WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

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What would you do an oral history project about?

Researchers often also use oral history to collect firsthand accounts from people who lived through a particular historical moment or participated in a specific social movement.

While everyone's lived experiences are different, an oral history collection puts the voices of people who experienced similar things in conversation with each other, framing their experiences as parts of a larger whole.

You can conduct an oral history with almost anyone as long as you get their consent!

For example, if you're curious about family history, you may want to interview elders, family members, or family friends about their lived experiences.

This could span anything from cultural traditions to political involvement.

"All memories are a mix of fact and both opinions, and both are important."

Do you agree? Why or why not?

Unlike written academic work, where claims require citations, oral history is unique. Oral historians are not in the business of fact-checking narrators as they retell their stories and experiences.

In fact, an important part of oral history is the slippery nature of memory: over time, the ways that people remember a particular event, individual, or feeling may shift.

People do oral history for man reasons: to document emotion and lived experience. to build community, to educate, to advocate, to challenge dominant narratives.

Archival primary sources are an amazing resource. But they're often reflective of only people of a certain ~~class, race, or social position~~. Oral history can be a tool to fill gaps left by the archive, or to otherwise document voices and perspectives left out of mainstream histories.

The history that ends up in books, museums, and textbooks is anything but neutral. In the process of making decisions on what history is "significant," the lived experiences of ordinary people and people on the margins of society often go unrecorded.

Everyone has a story. Oral history is a type of narrative storytelling that involves interviewing a subject - what we'll call a narrator - about their life history and other connected topics.