

SUPPLEMENT: GRAPHIC DESIGN ETHNOGRAPHY

Laura Tamakoshi and Brian Cross
<http://theanthropologistinthefield.com/default.htm>
 accessed 4/16/2011

“According to anthropologist Stuart Plattner (1989:30), fieldworkers ought to be capable of all the following methods ... :

- Structured direct observation of events: how much time does subject spend, types of interaction
- Observation and recording of the physical environment
- Still photography and video recording.
- Approaching informants, maintaining an interview situation, and ‘disengaging’ from an interview in a manner that leaves open the possibility for further interviewing.
- Designing and pretesting interview schedules...”
- (Types of questions to ask and how to ask them)
- “Data recording, coding, and retrieval skills,... a management system.”
- (Organize data so they make sense, truly represent what you saw and how you saw it [relationships between the events and activities, objects]).
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- “What does the user really think, feel, need, want ...
- Talk less and listen more,
- Make questions short and to the point,
- Use verbs of human universals rather than nouns of our experience,
- Anticipate and discuss the level of formality you plan for the interview, and invite informants to help you become a better researcher by asking them for suggestions about interviews. Many informants quickly “catch on” to what kinds of data you are after and can assess what kinds of relevant data you may be leaving out or are unaware of.”

AUDIENCES AND THE ARTS:
 COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVES
 Editor(s): Lois Foreman-Wernet and
 Brenda Dervin
 Hampton Press 2009

Quoted from Developing Your Interviewing Skills, Part I: Preparing for an Interview
 By Mia Northrop
<http://www.uxmatters.com>
 accessed 4/16/2011

What not to do:

- “posing hard questions first
- asking closed questions
- overloading questions
- asking boring questions
- answering his own questions
- posing questions in a random sequence
- doing little followup on responses
- using negative body language
- failing to build rapport”

...

“Immersing Yourself in the Problem Space”

Become familiar with the boundaries or frameworks within which to explore the subject matter.

“*Domain knowledge* includes products, design proposals, understanding of industry basics; goals and value propositions; industry jargon; design history; success stories; previous interviews. Amassing this knowledge equips you to write an appropriate interview script, gain insights during the interviews, and be nimble with your questioning.

... Your immersion in a domain extends to understanding the design context.

... Become familiar with best practices and alternative approaches.

Functional knowledge includes concepts, interactions, processes, vocabulary, taxonomies, and design patterns. Securing functional knowledge helps you to ascertain where to probe further when getting feedback, ... as well as recognize what is trivial and not worth discussing, ...

Through your full immersion in relevant domain and functional knowledge, you can confidently develop a set of research questions that can help you find the answers to what you and the project team really don’t know, providing enormous value and, hopefully, learnings that are of genuine interest.” ...

“Setting the Stage

Both the settings in which you conduct interviews and your presentation as an interviewer influence the way interviews proceed and the results of your research.

Ideally, select a meeting place that has some relevance to a research topic or participant.

This gives a greater sense of context and make participants more relaxed and open. The environment needs to be conducive to chatting intimately, so consider its physical layout, ambience, potential distractions, and the social warmth of the room.”

...

“Planning Sequence and Flow

...

- prepare a script for how to proceed, tailor your questions to the subject, what are you trying to discover
- “Ask easy, sociable, warm-up questions first to get a participant talking.
- Craft a natural order for your questions, with segues and transitions between them.
- Once you’ve had a chance to build rapport and trust, slot in your harder questions.
- Build a sense of closure at the end of an interview, so participants leave with a sense of accomplishment and feeling good about themselves for disclosing helpful information.”

