

ONE

Asking Questions and Individual Interviews

This chapter introduces:

- Question and answer sequences: *closed* and *open* questions and follow-up questions or *probes*.
- *Structure* in interviews.
- Forms of interviewing, including *phenomenological*, *ethnographic*, *feminist*, *oral* and *life history*, and *dialogic* interviewing.

In the film *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam*, Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989) purposefully upsets our assumptions about interviewing by juxtaposing English-language interviews of Vietnamese women that at first *look* to be real, against interviews conducted in Vietnamese with English subtitles of – we find out as the film unfolds – authentic interviews of people who have acted the parts of the interviews we have seen earlier in the film. In a further twist, we find out that Trinh has translated transcriptions of interviews from a Vietnamese book to form the basis of the scripts for interviews of the Vietnamese women who introduce the film with their touching, evocative, and sometimes heart-rending narratives. In but one of the themes explored in this film, Trinh cleverly asks questions of both the interview as method, and how researchers translate the voices of others into visual, oral, and written texts.

In this chapter, I begin my exploration of the interview as a research method by first examining ‘questions’ and ‘answers’ as a basic conversational sequence. Second, I discuss different structures for interviewing, including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Third, I review a variety of approaches to individual interviewing practice used by qualitative researchers. In contemporary qualitative research practice, there are numerous forms for conducting individual interviews as well as labels to characterize them. These include semi-structured, unstructured, and structured interviews; formal and informal interviews; long, creative, open-ended, depth, and in-depth interviews; life history, oral history, and biographic interviews; feminist interviews; ethnographic interviews; phenomenological interviews; and dialogical, conversational, and epistemic interviews. And this is by no means an exhaustive list! The purpose of reviewing a variety of approaches to interviewing is to assist researchers to make sense of the labels used

in the methodological literature. Researchers may then select the kind of interview structure and form that is both consistent with their theoretical assumptions, and appropriate to generate data to answer research questions.

An Introduction to Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews may be conducted individually or in groups; face-to-face, via telephone, or online via synchronous or asynchronous computer mediated interaction. In this book, I focus on qualitative interviews in which an interviewer generates talk with an interviewee or interviewees for the purposes of eliciting spoken, rather than written data to examine research problems (for those interested in learning about synchronous and asynchronous online interviews, see Beck, 2005; Davis et al., 2004; Egan et al., 2006; Hamilton and Bowers, 2006; James, 2007; James and Busher, 2006).

Information concerning the design and conduct of structured interviews or standardized surveys is not the focus of this book, since the purpose of these interviews – often administered via telephone – is to generate responses that may be coded to a fixed set of categories, and analyzed quantitatively. Much research has investigated the standardized survey methodologically (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Maynard et al., 2002; Schaeffer and Maynard, 2002; Suchman and Jordan, 1990); and advice is also plentiful with respect to construction and administering of surveys and questionnaires (see for example, Brenner, 1985; Foddy, 1993; Genovese, 2004). Interestingly, many suggestions for conducting an effective survey interview are reiterated in recommendations for conducting ‘good’ qualitative interviews.

The term *interviews* is used to encompass many forms of talk – including professional interviews such as counseling and therapeutic interviews, job interviews, journalistic interviews, and so forth. What all of these forms of talk have in common is that parties are engaged in asking and answering questions. Whatever the structure or format of an interview, or medium used for an interview (such as telephone, face-to-face, or computer-mediated), the basic unit of interaction is the question–answer sequence. Given that researchers pose questions to participants with the aim of eliciting answers, it is useful to examine in more detail how ‘closed’ and ‘open’ questions work, and how they can generate different kinds of responses.

Questions and Answers

Questions are particular kinds of statements that request a reply– although posing a question does not necessarily mean an answer will be forthcoming, or that the answer will relate to the particular question posed. In his analysis of conversation, sociologist Harvey Sacks (1992) located a class of utterances that he labeled ‘adjacency pairs’ (see Appendix 2 for a glossary of terms used in conversation analysis). In an adjacency pair, when a first-pair part (in this case, question) has been uttered, it sets up the expectancy that a second-pair part (an answer) will be forthcoming.

