

History of New York City

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The history research requires writing the first-hand story of an elderly person who has spent his life in New York City. The story is about our neighbor who had spent his last 78 years in this neighborhood. His life is comprised of many delightful and dark experiences. According to him, he had loved and grieved but never hated someone. He is famous for telling stories of his early childhood and young life, as well as all the historical events that happened in the past and what people thought during that time. When I asked if it was the requirement for my research paper to talk to him about his life in New York City, he surely was delighted to know and made sure that he would tell his firsthand experiences during the different times that have come and passed in history. During our conversation, I recorded points of all the answers so that I could explain them because word-by-word recordings made him uncomfortable. Also, I even noted down a few of the historical aspects for reference while asking him the questions so that it would be easy for him to answer and I would be able to record all historical events according to his experience. Oral testimony of this kind is most useful when it is read alongside documented histories of New York's population, housing, and neighborhood change (Rosenwaike, 1972; Plunz, 2016).

So, he started his life story by giving distant information during the long hours of doing nothing with a gathering of friends and relatives, which is rare now. He mentioned the crowded houses because, during that time in his early childhood, people used to have big families and lived together. The other significant thing he mentioned was there weren't antibiotics at that time when he got injured while playing, but the good and happy memories were mostly attributed to streetcars and all the fun they used to have on those streetcars. He told his father that despite the fact that things were not that expensive, the salaries were also low. His father was a laborer in a factory that made electronics, and the work was dangerous, which made his mother always worried about his health and well-being. The wage was low, which was an annoying factor that made his father always annoyed and angry when we were at home. He used to go to school and come home to find his mother working in the kitchen, making lunch, and talking to the women in the neighborhood through windows. Their conversation was mostly about the war, which was soon going to happen, and the conversation went round and round, talking about other people and what they were up to, which wasn't pleasant for him to hear while eating his food. He remembered his toys, the sports he used to play during those times, and how much he hated being called home during the evenings when his father back from office time was near. That time was spent doing homework, and his mother sipping tea and pretending to watch television, but actually waiting for his father, who would even be mad and tired of working all day. My father was worried about the rumors of war that would soon take him away. His recollections of crowded households and working-class neighborhood life are consistent with scholarship documenting long-term changes in New York housing and urban development (Plunz, 2016; Easterly, Freschi, & Pennings, 2016).

He told me that at the time, most of his parents would argue over one thing, and that was his mother's wish to work by doing any job. The government recently passed a law that gives women the right to work and have equal salaries, but his father was still reluctant because the changes in culture are still not being done. Soon, his mother found a job teaching children in a school. Despite the fact that the law suggests all employers give equal salaries, her mother still tells her friends and neighbors they don't pay her as much as they pay male colleagues. But that didn't worry him; according to him, he was more concerned about who would serve him lunch if his mother was not home. His great-parents were supportive enough to take care of him, but he still used to miss his mother. His grandparents were living a couple of blocks away, and his grandfather had to work small jobs because, at that time, there was no social security that could take care of old people living there. His grandmother, whom he didn't remember much, was an old and quiet woman who died when he was still a small kid. All those movies were mostly about the winning of war and the glorification of America. Those movies were giving messages about the hard times people saw, and the Russians and Arabs were bad people. I had many friends from both countries, so I used to feel that not everyone was the same. These were his words when explaining the movies and media. The culture of libraries was really at its peak. He had half of his teenage life in the library, sitting and reading books. When I asked about his interests in books, she mentioned mostly romantic novels like *The Great Gatsby*, which he loved the most reading.

