

# ■ Interviewing in Ethnography

**IC602**

**Cultural Immersion and Social Analysis**

# Listening and Learning

- Listen to those whose role it is to teach you
  - Who should teach me?
  - What do they want me to learn?
- Be patient, even long suffering
  - What else demonstrates a posture of learning?
- Give face, give gifts – be generous
- Leave a blessing

# Interviewing

## ■ Building Rapport

- Be open
- Be honest about what you are doing
- Be interested in who they are as a person, not simply as a container of worldview
- Explain (several times) why you want to know about their experiences
- Do not be afraid of silences
- Do not be in a rush

# Interviewing

- **Exploring** each other's world – be ready to share of yourself as well as explore the experiences and worldview of the other person.
- **Cooperation** – many people will be excited about helping you understand and will work with you.
- **Participation** – most people will let you participate if they feel you have a degree of competence in their world.

# Ethics in Ethnography

- You are obligated to protect the physical, social, and psychological welfare, dignity and privacy of the people you study.
- Be faithful to represent people accurately.
- Be open with people about what you will and will not do with the information.
- Be alert to how the information may cause them harm once published or shared publicly
- Do not drop the relationship once you have what you want

# First Key Element in Interviewing: *Purpose*

- Purpose – spend some time thinking about what you need to know
  - 1<sup>st</sup> time you want to know what are the important issues in this culture and begin to learn how they relate / communicate
  - All the interviews that follow should be explorations of issues that arise from things shared by the informant

## ■ ■ Second Key: *Explanations*

- Explanations to informants
  - explain what you are doing and why
  - explain that you are going to take notes so that you will not forget the important information that is being shared
  - Take your time – the more rushed you are the longer it will take to build trust

## Third Key: *Note Taking*

- It is often not possible during the interview
- Do your best to have informants use their terms in explaining – even if you don't understand them right away
- Ask them to draw pictures of their world or the thing that they have described
- Develop some kind of short hand system
- Spend time right after the interview filling in the gaps of your notes

## ■ ■ Fourth Keys: *Indirect Methods*

---

- Sorting and Piling Categories / Experiences
- Drawing places and experiences
- Looking and photographs together
- Kinship charts for the village / church / office

# ■ Fifth Key: *Asking Good Questions*

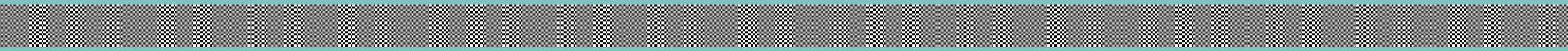
- **Good Ethnographic Questions** (see Appendix A for a list in Spradley)
  - Descriptive questions— Open ended questions that give you the background and the details
    - “Could you tell me what it is like to be an ATS student?”
  - Structural questions – Questions that help you identify important categories and classifications
    - “What are all the different kinds of people who are in the ATS building on any given day?”
  - Contrast questions – Questions that will help you to identify the relationship of one category to another
    - “What is the difference between intercultural studies students and Bible & theology students?”

# Analyzing the Data

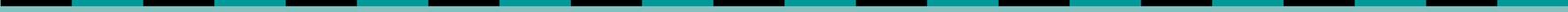
- Explore a Theme/Thread/Problem – example: “time”
- Consider all the data in terms of what it says about how time is perceived, what it means to the person.
  - Look for terms, symbols, events that get repeated.
  - Organize the data into categories that seem to make sense (this will raise new questions that will be important to pursue in your next interview)

# Framing Follow Up Questions

- What terms seemed to be significant in what they shared?
- What was shared that I still don't understand?
- Ask about key issues again but from a different angle in order to verify your understanding
- Try using small cards with insider terms and asking the informant to organize them into piles to determine the categories that they use to interpret experience



# ■ Interviewing Practice Session



Descriptive Questions

Structural Questions

Contrast Questions

# What did you learn about interviewing?

- What did you learn about being interviewed?
- What categories / themes seem to be important and require follow up?