Interviews are built on the assumption that questions asked by the interviewer will be followed by answers provided by the interviewee. Two kinds of questions that are routinely used in interviews are closed and open questions.

Closed Questions

Understanding questions is simple – isn't it? Maybe not. Although we immediately recognize or understand when a question has been posed in interaction, how to ask interview questions that are comprehended by others and answered in ways that generate relevant data is more complex than initially apparent. Some question structures have been found to have a certain kind of **preference** for the response. That is, response types might be marked or unmarked for certain kinds of adjacency pairs. For example, invitations *prefer* acceptances, and declinations are typically followed by accounts, or are 'marked.' Self-deprecations *prefer* disagreements, whereas agreements present an interactional difficulty to be negotiated by speakers. The question beginning this section is posed as an assertion with a tag, 'isn't it?' This question formulation implies a particular kind of response, which, in this case is confirmation ('yes'). The response that follows the statement above is the 'dispreferred' response, or disagreement. Researchers have found that dispreferred responses (such as when an invitation is declined) are usually followed by accounts, or explanations (as demonstrated in this paragraph). Although this closed question is formulated as an assertion that implies confirmation, the response generated is neither yes nor no! Thus, we can express something about the format of this particular question–answer sequence as shown in Figure 1.1 below. Note that that dotted arrow from the dispreferred response to the account or explanation indicates that a speaker *may* provide an explanation, although this does not always occur.

Many methodological texts advise qualitative interviewers to ask *open*, rather than *closed* questions because closed questions have the possibility of generating short one-word answers corresponding with yes/no or factual information implied by the question (for example, What time is it? One fifteen). Thus, closed questions are those in which the implied response is restricted in some way. For example, the closed question I posed below is answered by a single-word affirmation from the participant:

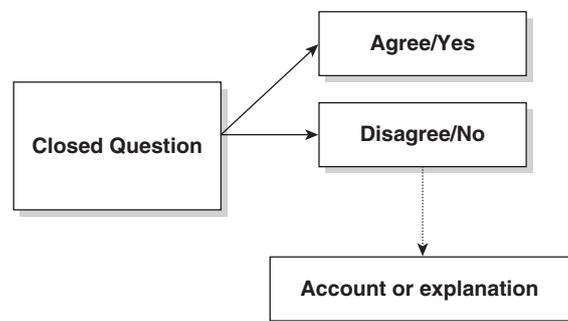


Figure 1.1 A closed question and possible ways of responding

Excerpt 1.1¹

Interviewer (IR) And, do you have choruses at school yourself?
 Interviewee (IE) Uh-huh.

Interviewees may respond to closed questions as if they were open by providing further description. For example, in response to the following probe that I posed as a closed question, the interviewee in Excerpt 1.2 provided further explanation, rather than supplying a one-word affirmation such as 'yes.'

Excerpt 1.2

IR Now you mentioned that you started taking private lessons yourself. Had you had formal music training prior to that?
 IE At a very early age, my father had enrolled me in a piano class. And I begged him to let me drop out. And he said, 'Well the only way I'll let you drop out is if you play a sport.' So I started playing soccer, so that I would not have to play the piano.
 IR: Huh.
 IE: That was probably the dumbest decision that either one of us ever made.

In Excerpt 1.2, we see that even closed questions can generate significant explanation, rather than simple yes/no responses. Thus, while closed questions may imply yes/no responses – they are not always taken up in that way. Yet, it is a wise move for novice interviewers seeking to generate in-depth descriptions of people's perceptions and experiences to learn how to pose open, rather than closed questions. This should not be taken to mean that there is no place for closed questions in a qualitative interview. In Excerpt 1.2, a closed question is used as a follow up question to clarify an aspect of a preceding narrative that was not central to the research topic. Therefore, closed questions can also be used judiciously by qualitative interviewers to clarify their understanding of details provided by interviewees.

