Listening like a historian? A framework of 'oral historical thinking' for engaging with audiovisual sources in secondary school education

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ABSTRACT

History education in many parts of the world is increasingly integrating the practices and sources of oral history. This rapprochement between the field of history education and the field of oral history presents an opportunity to allow students to engage with and develop the particular ways of thinking used by oral history practitioners and theorists. This study investigates how 'oral historical thinking' might be captured in a framework designed for educators, much like the various existing models of historical thinking, to support secondary students to analyse and interpret audiovisual interview sources in a way that emulates experts in the field. The study presents a prototypical 'oral historical thinking framework' and explores its possible applications to classroom teaching.

KEYWORDS

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Introduction

> "Do you think this memory of events long after the time they occurred is any different to how Parks may have recounted the event at the time? Why?"
>
> "In the source, we see her trying to recall what happened in the past, meaning that she was trying to go back in her memory. However, if the interview were years later, the experience would still be the exact same. Furthermore, if the interview were in previous years where racial segregation was still present, I think Rosa Parks would have described her experience the same way since we see she is not afraid of consequences regarding confrontation. Therefore, it would not be any different." (Grade 10 student, 2019)

Oral history rose to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s after having been sidelined in preceding decades as inferior to historical work centred on the written record (Abrams, 2016). The field continued to grow and evolve throughout the twentieth century into a distinct interdisciplinary practice that has become increasingly internationalised (Abrams, 2016; Thomson, 2006). By the late 1960s, school teachers, particularly in North America, were beginning to explore the potential benefits of oral history in their classrooms (Perrone, 2017). Although many oral history projects were undertaken in educational settings in the intervening period, "it is only in the last 10–15 years that oral tradition, testimony, and life histories have become an integral part of educational programming" in North America as well as even more recently in parts of Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and South America (Llewellyn & Ng-A-Fook, 2017, p. 3-4). Spurred on by technological advancements enabling wider dissemination of oral histories, we now find ourselves in a crucial period of rapprochement between the field of oral history and the practice of history education.

The present research situates itself at this juncture, one which is receiving increasing attention from oral historians and educationalists alike (e.g., Trškan, 2016). Positioned as it is between two domains, this investigation springs from pertinent issues raised in the literature of both, in particular: history education's emphasis on disciplinary thinking and oral history's efforts to distinguish itself as a particular field of study. This investigation attempts to constructively reconcile these theoretical points of focus in a way that may benefit both teachers and students of history around the globe.

While technology has made audiovisual oral history interviews a common inclusion in school history classrooms, teacher candidates in many parts of the world are offered little training in the distinctive ways of thinking of this field (e.g., Huijgen & Holthuis, 2016; Winslow, 2016). Moreover, concepts and ways of thinking which are commonplace in the work of oral historians might not come naturally to secondary students. In the quotation above, for example, we can see that while oral historians often devote much time and energy to exploring the myriad factors that influence the way the past is remembered and retold in particular contexts, a lay-student may not even recognise that the context of an interview has any bearing on its contents. In the same way that existing models of 'historical thinking' provide a guide for educators as to how to support students to think like experts in the historical discipline, the aim of this study is to propose ways we might provide teachers (and students) with a systematic overview of oral historical thinking concepts to explore in their studies. Beginning with an overview of the theoretical underpinning in which the study is grounded, we will then outline the methods used, present the prototypical framework of oral historical thinking developed, and conclude with a discussion of how this might be applied in the classroom alongside other models of historical thinking.

Theoretical framework

The concepts of historical thinking and oral history

The present study is grounded in the increasingly dominant consensus amongst history education experts that we must ensure students are not treated as receptive vessels for historical 'facts' but that they engage with the discipline's "unique problems, practices and habits of mind" (Bain, 2000, p. 332). The extensive international body of work in this field (e.g., Chapman & Wilschut, 2015; Metzger & McArthur Harris, 2018) is based upon the conviction that the methods, approaches, sensibilities, and ways of thinking used by experts in the discipline of history can and should be conceptualised, classified and conveyed in models or frameworks designed to support school students in developing the same. In pursuit of this goal, the approaches of researchers differ in their emphasis, scope, focus and precise purpose. They are conceived of under various names, such as "historical literacy," "historical consciousness," "historical competence," "historical reasoning," and "historical thinking" (van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008, p. 88). Nonetheless, they all share the fundamental goal of translating disciplinary realities into classroom practice. Moreover, the work of many of these researchers have been integrated in various forms into curricula across the English-speaking world. For instance, Ontario, Canada's curriculum is structured on the use of four "historical thinking concepts" (drawn from the six outlined by Seixas and Morton (2013)) or the Australian Curriculum which outlines five "historical skills" that appear to be derived from several research approaches including those of Lee and Ashby (2000) and Seixas and Morton. Whilst acknowledging the nuanced difference between many of the terms listed above, for the sake of simplicity, this study will use only the term "*historical thinking.*" We draw on the conceptualisation offered by Seixas and Morton for whom it denotes the "creative process that historians go through to interpret the evidence of the past and generate the stories of history" (p. 2).

