**Beyond the 5-Paragraph Essay: How to Structure Your Profile**

**Overview**: You have picked an interview subject, written questions for the interview, and maybe conducted the interview. The next step is to decide on an organizational strategy for the essay you will write based on the interview transcript.

**Basic Strategy for deciding on a structure**: Think in sections--paragraph blocks, not paragraphs--and think about what each section needs to accomplish. Your text has 2 patterns on pp. 203-4 (adapted below). The only difference is the middle section, one being structured primarily as a narrative, the other emphasizing description. Below is a synthesis

1. **Opening section**: Must capture your audience’s attention, introduce your topic, provide any background that is necessary to understand your essay.
2. **Middle section**:Presents details and analysis about your interview subject in a way that makes it come to life. Might include the following:

* Description of person(s), places, objects essential to the story
* Characteristics of the profile subject and/or the group he/she belongs to.
* Anecdotes that provide insights, impressions of the person or group
* Dialogue from the interview subject and/or others
* Further background information needed to understand the group (this might come from outside research, including quoting of experts)
* Insights/analysis drawn from the information and/or incidents

1. **Closing section**: Articulates your dominant impression with any insights you have gained from the interview about this individual and maybe others in the same group. To leave a strong impression with the reader, you might close with the following:

* A strong quote that sums up a main idea
* An incident that illustrates an important theme
* A description that underlines a key impression
* Something that looks toward the future implications of the story, particularly as it relates to the audience

**Variations of Structural Form**: Posted on the course website are several examples of profiles from “the real world.” These are used for the examples below.

**Transcript Style**: Often interviews are published essentially as transcripts, with the questions as they were asked (often in bold) and the answers directly quoted. Usually there is an introductory paragraph or two in the writer’s own voice setting it up. Usually the writer also edits the quoted material for brevity, trimming wordy bits. Examples: *Yes, Chef* book review and “The Amish Project.” NOTE: This is not an acceptable option for you in this assignment—too easy.

**Subheadings**: Sometimes the essay’s sections are highlighted with subheadings that shape the material for a particular audience, turning the piece into a “how to,” for example. Example: The “Mompreneur” story that turns the profile subject’s story into a template for other would-be “mompreneurs.”

**Dual or Multiple-person Profile:** When more than one person is being profiled, the writer can organize the material in various ways.

a) Treat each interview subject individually and sequentially. Examples: “Students set sights on conquering fashion world through self-made brands,” *The Smartest Kids in the* World (the book, not the excerpt you read)

b) Group the material from interviewees thematically, Examples: “My Freshman Year: Worldliness and World View,” “Muslim Prom”

c) “Braid” the testimonies together, combining the story arcs of the different profile subjects so that it seems like a coherent whole. Examples: “Students’ journey takes them from Sudan to Bay Area,” *Born Into Brothels* (the film)