

Oral History: A Qualitative Research Method Absent from Social and Human Studies at the Algerian University

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Abstract:

This study presents a scholarly examination of the methodology of oral history. It defines the concept through precise analytical formulations and traces its development within qualitative research methodologies, together with the scientific and intellectual foundations that constitute its initial premises and support the construction and advancement of an integrated theoretical framework. The study also highlights the interview as the principal instrument of this method, as well as the centrality of the relationship between narrator and researcher within the interview process, the major stages involved in applying the method, and the contribution of modern technologies and communication media to its consolidation, particularly in relation to the audio and visual recording of interviews. In addition, the study addresses the limitations associated with the application of oral history as an extension of the broader constraints that generally characterize qualitative research. It further distinguishes between the use of oral history as a process and the use of oral history as a product, before presenting examples of studies in different disciplines that have employed this method. Finally, the study examines the current state of investment in oral historical research within the Algerian university, noting the expanding historical efforts devoted to the writing of memoirs, which remain distinct from oral history studies, and emphasizing the justifications for adopting this method and the importance of giving it greater attention, especially in social and human research.

Keywords: oral history, qualitative research, social and human studies, Algerian university.

Introduction:

The Arabic scholarly corpus and academic literature are almost devoid of rigorous studies devoted to oral history, not because the subject is entirely new, even if its novelty remains relative, but because it belongs to the sphere of qualitative research approaches, which have not yet become fully integrated into prevailing research culture or established academic practice. For a long time, these practices have been marked by imitation and repetition, especially when combined with a reluctance to engage in unfamiliar research experiences through methods and procedures that remain outside the conventional framework.

Qualitative research has long required greater care and sustained attention from researchers in the social and psychological sciences. Yet quantitative research has remained predominant, sustained by the persuasive force of numbers, the authority of statistical data, and the prestige associated with charts and measurement, as though qualitative research were somehow

doubtful in validity and weak in evidentiary power, or as though it occupied the lowest rank within the hierarchy of scientific inquiry.

This mistaken perception has obscured the distinctive strengths of qualitative research and has limited recognition of the methodological and instrumental advantages that qualitative approaches offer. At a minimum, these approaches deserve to be regarded as profoundly significant, notwithstanding the criticisms or limitations that may affect them, just as such limitations affect all research methods and tools. Among these rich and productive approaches is the oral history method, to which this study is devoted. The discussion is organized around five principal axes:

- grounding the concept of oral history;
- the foundations for applying the oral history method;
- the use of oral history processes and the use of the oral history product;
- examples of diverse academic studies based on the oral history method;
- the reality and justifications of applying oral history within qualitative research methodologies in Algerian universities.

These axes, together with their constituent details, are expected to address questions that invite serious reflection on the significance of this research method and on the prospects for its application and use in Algerian universities, particularly in the field of social and human research, which has thus far remained distant from a full appreciation of the value of oral historical studies. In this sense, the present paper may be regarded as an attempt to open a long-closed door, so that meaningful discussion may begin concerning its major and minor dimensions and the possible ways of integrating it into actual research practice.

First: Grounding the Concept of Oral History

1- Definition of Oral History:

At the outset, it should be noted that this term has appeared under several different designations. James Bennett referred to a number of these in his address at the annual meeting of the Oral History Association in 1982, including *life history*, *self-report*, *personal narrative*, *life story*, and *oral autobiography* (Yow, 2005, p. 03). There is little doubt that oral history is a term of relatively recent circulation among specialists concerned with qualitative research methodologies, and its definitional boundaries vary considerably from one researcher to another. Some definitions emphasize the substance of recorded personal memories narrated by an individual to a listener. Others focus on the instrument and technique primarily used in the act of recording. Still others define it as a research method and methodological approach grounded in the conduct of carefully designed interviews.

Yow states that “oral history is the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form” (Yow, 2005, p. 03). Janesick similarly argues that a contemporary definition of oral history leads to its identification as “a collection of stories and memories of one person or a group of people who possess direct knowledge of those experiences they have lived through” (Janesick, 2010, p. 02). Whether individual or collective, oral history thus constitutes the construction of

narratives that reflect a particular experience related to a specific subject. It rests on conscious narration and deliberate recollection grounded in authentic, direct knowledge of that experience.

