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## Guidelines for Crim 321 Oral History Project

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The final product you will be producing at the end of semester is an oral history report. Recall from the course syllabus that the body of your paper (i.e., excluding appendices, references, cover page) is to be no more than 5000 words, which is about 15 double-spaced pages in 12-point font. Also, remember it is due on the Monday after our last class, i.e., 5 December 2022, at the stroke of midnight, and that late papers will be penalized 10% per day.

Your report will take the form of an academic article insofar as it will have an introduction followed by sections entitled methods, results, discussion and conclusions. But remember that this is a methods course, which means we are more interested in the methodological decisions you make and why you make them more than any connections to the literature. This means that you will have a much smaller “introduction” and much larger “methods” section than would be the case in an article you were trying to publish. The following describe what you should include in each section of your paper:

### **Abstract:**

This will be no more than 200 words and will provide an overall summary of your project and its findings. I’d recommend you do it last after you’ve written the report so that you know what you are summarizing.

### **Introduction:**

If you were writing an article or preparing a presentation, your introduction would be a literature review that identified gaps and showed how your study would contribute to the literature. In our case, I simply encouraged you to pick an interesting person in your life, so this section will be a very short one for our course where all you do is give a one-paragraph introduction about the topic that interested you, a brief description of the person you picked as your research participant, as well as why you picked them and what you expected the focus of the interview to be.

Or at least that is what it would look like if you were to take the more inductive approach that your professor suggested. However, if you decided to take the more deductive approach that your text describes, where you looked to the literature to help you identify issues to ask about, then you would report that literature here.

The difference between these two is that in the former, you will have a very short introduction and longer discussion, while the latter would lead you to have a longer introduction and shorter discussion section.

### **Methods:**

This likely will be one of the largest parts of your paper. For the most part it will involve you explaining how you approached the interview and what decisions you made. In the process, I will expect you to be citing the lecture notes and/or our text to justify your choices and articulate the principles you were trying to implement. You described in the introduction who your participant was and what topic you began with, but this section takes it a step further and articulates what specifically you did and how your

choices reflect (or not) the principles that were discussed in class and in your text. It would include things like the following:

- What did you do before the interview(s) started and what decisions did you make both before and during the interview?
- What location did you choose to do the interview and why?
- To what extent did you prepare questions ahead of time and why did you do it that way?
- Did you do anything in particular to build rapport? Why or why not?
- How did you “manage” the interview to ensure that your participant was comfortable and you got what you wanted out of the session(s)?
- How many sessions did you hold, and why that many?
- Did you record? How and why?
- Did you transcribe the whole interview? How and why?
- What approach did you take to analyzing your data? How did you decide what was important?

### **Results:**

This section will describe what you learned from your participant about the topic that led you to interviewing them, and will likely be the longest section of your paper.

There are different ways to organize a “results” section like this. One way is to report the results chronologically if there was a flow to it in that way. Another possibility would be to identify different themes that emerged and report information you learned about each of those themes. Either way, explain why you chose to organize it the way you did. Was there anything you were surprised by?

Remember as you do this section the kind of reporting that we discussed in class, i.e., where in qualitative research, because there are often no graphs or tables, we make our points and then provide quotes that illustrate the inferences we are making.

### **Discussion & Conclusion:**

This section is where you take a step back and reconsider what you have done and what you found. We always have to make choices when we do research, which always involves trade-offs and compromise. So what do you think were the strengths of what you did? What do you think were some of the limitations? If you had it to do all over again, would you do anything differently?

The discussion is also the place where you take your study and place it into a broader context – moving it from “intrinsic” to “instrumental” -- so this is where I expect you to place your oral history into a broader literature. Because our focus is on the methods, I would be content with you citing three studies in your general area of research that begin to contextualize your work. What is the broader category of which your participant is a part? If you were going to continue this line of research, what would you do next? Who would you approach? What questions arise from this research that you would want to continue or expand in your next?