**Oral History or Interview? (NHSR or HSR?)**

What is the difference between an Oral History Project (Not Human Subjects Research), and an Interview (Human Subjects Research)?

**Oral History**

*“Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events.” – Oral History Association, oralhistory.org*

It is helpful to understand the differences between an oral history project and an interview project by defining their intended uses. An interview seeks to gain information, very directly, about a specific event, time, experience. They are often short and focused, driven by the interviewer’s topic. Oral histories are often defined by the intention of creating primary source materials that should be preserved and made available for a wider audience.

Oral history is both the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940s and now using 21st-century digital technologies. The modern approach, however, rests on the work of (1) recording, (2) preserving, and (3) making available these life stories. These three aspects are crucial to the way that knowledge about underrepresented communities can be created and circulated. In its intention to address the gap in historical knowledge, oral history methods have the potential to enhance our work in building more inclusive archival collections. - Source: UC Irvine

The Hawaiian language was originally an oral language. “Talk Story” is a Hawaiian and local tradition and practice, and oral history falls naturally into this category. Source: Chun, M. N. (2011). *No nā mamo : traditional and contemporary Hawaiian beliefs and practices*. University of Hawaiʻi Press.

**Interview**

An interview is a qualitative research method and occurs when a researcher engages directly with a participant in a one-on-one or small group setting (focus group). While the researcher will know the participant’s identity, the data gathered can still be de-identified to protect the participant. Consider the following:

* Where will you conduct the interview?
* Is this a casual conversation or a formal interview? Both?
* Will you use an oral consent process or a more formal written consent?
* How long will the interview take? Will you do more than one interview?
* What questions will you ask?
* What will you do if the participant feels uncomfortable about a question? What if a participant talks about something that you don’t want to record such as an illegal behavior?
* Do you speak the participant’s language or will you need an interpreter?

Source: University of Virginia, https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs/interviews