Oral history has also been defined as “a recorded interview with a knowledgeable person, through questions and answers, concerning what he or she did or observed of an event or events or a way of life of historical significance. The purpose is to preserve this record for current or future researchers in particular, and to make it available for use whenever needed” (Baum, 2007, p. 15). On this basis, specialists have identified a number of defining criteria of oral history, including the following:

- that it should take the form of a sound historical narrative produced according to scientifically established criteria, based on questions and answers constituting the essence of an interview founded on planning, direction, editing, and the deliberate selection of questions;
- that it should provide an accurate historical account describing the specific event or subject;
- that it should be grounded in directly lived events, leaving no room for the transmission of popular lore or circulating oral rumor;
- that it should be direct, taking place between the narrator and the researcher;
- that it should be preserved in recorded form, especially in light of the development of technologies of preservation, storage, transmission, and dissemination;
- that it should be legally accessible for research, study, analysis, and citation.

Lummis further emphasizes that the term *oral history* substantially overlaps with several closely related terms (Lummis, 1987). Whereas its meaning is oriented toward acquiring knowledge about a specific subject in the past, the term *life history* or *autobiography* is concerned with obtaining information about the stages of an individual’s life and development. By contrast, *social life history* focuses on gathering information about the ways in which an individual’s life shapes, and is shaped by, particular times, situations, and specific groups.

For its part, the Oral History Association affirms that oral history includes all forms of recordings and documents, whether audio, video, or written notes. These materials are drawn from the memory of interviewees through the continuing collaborative relationship established between researcher and narrator. The resulting product emerges from a partnership between both parties, since the interview conducted by the researcher through directed questioning is met by responses rich in meanings and insights connected to the narrator’s personal experiences. In this sense, both sides contribute to the construction of a distinctive oral historical product (Mulvihill & Swaminathan, 2022).

2- Evolution of Oral History:

The first clear indications of substantial interest in oral history appeared in the transmission of living testimonies from those who had experienced the events of the Second World War. During the 1950s, broader efforts began to emerge, as this form of historical inquiry was directed toward collecting information and ideas from key actors in the United States of America who had participated in major events. The aim was to deepen understanding of the reasons behind

those events and to impart texture and vitality to historical realities that written and often static documents had failed to capture, whether political, economic, or cultural. It thus became necessary for such events to be documented or narrated in a living form through the words of those who had made them (Baum, 2007).

In this regard, Thomson identifies four fundamental stages in the development of oral history, which he describes as revolutions (Thomson, 2006):

a- the stage of the rebirth of memory after the Second World War, accompanied by the emergence of a need to collect living testimonies and truthful narratives from those who made history or those closely connected to it;

b- the stage of writing the history of the people, particularly in its ethnographic, cultural, political, anthropological, and human-historical dimensions. This stage included attempts to rewrite the history of minorities, the oppressed, Indigenous peoples, and those who had lived through distinctive economic, cultural, or religious contexts that left a mark on advanced societies after the Industrial Revolution and the profound social mobility it generated;

c- the stage marking the development of the oral historian's role in the late 1980s, from that of a mere recorder to that of an interviewer, analyst, and scholar fully conscious of the course of the interview and the substance of its content;

d- the stage of the digital revolution, in which technology, communication media, and audio-visual tools of recording, preservation, and dissemination, together with their wide diffusion among the public, produced a radical transformation in the patterns and methods of conducting and documenting oral history, as well as in the strength, visibility, and reach that these technologies conferred upon this method in academic and socio-cultural contexts.

At this point, it should be noted that one of the most distinctive features of the overall development of oral history is that "it has today become a multidisciplinary research method used in the humanities and the social sciences" (Leavy, 2011).

Secondly: Foundations for Applying the Oral History Method:

1- The Growing Interest in Oral History within Qualitative Research Methodologies:

Research grounded in oral history is no longer confined to historical events and major issues related to racial discrimination, migration, minority experiences, or certain traumatic and far-reaching phenomena that have left a visible imprint on the collective imagination of societies, such as the Great Depression, its economic repercussions, and the health and social problems of American society.

Oral history has instead developed into a far broader and more diverse field of inquiry, extending across multiple disciplines within the social sciences, including economics, literary narrative, sociology, education, communication, law, anthropology, youth studies, ethnic studies, women's studies, and many others. These fields have drawn upon it to collect information and testimonies concerning specific subjects and dimensions insufficiently addressed in written historical documents, yet essential as sources of historical knowledge within those domains.