When defining what is meant by 'oral history', Abrams (2016) makes the important observation that the term refers to two things: both the research process and methodology as well as the result or output of this practice. This study will employ the term in both of these senses. 'Oral history' will be used firstly to refer to the field of study that is concerned with eliciting and recording oral testimony in the form of interviews which provide accounts of personal experiences and reflections about some aspect of the past (Shopes, 2002; The Oral History Association, 2009). Oral history is referred to here as a 'field' since framing it as a sub-discipline wholly contained within the discipline of history would fail to capture its distinctive features and interdisciplinary nature, emphasised in much of the literature. Indeed, in 1979 Alessandro Portelli dedicated a paper to discerning "What makes oral history different" (Portelli, 2016). He and others have made efforts to identify exactly which features set oral history apart, with suggestions including: "orality, narrative form, subjectivity, the 'different credibility' of memory, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee" (Portelli as cited in Perks & Thomson, 2016, p. 5) alongside "performativity, mutability and collaboration," (Abrams, 2016, p. 19) as well as its emphasis on interdisciplinary skills (Perks & Thomson, 2016). The distinctive features of oral history are explored in greater depth in the prototypical model below.

The term 'oral histories' will also be used to denote the 'outputs' of the field, that is to say the testimonies collected. Larson (2016) underscores the practical implications of how we conceive of oral histories in this regard, arguing that while we use the term to refer to recordings that are fixed, we should remember that an oral history might best be conceptualised as "a one-time, interactive performance, culturally and contextually bounded and specifically situated in time and space" (p. 337). Remembering that oral histories are more complex and holistic events than what may be captured in recordings will be essential to the discussion of approaches to the analysis and use of these sources.

It is important to note that this study will focus not on 'active' oral history projects wherein students, for example, conduct their own interviews but on the use of existing audiovisual

interview sources. Though 'passive' is the term frequently used as a counterpart to 'active' oral history, we agree with Stradling (2001) that "students are also *doing* oral history when they analyse oral evidence" (p. 213). We therefore employ the term 'secondary analysis' in this study.

Oral history in education

Oral history's presence in history, social studies, and humanities curricula across the English-speaking world continues to grow. Our explorative analysis of a small sampling of curriculum documents shows that oral history has been explicitly referenced in many locations. Some jurisdictions, such as New York State, Australia, and South Africa, include an expectation that students conduct 'active' oral history projects (New York State Education Department, 2017, p. 26; Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016, p. 120; Republic of South Africa Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 14-15). In many instances, however, 'oral history' or 'oral sources' are framed more as materials and resources, often referred to in a list of diverse source types. In Canada, for example, Ontario's Grade 11 & 12 *Canadian and World Studies* curriculum lists 'oral histories' amongst types of primary sources students might use (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 296), whilst Alberta's Grade 12 *Social Studies* curriculum states that students should "consult a wide variety of sources, including oral histories" (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 18). Similarly, in California's K-12 *Social Science* program students are to work with "historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artefacts, photographs, maps, artworks and architecture" (California Department of Education, 2017, p. 8). Australia, too, in its F-10 *Humanities* curriculum refers throughout to "oral histories" and "oral and audiovisual sources" within longer lists of suggested resources (ACARA, 2016). Hong Kong's secondary history curriculum also lists "oral history" amongst various suggested "source materials" (Curriculum Development Council and The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2015, p. 55).

Taken together, these examples indicate a focus on secondary analysis approaches in which existing oral histories are intended to be analysed, interpreted, and used by students as just one more material amongst a host of historical sources. Two implications arise from the frequency of this type of inclusion: a curriculum-driven need for teaching resources that support effective engagement with existing oral history source materials and a need to clarify how they differ from the various other source types with which they are grouped. As Thompson (2000) asserts, to treat oral history sources "as 'simply one more document' is to ignore the special value which they have as subjective, spoken testimony" (p. 118). A student in Ontario, for example, whose curriculum explicitly calls for the inclusion of oral histories as primary sources and currently draws upon Seixas and Morton's (2013) model of historical thinking, might analyse an oral historical source like any other: considering features such as origin, purpose, and reliability to "reach conclusions about a wide range of historical issues, developments, and events" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 15). Such an approach risks overlooking aspects particular to the complex nature of oral sources (e.g., oral and embodied storytelling, the influence of the interviewer, the blurring of lines between primary source and secondary account). Additionally, students may miss opportunities to investigate beyond "historical events" to the ways these intertwine with experience, memory and retelling up to the present.

Furthermore, although curriculum documents are increasingly demonstrating an expectation that oral history be included in secondary education, the implementation of these objectives has not been well-supported by current teacher training. Llewellyn and Ng-A-Fook (2017) observed that "history educators have few resources to help them consider if and how doing oral history education is a "best practice" for encountering the past lives of others" (p. 4) while Huijgen and Holthuis (2016) found that oral history experts in the Netherlands were concerned about the gaps in understanding produced by "the marginal role of oral history in teacher education programs" (p. 52). Likewise, in the United States, Winslow (2016, p. 182) argues that oral history is "rarely offered in teacher preparation programs" and that teachers must thus rely on outside professional

development opportunities to develop their understanding of how to use oral history in their teaching.