Open Questions

Open questions are those that provide broad parameters within which interviewees can formulate answers in their own words concerning topics specified by the interviewer. Questions beginning 'Tell me about ...' invite interviewees to tell a story, and can generate detailed descriptions about topics of interest to the interviewer. These descriptions can be further explored when the interviewer follows up on what has already been said by asking further open-ended follow up questions, or 'probes' that incorporate the interviewee's words. For example, I have used the following kinds of questions in interviewing to clarify topics, and elicit further description:

You mentioned that you had ____; could you tell me more about that.
 You mentioned when you were doing ____, ____ happened. Could you give me a specific example of that?

¹Unless otherwise noted, all interview extracts included in the text are drawn from studies in which the author was principal investigator, and for which informed consent from interviewees was obtained.

Thinking back to that time, what was that like for you?

You mentioned earlier that you _____. Could you describe in detail what happened?

Probes frequently use *the participant's own words* to generate questions that elicit further description. This is an important point, because in everyday conversation, we regularly use 'formulations' of what others have said to us to clarify our understanding of prior interactions. There is a distinct difference between using formulations to sum up our understanding of others' talk and using the participants' words to generate questions. In the former, interviewers use their own terms to sum up what they have heard (through a process of preserving, deleting, and transforming aspects of what has already been said, see Heritage and Watson [1979] and Appendix 2 for further information). By formulating talk, interviewers are likely to introduce words into the conversation that the participants themselves may not use. Just as in everyday conversation, interviewees may take up the researcher's terms at a later point in the talk – in effect recycling what the interviewer has said rather than selecting their own words. This is avoided when interviewers use the participants' words to generate probes. In Excerpt 1.3, we see in an interview that I conducted how I formulated talk in a way that my research participant commented on.

Excerpt 1.3

IR Yeah, so the, like the identification of the vocal timbre.

IE Right.

IR Gets identified with sexual orientation.

IE Exactly.

IR Yeah.

IE Look at you. Putting that into big words, you know.

In this example, I formulated the interviewee's previous talk concerning how she had overheard comments from fifth-grade boys that boys who sang sounded gay as 'the identification of the vocal timbre gets identified with sexual orientation.' In this instance, the interviewee commented on how this formulation had transformed her comments into 'big words.' Here I elicited agreement to my formulation from the interviewee; however, another way of approaching this talk could have been to generate more detail concerning the interviewee's response. There are many probes using the participant's words that could have been used, however, perhaps the simplest probe is: tell me more about that.

When asking open ended questions, interviewers need to be sure that the topic is sufficiently specific so that the interviewee will be able to respond. If topics have not been explained, or are unclear to interviewees, they may have difficulty in answering broad open-ended questions. When interviewees and interviewers both feel comfortable talking to one another, it can take as few as four or five key interview questions with appropriate probes to generate talk of an hour or more. A possible sequence of open questions can be illustrated diagrammatically (see Figure 1.2).

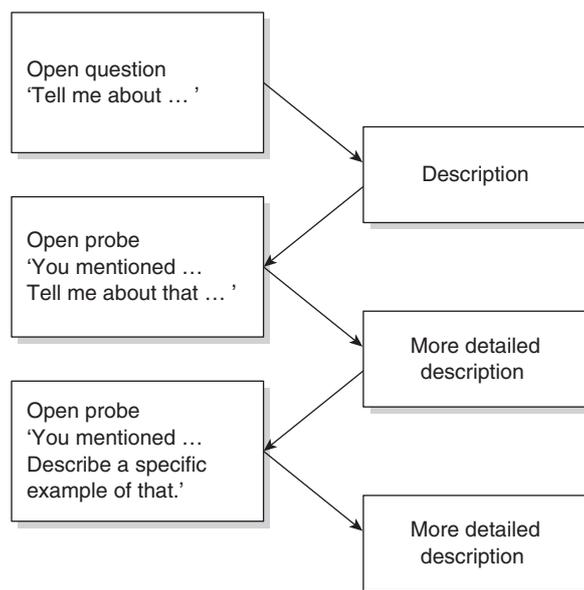


Figure 1.2 An open question and possible ways of responding

‘Structure’ and Interview Talk

Broadly speaking, research interviews for the purposes of social research range across a spectrum from structured, tightly scripted interviews in which interviewers pose closed questions worded in particular ways in specific sequences, to open-ended, loosely guided interviews that have little or no pre-planned structure in terms of what questions and topics are discussed (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Range of interviews