Oral history is, therefore, both a research method and a means of collecting information from the past that has become necessary to preserve in light of the significance of such testimonies and events. In this regard, Janesick maintains that when individuals witness a meaningful transition in the course of life, or when a fundamental transformation takes place within society, that moment constitutes the most appropriate context for conducting an oral history interview and initiating oral history projects, so that such materials may be addressed by numerous social science disciplines in addition to history and may emerge through a wide variety of approaches and forms (Janesick, 2010).

It is worth noting that some scholars regard oral historical research as largely equivalent to qualitative research and as sharing its principal characteristics. Janesick (2010, pp. 6–7) outlines these areas of convergence, noting that the two coincide in several respects:

- both rely on similar basic techniques, including interviews, observations, documents, photographs, video recordings, and drawings;
- in both, the researcher serves as the primary instrument through which data are filtered, refined, and interpreted;
- both involve helping narrators bring forth people’s stories by facilitating the recollection of key events and encouraging focus on lived experience;
- both employ ordinary language in the communication of stories;
- in qualitative methodologies, as in oral historical research, the researcher seeks to provide the most appropriate interpretations of the data in a manner consistent with the context of the interview and its surrounding circumstances;
- both generate interpretations of the data that are varied yet reasonable;
- both are grounded in the dual processes of description and explanation;
- in both fields, the work of specialists appears as a narration of participants’ lived experience without the researcher’s self visibly occupying the foreground;
- both provide a methodological foundation that enables others to raise questions and investigate people’s experiences;
- oral history, like the broader field of qualitative research, cannot be commodified or monopolized, as it does not lend itself to commercial possession;
- both also share the capacity to provoke difficult, and at times unsettling, questions concerning issues that often bear upon the social policies of states.

Moreover, “oral history methodology is a research methodology in which we take into account those who carry it out and the scenario in which it is carried out. Furthermore, oral history is a qualitative research methodology established within the field of the humanities, drawing its strength from descriptions. The humanities cannot exist unless we attend to the ways individuals or groups perceive themselves; how they compose their discourse, and how they reveal or conceal what they think or intend. Descriptions generate the concepts upon which the humanities rely in qualitative research” (Garnica & Vianna, 2019, p. 04).

2- Toward Developing a Theory of Oral Historical Research

When historians first undertook the task of transmitting and preserving historical events through the voices of witnesses and participants, the details and conditions surrounding the

conduct of interviews, or the procedures of data collection, did not occupy a central place in their concerns. The essential objective at that stage was to transmit testimony, gather information, and subject it to study. However, the expansion of this method across the social sciences and the humanities compelled academic researchers to reconsider those conditions, to question the forms of interaction between researcher and narrator required for a successful interview, and to ensure both its reliability and the credibility of its participants. It also led to greater attention to the linguistic, narrative, cultural, anthropological, and psychological dimensions involved, as well as to the wider social contexts within which this subject is investigated. Indeed, an urgent need emerged to examine the contexts shaping the role of memory, the mental processes of recall that govern testimonial situations, and the interactive positions associated with them (Thompson & Bornat, 2017).

It therefore becomes evident that any attempt to construct a theory explaining how the oral history method operates must draw on a range of disciplines and approaches capable of addressing two central questions: What was said? and Why was it said in that particular way? This becomes especially important when oral history functions as a research method employed across numerous scientific disciplines, as noted earlier, and when it is treated as one of the forms of qualitative research methodology, a field that still requires deeper understanding and more rigorous scholarly framing in order to consolidate its theoretical foundations.

Such theoretical efforts enable oral historians to open the “black box” and to interpret narratives and stories, since these means are indispensable to that task. As Thompson and Bornat state (THOMPSON & BORNAT, 2017), stories do not disclose their meaning unless appropriate analytical tools are employed, particularly when the subject of analysis is a narrator attempting to reconstruct earlier cognitive structures that, in turn, reactivate an important emotional domain. Under such conditions, the narrator may enter into a dialogical experience that approaches emotional release or even a therapeutic exercise, thereby placing both the information and the associated situations within particular interpretive conditions.