In terms of the literature on oral history education to which teachers might turn, there is an abundance of material focused on undergraduate level education but "very little research exists below the university setting" (Wendling & Lanman, 2006, p. 222). Existing literature also focuses heavily on active oral history projects and it is common for such materials to contain little or no emphasis on the analysis of the oral histories obtained through student interviews. Trofanenko (2017) laments just this difficulty, arguing that "often, the focus is more on the organizational and pragmatic elements (doing an oral history and gathering information) than the process through which students grapple with the information provided" (p. 151). This pattern is visible in many resources designed to help teachers incorporate oral history in the classroom. For example, *Talking Gumbo: A Teacher's Guide to Using Oral History in the Classroom*, dedicates only one of its eighty-six pages to strategies to help students interpret and analyse their interviews (Dean et al., 1998). Even the Oral History Association's *Principles and Best Practices for Oral History Education (4-12): Classroom Guide* discusses research, interview questions, preservation, reflection, and dissemination but contains no mention of analysis or interpretation (Ardemendo & Kuszmar, 2013).

It should be acknowledged, however, that despite these gaps in the literature, there is a small core of existing resources on secondary analysis in oral history education at the secondary school level that offer, in particular, a range of helpful questions to scaffold student analysis of oral history sources. For instance, Shopes (2002) has written a comprehensive guide for *Making Sense of Oral History*, particularly focusing on online sources. Similarly, in *Teaching 20th-Century European History*, Stradling (2001) includes chapters on both oral history and television as a source which contain useful guidance on the use of audiovisual oral history sources in secondary classrooms. Moreover, *The Touch of the Past. Remembrance, Learning and Ethics* might help teachers to guide "remembrance learning" by examining the benefits and limitations of oral sources (Simon, 2005).

In addition, investigations into potential links between models of historical thinking and oral history have begun, though they remain relatively scarce. Two separate studies have mapped student learning in active oral history projects against Seixas and Morton's (2013) six historical thinking concepts, concluding that they could support the development of historical thinking (Perrone, 2017; von Heyking, 2017). This finding is supported by recent empirical research which found students engaging in lessons using oral histories (in the form of live interviews, text, but particularly video) outperformed control groups in historical thinking skills (Bertram et al., 2017). Importantly, however, these efforts to map learning grounded in oral history against models of historical thinking that reflect the discipline as a whole fail to capture a central thrust in oral history literature, namely: the characterisation of a distinctive field of study. As Abrams (2016) argues, "there is a need for the historian to think in a distinctive way about oral history" (p. 3) and thus more general historical thinking concepts may prove insufficient to guide student learning. Certainly, if we accept that history education should strive to support students to develop ways of thinking that reflect disciplinary realities *and* that the field of oral history requires distinctive habits of mind, could it be that we require a more specific framework to better guide students towards this goal when working with oral history sources?

Research question

As we have seen, oral history continues to gain traction within secondary school education but a theoretically grounded and practical oral history framework for history teachers and students is missing. The research question of this study is thus: How could 'oral historical thinking' be captured in a framework to support secondary school teachers and students to engage with audiovisual interview sources like oral historians?

Methods

It was first necessary to discern what 'oral historical thinking' consists of, based on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. This was examined in an effort to identify the most prominent and recurrent concepts, issues and questions that oral historians engage with when interpreting and analysing their sources. Considering the immense diversity in the approaches employed by oral historians and the dynamic nature of the discipline, this paper aims not to present definitive or agreed-upon 'steps' or 'answers', instead echoing Seixas' (2017) approach in seeking to identify the foremost "problems, tensions, or difficulties that demand comprehension, negotiation and, ultimately, an accommodation that is never a complete solution" (p. 597).

Once we identified a range of components of oral historical thinking, these concepts had to be distilled into a framework for use in secondary school education. Seven existing models of historical thinking provided guidance on how the oral historical thinking concepts might be usefully presented to educators for use in the classroom context (Körber, 2011; Lee, 2005; Lévesque, 2008; Mandell, 2008; Seixas & Morton, 2013; van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008; Wineburg, 1991). Several principles became apparent. Firstly, with the exception of Lévesque, who proposed a particular progression of steps, the models all emphasised the interrelatedness of their various components. Clarity and structure also appeared as integral for the effectiveness of models. Furthermore, we deemed visual representations, such as those proposed by Mandell or van Drie and van Boxtel, to be the most useful way to explicitly present educators with different levels of interacting concepts (for instance, epistemological beliefs and procedural concepts). These existing models were also cross-mapped to investigate how an oral historical thinking framework might interact with them. An analysis of the types of questions proposed by educational materials on oral history further confirmed the need to include a component in the framework of oral historical thinking pertaining to the very nature of the field of study. These questions also guided the composition of explanatory elaborations of the framework's components. Finally, theoretical consideration was given to how such a framework might be implemented in classroom teaching.

Results

A framework of oral historical thinking

The prototypical framework presented here attempts to catalogue recurring concepts as well as some shared underlying epistemological beliefs regarding oral history while bearing in mind the fact that any such categorisation will necessarily be an artificial separation of inextricably linked elements. The framework is designed to be applied with students at a secondary school level (approximately 12-18 years of age). It focuses specifically on the interpretation and analysis of audiovisual oral history interviews which may include: videos from web-based oral history archives, interviews in historical documentaries or television programs, historically-focused journalistic interviews, and audiovisual recordings of oral history interviews that students have conducted themselves. The framework identifies important concepts arising from the literature that are relevant to:

- understanding the nature of the field;

- analysing and interpreting audiovisual interviews; and

- relating these to other historical narratives and sources.

