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Oral History Beginnings with Sangster (1994) and Portelli (1998)

“Asking why and how women explain, rationalize and make sense of their past offers insight into the social and material framework within which they operated, the perceived choices and cultural patterns they faced, and the complex relationship between individual consciousness and culture” (Sangster, p. 6)

“Cultural values shape our very ordering and prioritizing of events, indeed our notions of what is myth, history, fact or fiction.” (Sangster, p. 8)

“Oral sources are credible but with a *different* credibility. The importance of oral testimony may lie not in its adherence to fact, but rather in its departure from it, as imagination, symbolism, and desire emerge. Therefore, there are no ‘false’ oral sources. Once we have checked their factual credibility with all the established criteria of philological criticism and factual verification which are required by all types of sources anyway, 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.” (Portelli, p. 37)

“Oral sources are not objective. This of course applies to every source, though the holiness of writing often leads us to forget it. But the inherent nonobjectivity of oral sources lies in specific intrinsic characteristics, the most important being that they are *artificial*, *variable*, and *partial*.” (Portelli, p. 38)

In your groups, break down the above quotations so you understand them. Then, connect the dots between them. How do they all inform or further the ideas of the other? How do they help you understand the empowerment narratives we’ve read about?

List 3 conclusions you come to about oral sources and why they are significant. Reference the empowerment narratives.



How do the ideas mentioned above and in the whole of the oral history articles overlap with what we have discussed and read about co-creation?

If oral sources are not objective or factual, can they be trusted? Why or why not?