

HGSE S-710C
Interviewing in Qualitative Research
Fall 2009 – First Half of Semester

Tu/Th 10-11:30
Staff Asst.: Melita Garrett
443 Gutman Library
Tel. 617 496-4808
melita_garrett@gse.harvard.edu

Mark R. Warren
Nichols House 301
Tel. 617 495-5960
mark_warren@harvard.edu
Office hours: M 1-3pm

Teaching fellow: Thomas Nikundiwe and Connie Chung

This module provides an introduction to qualitative interviewing as a research strategy and practice. We will briefly introduce some of the theoretical and methodological issues surrounding interviewing as a research method. But the focus of the course will be on students learning the craft of interviewing. This will be accomplished primarily through practicing qualitative interviewing as a research method and reflecting upon that experience.

Interviewing can be thought of as a conversation in relationship, and is therefore inherently an interpersonal and social enterprise. Students will have the opportunity to develop their own personal style of interviewing and consider their own interest and commitment to qualitative interviewing. We will work towards building a research community in the class, where students support each other's development as researchers committed to advancing the public's interest in education and social change. The course will discuss ethical issues in qualitative research and consider how power differentials between researcher and subject affect the research process.

Class time will be devoted to a mixture of the following:

- Discussion of readings
- Structured discussion of the research project, as it develops
- Exercises and activities

The Research Project

In this class, students will work through a research project from beginning to end, intentionally reflecting upon their experience along the way. Components of this process include:

- Defining a research question
- Developing interview questions
- Selecting subjects to interview
- Gaining access and establishing rapport with interviewees
- Conducting interviews
- Writing fieldnotes
- Transcribing interviews
- Analyzing data
- Writing up results

The process is iterative and we will reflect upon our experience at each stage. As a short module, we will be providing an *introduction* to all of these aspects of the research process, highlighting those closest to the conduct of the interview itself.

The teaching staff will provide a research question for the class, one that can be answered by interviewing students at HGSE. In round one, students in the class will interview each other,

providing each student with the chance to be interviewed. Students will transcribe and begin to analyze these interviews, writing-up some of their preliminary findings. In round two, students will revise the interview protocol and interview one other student at HGSE.

Requirements

This is a fast-paced, active learning course. Students are expected to:

- Come to class having done the reading and prepared to participate fully in class discussions and activities.
- Submit assignments on time. The seven assignments contain written work appropriate to each phase of the research project and will be discussed in class on the day they are due. Assignments #3, 4, 6 and 7 will receive written feedback from the teaching fellow.
- Provide critical support to other students as part of helping to build a community of researchers in the class.
- Students must be available Friday, September 18th to be interviewed by each other; and they must be available twice between October 6-8th to meet in pairs outside of class to reflect on the process.

Grading

All students will be expected to enroll in this module for a pass/fail grade. Written permission of the instructor is required to take this course for a letter grade, in which case a grading contract will be established.

To receive a passing grade, students must fulfill all requirements of the course (see above), handing in assignments on time.

Please follow HGSE guidelines on plagiarism in all work submitted for this course.

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase and are on-reserve in Gutman Library.

Seidman, Irving. *Interviewing as qualitative research (3rd edition)*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2006.

Weiss, Robert S. *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.

Course-pack of readings

Suggested Texts

Chapters from the following textbooks appear in the course-pack. The books themselves are available on-reserve at Gutman Library. You may want to consider some of these books for purchase.

Rubin, Henry J. and Irene S. Rubin. *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005.

Kvale, Steinar and Svend Brinkmann. *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara and Jessica Hoffmann Davis, *The art and science of portraiture*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Maykut, Pamela and Richard Morehouse. *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001.

Maxwell, Joseph A. *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (2nd edition)*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005.

Schedule of Classes

8/27 Introduction to the course (Shopping class)

Overview/Purposes

9/3 What is interviewing? Why do interviewing?
Different purposes of interviewing in relation to research questions; Interviewing as a conversation in relationship. Qualitative research as scientific research.

In this class we will discuss the readings and we will introduce the research question for the class project.

