

Short Assignment #4: Conversation as a Practice of Archiving

One day it dawned on me. When she said, 'cause she said, you know, "What we do in here is our secret, and someday you'll know what to do with it." She did not mean the money. She meant the knowledge.

Sheila Spencer-Stover,
Native American genealogist,
interviewed in *Lordville* (2010)

This assignment is meant to provide an occasion to critically think about the concept of “the hierarchy of memories” that we have been discussing. If the act of remembering, of judging what is worth remembering and what is not, is not neutral but rather happens according to a certain set of values, how can we self-reflexively recognize these values? Can we change these values if need be? What might it look like to remember otherwise?

One of the methods that Rea Tajiri uses in *Lordville* is conversation. Unlike other, more hierarchical speech genres—such as a lecture, a job interview, a press junket—conversation takes place in more familiar, relaxed, and intimate settings (although this does not mean that these things cannot be hierarchical) and is more likely to take place between peers (e.g. you have a nice casual chat with a friend, not an employer). Thus, conversation is a medium that is suitable to remembering otherwise.

Your Task

1. Find someone whom you are comfortable talking with and who is willing to be interviewed.
2. Explain to them what you have learned about the concept of “the hierarchy of memories” or however you have understood archiving as we have learned it in class to be.
3. Record a 10-to-15-minute conversation about an imaginary scenario in which archivists a century from now are trying to learn about people living with Covid-19. What would your interviewee want them to know and remember about themselves? What piece of memory would your interviewee want to be archived in this conversation?

4. Write a 1-page Writer's Memo how this conversation has helped you understand the concept and practice of archiving. You should be able to articulate these ideas in your own language and according to your personal stakes. This Memo requires **one** quotation sandwich incorporating a relevant insight from either Cacho or Tuck and Ree.

As with previous assignments, you are free to decide which piece of information to disclose and withhold. Interview can be granted under anonymity, if requested, and will not travel outside the boundary of this class.

Rubric

A successful paper

- conducts an interview in which the relevant topic of archiving and “hierarchy of memories” are addressed.
- includes a Memo that shows how the concept and practice of archiving is relevant to the writer's own everyday life.
- includes a delicious quotation sandwich.

4.0-3.9—fulfills all three requirements.

3.8-3.5—fulfills two requirements while leaving one undeveloped.

3.4-3.0—fulfills two requirements.

2.9-2.5—fulfills one requirement while leaving one undeveloped.

Format

MLA, Times New Roman, 12 points, double space, 1-inch margins, in .doc or .pdf format.