**Interview Guide**

When doing qualitative research, sociologists and anthropologists often conduct interviews. The primary style of ethnographic interview is called a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews are in-depth, open-ended conversations on specific topics. The researcher must arrive with a list of topics and questions that they would like to ask the person who they are interviewing. This list of topics and questions is called an interview guide. One of the things that makes interviews different from conversations is the amount of planning that goes into them. Developing good questions is an essential part of conducting good semi-structured interviews. But it is not easy. It is common to go through several drafts of questions before getting the final set that you want to use.

Develop interview guide(s).

1. Each interview guide should be tailored to each person you plan to interview. For example, you would not ask a farmer the same questions you would ask someone who shops at farmers’ markets. Decide how many interview scripts you need to develop.
2. Develop at least 15 questions per interview guide. Remember that the questions are designed to elicit narrative conversation. Questions should be open-ended!

Develop an 8-10 sentence consent script. The script should:

1. Introduce yourself
2. Describe your research topic or interest
3. Share the practical considerations a potential interviewee should be aware of (i.e. how long the interview will take, that you would like to audio record the interview, and that they can decline to participate with no hard feelings)
4. Ask the potential interviewee if they are willing to participate in the interview.
5. Ask the potential interviewee if they are willing to have the interview recorded.

Things to consider when designing questions:

* Use initial questions to build trust and rapport (i.e. have your interviewee tell you about their background)
* Questions need to make sense *to the interviewee*
* Avoid yes/no questions
* Avoid vague questions
* Avoid multi-part questions
* Construct unbiased or non-leading questions
* Have interviewees walk you through different time periods (past, present, future)
* Ask interviewees to narrate their experiences related to your research topics (i.e. Could you talk me through what your job as a \_\_\_\_ entails? What is a normal day like at your work?)
* Avoid potentially controversial topics

**Before an interview**

* Gather background knowledge of the topic—never ask questions that you can easily find the answer to online!
* Learn as much as possible about the potential interviewee
* Contact potential interviewee
	+ Be sure to explain
		- your project and its purpose
		- what information is being sought and what it will be used for
		- your reason for contacting this person in particular.
	+ Be sure to *ask* if she will agree to be interviewed and explain that it is ok if she doesn’t want to.
	+ If she says yes, set up the details of the interview including date, time, place, and permission to record if necessary.
* Prepare a specific interview guide for each new interview.

**During an Interview**

* ARRIVE ON TIME!
* Introduce yourself and your research, and ask if the interviewee has any questions about your research.
* Share your consent script.
* If recording: Re-confirm that this is acceptable to interviewee. Select an environment as free of anticipated noise and distractions as possible.
* Take jotted notes of key points, even if you are recording! This will help you keep track of all main topics of the interview. Also, taking notes during an interview can reassure the interviewee that you think what she is saying is important.
* Create a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.
* Ask one question at a time.
* Avoid interrupting the interviewee.
* Use probes to solicit more in-depth information. Ask for clarification when necessary.
* Try to maintain a balance between following your planned interview guide and following relevant leads your interviewee opens up to you.
* Be aware of and sensitive to how the person is affected by and responds to different questions, this includes observing body language and silences.
* Respect the time-constraints, attention and physical comfort of the interviewee. Before you conclude the interview, ask if the interviewee has anything else to add or any questions to ask you.

**After an Interview**

* Thank your interviewee for her time and participation. Thank the interviewee again later by phone, email, letter or personal visit.
* Provide the interviewee with your contact information if you have not already done so.
* Write out field notes as soon after the interview as possible to avoiding forgetting important details. Be sure to include pertinent setting and contextual details. Distinguish descriptive and interpretive sections in your notes.
* If you will be conducting more interviews, revisit your interview guide and make any necessary adjustments.