<i>Structured interviews</i> ↔	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i> ↔	<i>Unstructured interviews</i>
The interviewer follows scripted questions in a particular sequence	Interview protocol is used as a “guide” and questions may not always be asked in the same order; the interviewer initiates questions and poses follow up “probes” in response to the interviewee’s descriptions and accounts	Both interviewer and interviewee initiate questions and discuss topics
The interviewee chooses responses from a range of fixed options that are coded quantitatively; responses are provided by interviewer	The interviewee selects own terms to formulate answers to questions; responses are guided by the interviewer’s questions	The interviewee selects own terms to participate in free-flowing conversation
Asymmetrical structure	Asymmetrical structure	Possibly less asymmetrical structure

Table 1.1 (Continued)

<i>Structured interviews</i> ↔	<i>Semi-structured interviews</i> ↔	<i>Unstructured interviews</i>
<i>Data analyzed via deductive analysis for hypothesis testing in multivariate studies^a</i>	<i>Data analyzed via inductive analytic methods for descriptions and interpretations in interpretive studies</i>	

Note: ^aAlford (1998: 38) explains that multivariate arguments attempt to measure factors that explain a 'particular social Phenomenon', while 'interpretive' arguments are those that 'combine an empirical focus on the language and gestures of human interactions with a theoretical concern with their symbolic meanings and how the ongoing social order is negotiated and maintained' (1998: 42). Interpretive arguments may also 'focus on ideologies, discourses, cultural frameworks' (1998: 42).

Respondents of *structured interviews* are called upon to select their answer from those listed by the interviewer (see Foddy [1993] and Fontana and Prokos [2007] for more detail on structured interviews). Interview researchers using a standardized format of interview are advised not to deviate from the script, although conversation analytic studies of talk generated in standardized survey interviews suggest that this is technically very difficult to do, given that interviewees may not understand questions, and speakers may demonstrate a variety of other interactional difficulties in the administration of survey instruments (see, for example, Houtkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Houtkoop-Steenstra and Antaki, 1997; Suchman and Jordan, 1990).

Another point on the spectrum of structured to unstructured interviews is that of *semi-structured interviews*. In these kinds of interviews, interviewers refer to a prepared interview guide that includes a number of questions. These questions are usually open-ended, and after posing each question to the research participant, the interviewer follows up with probes seeking further detail and description about what has been said. Although the interview guide provides the same starting point for each semi-structured interview given that it assumes a common set of discussable topics – each interview will vary according to what was said by individual interviewees, and how each interviewer used follow up questions to elicit further description. Similarly to other interview structures, interviewers using semi-structured interviews must have highly developed listening skills to be able to both ascertain whether the research topics have been addressed by the interviewee, and when and how it is appropriate to follow up on the accounts given.

Unstructured interviews, in contrast, are those in which interviewers proceed with no formal interview guides. Questions are posed in relation to both ongoing ethnographic field work (i.e. participant observation) as well as the talk that takes place in spontaneous conversations, rather than from pre-specified topics outlined in an interview guide. Nevertheless, interviewers using unstructured interviews have research topics in mind, and are likely to steer conversations towards topics of interest to them. The talk generated from unstructured interviews resembles conversation, and the interviewees are freer to ask questions of the interviewers, who may divulge personal details and opinions of their own. Like conversation, unstructured interview talk may appear to be less asymmetrical than structured and semi-structured forms of talk in which the interviewer has greater rights to ask pre-designated questions. In that conversations can

sometimes turn into arguments or interrogations, it is impossible to predict whether unstructured interviews – nor for that matter, any interview format – will go smoothly, or resemble free-flowing conversation. A drawback of using an unstructured format for interviewing is that the talk may not generate useful data, given that any and every topic can be introduced at any point by either of the speakers, and topics may not be relevant to the researcher's interests. For researchers to generate usable data to examine research questions using unstructured interviews, they are likely to carry these out on repeated occasions during an extended period of fieldwork in which they have focused on specific topics and aspects of analysis (see Lofland et al., 2006).