Theory also examines the proposition that “there is no such thing as a narrative without mediation,” as oral historians have observed the influence of social interaction on the ways respondents construct their stories, while acknowledging that memory narratives are shaped by forms of discourse current within the culture, whether at the time of the event itself or at the moment of the interview. Respondents’ statements thus appear as natural responses arising from strenuous efforts to make sense of their lives within a cultural and social context, one that may indeed express the marginalization or exclusion of experiences long buried by time until recalled in the interview setting. Efforts to develop theory have transformed the ways oral history narratives are analyzed and interpreted, making it possible to move beyond content alone toward a deeper and more precise appreciation of the significance of what is said within a given context.

Accordingly, the analytical approach to the text can no longer be confined to the spoken word alone. It must also encompass the written interview in which the researcher records specific observations, as well as the non-linguistic dimensions of the interview, namely those elements

that convey meaning through voice, patterns of emphasis, gestures, and facial expressions. The interview itself has therefore come to be understood as the product of a highly specific historical moment and of a personal relationship between interviewer and interviewee, a relationship directed toward the production of a coherent narrative. The context in which this narrative is produced clarifies the meaning the narrator seeks to convey faithfully, and this constitutes the task of the listener as well as the responsibility of the analyst.

3- Interviews in the Oral History Method:

The oral history method generally adopts the interview as its principal instrument for collecting information and establishing a communicative basis with the interviewee. It is usually limited to a small number of participants and, in many cases, to a single participant alone. These interviews frequently extend across several sessions; however, they must be characterized by depth, and their protocols may range from semi-structured to unstructured formats.

Open-ended inductive interview models, which rely on questioning while encouraging the narrator to speak at length through the creation of conditions conducive to in-depth storytelling, are fundamental to this method. They enable the researcher to reach certain truths that require considerable intellectual and emotional effort on the part of the narrator. Under such conditions, the narrator speaks extensively, with depth, concentration, and fluency, in an effort to retrieve images from memory. In this way, a substantial part of the participant's life and individual experience is brought forth within broader contexts, including how and why people lived as they did, and what ideas and beliefs shaped their conduct.

For this reason, many researchers maintain that oral history projects raise important questions about social life as it intersects with the lives of participants. Oral history is therefore regarded as a deliberate and carefully planned conversation between two individuals, even when it takes the form of a dialogue between researcher and participant. This conversation revolves around an event or an aspect of the past that carries particular significance, a significance that may vary according to the perspective of either the researcher or the narrator. Hence, the value of dialogue constitutes the very core of oral history, because dialogue is capable of bringing the two perspectives into closer relation and directing the narration of the story toward a particular context.

Accordingly, the type of questions posed, the extent to which both interviewer and participant are prepared for the interview and willing to speak, together with the dynamics of the relationship established prior to the meeting and the overall strength of that relationship, all serve to stimulate oral historical narration and to determine the course of the interview, as well as its success or failure. Listening, meanwhile, constitutes a central and indispensable dimension of oral history interviews. In addition to being a skilled interviewer, the researcher must attend to the quality and precision of the questions and provide critical observations capable of provoking further reflection on the part of the participant reflections that generate additional meaning and open another dimension for understanding past events and experiences in light of the present.

The nature of the dialogue itself may assume many forms. It may appear as an open and continuous narrative resembling an extended exposition; it may take the form of a dialectical

exchange between researcher and interviewee; it may unfold as a discussion in which ideas move fluidly between the two parties; it may become a nostalgic journey into the past that excavates memory; or it may assume the form of a confessional narrative (Garnica & Vianna, 2019).

4- The Centrality of the Relationship between the Researcher and the Narrator in the Oral History Method:

Oral history constitutes a broad field of research that assumes diverse forms across a range of social disciplines, including history, narrative studies, sociology, education, economics, and others. Although these disciplines impose scholarly requirements for regulating and conducting recorded interviews, such requirements do not relieve the specialized researcher of the responsibility to give serious attention to shaping the contours of an interactive relationship with the participant. Indeed, the succession of meetings and interactive dialogues directly affects the narrative dimension of storytelling and the mechanisms through which it unfolds. At the heart of this process lies the construction of relationships.

Thoughtful engagement in oral history encounters, together with a deep understanding of their nature on the part of researchers, constitutes a challenge that is essential to the success of the research process. However central the interviewee may appear, the researcher also plays an active role through dialogue and discussion, and at times through disagreement or the expression of agreement, attentive listening, the sharing of conversational turns, or even the exchange of stories from both sides. Through these forms of interaction, the features of the time and place under investigation are shaped and revived in ways that allow them to resonate more fully with the narrator or participant.