The most beautiful thing which he considered the most and missed the most was the crowded homes and big families. He had seven siblings, and all his uncles and aunts used to visit during the weekends. He misses this culture a lot and all the travels he had during his early age, visiting relatives, and being together. He looked sad when he was explaining his experience with his relatives because now he said people don't get along much with each other, and even his own children live far away. One was for studies, and the other got married and moved out. He had a beautiful life, which he remembers most of the time and recalls by telling the stories to people he met and greeted. The stories were mostly about the towns he visited, people he met, shows he attended, and all the loves, betrayed, and sad events in his life that taught him plenty of things. Long-term demographic and housing histories show how family size, residential patterns, and neighborhood life in New York have changed substantially across generations (Rosenwaike, 1972; Plunz, 2016).

The most significant event I remember was the time of World War 2, which took his two elder brothers because he was a little kid and was not allowed to attend the war. But his two brothers, who went to fight on behalf of America, died in that war. This event really devastated his whole family even though they were high in spirits to protect the liberty of America, but losing loved ones was not an easy thing to experience. He was a child during that time, and he expressed that every night, he prayed that the war could just stop when he woke up and his brothers came home with his mother the most. The start was not that difficult because his parents convinced both of his brothers not to go to war, but all of their friends who were leaving one by one influenced the spirit of his brothers.

The conversation then revolved around his teenage years, his education, and transportation to school. The only thing about his school that he misses the most is his first love, which was a pleasurable

moment when we were talking. He laughed, smiled, and told me all about it, which really delighted me. The woman he loved at first sight, who, according to him, was the prettiest girl in the school, also traveled with him to school, and during their affair, they bunked classes and roamed around the city and parks. She moved to another town, and that's how they stopped seeing each other. He said even though he wasn't able to spend his life with that girl who broke his heart during that time, now remembering that time, he felt happy and delighted because he was just a 12-year-old kid. He wasn't an immigrant and had spent all his life in America, but he felt sorry for people who had to go through such hard times leaving their own country and coming to America. He told me about one of his friends who migrated from Germany, and that boy became his best friend. The stories that their friend shared with him were dreadful things that turned his nights into nightmares. New York's schools and neighborhoods have long been shaped by migration and acculturation, making immigrant experience an important part of the city's social history (Bartlett, Mendenhall, & Ghaffar-Kucher, 2017; Rosenwaik, 1972).

The changes during that time happened really quickly because it was right after World War 2 ended, and people were coming back from the war. There were stories all around about the war and how they survived, and they were asking about people who were living back here in America. He observed that the changes in music and media were really amusing. They used to watch movies in open theaters and sit in the cars watching those movies. All those movies were mostly about the winning of war and the glorification of America. Those movies were giving messages about the hard times people saw, and the Russians and Arabs were bad people. I had many friends from both countries, so I used to feel that not everyone was the same. These were his words when explaining the movies and media. The culture of libraries was really at its peak. He had half of his teenage life in the library, sitting and reading books. When I asked about his interests in books, she mentioned mostly romantic novels like *The Great Gatsby*, which he loved the most reading. These memories can be situated within the broader postwar transformation of New York's neighborhoods, public spaces, and urban culture (Fuller & Moore, 2017; Plunz, 2016).

Following the instructions provided, I asked him about all the events mentioned. World War 2 and, after that, the Vietnam War, which he had mixed reviews. He only emphasized the fact that he was against the Wars because losing loved ones devastated the families of those people. He mentioned it was all about the power that America was trying to show after winning World War 2. But the other significant event that had happened in his life came right into 9/11, which made him sad about the fact that people are using religion to kill others. The topic of religion was not interesting to him, which made me think he was not a religious person like all the old people. He had spent his life as a liberal man, according to him. He participated in all the protests which were against the wars and for the rights of women and people of different races. The financial crisis, according to him, did not really affect his career because his job was simple, but the rise in rates nearly took his house away because he was unable to provide for his family. The lives of the old people are now easier compared to those of his parents and grandparents because he has social security, which provides him enough to spend the remainder of his life. I asked him about the mayor of New City, and he only told me about Bloomberg, who he thinks is doing a good job. According to him, it's the first mayor who is doing his

rather than only playing politics. The duty of the mayor is to do your job by providing justice to people who are hoping well for that mayor. All the others just wasted the time of people with speeches and spending all their time playing politics.

