



EDCP 510: Video Ethnography

Activities

Ethnographic Interviews

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The purpose of this activity is to experience an ethnographic interview. Spradley (1979) describes the ethnographic interview as conversational:

When we examine the ethnographic interview as a speech event, we see that it shares many features with the friendly conversation. In fact, skilled ethnographers often gather most of their data through participant observation and many casual, friendly conversations. They may interview people without their awareness, merely carrying on a friendly conversation while introducing a few ethnographic questions.

It is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants. Exclusive use of these new ethnographic elements, or introducing them too quickly, will make interviews become like a formal interrogation. Rapport will evaporate, and informants may discontinue their cooperation. At any time during an interview it is possible to shift back to a friendly conversation. A few minutes of easygoing talk interspersed here and there throughout the interview will pay enormous dividends in rapport.

Ethnographic Interview Guide: Life Histories

Activity

1. Groups of 2
 - a. Agree on a research problem or question of life history.
 - i. e.g., Just as “we teach who we are,” we research who we are. How might life histories inform an understanding of research culture?
 - b. Formulate a few 2-3 ethnographic interview questions to work with an informant (participant) on understanding their life history. We all have stories—herstories and histories— and these are cultural inasmuch as they are personal.
 - i. Some life history questions might be:
 1. What was your journey through education like? What particular cultures have you been immersed in? Why? How do you describe your cultural experiences?
 2. This is cultural, personal, and ethnographic; not academic and phenomenological. So of course use a friendly style. Create interview protocols (see below)
 3. Formulate a few that interest you
 - c. Review any ethical concerns
 - d. Ethical protocols
 - i. E.g., forms @ consent
 - ii. Review recording protocols
 - iii. Data protection and storage
2. Conduct interviews (20 min each, exchanging roles)
3. The next Activity will address ethnographic data analysis

Protocols, e.g.:

Include the following information for each interview so there is consistency across the interviews:

- Consent form signed and a copy given to participant.
- Demographic information.
- All questions need to be asked.
- Ask if the participant is interested in being included in future interviews. Log this on demographic form. Ask at the end of the interview.

General Interview Protocols

The following are considerations for the interview process:

- Make sure ahead of time that your recording device is powered up and all of the necessary gear is ready. Example: battery charged; microphone attached if necessary; file space available on device.
 - Have forms or any other documents ready
 - Have paper and pencil as backup for notes (power may fail, etc.).
 - Stay open to new directions raised in the interview.
 - Stay open to participant's position.
 - Do not correct the participants.
 - Ask for clarification when necessary.
 - Ask if participants are willing to be contacted for clarification or follow-up
 - etc.
- **Interview questions:**
 - a. Agree on 2-3 questions