The concepts included do not represent agreed-upon 'answers' from the field but rather serve as points of focus for students to consider, grapple with, and question. The underpinning aims, beliefs, and practices of the field of oral history are placed at the centre as they form a necessary foundation of students' work with oral history sources and the epistemological basis for all the

other concepts represented in the framework. The next layer of the framework highlights eight concepts linked to remembering and retelling during the interview event on which students should focus as they engage with particular interviews. Finally, the concepts linked to accuracy and generalisability in the outer layer of the framework underscore points of attention for students when situating individual interviews within a larger context for historical understanding. While the concepts have been layered to highlight different aspects of the analysis and interpretation of sources, this is not intended to represent a unidirectional progression. Thus, the visual representation below attempts to convey the way in which these three layers and the concepts within them all overlap and interact when working with oral history sources. The elaborations below provided further insights into what each aspect of the framework represents.
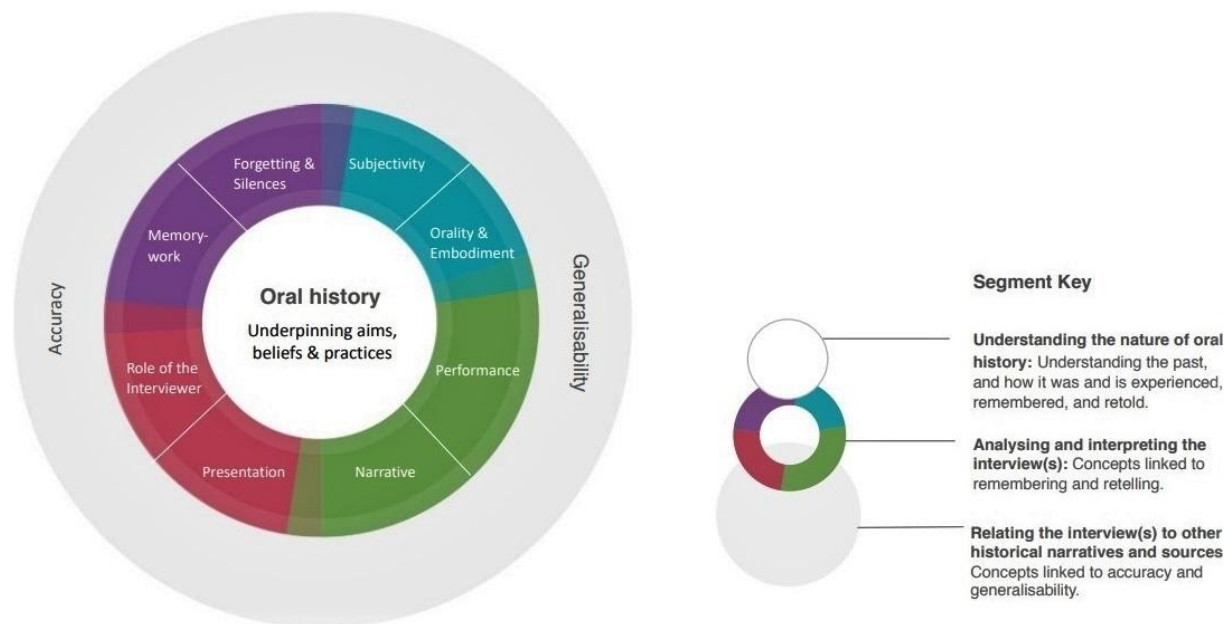

Figure 1. Oral historical thinking framework

Understanding the nature of oral history

In order for students to meaningfully engage with audiovisual oral history sources, they must first have some understanding of the nature of the field of oral history. As with the broader study of history, there is a shared goal of understanding the past. Oral history, however, also seeks to understand how the past was and is experienced, remembered, and retold by individuals, families, communities, nations, and so on. Oral history is therefore not only concerned with investigating 'what happened?' but other key questions such as: How does the past interact with the present? What does it mean to us? How do we remember it? How do we think about it? How do we feel about it? How do we talk about it? (Bertram et al., 2017). Furthermore, oral historians often examine the way in which the answers to these questions change in different temporal, social and political contexts and according to the particular pasts with/in which they are working. While some documentary historians make efforts to explore similar lines of inquiry, these questions do not lie at the core of the broader discipline or corresponding historical thinking frameworks in education. Students should therefore be encouraged to consider how and why these core questions might differ from the types of historical questions they may be more familiar with. Moreover, inquiry questions constructed by teachers and students to guide engagement with oral history sources should keep the central areas of interest of the field in mind.

Another key aim of the field of oral history for many practitioners is the democratisation of history and historical practice. A significant aspect of early oral history ventures was an effort to

provide a voice to those marginalised by conventional historical approaches that focused on 'great men' or political and economic forces. The close relationship between oral history and social history is often emphasised. Blee (2016, p. 424) notes that "from this tradition of history from the bottom up has come a rich and sensitive body of interviews with union organizers, feminist activists, civil rights workers, and others." In addition, the practice of oral history has allowed access to the stories of people and groups who are less able or likely to produce written documents (Harnett, 2011, p. 2), offering "a window into experiences obscured in written sources" (Sangster, 2016, p. 65). The concept of democratisation also appears frequently in debates about who can and should conduct oral history interviews, what ought to be considered 'oral history' (Frisch, 2011, p. 135), as well as the impact of digitisation in democratising access to oral histories (Cohen, 2013, p. 155). When watching and listening to an audiovisual oral history, it would therefore be useful for students to consider ideas such as the extent to which the source gives a voice to a previously 'voiceless' person or group, how and why it does this, and what might be learnt as a consequence of hearing a story usually untold in prevailing historical narratives.