This complex relationship may assume different forms from one session to another depending on the subject under discussion and the reactions it provokes, and it may at times become emotionally charged. Such fluctuations require the researcher, or the oral historian-interviewer, to remain constantly aware of the need to preserve the narrative context and the intensity of mental concentration governing the encounter. By contrast, sequential chronological historical context is not, in most studies, a decisive dimension of oral history, since it does not always need to function as a rigid framework organizing the narrative (Ritchie, 2015).

5- Stages in Using the Oral History Method:

The application and use of the oral history method require adherence to a set of precise stages. These may be summarized as follows:

a- The stage of planning the dialogue and interviews:

This stage depends on careful reflection concerning the nature of the target group, preferably those who are closest to the subject or oldest in age, while also considering the available number of participants and the number that can realistically be reached. It further involves identifying their circumstances and examining the resources available to facilitate the conduct of the interviews, including the tools and means assigned to them, as well as the time allocated

for their completion. At this stage, a decision must also be made as to whether the interviews will be individual or collective, and whether they will be paid or unpaid.

The researcher is likewise concerned with preparing the principal axes of the interviews and their general form after obtaining a preliminary understanding of the subject and meeting with certain individuals, benefiting from informal conversations before engaging those actually concerned with the interview. This stage also requires determining the direct objectives of collecting the information: whether the purpose is preservation and archiving, filling gaps in what has already been written, serving the researcher's immediate scholarly use, or making the material available to other researchers.

b- The stage of preparing the interviews:

The interview should not be understood merely as what has been collected, recorded, transcribed, or filmed. Rather, the interview refers to what has been agreed upon with the narrator for presentation and transmission to the public or for research purposes.

At this stage, the recorded dialogues are reviewed and refined, and any material that must remain confidential is withheld, while the narrator is informed accordingly and made aware of all details related to editing and revision. It is also necessary at this stage to determine the legal arrangements governing the relationship between intellectual property rights, which naturally belong to the narrator, and whatever agreement is reached with the researcher concerning the right to use and employ that material for scholarly purposes (Ritchie, 2015).

c- The stage of transcribing the interviews:

This is the stage in which the oral materials are transferred onto paper or into computerized text-processing programs so that they assume written form. At that point, the researcher proceeds to revise whatever requires revision in the manner considered most appropriate.

d- The stage of presenting the texts to the interviewee:

Once the individual with whom the interviews were conducted grants approval, he or she signs a rights assignment document, thereby enabling the researcher to disclose the final text and subject it to scholarly analysis.

e- The stage of preserving the texts in different formats:

This stage involves preserving the materials in various forms, whether audio, written, or audio-visually recorded, while making as much of them as possible available to future researchers. These materials are usually titled, classified by subject, and indexed so that they may be easily consulted and used at the earliest opportunity (Garnica & Vianna, 2019).

6- Modern Technologies and Their Impact on Oral Historical Research:

Traditional definitions of oral history generally emphasize two essential elements: the recorded interview and the preservation of that recording for future consultation and use. These recordings consist of interviews that often take the form of personal narratives, and they may appear as audio-visual records in which the interviewee recounts events or situations

expressing the particular subject of the study. Oral history has therefore been closely intertwined with the technologies and tools that have facilitated the recording, storage, preservation, and organization of such encounters and the events they document (Schneider, 2014).

Oral history practices have been profoundly shaped by digital and technological innovations in the areas of documentation, data storage, and data sharing. Even the language used to describe these practices changes with each technological advance. The recent circulation of terms such as *digital narratives*, *online audio repositories*, and *Zoom interviews*—which provide audio and/or video recordings accompanied by synchronized transcripts, in addition to the possibilities introduced by developments in artificial intelligence—clearly illustrates the evolving character of oral history and the ways researchers in this field have adapted to these transformations.

The opportunities offered by electronic platforms for recording testimonies and scholarly material for those wishing to leave behind a preserved and accessible audio trace remain among the pioneering experiences that cannot be overlooked. In Brazil, for example, the *Museu da Pessoa* (Museum of the People), a virtual and collaborative life-story project, was established in the city of São Paulo in 1991. Its purpose is to record the life stories of all members of society through information technology, preserve them, and transform them into accessible electronic files.

