

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

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**Section I:**

1. Thinking back to the start of the semester, what were your initial thoughts about participating in an oral history project documenting your experience during the ongoing global pandemic?

When I first learned that this class would be focused on conducting an interview about student experiences during the pandemic, I was very intrigued. A heavy emphasis in the class was that conducting these interviews would be creating a primary source, which is a very interesting concept. By conducting these interviews, we are basically becoming a part of history and creating a document that could possibly be used by researchers. I was very excited about this.

2. How did your feelings about the project change?

As the project went on, I was still very excited about it, but some of the novelty started to wear off a little bit. There is quite a bit of preparation that goes into this interview process. The preparation is not a bad thing, as it is necessary. However, so much work can take some of the initial luster out of the project. Despite this feeling, I was still very excited to conduct the interview and was very intrigued by the fact that these projects will be held in a permanent archive.

**Section II:**

3. As an **interviewer**:
  - a. How did you prepare for the interview?

To prepare for the interview, I first wrote many drafts of a script of questions. I had to be sure that I was asking well thought out, open-ended, and interesting questions that weren't redundant and weren't loaded questions. I also studied interviews from previous iterations of this *Capturing Quarantine* project. I studied these to learn good interviewing techniques and how to approach the interview itself. I got to know my narrator some as well. I didn't get to know him enough to where I knew how he was going to answer every question, but I did get to know him enough to where I felt comfortable talking to him and he felt comfortable with me. This helped the interview to go smoother and feel

less tense and awkward. It would not have gone as well I think if it felt like talking to a stranger.

b. What was it like to interview a classmate?

Interviewing a classmate was a very unique experience. It was unique because although I was interviewing someone I already knew, it now feels like I know them even better than some of closest friends. My narrator and I had become friends throughout the course of the semester but following this interview I learned things about him that I never would have guessed at. It's also interesting to be interviewing someone who is your peer. You are interviewing someone who grew up through the same things as yourself and experienced the same world events at roughly the same age, Yet, they had a completely different life from yourself and experienced and perceived things in a completely different way. To gain this insight into the life of a classmate and a friend is very unique and certainly an engaging experience.

c. How did you feel after the interview?

After the interview I felt like I had learned a lot. I learned much about both my narrator and the interview process as a whole. I also felt like I had opened a new channel for my narrator to express himself. Not many people get the opportunity to be interviewed and so being able to let someone speak so freely like that was a distinctive feeling. I also felt closer to my narrator as he had just opened up to me about things that he rarely if ever discusses with people that he knows as little as he knew me at the beginning. It was a rare feeling and experience.

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

I'd say that the most important thing I learned as an interviewer is how to listen more. Although throughout the interview I did often respond with a brief "yeah" or some other reassurance, that helped to teach me that I need to listen more rather than always responding. You don't have to respond to every single thing a person says with a reassurance or a secondary comment. Sometimes what a person needs to do is just talk and let something out. As a listener, we need to just be quiet and let them say what they need to say. If we feel the need to always respond, even if it's just with a brief "yeah", this could distract them or throw them off guard. I learned how to be better at this and listening to someone speak through this interview.

e. What advice would you give to future interviewers?

I'd say to future interviews that you should just, for lack of a better term, "roll with the punches". I'd also say to not be concerned with hitting every single question you have outlined. You never know what someone is going to respond to a question, and you never know what direction that response

could take the interview. If you're concerned with hitting every question and don't follow the new trails your narrator could present, you end up with a very stale and uninteresting interview. Your narrator could also give very lengthy responses and trying to ask every question could result in an interview that is way too long. Don't go in with expectations, just let the interview play out.

4. As a **narrator**:

a. How did you prepare to be interviewed?

While preparing to be interviewed, I got to know my interviewer. I wanted to be comfortable with the person interview me so that it didn't feel like I was unloading my personal life on a complete stranger. This definitely helped me feel more comfortable during the interview. I also read and signed a consent form so that I knew what was going to happen with the interview once it was in the archive and I was comfortable with that. I also tried to put myself in the proper mindset of giving completely honest and unrehearsed answers. I think I did this rather well.

b. Describe your experience being interviewed.

The experience of being interviewed, first of all felt way quicker than I expected. It felt like the hour-long interview went by in no time at all. I had somewhat expected it to feel as if I was reaching for answers and trying to take up as much time as possible so that the interview was substantial. However, I had no problem talking for as long as I did while still giving thoughtful and candid answers. I also felt very open during the interview. All of the responses I gave were totally mine and felt like I could just speak and be myself. Overall the interviewing experience felt very open and very quick.

c. How did you feel after the interview ended?

After the interview ended, I felt like I had learned things even about myself. Seeing as I didn't know what any of the questions would be, I also didn't know what any of my responses would be. I feel like I gave some responses that I did not even expect from myself. It was an uncommon to feeling to learn things about your own experience that maybe you didn't consciously acknowledge.

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

I would tell someone who is hesitant to be interviewed to just really allow yourself to be open and be entirely yourself. There is no judgement during the interview, and you are not expected to give any sort of specific response. The interview is entirely about you and what you have to say, so just open yourself up and say what you feel. The interview process is also focused entirely on making you, the narrator, comfortable with what's happening. Make yourself at least somewhat familiar with your interviewer, make sure you understand

the interview process and what's going to be done with it, and then just talk. It's a worthwhile experience.

### **Section III:**

5. What information is missing? What else do you think those trying to understand the pandemic should know?

The only other thing I'd say about these interviews is that they're very unique and very much a product of their time. Obviously, these interviews would not even really exist if it weren't for the global pandemic and everything going on in the world right now. Had the circumstances been different, these interviews would probably have better camera and sound quality, they would have been done in person, many things would have been differently. However, they're representative of the time period that they are from. They help to give a true insight into what a student's life was like during the COVID-19 pandemic.