At this age of life, he mostly spends his life reading books and watching television. He had conflicts with his children regarding their studies and did not give enough time to things which are worth doing rather than wasting. He said despite the fact he loved them the most, their busy lives are no longer accommodating him. The old age homes which are for old people, he said he will never go there but will die just like that healthy and walking. The condition of his fellow friends was miserable. He told me that they were not happy there. After this, he started mentioning the mistakes he had made in his life, which he had given to his children as well. The lesson of leadership is to always act confident because he realized what made him scared that what people will think now does not even matter to him. The career he had as a clerk in the post office made him learn that every job can help you learn things that are worthwhile to engage in and turn every work to help others. Then came married life, which he said was sure more than enough for him to make him happy. He suggested continuously telling your spouse that you love them and forgetting to use thank you and sorry terms because these will always give strength to your relationship. Life in New York is fast now, and everyone is busy, so we are taking the time for people we love. The contrast between his memories and contemporary city life reflects the broader social and spatial changes emphasized in histories of New York's development (Fuller & Moore, 2017; Plunz, 2016).

In conclusion, the life he led was full of experiences, and all the things he said during the interview really helped him gain information regarding all the changes that have taken place since that time. The simple facts he mentioned are that he is famous for telling stories from his early childhood to his young life, as well as all the historical events that happened in the past and what people thought during that time. When I asked if it was the requirement for my research paper to talk to him about his life in New York City, he surely was delighted to know and made sure that he would tell his firsthand experiences during the different times that have come and passed in history. The wage was low, which was an annoying factor that made his father always annoyed and angry when we were at home. He used to go to school and come home to find his mother working in the kitchen, making lunch, and talking to the women in the neighborhood through windows. Their conversation was mostly about the war, which was soon going to happen, and the conversation went round and round, talking about other people and what they were up to, which wasn't pleasant for him to hear while eating his food. His mother found a job in a school to teach children. Despite the fact that the law suggests all employers give equal salaries, her mother still tells her friends and her neighbors they don't pay her as much as they pay male colleagues. His grandmother, whom he didn't remember much, was an old and quiet woman who died when he was still a small seven. He had seven siblings, and all his uncles and aunts used to visit during the weekends. He misses this culture a lot and all the travels he had during his early age, visiting relatives, and being together. He looked sad when he was explaining his experience with his relatives because now he said people don't get along much with each other, and even his own children live far away. One was for studies, and the other got married and moved out. His teenage years, his education, and his transportation to school. The only thing about his school

that he misses the most is his first love, which was a pleasurable moment when we were talking. He laughed, smiled, and told me all about it, which really delighted me. The woman he loved at first sight, who, according to him, was the prettiest girl in the school, also traveled with him to school, and during their affair, they bunked classes and roamed around the city and parks. The lives of the old people are now easier than those of his parents and grandparents because he had social security, which provided him enough to spend the remainder of his life. I asked him about the mayor of New City, and he only told me about Bloomberg, who he thinks is doing a good job. According to him, it's the first mayor who is doing his rather than only playing politics. They used to watch movies in open theaters and sit in the cars watching those movies. All those movies were mostly about the winning of war and the glorification of America. He said despite the fact he loved his children the most, their busy lives are no longer accommodating him. Also, the sad part of the interview was how much he misses his children, friends, and family at this stage of life. The cultural change that took place made the lives of people sad and took loved ones away. He had a beautiful life, which he remembers most of the time and recalls by telling the stories to people he met and greeted. The stories were mostly about the towns he visited, people he met, shows he attended, and all the loves, betrayed, and sad events in his life that taught him plenty of things. His personal testimony is best understood as one individual memory within a much larger documented history of demographic, housing, educational, and cultural change in New York City (Rosenwaike, 1972; Plunz, 2016; Coburn, Penuel, & Geil, 2015).

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