Its collection consists of oral records of individuals who have expressed their willingness to share their life experiences with others and which, once recorded, may be accessed by anyone interested in them. In its personal, humane, and collaborative form, this initiative demonstrates the possibility of presenting an immense and diverse body of experiences that may be employed in projects related to institutional memory, culture, local community development, and education, thereby exposing people to a wide range of topics and situations. The oral history specialist need only prepare this archive carefully, work toward broad accessibility for its users, and organize and preserve it in electronic form (Garnica & Vianna, 2019).

Accordingly, the work of researchers and specialists engaged in preserving and recording oral history has come to represent an experience of building meaningful bonds and forms of knowledge, particularly when the topics under investigation possess strong human dimensions and address social issues shared collectively within contexts of difficult transformation or painful experience.

In effect, this work also constitutes a form of recognition and esteem for those efforts and testimonies. In this regard, it is worth noting that many researchers who acquired expertise in applying the oral history method observed that interviews had, for narrators, come to resemble therapeutic sessions. They reported that the narrative experiences through which participants passed enabled them to release many painful emotions and to reconstruct their understanding of certain issues from new angles that were more rational, clearer, and more objective. They also indicated that their encounters with researchers helped them make a substantial effort to recall particular matters, connect them together, and present them through the discussions

unfolding between both parties in a deeper and more fruitful manner (Thompson & Bornat, 2017).

As for the use of the oral history product, it encompasses all the texts, recordings, notes, and other materials that have been collected. It also includes the compilation of photographs, illustrations, and data related to the interview, together with any other relevant information deemed useful. In this regard, specialists maintain that the primary and fundamental objective of oral history remains the acquisition and preservation of historical data, followed by the timely use of that material in historical research and its scholarly examination in accordance with established conditions and controls (Wray, 2017).

Scholars in the field of oral history further emphasize that the completed work and the results derived from it may be used to honor narrators, express gratitude to them, and acknowledge their contribution, while also highlighting the most significant insights made possible through their narratives. At the same time, such work serves as an educational experience for those who attend commemorative events of this kind. It may also culminate in the exhibition of photographs and oral recordings in academic forums and cultural events, the screening of videos related to particular studies, or the organization of scholarly sessions devoted to discussing and enriching specific issues, in addition to its core function within academic research (Baum, 2007).

Fourthly: Examples of Diverse Academic Studies Based on the Oral History Method:

The following table presents a number of diverse academic studies that relied on the oral history method. A comparative reading of these studies and an examination of their shared characteristics help clarify the actual dimensions of applying this method.

Table No. 01 shows examples of diverse academic studies based on the oral history method

Field of Study	Title	Objectives	Tools for Applying the Oral History Method	Sample	Main Findings
Education and Teaching	Education in Saint Martin from 1954 to 2000: An Oral History Narrative (Milton, 2016)	To study the development of primary education in Saint Martin (Dutch Caribbean) between 1954 and 2000. To benefit from the experiences of important	- Direct interviews, and interviews conducted online. - Distribution of questionnaires	- Teachers = 88 - Students = 320 - Educational administrators = 58 - Government members = 64	The study gathered multiple data and pieces of information about primary education during that period with regard to educational curricula,

		figures in national and Catholic primary education in Saint Martin between 1954 and 2000.			learning conditions, the social dimensions of learning and the opportunities associated with it, initiatives aimed at developing and improving learning, the relationship between Catholic education and ordinary education, and the way private education later developed.
Sociology of Education	The Oral History of Roma Women's Lives in the Spanish Education System (García, M.J, Megías, M.E, & Arcos, D., 2017)	To examine the learning opportunities available to the Roma group (Gypsies) in certain regions of Spain. To investigate educational opportunities in light of the prevailing culture of	Recorded face-to-face interviews	Two Roma female teachers who completed their educational paths and work as educational mediators in four primary schools between a non-	Contrary to the prevailing perception of Roma women, the analysis of oral history data indicates the need to move toward specialized academic

		marginalization, especially with regard to women.		governmental organization and those Roma communities	culture based on the classroom, and toward the individual efforts made by younger groups to attain recognition and the right to learning for all.
Public Health	Uses of Oral History and Digital Storytelling in Public Health Research and Practice (Tsui & Starecheski, 2018)	To assess how oral history and digital storytelling are used in health fields and to provide examples of the ways in which these approaches have contributed to awareness-raising and health education work	Narrative review of articles collected from the electronic PubMed database	102 interviews mentioned within the adopted articles were conducted with citizens concerning public health	The study made it possible to examine hidden dimensions in health education and to confirm that the experiences of communities affected by public health problems increase awareness of their risks and provide a clearer vision for improving health services.
Accounting	The Accounting	To examine developments	Face-to-face interviews	21 retired accountants	The study identified