Reading:

Seidman, chapter 1 "Why interview?" and chapter 2 "A structure for in-depth phenomenological interviewing," pp. 7-14 and 15-27

Weiss, chapter 1 "Introduction," pp. 1-14

Joseph A. Maxwell, "Causal explanation, qualitative research, and scientific inquiry in education," *Educational Researcher* 33 (March 2004): 3-11

Gerald Cupchik, "Constructivist Realism: An Ontology That Encompasses Positivist and Constructivist Approaches to the Social Sciences," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 2(1), Art. 7. available at:

<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/968/2113>

Recommended: Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, chapter 1 "A view of the whole," pp. 3-16

9/8 The "personal" of the researcher in interviewing

In this class we will discuss the readings and, for the project, talk about how to construct interview questions.

Reading:

Ruth Behar, "The vulnerable observer," pp. 1-33 in *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

Wendy Luttrell, "Preface," pp. xii-xv in *Schoolsmart and motherwise: Working-class women's identity and schooling*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Rubin and Rubin, chapter 8 "Designing main questions and probes," pp. 152-172

Maykut and Morehouse, pp. 79-100 and pp. 178-189

Recommended: Kvale, chapter 6 "Ethical issues in interview inquiries," pp. 109-120 and skim 120-123

Recommended: Kvale, Chapter 7 "The Interview Situation," pp. 124-143

Conducting Interviews

9/10 Designing interview protocols

Assignment #1 due – draft interview questions

In this class, we will discuss students' drafts of their interview questions for the project; we will also discuss IRB protocols in preparation for assignment #2.

Reading:

Seidman, chapter 5, "The path to institutional review boards and informed consent," pp. 57-70 and skim pp. 70-77

Rubin and Rubin, "Institutional review boards and professional codes of ethics" pp. 104-107

Weiss, "Appendix D: Consent Forms," pp. 214-218

9/15 IRB Protocols, Ethical Issues and Researcher Positionality

Assignment #2 due – draft IRB application, consent letter and introductory script

In this class we will review the IRB application, consent letter and introductory script. We will also continue our discussion of researcher identity and positionality.

Reading:

H. Richard Milner IV, "Race, Culture, and Researcher Positionality: Working Through Dangers Seen, Unseen, and Unforeseen," *Educational Researcher*, 2007, 36(7):388-400, available at:

http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/Publications/Journals/Educational_Researcher/3607/10EDR07_388-400.pdf

9/17 Asking questions in the interview (probing, etc.)

We will discuss the readings concerning the conduct of an interview itself and how to take fieldnotes at an interview. We will also do some mock interviews.

Reading:

Seidman, chapter 6 "Technique isn't everything, but it's a lot," pp. 78-94

Weiss, chapter 4 "Interviewing," pp. 61-119

Rubin and Rubin, chapter 9 "Preparing follow-up questions," pp. 173-186

Recommended: Rubin and Rubin, pp. 186-200

9/18 (Friday) Students must be available to be interviewed by each other on this day (Note: Rosh Hashanah starts at sunset)

Fieldnotes & Transcriptions

9/22 Reflections on the interview process; transcriptions

Assignment #3 due – fieldnotes, analytic memo and reflective memo on the interview

In this class we will discuss the materials in assignment #3 and talk about how to transcribe interviews.

Reading:

No assigned reading for today. Concentrate on conducting the interview and completing assignment #3.

9/24 Transcriptions; coding and analytic/interpretive memos

Students should begin to transcribe the interview prior to this class.

In this class we will reflect on students' efforts to begin to transcribe the interviews and talk about how to code interview transcripts and write analytic/interpretive memos.

Reading:

Seidman, chapter 8 “Analyzing, interpreting and sharing interview material,” pp. 112-131

Weiss, chapter 7 “Writing the report,” pp. 183-206

Recommended: Rubin and Rubin, chapter 10 “The first phase of analysis,” pp.201-223

Working with data: steps towards analysis and interpretation

9/29 Coding and analytic memos

Assignment #4 due – coded transcript and analytic/interpretive memo

In this class we will discuss students' work coding and writing up results, and reflect on that process.

