

**Oral History
Capturing Quarantine
Spring 2020
Final Reflection**

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1. How did you feel when you read the email notifying students the oral history project would change from *Interfaith Chicago* to *Capturing Quarantine* due to the transition to remote learning?

My first thought when reading the email was actually not disappointment, but excitement. I found the prospect of being a part of a new project really intriguing, and one that'd be extremely relevant and important in documenting the everyday history of Americans during this time. I was also, in a sense, relieved to be changing the topic - from the moment I found out about the school going remote, I began having concerns about how we'd conduct the interviews for the Interfaith Chicago project with everyone having different technological capabilities and now being located in different regions. Having to conduct remote interviews with our narrators for that project would've been much harder (i.e. my narrator already was extremely busy in their personal life, and coordinating a Zoom interview would've been even worse than back and forth emails), and much different than doing them in person and I felt it wouldn't do justice to the narrators. I knew it'd be much easier to coordinate this new project with the others within our class, as we all knew the process well by this point. I was also looking forward to getting the chance to be interviewed, something we wouldn't have originally gotten the chance to see otherwise - it would be the first time I really had the chance to (at length) reflect on the situation at hand, and be asked to discuss it. I feel like being on both sides of the interview definitely helped further my understanding of the process of oral history, and the techniques and strategies we'd learned about in class.

2. What were your initial thoughts about participating in an oral history project documenting your classes' experience during the first months of the global pandemic?

My initial thought was how smart the idea was, as I had yet to hear of any larger scale oral history projects with the goal of documenting not only how the college experience was affected, but how anyone was experiencing the Coronavirus pandemic. I couldn't wait to hear more about what our focus in the interviews would be, and I was glad we were able to still do a project even with the unusual circumstances.

3. How do you feel about the project now?

I'm very happy with how both of my interviews went, and can't wait to listen in to the rest of my classmates, and see what their thoughts are on the pandemic. It's rewarding to know that our hard work throughout the semester has still definitely paid off, albeit the subject change, and these histories will be in the college archives for anyone to use in research for years to come. I was lucky to be a part of it, and really grateful to have experienced both interviewing and being interviewed.

4. As an interviewer:

a. How did you prepare for the interview?

To prepare for the interview as an interviewer, I made sure to double check both the biodata form, to refresh my mind of the basic outline of my narrators relevant 'fun facts' and accomplishments. That morning, I also double checked my script questions to make last revisions, and add any other basic topics I thought may add to the conversation, or other personal points my narrator might want to discuss. After that, I put it out of my mind until the interview later that day so as not to overthink it.

b. What was it like to interview a classmate?

Leading up to the interview, even though I'd done my own interview earlier that month, I was really nervous - I can attribute it to the stress of knowing the whole semesters teachings/learning lead up to this point and I wanted to do well. It was also, I believe, partially because the idea of having to interview for over an hour seemed largely intangible to me. However, within the first couple of minutes I felt more comfortable than I did even when I was interviewed, which I wasn't anticipating. It was easy to get into the flow of things, and even easier to ask follow up questions (something else I got nervous about) as I was listening intently. However, I definitely wish I would've paid more attention to the suggested time guidelines for each topic - I felt as though I did a good job for the most part, but I the beginning I found myself stuck in a rabbit hole where I felt like I wouldn't have enough time and had to ask a lot of followup questions, but by the time I got the the reflection questions I had to speed into them, and wish I could've asked more narrative questions.

- c. How did you feel after the interview?

Immediately after the interview, my first thought was that I wished I'd had more time to ask questions, and that the interview was longer! I had a lot of fun, and it was a relief as I was so nervous about interviewing and I feel like it went very well.

- d. What is the most important thing you learned as an interviewer?

I learned how important timing was, in terms of allotting more time to focus on the real narrative questions about the subject, and have more strength in steering back the conversation when necessary. A couple of times answers would be longer than anticipated, and I would catch myself continuing to ask follow up questions that, while relevant to the narrator's life story, weren't relevant to his experience living during the pandemic. I also found myself distracted when I noticed the narrator went far forward into his experience with the pandemic, and moving far past other questions I'd anticipated asking, making any redirection questions or follow up questions seem awkwardly phrased, thus I learned to put the anticipation and typical interview jargon aside quickly, and adapt to redirection.