	Profession in the People’s Republic of China: A Preliminary Understanding from an Oral History Perspective (Xue & ZEN, 2022)	in the accounting profession in China	following an open-conversation style	aged between 60 and 90 years	and documented accounting changes in China and their social and economic effects on the profession.
Regional Planning	Applying Local Knowledge: The Contribution of Oral History to Wetland Rehabilitation in the Kanyapella Basin, Australia (Robertson & McGee, 2033)	To rehabilitate wetland areas through the use of local knowledge concerning the history and systems of these ecological places, thereby saving time in developing sound knowledge for the management of these environments	Face-to-face interview	Interviews were conducted with nine local residents and 11 retired natural resource managers	Oral history proved to be an effective means of obtaining information about environmental changes and the occurrence of floods over the past sixty years. Observations were also recorded concerning rare and endangered animals, along with comments related to the reasons behind the success of previous management

					, and the results of the oral history were used to support the research.
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Source: Prepared by the researcher.

Commentary on the Table:

The table above presents a number of studies that employed the oral history method. These studies are drawn from different disciplines, which confirms that this method is not confined to the humanities and social sciences alone, but is also applicable to other fields of knowledge, including health, finance, and others. The reason for this broad applicability lies in the fact that the method is based on collecting information about specific topics or issues that stand at the very center of those disciplines' concerns.

Researchers thus approach such matters through prior experience in dealing with them, perceiving them, managing them, or even tracing the ways in which understandings of them have evolved over time, whether positively or negatively. It may be observed, for example, that the accounting and financial study mentioned above examined the pattern of the profession's development and its techniques across time, so that knowledge of this development could serve as a basis for comparison with the condition the profession has reached today. Likewise, the application of the oral history method to the study of public health has opened important avenues for understanding how populations adopt public health regulations during the outbreak and intensification of infectious diseases. In this sense, every scientific field can draw on those with prior expertise in it in order to collect valuable data and information that are not ordinarily found in the historical archives of those disciplines and their related issues.

What is also distinctive about these studies is their reliance on the interview more than any other tool, whether conducted face-to-face or through electronic media, whether individual or collective, and whether used alone or in combination with other tools such as questionnaires. All the material gathered through these interviews is collected and preserved for consultation whenever needed, whether by the researcher personally or by other researchers in the future.

The studies also show that most narrators are individuals with experience in practicing a profession or working within a particular field, which often places them within older age groups. This once again raises the issue of the capacity to remember, organize, and refine information. Yet this does not preclude the possibility of conducting interviews with younger categories of participants, as shown in the study by García, M.J., Megías, M.E., and Arcos, D. (2017), which interviewed only two Roma women.

Finally, it is useful to note that the general context within which all these studies are situated is oriented toward knowing the past in order to save time and gain rapid access to facts that would otherwise require a long process of gradual reconstruction. Studies of this kind therefore provide a solid scholarly basis for making precise comparisons between present realities and past conditions. In light of this discussion, it may be argued that disciplines of all kinds have

opened before themselves a rich field for the use of qualitative research and for discovering its value through oral historical inquiry.

Fifthly: The Reality of Applying Oral History within Qualitative Research Methodologies in Algerian Universities

1- Are Algerian Historical Memoirs Part of the Core of the Oral History Method?

According to the researcher's knowledge, and within the limits of the material that could be accessed, research based on the oral history method in the social sciences, the humanities, and other disciplines remains very limited, if not almost entirely absent. An exception may be made for historical research that became more active during the last two decades under the label of historical memoirs, written either by specialists, by those interested in history, or by the memoirists themselves, concerning their militant and revolutionary trajectories during the War of National Liberation and after independence. These memoirs emerged after the passing of a large number of those who had made independence possible, and they came to answer many critical undocumented historical questions. They also added scholarly, social, literary, and artistic value to the culture of narration, to its stylistic expression, and to the manner in which it is written and presented within its national context.

Historical memoirs, however, differ fundamentally from oral history in both method and content. Memoirs are concerned with life history and with the course of events arranged according to a chronological sequence whose degree of strictness may vary, all within a broader temporal framework shaped by major transformations such as the Algerian War of Liberation. Oral history, by contrast, addresses a subject or a set of specific and delimited themes within a precise temporal context. Moreover, the mode of presenting historical memoirs tends to align more closely with the general social, political, cultural, and economic condition, that is, with the overall state of life prevailing in a given period.