Additionally, it should be remembered that oral history is a diverse and heterogeneous field, in part because of its interdisciplinarity. Interviewing techniques, data collection strategies and analytical approaches are drawn from a variety of fields such as sociology, psychology, anthropology, documentary history, memory studies, performance studies, literary studies, linguistics, and feminist theory amongst others (Perks & Thomson, 2016; Thomson, 2006). Students, equally, can be encouraged to consider how knowledge, ideas and ways of thinking from the other disciplines they study – particularly literature, languages, drama, and media studies – might be useful or appropriate in the analysis and interpretation of audiovisual interview sources.

Analysing and interpreting interview(s): Concepts linked to remembering and retelling

When it comes to the analysis and interpretation of audiovisual oral histories, there are a number of concepts with which students should engage. Guiding students to investigate and explore these eight concepts to support their addressing of inquiry questions underpinned by the aims, beliefs and practices central to the field will build their disciplinary skills and understanding. Audiovisual interviews must always be understood as a dynamic dialogue in which remembering and retelling are co-constructed by the interviewee, interviewer and in some cases other parties (such as filmmakers). Therefore, some concepts in the framework centre more on the narrator (indicated in blue), others focus more on how external influences shape the oral history (indicated in red), while certain points emphasise the interplay of these two (indicated in purple and green). While these may be useful directions to point student attention, it should be reiterated that all the concepts are interlinked and they are not designed to be dealt with in a particular order.

Subjectivity

Portelli (2016) contends that while oral history can provide factually valid and informative accounts of past events, its strength comes from the subjective retelling of these events which enables us to obtain a greater appreciation of their meaning. Oral histories are infused with the subjectivity of lived experience, personal perspective, and later reflection and interpretation by the narrator. In Portelli's view, this is of equal historical value since "what informants believe is indeed a historical fact (that is, the fact that they believe it), as much as what really happened" (p. 53). Many others echo these sentiments, extolling oral history's ability to incorporate new elements into our historical understanding, particularly regarding the way in which events were experienced at the time and are remembered in the present (Grele, 1987; Thompson, 2000). Students should aim to develop an understanding of the subjectivity of oral history interviews, exploring indications of the narrator's sense of identity, their perspectives, their experiences, as well as their interpretations of events and ideas and how they may have arrived at these. Exploring subjectivity in oral history sources bears some similarity to wider historical thinking concepts such as historical perspective-taking and historical empathy. It differs, however, in two ways: first, perspectives offered in oral histories are not captured at the time of events but reflect the context

of a later retelling; second, the subjectivity is of interest in oral history for what it can tell us about the meaning of the past for individuals in the present, not only about the past itself.

Orality and embodiment

One significant peculiarity of the sources of the field of oral history is their oral nature. Important aspects of oral expression such as intonation, changes in the rhythm of speech, and shifts in velocity (how long a narrator spends narrating a given period in the past) all reflect the narrator's attitude towards different subjects in their narration (Portelli, 2016). Grele (1987) notes that a major drawback of transcription is that it "conveys none of the meanings imparted through inflection, cadence, tone, or volume" (p. 577). Orality must also be understood in association with embodiment. As Friedman (2014) argues, the voice not only originates in the body but is affected by both the body and by facial expressions which impact upon vocalisation. He further demonstrates that facial gestures such as the raising of an eyebrow combine with tone to produce nuances of meaning such as irony and thus the interpretation and analysis of oral histories must deeply consider all layers of communication. In some cases, gesture and expression alone may even convey what words cannot. Audiovisual interviews enable students to see and hear individuals as they recount their experiences and students should consider not only how this changes the way that they, as a viewer, respond to the story but also how the narrator's way of speaking and moving can aid interpretation of their testimony. Exploring the way that a narrator speaks (volume, pitch, accent, speed, intonation, alongside changes in rhythm and velocity) as well as their physicality (posture, gestures, gaze, and facial expressions) can offer students valuable insights beyond the 'content' of their speech regarding their attitudes and feelings about aspects of their past.

Performance

The interviewer's mere presence renders the retelling of any oral history a performance and narrators will, consciously or unconsciously, adopt a performance style made up of a combination of narrative and speech forms appropriate to the interview situation (Abrams, 2016). This effect can be further exacerbated by the purpose and intended audience of the recorded history. For example, the presence of video recording equipment can fundamentally transform the way in which narrators retell their stories by making them feel not only the centre of attention but as though every word they say will be preserved in perpetuity (McLaughlin, 2018). Moreover, the fact that documentaries are filmed for wide public consumption and oral histories are increasingly uploaded to broadly accessible online collections can also cause interviewees to moderate their performance (McLaughlin, 2018; Sheftel & Zembrzychi, 2017). The narrator's surroundings and their perception of their audience - the interviewer and/or secondary viewers - will inform their choice of dress, use of voice, physicality, use of language and their overall narrative. Students should look for indications of these performative aspects and consider how the context and purpose of the interview may have affected the way the narrator chose to present themselves. This should lead to further questions about the implications of a narrator's performance on how we interpret their testimony and what their desired self-portrayal might tell us about the meaning their story holds for them at the time of the interview.