10/1 Research as on-going praxis; sum-up the project so far: what worked, what didn't, how do it differently, remaining questions

In this class we will reflect on the project so far and discuss selecting participants (interview subjects) for the second round of interviews. We will also demonstrate software for qualitative data analysis.

Reading:

Maxwell, “Negotiating research relationships” and “Participant and site selection,” pp. 82-91

Seidman, chapter 4 “Establishing access to, making contact with, and selecting participants,” pp. 40-56

Entering the Field (again)

During this week students are contacting prospective subjects and gaining their agreement to be interviewed in round two; **interview to be conducted by Monday October 12th.**

10/6 Gaining access, establishing a relationship

Assignment #5 due – memo reflecting on your experience reading the transcript, coded transcript and analytic memo of the interview conducted of you

In this class we will discuss issues concerning gaining access to subjects and establishing and maintaining a relationship with them; we will also discuss issues surrounding the revision of the interview protocol in preparation for the second round of interviews.

Reading:

Please review the readings for the October 1st class

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman, "Illumination: Navigating Intimacy," pp. 135-159

Each pair of interviewer/interviewee meets between October 6th and 8th to discuss assignments #4 and #5

10/8 Writing up findings

In this class we will return to the writing-up of findings; we will look at some different ways researchers make use of qualitative interview material in articles and book chapters; and we will also reflect on our experience with assignment #5.

Reading:

Lawrence-Lightfoot and Hoffman, "Illumination: Expressing a point of view," pp. 85-105

Nathan Teske, *Political Activists in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-5.

Mark R. Warren, "Starting Down the Road: Seminal Experiences and the Moral Impulse to Act," from *Embracing what is right: White racial justice activists in America* (to be distributed)

Thea Renda Abu El-Haj, "'I was born here, but my home, it's not here': Educating for democratic citizenship in an era of transnational migration and global conflict," *Harvard Educational Review* 77(3): 285-316, 2007.

Recommended:

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., Kathleen M. Brown, and Terri L. Mangione, "Qualitative Analysis on Stage: Making the Research Process More Public," *Educational Researcher* 31 (October 2002), pp. 28-38

Voice and Validity

- 10/13 Validity in Qualitative Research
Reflections on the second round of interviewing

Assignment #6 due – Analytic/Interpretive memo on second interview

In this class we will discuss assignment #6 and the reading for the week

Reading:

Maxwell, Chapter 6 “Validity: How might you be wrong?” pp. 105-116

Recommended: Kvale, chapter 13 “The social construction of validity,” pp. 229-252

- 10/15 Back to the purposes of interviewing and to the power of stories (and their limitations)
Final reflections on our role as qualitative researchers

Assignment #7 due – final reflection: where do you stand: what did you learn about yourself as a researcher, what is your style, what are your goals, what will you do?

Reading:

Concha Delgado-Gaitan, “Researching change and changing the researcher,” *Harvard Educational Review* 63(4) Winter 1993

Mary C. Waters, “Appendix: Notes on Methodology,” pp. 347-371 in *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 1999.

Recommended:

Charles Tilly, “The trouble with stories,” pp. 256-270 in Bernice A. Pescosolido and Ronald Aminzade (eds.), *The Social Worlds of Higher Education: Handbook for Teaching in a New Century*. Sage Publications, 1999.

Wendy D. Roth and Jal D. Mehta, 2002. “The Rashomon Effect. Combining Positivist and Interpretivist Approaches in the Analysis of Contested Events.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 31(2): 131-173.

For further reference: A short list of suggested texts on qualitative research

John Lofland et al. *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, 4th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson.

A classic and comprehensive text.

Lyn Richards, *Handling Qualitative Data: A Practice Guide*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005.

Pitched at a fairly introductory and accessible level. Good for advice on using software.

Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman. *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994.

A more advanced and technical manual.

Harry F. Wolcott, *Writing Up Qualitative Research*, 2nd edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001.

A comprehensive, practical and realistic treatment.