

Fall 2012

Research Methodology

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Recommended Citation

Edwards-Simpson, Louise, "Research Methodology" (2012). *Project Guide & Documentation*. 4.
https://sophia.stkate.edu/scuvoh_home/4

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The Equipment List

The following recording equipment was purchased for this project. We followed the specifications of the Oral History Collections at the Library of Congress to insure broadcast quality recordings.

-Sound Devices High Resolution 2-Channel Compact Flash Field Recorder.

-Rode Matched Pair of NT1A Studio Condenser Microphones

-Mercury Elite Pro Mini Solid State Hard Drive

-3 Sennheiser Stereo Headphones

-1 Sennheiser Headphone Monitor

-Assorted cables, and compact flash cards, and a card reader

The Recruitment Process

After the project received approval from the SCU Institutional Review Board, potential narrators were recruited in a number of ways. Prof. Louise Edwards-Simpson and her research assistant, Luci Russell developed a recruitment poster asking community members “Has there ever been a time when you didn’t have a place to call home?” and informing them that they were not alone and to contact Prof. Edwards-Simpson if they were willing to tell their story. Dozens of posters were distributed around campus, on bulletin boards and given to departments that work

directly with students such as Student Affairs, the Financial Aid Office, and Access and Success. Faculty, staff and project participants also referred people.

Because of the personal and difficult nature of our project, we wanted to ensure that potential participants felt as comfortable as possible with the interview process. Each potential participant was emailed individually and given summary information about the project and its purpose, including the interview questions, and all three consent forms. Some prospective participants met with project members to ask questions and got more information before deciding whether or not to participate. We communicated with about 30 potential narrators and fielded inquiries from approximately 50 people.

The Consent Process

The consent process played an important role in the project to assure each narrator that she or he would have the ultimate authority over what to share and how their personal and often traumatic story would be presented. Narrators were informed that participation in the project was fully voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from at any time prior to the final gifting of their interview. Potential participants would contact us to indicate their readiness to schedule an interview. On the interview day, we first reviewed all of the consent documents and answered any questions from the narrator. The participant signed then signed the form granting consent to be interviewed and recorded. Post-interview, the narrator signed a second form, to giving permission to have the interview transcribed. Once transcription was complete, the narrator was contacted and given a copy of the written text for review. Narrators could amend, add to or omit information from their transcript in order to ensure that their story was presented as they saw fit.

By signing a final consent form, the narrators gifted the interview transcript and had the option to donate the audio recording, a photograph and/or supplementary materials for deposit in the St. Catherine University Archives in Special Collections and digitally. Project participants had the option further to restrict public access to their interview for periods of five (5) or fifteen (15) years from the date of the interview.

The Interview Process:

Since project participants were emailed a list of possible questions in advance of their interview, they could familiarize themselves with the process and become comfortable with the subject matter in advance. We arranged the interview space to facilitate the comfort of the narrators which were conducted in small, nondescript rooms, in remote and quiet sections of the Library on the St. Paul campus. We covered a table with a cloth, used comfortable chairs and provided water and snacks as well as tissues. While student research collaborator Luci Russell set up the recording equipment, Prof. Edwards-Simpson would use small talk as a way to set a relaxing atmosphere. Participants were informed that they were free to stop the interview at any time or ask to pause the recording. The interviews were often emotional and several participants were moved to tears. After each interview, Prof. Edwards-Simpson and Luci Russell met to reflect on what had occurred and to process any emotions that were elicited during the interview.