
Crim 321: Qualitative Research Methods

Study Questions for Hesse-Biber & Leavy / Chapter 6

Oral History

1. What are some characteristics of oral history approaches that distinguish them from interviews?
2. In class your professor will talk about the “box of history” when he explains the notion of “selective deposit.” How are those two concepts related to oral history?
3. Why do you think oral histories have been particularly popular among marginalized and oppressed groups?
4. Are *oral* histories always *life* histories?
5. The chapter talks about how oral histories are “holistic.” In what sense?
6. In what sense do oral histories “allow for the merging of individual biography and historical processes” (p. 137)?
7. What does “rapport” refer to and why is it important for researcher and narrator to spend some time working on that before formal data gathering begins?
8. The chapter suggests as researchers we need to be “listening” to people’s words, but suggest it goes far beyond what we mean by “listening” as we go about our daily lives. Explain some of the dimensions of “listening” that the authors suggest are integral to doing oral history?
9. Explain what the authors mean when they talk about “narrative style” and “narrative structures.” Just how many categories of “narrative styles/structures” do the authors identify? Explain each one. And why is it important for a researcher to understand what narrative style(s) people may use in their oral histories?
10. In their discussion of collaboration and authority, the authors state that “the researcher and research participant ‘create knowledge together,’” which in turn raises issues such as “who is the ‘author’ of an oral history?” Keep that thought in mind as you read the Borland article in this week’s readings as well.
11. The authors explain that there are no simple answers when it comes to the “right” amount of “collaboration” or independence between researcher and participant. What are some considerations that would make collaboration more or less appropriate?
12. What ethical issues arise regarding whether the transcription you do is “cleaned up” to get rid of “ums” and “uhs” and “likes”?
13. What ethical issues does the archiving of oral histories bring to the fore? [Your professor will be adding to this discussion in class using some recent examples he was involved with.]