I really loved groups like the Mahavishnu Orchestra. I love jazz fusion and Jeff Beck, but there's some people I really don't care for...Pat Metheny. I never cared for him; why, I don't know. Maybe he has no character in his guitar. It's like a bland speed shuffle. Whereas people like Larry Coryell and John McLaughlin and Jeff Beck, Jan Akkerman...it's just so distinct...their own personal signature. But guys like Pat Metheny and that guy who played with Chick Corea, Al Dimeola, they just don't sign their work; it's all just mumbo-jumbo to me. Other people like them; they sell, right? I don't know; that's my personal taste. I really appreciated any band with a truly outstanding guitarist, somebody you can say: Ah, now this is *him*...I really appreciate that, the signatures.

I like to hear music that I'm not going to hear anyplace else; judge it for myself. Another phase of my life I went through, I really appreciated the blues. From about '67 to '72 was really my blues era, when I was in college. Of course, a lot of peo-

ple were blues addicts then. Everybody was getting drafted for Vietnam...the blues were very popular back then. You had a lot of English blues groups coming out, like the original Fleetwood Mac, Peter Green...who I thought was a phenomenal blues guitar player, phenomenal!...different groups like the Hedgehogs. A lot of groups shucked it off and went commercial; that really turned me off to them. I also happen to like Beach Boy music...all a rip-off of black history, all a rip-off of black music...but white fun...black fun translated into white fun. Surf music was big around '65 or '66. I'll admit it; we were punks.

Ah, let's see...punk. Where did punk start out? Malcolm McLaren? Malcolm McDowell in *Clockwork Orange*?...when he played the ultimate punk, Alex? Was it Richard Hell in 1974 in New York City with ripped T-shirts and safety pins? Punk is kind of a quaint way of expressing yourself. It hasn't come to murder yet; I wonder if it's gonna come down to murder-rock? You've got savage beating and stuff like that; I wonder if it's ever going to get there. It'll be interesting to see where it goes in the future...looking ahead.

These days I like to go into a bar with a quality jukebox...go in there, dump some quarters in the box, and listen to the old songs.

STEVE

Steve is fifty-seven years old and works as a salesman. He was interviewed by his daughter.

Q: Dad, what does music do for you?

A: What does music do for me? Well, music relaxes me. In order for me to explain, I have to go back and give you an idea exactly how my whole life was affected by music. For example, when I was five or six years old, my mother and father had come from Poland, so naturally all music played at home was ethnic music. This established my ethnic heritage. I had a love for Polish music. Later on in life, like at Polish weddings, they played mostly Polish music...since we lived in Cheektowaga and there is mostly Polish people and a Polish parish. My love for Polish music gave me enjoyment when I was growing up and it carried on all these years to the present time.

But naturally as I got educated in the English language I started going to the movies. I was raised during the Depression and, at that time, the biggest form of escape was musicals...people like Dick Powell, Ruby Keeler, Eddie Cantor, Al Jolson, and Shirley Temple. These were big stars of their day and in order to relax and forget your troubles...we all went through hard times...everybody enjoyed musicals, they were the biggest thing at that time. A lot of musicals were shows from Broadway so, as I was growing up in the Depression and watching movie musicals, I was also getting acquainted with hit tunes that came from Broadway. In that era, Tin Pan Alley was an expression for the place where all these song writers used to write and compose music, and these songs became the hits in the musicals.

Later on these writers went to the movies and it seemed as if every month there was a new hit song that everyone was singing. Some of the writers, like Irving Berlin, Gershwin, Jerome Kern, Harry Warren, and Sammy Kahn...some of these songs are the prettiest songs that were ever written. Even though I never played a musical instrument or was a singer, I was like hundreds of thousands of people in my era who loved music. In fact, radio was very popular at that time, so you heard music constantly on the radio, in the musicals, and all my life I could sing a song all the way through, knowing the tune *and knowing the words*.

Later on in life, when we get to W.W. II, music used to inspire patriotism, and also to bring you closer to home when overseas. For example, one place that just meant music was the Stage Door Canteen in Hollywood. All the stars of the movies and musicals used to volunteer their services and entertain everybody. Later on, as these stars went overseas and performed for the G.I.s, I had a chance to see a lot of these stars in person—stars that I really enjoyed, seeing their movies and listening to their music. So it was like bringing home to overseas. Of course, there was a lot of patriotic songs that stirred us...we were young...say, the Air Force song like

"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition." There was sentimental songs like "There'll Be Blue Birds Over the White Cliffs of Dover," "I Heard a Nightingale Sing Over Berkeley Square." But it was actually music that helped you through tough times like W.W. II, the way music helped you feel better during the Depression...in days that I was younger.

When I came back from overseas...now I'm entering the romantic part of my life, in my early twenties...it was the era of the big bands. One of the greatest events in music history were bands like Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman, the Dorsey Brothers and Sammy Kaye...big bands were popular at the time you used to go to local Candy Kitchens and play the jukebox, and, just like some of the songs said, it was a wonderful time to be with your friends. Good clean entertainment; you listen to the jukebox, dance on the dance floor.