Narrative

In order to make sense of our memories, we all have a tendency to construct narratives from our recollections (Yow, 2015). This process and its link to memory have been the subject of much investigation by oral historians. In addition to 'internal' narrativisation, oral historians examine the connections (and disconnections) between individual life stories and the narratives of collective history (Frisch, 2016), particularly dominant Grand or Master narratives (Stoler & Strassler, 2016). Oral history interviews take on a particular narrative form as they seek a retelling of personal experiences in which the narrator is typically positioned as the protagonist. Furthermore, their focus on spoken modes of storytelling, accessible outside learned circles and expressed differently to written forms of communication, give them a specific quality amongst historical practices (Abrams, 2016). For these reasons, narrative analysis is touted by several

prominent theorists as a useful and appropriate approach to understanding oral histories (Abrams, 2016; Portelli, 2016; Thompson, 2000). Students might explore narratives for the ways they reflect or reject dominant historical narratives with which students may be familiar, such as official nation-building historical narratives from their home countries. Testimonies can also be examined for the use and effect of narrative features – genre, themes, symbols, motifs, arcs, etc. – and features specific to spoken narratives to communicate experiences and memories.

Presentation

The holistic reality of an interview event can never fully be captured in all its nuance and thus the interviews students watch and listen to are inevitably shaped by the way in which they are presented. Frisch (2011) uses a culinary analogy to describe the traditional dichotomy in oral history work between the relatively 'raw' recordings located in libraries or archives and the 'well-cooked' presentation prepared by scholars, documentarians, or museum curators. Indeed, filmmakers underscore the impact of conventions such as staging and editing on the oral history produced, reiterating that "documentary is a representation of reality, rather than reality itself" (McLaughlin, 2018, p. 313). Even in 'raw' recordings, the impact of framing, editing, and so forth remains a key concern. When examining the impact of presentation, students should investigate the provenance and purpose of the source (website, film, television program, etc.) and consider how these factors may have favoured a certain kind of presentation. They should also examine the interview itself for signs of staging, editing, length, use of music, presence or absence of interviewer, voice over, and contextual information on the interview. Students should then assess the impact of these elements on the testimony and what we can understand from it.

The role of the interviewer

Unlike other historical sources, it is the oral historian who initiates the interview and thereby the source's creation. As Sheftel and Zembrzycki (2017) remind us, even where we are able to access a relatively 'raw' audiovisual recording, this does not mean that the history presented is free from outside influence since the process of interpretation by both interviewer and interviewee begins during the interview itself. Portelli (2016) highlights the intersubjectivity of narrator and interviewer as one of the key features of oral history sources, arguing that their content "depends largely on what the interviewer puts into it in terms of questions, dialogue, and personal relationship" (p. 54). This relationship may be further impacted by factors such as age, gender, social class, cultural background, political persuasion, and so on (Abrams, 2016). Intersubjectivity produces a unique narrative that could never be recreated in quite the same way. For Frisch (2011, p. 127), this can be characterised as a "shared authority," the joint meaning-making process in which authorship is shared between interviewer and narrator.

When analysing the role of the interviewer, students should consider the impact of their choice of questions, the frequency with which they ask them, and the extent to which they adapt to the narrator's responses. Similarly, they should observe the apparent relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, identifying positive flow in interactions, awkwardness, signs of power dynamics, a sense of professionalism, or even confrontation. They ought to consider how the identities of the narrator and interviewer may influence this relationship. In this process, students should try to find out as much as they can about the interviewer and their aims in the interview.

Memory-work

From around the 1970s onwards, the field of oral history increasingly turned to treating memory not only as the source of their study but also as its subject (Thomson, 2006). In addition to broader investigations into the functioning of memory and its imperfections, one common theme explored in oral history literature is the interaction between different layers of memory, such as: individual and collective memory (Halbwachs, 1992); repressed, secret, communal, and public memory (Browning, 2016); or official, popular, and 'countermemory' (Yow, 2015). Whilst different theorists propose different categorisations, many emphasise the importance of examining oral

history testimonies for traces of collective memory influences - which may be evident in the language, motifs or narrative frames used by the narrator - in order to explore the interaction, convergence and divergence of individual accounts with shared cultural patterns over time (e.g., Stoler & Strassler, 2016).

Whilst some of the more complex subtleties of memory-work may prove too challenging for secondary students, it is important that they engage with questions about remembering which link directly to the core tenets of oral history. Students should think carefully about what has been remembered by the narrator and why this might have been remembered. They should develop some understanding of ideas about individual and collective memory (in its various forms) and examine audiovisual interviews for indications of the interactions between these layers of memory. Students should also explore the features of the context at the time of retelling that may have shaped the way the narrator remembers in their testimony. These might include consequences of past events which have occurred in the intervening years, current affairs, changing social values, or the narrator's individual sense of self.

