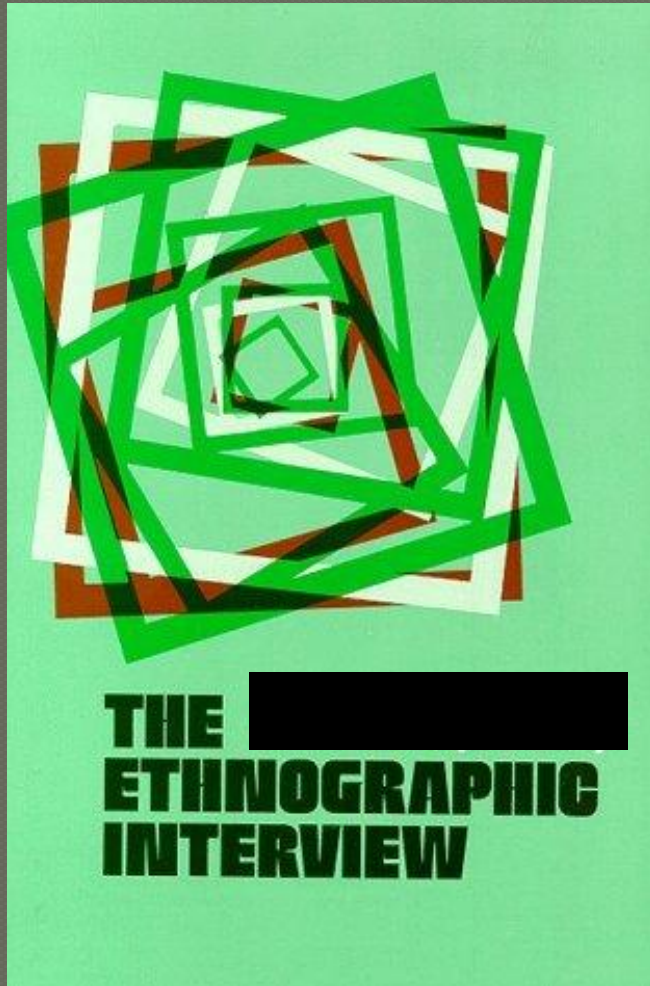


The Art of the Interview

TEM Summer School
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Types of Interviews



- The Structured
- Semi-structured
- Open-ended
- Focused-group
- Case-study

Is Data Collection a Trick?

- **The social science trades, no less than plumbing or carpentry, have their tricks...**



What is the Goal of an Interview?

- Butterfly collection or ... an unfolding of meaning...

High Level Pre-interview scenario...

- ◉ What are you looking for...
 - Imagery
 - Sampling
 - Concepts
 - Logic [how you relate concepts to make a statement]

Trick One

- ① Cover the entire spectrum of a phenomena... examine the full range... find that new variable...

Trick Two ...

Look for stories that **do**
not hold-up...



Trick three

- ◉ Defining a term by looking for how its meaning arises in a network of relations

How do you study Ethnic groups?

- An ethnic group is not one because of the degree of measurable or observable difference from other groups; it is an ethnic group, on the contrary, because the people in and the people out of it know that it is one; because both the *ins* and the *outs* talk, feel, and act as if it were a separate group.

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- The trick then is recognizing that you can't study an ethnic group all by itself and must instead trace its "ethnicity" to the network of relations with other groups in which it arises

Software Engineers and Plumbers

- Occupation and Social Class
- Skill and Salary
- Gender and Salary

Is there a White Collar Crime?

- ◉ Race and Crime
- ◉ Crime and Poverty

A few rules of thumb....

- ⦿ A continuous dialogue with empirical data: *let the case define the concept*

What is it that gets you in a fix....

DO you forget the questions you planned to ask when you finally get the nerve to ask a subject?

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More rules....

- Begin with an interview guide but be prepared to change your assumptions

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- ◉ In a messy situation, begin from the answer and wade your way to your question...

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- ⦿ What does *nice* or *fascinating* mean?

Do not let your interviewee get away with a word that says everything and nothing..

So, to turn the interview magical...

- ◉ Explore rather than probe...
- ◉ No *leading* questions
- ◉ *A day in the life* kinda questions...
- ◉ Experience rather than Structure
- ◉ Reconstruct rather than Remember

So, to turn the interview magical...

- ◎ Remember that an interview situation is **co-constructed** by the interviewer and the interviewee

From Concepts to relations to generalizations...

- Similar but not identical... *Family resemblance?*
 - *Is it all definition? Are you tall or short?*
 - *The relational element in concepts*
 - *The importance of being Social..*
- *Concept as empirical generalization..*
 - *How to get to the core...*
 - *A specification of a more general set of ideas*

Finally, tricks to do a good interview

- ◎ ... are ways of thinking about what we know and formulate new questions based on what we've found. They help us get all the good we can out of our data by exposing new facets of the phenomenon we're studying....

Readings...

- Howard S. Becker, *“Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You’re Doing It”*
 - Excerpts here <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/041247.html>
- Seidman, I. *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*
 - Browse here http://www.amazon.com/Interviewing-Qualitative-Research-Researchers-Education/dp/080773697X#reader_080773697X
- Mishler, E. *Research Interviewing: Context and Narrative* <http://www.powells.com/biblio/65-9780674764613-1>