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Sample questions:

“sequence—‘Walk me through a typical day.’ ‘Then, what do you do next?’

specific examples—‘What did you make for dinner last night?’

peer, product, or activity comparison—‘Do other designers do it this way?’

projection—‘What do you think it will be like in five years’ time?’

look back—‘How did it use to be?’

quantity—‘How many of your customers fall into that category?’

changes over time—‘How are things different now, from the way they were ... years ago?’

suggestive opinion—‘Some people have really negative feelings about X. What are your feelings about that?’

clarification—‘And when you say X, you mean X, right?’

hypothetical—‘What would you do if X happened?’

reflective—‘When you say X, it seems that you’re XYZ. Tell me more about that.’

other viewpoint comparison—‘What do you think younger people might think about that?’

*native language—*Point at object X and ask ‘What do you call this?’

exhaustive list—‘Write down everything that comes to mind when you think of X.’

relationships, organizational structure—‘Draw the different groups, indicate the size of each group, and show whether they overlap.’

naïve outsider perspective—‘How would you explain this to someone who had never heard of this or done this before?’”

...

“Taking Notes

It’s also valuable to plan what data you’re going to record before interviewing participants ...

- You should already know whether you’ll be taking notes yourself, ...
- will there be any observers, or
- someone who will transcribe every word afterward.

There’s nothing worse than entrusting someone else with taking notes, then finding out they’re scant, vague, or inconsistent.”

Quoted from

<http://www.mediacollege.com/journalism/interviews/>

accessed 4/16/2011

“Interview Technique

Interviewing is a vital skill for any (interviewer). [The following] should give you a reasonable understanding of how interviews work, what to do and what not to do.” ...

“Interview Questions

Most interviews seek to achieve one or more of the following goals:

- Obtain the interviewee’s knowledge about the topic
- Obtain the interviewee’s opinion and/or feelings about the topic
- Feature the interviewee as the subject.

It’s important that you know exactly why you are conducting an interview and which goal(s) you are aiming for. Stay focused on questions and techniques which will achieve them.

- Do your homework. You will be expected to have a basic knowledge of your subject. ...If you show your ignorance, you lose credibility and risk being ridiculed. ...
- Have a list of questions. ...While you should be prepared to improvise and adapt, it makes sense to have a firm list of questions which need to be asked.
- ... many interviewees will ask for a list of questions before hand, or you might decide to provide one to help them prepare. Whether or not this is a good idea depends on the situation. For example, if you will be asking technical questions ... then it helps to give the subject some warning. On the other hand, if you are looking for spontaneous answers then it’s best to wait until the interview. ...
- Ask the subject if there are any particular questions they would like you to ask.”

...

“Listen

A common mistake is to be thinking about the next question while the subject is answering the previous one, to the point that the interviewer misses some important information. “...

“Open-Ended Questions

The ability to ask open-ended questions is very important ...

An open-ended question is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subject’s own knowledge and/or feelings. It is the opposite of a closed-ended question, which encourages a short or single-word answer. Open-ended questions also tend to be more objective and less leading than closed-ended questions

Open-ended questions typically begin with words such as “Why” and “How”, or phrases such as “Tell me about...”. Often they are not technically a question, but a statement which implicitly asks for a response.

Examples

Closed-Ended Question

Do you get on well with your boss?

Who will you vote for this election?

What colour shirt are you wearing?

Open-Ended Question

Tell me about your relationship with your boss.

What do you think about the two candidates in this election?

That’s an interesting coloured shirt you’re wearing.

How do you feel?

Perhaps the most famous (or infamous) open-ended question is “How does this make you feel?” or some variation thereof. This has become a cliché in both journalism and therapy. The reason it is so widely used is that it’s so effective.

In journalism, stories are all about people and how they are affected by events. Audiences want to experience the emotion. Even though modern audiences tend to cringe at this question, it’s so useful that it continues to be a standard tool.

In psychology, feelings and emotions are central to human behaviour. Therapists are naturally keen to ask questions about feelings.

A leading question is a question which subtly prompts the respondent to answer in a particular way. Leading questions are generally undesirable as they result in false or slanted information. For example:

“Do you get on well with your boss?” This question prompts the person to question their employment relationship. In a very subtle way it raises the prospect that maybe they don’t get on with their boss.