Forgetting and silences

Students should also consider what is not remembered or said in the audiovisual interview. 'Forgetting' here refers both to the forgetting or repression of memories by the narrator as well as the collective forgetting of particular stories and voices in history and public discourse. Similarly, 'silences' may be understood literally as moments without sound between narration in an interview, but also refers to stories unspoken about either in history, public memory or individual testimony (Passerini, 2003). Oral historians remain alert to these phenomena, investigating their possible causes such as narrator reticence to discuss particular subjects because: these do not align with their purpose in the interview, they are restricted by the bounds of social discourse (norms of privacy and politeness, for instance), they have experienced associated personal trauma, their memories do not accord with accepted public and collective memory narratives, or there are express restrictions placed on memory by authorities (particularly, but not exclusively, by dictatorial governments) (e.g., Benadiba, 2012; Layman, 2016; Norquay, 1999; Passerini, 2003). Students should endeavour to identify any facts or subjects which the narrator appears either unable or unwilling to remember and discuss in the interview, exploring possible explanations for this. In addition to the passage of time and fallibility of memory, they might consider, for instance: whether these forgotten or unspoken issues or topics may have been deemed unimportant by the narrator or interviewer, may not have been previously thought or spoken about, may be difficult for the narrator to discuss, might be considered too private, and so on. Silences, in the literal sense, can also be examined along with physical clues to determine the feelings they may communicate.

Relating the interview(s) to other historical narratives and sources

In addition to analysing and interpreting the interview itself, students will often need to situate the interview in relation to other narratives and sources in order to address inquiry questions. Two areas of particular interest in this process are the accuracy and generalisability of the oral testimony. It is important to note, however, that these concepts should not be considered checkboxes for usefulness. An interview with numerous factual inaccuracies and which appears unrepresentative of the broader experiences of a certain group may still offer interesting and valuable insights into the past and how it was and is remembered, experienced and retold by an individual.

Accuracy

In addition to being subjective in nature, testimonies provided in oral histories, in some cases recounted a great distance after the event, raise concerns about accuracy. For many, the use of memory is the locus of concern when it comes to reliability. Whilst it can feel uncomfortable for the oral historian to challenge the accuracy of others' memories, particularly survivors of traumatic events (Browning, 2016), there is general agreement that respectful evaluation of the

accuracy and reliability of oral sources is important and must include an appreciation of various influences that shape oral testimony. It is not, however, a matter of dismissing any oral source which contains unreliable elements. Portelli (2016), instead, suggests conceiving of oral history sources as holding a "different credibility," arguing that "the diversity of oral history consists in the fact that 'wrong' statements are still psychologically 'true' and that this truth may be equally as important as factually reliable accounts" (p. 53). Students would benefit from considering how, why, and the extent to which memory is subject to distortion and degradation and how this may produce factual inaccuracies. Additionally, they ought to examine the ways that what is remembered and how it is remembered will be influenced by many of the concepts discussed above. Students can assess the factual accuracy of oral testimony by checking for internal consistency and by corroborating elements of the testimony against other historical sources or interviews while bearing in mind that inaccuracies may, in fact, be useful for investigating certain questions pertinent to oral historical study.

Generalisability

A related concept which students should also consider is the extent to which the interview is generalisable. In some cases, the generalisability of an interview may be informed by its accuracy. Generalisability, however, may also refer to how representative non-factual elements of an interview are. For example: Are the experiences and emotions described by the narrator common to this group? Are oral narratives of this event or period often remembered and retold in similar ways? In order to address such issues, students would need to situate an interview in the context of other similar interviews and historical sources. Sometimes interviews with multiple narrators about the same event may throw up contradictions (Browning, 2016), though Portelli (as cited in Yow, 2015, p. 284) sees these merely as a reminder that societies and cultures are made up of individuals. Some oral historians argue, on the other hand, that generalisability is not necessarily a valuable pursuit as a close examination of a single oral history allows a deeper engagement with the individual "personality, emotion, detail and dialogue" and a peeling back of layers of memory and experience that might otherwise be lost in a broad sample of stories (Sangster, 2015, p. 65). Students should thus consider the generalisability of a source in the context of the inquiry question they are seeking to address and should consider formulating questions in such a way as to make clear if they require a generalisable conclusion or not.

Conclusion and discussion

This study has proposed a prototypical framework, one possible way to capture oral historical thinking to support secondary school teachers and students to engage with audiovisual interview sources like oral historians. This framework endeavours to integrate a range of concepts identified in oral history literature into a structured format to support the translation of these ideas into a variety of secondary-level classroom contexts. It is not, however, proposed as the only valid approach to bringing oral historical thinking into school-level education. The developed framework comprises three domains, guiding students to understand the nature of the field of oral history, engage with concepts crucial to the analysis of audiovisual sources, and consider additional concepts relevant to relating individual oral history interview recordings to other historical narratives and sources.

Interaction with existing historical thinking frameworks

Since the present study has used existing frameworks of historical thinking in education as its basis, the way in which the proposed framework for oral history sources might relate to these merits some attention. One challenge in determining how a framework of oral historical thinking could interact with existing models is the disparity in their approach, content, and scope. Following a cross-mapping of the main components of each model to identify areas of convergence and divergence, some significant overlap in the components of these existing works were

identified such as taking perspectives or empathising with historical actors, and using sources and evidence. These were then examined for potential links with the oral historical thinking framework.

Prominent in existing models are a range of meta-concepts "such as *historical significance*, *continuity and change*, [and] *cause and effect*" (Huijgen & Holthuis, 2014, p. 106). These can be relevant to oral historical study and evidence suggests oral history may benefit students in mastering these meta-concepts (e.g., Huijgen & Holthuis, 2016; Perrone, 2017; von Heyking, 2017). This, however, does not necessarily imply a mutual development of students' ability to think like oral historians. Although the concept of *democratisation* of history might relate to issues of *historical significance,* on the whole these meta-concepts did not appear as leading themes within the literature of the field of oral history. Therefore, a vast majority of the oral historical thinking concepts identified above do not easily align with these meta-concepts. Other historical thinking concepts such as *perspective-taking* and *historical empathy* do correspond more closely to themes arising in oral history such as *democratisation*, *subjectivity*, *memory as the subject of study*, *orality and embodiment*, *performance*, and *narrative*. There is an important caveat to this convergence, however: oral historians are not singularly focused on the perspectives held in the past but also on the perspectives displayed at the time of interview.