In the big band era, we get into the popular singers who used to sing with the big bands. They went on their own and the era of the ballads was born, and to me this was my favorite era of music in my life. I'll mention some of the big singers just to give you an idea of what I mean—singers like Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, Margaret Whiting, Jo Stafford, and Perry Como.

The time of your life when you meet the "girl of your dreams." I was fortunate that we had the Canadiana. It was just like the Love Boat of its time. They used to have a band, and you used to be able to dance on the dance floor. If they didn't have a dance band that night, they would play records, and you could listen to music riding on the lake at night under the stars and moon. It was unbelievable, that particular part of life. It's a shame the younger people of today couldn't experience, not only the boat, but a lot of the things we went through. We thought it was tough at that time, but it was the music that really made things a lot happier and the reason why it's so easy for someone like myself to hear a song and just place myself back in time, at exactly where I was. Was I in the Philippines, or

Tokyo, or on the boat? What were the songs that were playing when I first met my wife, what were they playing when I was a young recruit in the Air Force? All I have to do is hear the songs and it'll just take me back in time and I will relive a lot of the parts of my life and, of course, you only remember the good parts! (laughing) You don't remember the bad.

Music to me is very important. One thought that I wanted to mention, about going back in time: when I was just five or six years old, my parents, because they were from the old country, played Polish music, so that when I did meet the girl I was going to marry...every couple has a favorite song and ours was one that was very popular at that time...it was a Polish song to which they put American lyrics. The song was "Tell Me Whose Girl You Are," and I think it was because my wife and I came from a Polish background that Polish music was still a very important part of our life.

Q: What music really did for you was to make you get through bad times and made you think of good things mostly, right?

A: Well, yes, and I would say that music became part of my personality. I use music to not only relax, I use it to relieve tension. About thirty percent of the time I am singing, and it has become part of my personality because it has given me a certain amount of assurance. Not only does it relax me but I think it also bolsters my confidence in being a salesman where you have to always be up. You can't be depressed. Otherwise, you're just going to waste a day. I think music to me is also something that bolsters my spirit.

Q: Does music amplify your mood or does it change your mood? For example, when you're in a depressed mood do you put on something slow or something happy to get you out of that mood?

A: Well, when I was single, if my love life wasn't going right, I used to play sad songs. Well, I guess like most young kids when their love life isn't going right they turn to sad music. I know that after I'm married and have children and more

experience, if I get in a depressed mood then I switch to happier music to change the mood.

Q: What do you think about today's music?

A: (laughing) I could give you enough swear words....No, seriously, I will answer you. I can do it right off the top of my head because I was in a restaurant this morning and I heard a song being played on the radio, which was supposedly a big hit by a new big star. Supposedly this fellow is just as big as Michael Jackson. I think his name is Prince, singing "All Night Long" [Lionel Richie], and, my God when I heard that record where they kept repeating the words over and over, I said to myself, "God, how terrible it is that these kids are not getting benefit of the music that we had when I was younger," because I can take one phrase and write a modern song. I could do the lyrics. And I'm not musical. Say, "Let's Go Mud Wrestling Tonight, Let's Go Mud Wrestling Tonight, You and I, Let's Go Mud Wrestling Tonight. We will be in the mud, we will be in the mud. After the day is over, it's night so Let's Go Mud Wrestling Tonight!"

I really felt very sorry because I realize that the music that I'm telling you about now...music of my era...not only gave me relaxation, not only gave me a certain amount of stimulation...the lyrics of the songs actually educated me. I would say thirty percent of what I know about life today was gleaned from songs. You remember what you learned from a song. Today I heard Paul

Robeson singing "Ol' Man River," and I remember seeing the movie with Paul Robeson—the best singer of all time, and the story where it had a mixed marriage, things going on now...the problems of the black people. He sang, "take me away from the White Man Boss." That phrase stuck in my mind because as I heard the song today...and this song was sung thirty or forty years ago...I had also read in the editorial page why Reagan isn't the best candidate for the blacks because they are losing a lot of what they have gained, and I began to realize what a long struggle these people are having.

Q: So, in other words, some of the music you listen to taught you about the people singing it and gave you knowledge...?

A: Well, not only taught me about the people singing, but about life in general, conditions. For example, during the Depression there was a big hit, "Brother Can You Spare A Dime?" and the words went, "...once I built a railroad...now I'm asking for a hand-out."

It wasn't just the person singing the song but the times. For example, during the war era we sang songs that were not only patriotic, but they taught us a lot about what we were fighting for, what was so important about saving America. In a lot of cases, the songs weren't written by the religious but they had some religious overtones and brought in some sense of faith.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Edwardo's responses to the interviewer's questions are much shorter than Ralph's or Steve's. One senses the pressure that the interviewer must have felt to keep the conversation going. Ralph's interview, though, is one long response. Steve's contains an extended statement that is followed by question and answer. Take a second look at the questions that the interviewers ask of Edwardo and Steve. What do their purposes seem to be? Try to get a sense of how and why the interviewer decided to ask particular questions. What alternatives, if any, can you imagine?
2. Notice that the interviewees do not fall easily into one distinct musical subculture. Each talks about a range of music. How do Edwardo, Ralph, and Steve make sense of these various forms of musical expression?
3. Each of the interviewees relates his musical tastes to particular social groups or moments in time. How do they connect music to their relationship with others and/or their memories of the past?