This is not the case with oral historical research, which examines a specific phenomenon within the narrower context in which it emerged and developed, contexts that are, as far as possible, distanced from subjectivity, unlike memoirs. With regard to purpose, historical memoirs and oral history are similar to some extent in that both seek to document and preserve testimony. Yet memoirs require extensive work of revision and comparison before they can be studied and analysed, whereas oral history data are often ready, once collected and organized, for direct study and analysis. As the previous examples have shown, researchers conducting such studies were able to use the data they had gathered and analyse them directly through qualitative inquiry.

In conclusion, it must be emphasized once again that Algerian popular linguistic heritage, whether manifested in folk tales and popular narratives, in expressions of popular belief, or in accounts of imaginary events, is not regarded by specialists as part of oral history. The reason is straightforward: oral history is a scientific research method governed by its own foundations and rules.

2- Justifications for Using the Oral History Method in Social and Human Research in Algerian Universities:

The absence of studies employing the oral history method does not constitute a valid reason for neglecting it within the Algerian university. On the contrary, its use and broad deployment across multiple fields have become necessary, because strong grounds justify both its value and its application. Among these are the following:

First: Algeria has now lived through more than six decades of independence, a period sufficient to direct the attention of researchers in all disciplines toward the use of oral history in order to learn what people of expertise and specialization have to say, or what those who lived through a particular social, political, educational, or other circumstance or event can recount, thereby raising a fundamental question: *What has changed, and has that change been for the better?* Many people offer passing answers to such questions, yet such responses are often shaped more by emotion and nostalgia than by scientific discipline and analytical rigor. Has the time not come, for example, to ask a graduate of an Algerian university in 1972 about his view of the academic and intellectual level of university students at that time? Or to ask the head of a household what has changed in his dietary system over the last forty years in comparison with present eating habits? Or, indeed, to ask long-serving specialists in dentistry about the corrective procedures that have now become easier and more accessible, particularly for researchers belonging to that field and directly concerned with its development?

Second: In response to the dominance of quantitative research, the strength of qualitative research has also emerged and expanded. This development calls for a reconsideration of the one-dimensional scientific orientation adopted by many Algerian researchers and invites a reassessment of the prevailing reliance on numbers and statistical analyses. In addition to the limitations revealed by quantitative methods in certain studies—or, more precisely, in relation to particular topics—and their inability at times to provide scientifically satisfactory answers, it has become necessary to turn toward qualitative research methodologies and to give them the attention they deserve, since they may constitute the most appropriate alternative. Within this context, the oral history method presents itself as a robust methodological alternative suited to a wide range of studies and disciplines.

Third: Technology has provided immense possibilities for the recording, transmission, transcription, and preservation of interviews. The contemporary researcher therefore has no valid reason to avoid, or to fear, the application of oral historical research, which is fundamentally grounded in the interview and its recording; nor is there any justification for overlooking the reservoir of information that this method can provide. A recorded living testimony increases in scholarly value the further it recedes in time and the deeper it enters the historical past. It is therefore only appropriate for the Algerian university to approach the oral history method through an integrated perspective consistent with the demands of both scientific inquiry and lived reality. The time has come to organize institutional efforts toward the establishment of national databases for the materials collected through oral history.

Conclusion:

The present study has sought to define the oral history method and to highlight its strengths and the fields in which it may be employed productively. It has become clearly evident that oral history deserves particular attention from researchers specializing in the humanities and social sciences and working within qualitative research, especially in light of the considerable distance separating this context from universities that have already generalized the method, developed it, and placed it at the center of qualitative studies.

The call to invest in oral historical research is, in essence, a call to open a wide path toward scientific facts preserved within minds and experiences that have not yet found the opportunity to present and offer that invaluable knowledge. The past experiences conveyed through oral history interviews are capable of providing a major resource for understanding a range of issues, particularly social, educational, and political ones, whose variables overlap and intertwine across multiple contexts.

If the Algerian university is called upon to revive this method, society as well—through associations concerned with documenting and preserving particular issues—is equally entitled to enter the field of interview recording, especially now that the necessary technology has become available and is accessible to narrators, researchers, and recorders alike.

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