Similarly, the use of sources and *evidence* appears as a through-line in almost all the models listed and has obvious links to oral historical thinking, particularly centred on engagement with audiovisual sources. The focus on working with a particular source type could suggest positioning it as a sort of sub-framework within the concept of evidence is appropriate. Like the links to perspective-taking, however, this only functions to an extent. Firstly, the use of sources and evidence as described in the historical thinking models focuses particularly on primary source material rather than retrospective sources like oral histories which hold an ambiguous status between primary source and historical account (Bertram et al., 2017). Secondly, there are several important oral historical thinking concepts which deal with broader aims and methods of the discipline which could not be encompassed within this narrower scope. Finally, the use of evidence and sources in existing frameworks is almost exclusively for the purpose of interpreting and drawing conclusions about the past.

It is this final aspect that arises as the most significant obstacle to the close intertwining of existing models and a framework of oral historical thinking. History and oral history as fields of study are both concerned with understanding the past, but oral historians also place a great deal of emphasis on other objectives (exploring how this was and is experienced, remembered and retold) which do not hold the same prominence in the broader discipline of history, particularly as it is represented in the models studied. This difference in underpinning beliefs and aims alongside particular approaches which centre on memory and the relationship between past and present – including sources which themselves span this divide – indicates that a framework of oral historical thinking could not be designed to slot into a neat interaction with existing historical thinking models. Thus, it must function as a standalone, though complementary, framework.

Using the historical thinking framework in the classroom

Developing student oral historical thinking skills across these diverse areas will take time and may best be achieved by the regular integration of audiovisual interviews in the classroom. Supporting students to engage deeply with oral history sources in this way can not only develop their general historical thinking but can also allow them to explore a range of other important concepts specific to the study of oral history.

The core of the framework, developing an understanding of the nature of oral history, must be the starting point for student learning and the point through which learning continuously pivots. As Bruner (1977) argued, "mastery of the fundamental ideas of a field involves not only the grasping of general principles, but also the development of an attitude towards learning and inquiry" (p. 20). Where students have had little to no exposure to oral history in the past, the

central aims, beliefs, and practices must form the springboard for their learning. Teachers implementing the framework should therefore begin with activities and discussions that promote student understanding of core tenets such as: the particularity of oral history and its sources, the interdisciplinary practices of the field, the prominence of democratising objectives, and the types of questions that oral history seeks to address. Furthermore, teachers and students should construct inquiry questions that relate directly to these fundamental ideas. Engagement with these central components of the framework is not only restricted to the beginning of the learning process, rather Bruner advocates for a "continual deepening" of one's understanding of core disciplinary concepts (p. 13).

The next two layers of concepts in the framework are intended to form part of more procedural instruction. As they work with an interview or collection, students should be striving to explore how these concepts play out in the particular source/s and how this affects the construction of responses to inquiry questions. It is not suggested that all concepts in the framework be dealt with collectively and in depth during every student encounter with an oral history source. This would be impracticable in most teaching contexts and far too onerous an undertaking for teachers and students alike. Instead, the framework aims to provide a systematic overview of oral historical thinking that can be applied flexibly in diverse teaching contexts. Its implementation, therefore, would best include the use of activities linked to one or several concepts as appropriate to a given source or source collection and chosen inquiry questions. For instance, the role of the interviewer can be explored by examining multiple interviews with the same interviewee on the same general topic. Students can be guided to analyse the different interviewers' identities, contexts, aims, their apparent relationships with the narrator, their lines of questioning, the speed of their questioning, and so on. Students then compare and contrast the oral histories produced as a result, considering how the interviewers may have impacted on these accounts.[1]

It is recommended that teachers scaffold learning (design activities with controls and supports that are appropriate to the learner's present capacity) with a gradual reduction in teacher intervention over time (Wood et al., 1976). The ultimate goal of long-term interaction with the concepts of the framework is that students will be able to flexibly select and explore relevant concepts when independently analysing and interpreting audiovisual sources.

Suggestions for future research

Limitations of the present study include the authors' own subjective interpretation and classification of core ideas within the field of oral history for educational purposes and, importantly, the fact that it remains wholly theoretical. Further research would be required to test the usability and effectiveness of the framework in authentic classroom settings using quasi-experimental studies to determine its real-world validity. This would require valid and reliable pre- and post-tests focusing on students' ability to examine audiovisual sources. Thinking aloud methodology could also be used to gain insight into how students use the different components of the framework and how they value them. Moreover, in the same way that the aforementioned models of historical thinking have evolved over time and have been approached in different ways by different researchers, the prototypical framework presented here may be improved upon in future or stimulate the development of an altogether alternative approach. It is hoped that, by putting forward one possible approach as a starting point, the framework will indeed provoke an ongoing dialogue between oral historians and educators as to how we may best bring disciplinary ways of thinking from the field into the classroom.

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Endnotes

[1] A range of classroom activities of this kind have been developed and can be provided by contacting the first author.