- e. What advice would you give to future interviewers?

Don't stress, don't overthink, listen closely, and come in naive and hungry to learn about the person you're interviewing! The prospect of interviewing can be very scary, but you quickly get into the rhythm and it feels extremely rewarding.

5. As a narrator:

a. How did you prepare to be interviewed?

As a narrator, I didn't spend all too much time thinking about it or preparing beforehand, besides reflecting and replaying my pandemic experience so far. I definitely wasn't nearly as nervous to be interviewed as I was to interview, as I've been interviewed in the past, and it (in my opinion) requires less stamina and brain power than being the interviewer does, as I simply have to answer what's asked of me and not be listening to every word quite as actively and planning out the next move.

b. Describe your experience being interviewed.

I had a ton of fun being interviewed, and my answers seemed to come right to me as the question was asked, something I wasn't expecting as a lot of these questions or answers I hadn't previously thought of, wouldn't have had the chance to share if it wasn't for this project. It was definitely easy to get into the rhythm of being interviewed, however I definitely was A LOT more nervous than I thought I was going to be right at the very beginning, starting from the second the interview recording started up until, really, some of the narrative questions.

c. How did you feel after the interview ended?

It was really exciting to be able to talk about my own experience during the pandemic for the first time, and I was surprised I was able to really discuss everything I thought I could about it. Several hours after, I thought of more things I could mention, and wished I was less awkward and nervous at the beginning, but overall I was definitely pleased with how it went.

d. What would you tell someone who is hesitant to be interviewed?

It's a ton of fun getting to talk about yourself and tell your own story for over an hour straight, and have it on the record, because how often will you get to do that in your life?

6. (OPTIONAL) Questions about narrators' private lives and personal relationships were not included in the formal interview, how do you feel about this?

I think that the overall purpose of our Capturing Quarantine project set out mainly to address student life during the pandemic, and how it directly affected academics, and work and study life, as well as any other college related sidebars, and there was already way much more to say than what could be kept to sixty minutes. However, I do feel as though it's very important to keep in mind, and memorialize how personal relationships during the time were affected, as that's something the future history books may easily miss because of how 'trivial' or 'taboo' the subject may seem.

- a. How has your gender, sexuality, race, and /or ethnicity affected your experience during the global pandemic?

N/A

- b. Exploring and developing new relationships is an important part of the undergraduate experience, how has this aspect of your life been affected?

In terms of new friendships, I feel as though I've still been able to cultivate those via my classes, even if they are over Zoom - I'm an acting major, not only are my class sizes comparably small, but we're still required to interact with each other, and do online taped scenes as a group. Because of this, any new friendships I was developing before the pandemic have still been able to grow and flourish, as we saw each other weekly, were required to Zoom outside of class, and in several of my acting classes this semester we ended our class (in tears) with a Zoom group photo and following each other on Instagram, and other social medias. As for romantic relationships, I definitely wasn't actively looking for one as the quarantine hit, but have taken time to browse Tinder for fun while being stuck inside, and have noticed Tinder, and other dating apps, have taken measures to keep helping others connect (i.e. letting you still view people from your college even if you're miles away, or changing the location you're looking in). It's also been interesting keeping up with my friends in relationships to see how they've been coping during the pandemic, whether they've been living together or living (very) far apart.

c. How are you dealing with the absence of physical contact?

To deal with the absence of physically being with my friends and peers from college, I've been able to Zoom them frequently, and we do usually end up talking for hours at a time. This has helped keep some sense of regularity, almost as if I'm still at school with them and we're talking after class. With my friends from high school, we've developed a social distance hang out system as of late, as things slowly start reverting to the new 'normal' of gradually opening up some local non-essential businesses. We've been able to drive to either our old high school or beach parking lot in our own separate cars with our masks on, and park so that the trunks are facing each other. We're able to sit in the trunks of our cars with our cars (and ourselves) way more than six feet apart, and converse and catch up safely without ever going near each other.

7. Is there anything else you would like to include?

No, there's nothing else I can think to include in my reflection.