“Tell me about your relationship with your boss.” This question does not seek any judgment and there is less implication that there might be something wrong with the relationship.

The difference in the above example is minor but in some situations it can be more important. For example, in a court case:

“How fast was the red car going when it smashed into the blue car?” This question implies that the red car was at fault, and the word “smashed” implies a high speed.

“How fast was each car going when the accident happened?” This question does not assign any blame or pre-judgment.”

“Obtaining Responses to Suit the Edit

In journalism, leading questions can be used in various ways. For example, a journalist might want a particular type of answer to edit alongside some other content. This can be good or bad, as illustrated by the following example.

A hypothetical journalist is doing a story on the moon hoax theory¹. First of all the journalist gets the following statement from an advocate of the theory:

“Photographs of the moon landing show converging shadows were they should be parallel. This could only happen in a studio so the photos must be fake.”

The journalist then interviews a NASA engineer. This response will be edited to appear immediately after the accusation. There are several ways to ask the question, each with very different results:

“How do you explain the missing stars from the Apollo photographs?” This question leads the engineer enough to answer the specific question, while being open-ended enough to get a complete answer. This is good.

“How do you respond to people who say the Apollo photographs were fake?” This question elicits a tenuously-relevant reply without actually answering the accusation. The engineer will give a broad answer such as “I think these people have got it wrong”. This gives the impression that the engineer is being evasive and can’t answer the question.

“How do you respond to conspiracy theorists who accuse you of faking the landing and lying to America?” This question adds some spice with provocative phrases designed to encourage a stronger response.

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Of course the ethical journalist will avoid using leading questions to mislead.”

...

“More Interview Tips

These are very general tips which apply differently to different situations. Use your judgment to decide when and how to use them.

Dress appropriately, or at least dress with a purpose. Your appearance will influence the way interviewees respond to you.

Try to be unique, so it’s not just another interview rehashing the same questions the subject has answered many times before. Don’t push this too far though – if you try to be cute or disarming it may backfire.

Be honest. Sometimes it’s tempting to lie or omit important information when securing an interview. This isn’t just unethical, it will damage your career in the long run.

Don’t have an attitude if you want a quality interview. A confrontational approach is less likely to get good information.

Stay neutral. Try not to ooze bias. Don’t appear to be persuaded by the subject’s opinions.

Don’t judge or directly criticise the subject.

Don’t interrupt. This can upset the subject’s train of thought.

Minimize your own vocals (in video and audio interviews). Ask questions clearly and succinctly, then let the person speak without any more words from you. Learn to react silently as the subject talks – rather than saying things like “uh-huh, right, I see”, use nods and facial expressions.

Don’t over-direct. Try not to give the subject too many instructions or be too specific about what you want them to say. In most cases it’s better to let them speak freely.

Show empathy. Often you will need to cover sensitive or distressing topics. Show some compassion for the subject without getting too emotional. Ask for permission before asking difficult questions, e.g. “Is it okay to talk about...?”

It’s not about you. Don’t talk about yourself or add your own opinion. Your questions can be long enough to add information or interest about the topic, but the interviewee is who the audience wants to hear from.

Take an interest in psychology. Interviewing is very closely associated with psychology. The better you understand how people think, the better you will be able to extract their thoughts from an interview.

When you finish the interview, put your notebook or recorder away and have an informal chat. As well as being polite and leaving a good impression, you might be surprised at what additional information flows when the subject thinks it’s all over and is more relaxed.

If you missed a question from the interview, you might be able to call the subject back later and get the answer. You get one shot at this – call them back twice and you’ll probably be out of luck. Obviously the call-back will be more difficult for video interviews, but you might still be able to voiceover the answer yourself during the story.”

For Video Tutorials go to

<http://www.mediacollege.com/video/>