Interviews Used in Qualitative Research

While some social science researchers characterize their use of qualitative interviews in terms of 'structure' – that is, they use structured, semi-structured, or unstructured interviews – researchers often specify the form further in accordance with the kind of content they seek to elicit. In the next section I review a number of forms for qualitative interviewing used in social science research. Each is used for different purposes, corresponds with different theoretical assumptions about how we might learn about the social world, and may entail particular approaches to data analysis and representation. In this chapter, suggestions for each interview form are not intended to be taken up as prescriptions for interview practice. In each individual interview setting, the interviewer must exercise wisdom in judging when it is necessary to talk about his or her own experiences in order to develop rapport. This differs on each and every interview occasion. Below I discuss the phenomenological interview, the ethnographic interview, feminist interviews, oral and life history interviews, and the dialogic or confrontational interview. Although these interviews share some common characteristics, they also have some distinctive features in relation to the kinds of content sought by researchers.

Phenomenological Interviewing

Social science researchers who focus on generating data to examine participants' lived experiences have made frequent use of phenomenological interviews. The purpose of this kind of interview is to generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of human experiences. Thus, questions that generate detailed information concerning these experiences as well as the participant's responses to the phenomenon of investigation are crucial. Since researchers want to understand the participants' feelings, perceptions and understandings, open questions are particularly useful in providing a format for interviewees to answer in their own words. To begin the interview, an open question could be posed as follows:

Think of a time when you experienced _____ and describe that in as much detail as possible.

Possible follow up questions include:

You mentioned _____ tell me what that was like for you.

You mentioned _____ describe that in more detail for me.

To use phenomenological interviews effectively, it is essential that the interviewer has identified participants who have both experienced, and are able to talk about the particular lived experience under examination.

Some researchers using phenomenological interviews are informed philosophically by phenomenological theory. According to Catherine Adams and Max van Manen, the focus of phenomenological interviews is to elicit the 'direct description of a particular situation or event as it is lived through without offering causal explanations or interpretive generalizations' (2008: 618). Adams and van Manen distinguish between two inter-related forms of interview – the 'phenomenological interview' that explores and gathers descriptions of lived experience, and the 'hermeneutic interview' that seeks to examine the 'interpretive meaning aspects of lived experience material' (2008: 618). Researchers informed by phenomenological theory may use phenomenological reduction to analyze and represent the findings in the form of descriptions of the structures of meaning relevant to a lived experience (for an example, see Fischer and Wertz's [1980/2002] description of being criminally victimized). Yet, some researchers draw on the form of phenomenological interviews in order to gain detailed descriptions that may be subject to other forms of analysis such as narrative analysis and constant comparative analysis, and may not be conducting research informed by various strands of phenomenological theory. Thus, in some work the term 'phenomenological' is used as a synonym for 'qualitative,' rather than to refer to the kind of work described by Adams and van Manen, and other researchers who conduct phenomenological inquiries.

In terms of 'structure,' the phenomenological interview is relatively unstructured and open-ended, and may be guided by only one or two interview questions. For example, Fischer and Wertz state that the questions used in their study of the experience of being criminally victimized were 'what was going on prior to the crime, what it was like to be victimized, and what happened then. Questions were restricted to requests for clarification or elaboration of what the victim had already said' (1980/2002: 279).

Interviewers may also conduct multiple interviews with each participant. For example, Seidman (2006) describes a phenomenologically informed interview sequence in which the interviewer conducts three separate 90-minute interviews over a two- to three-week period. In phenomenological interviews, the interviewer takes a neutral but interested stance, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is sometimes described as pedagogical, in that the interviewer's role is to be a student of the interviewee, learning as much about the topic of inquiry as possible through sensitive questioning (see, for example, Van Manen, 1990). In this kind of interview, the interviewer must listen carefully, follow up on participant's responses without interrupting the story flow to gain specific details of the participant's experience, and generally exercise reservation in contributing to the talk. This would usually mean refraining from evaluating or challenging the participant's responses. In sum, in phenomenological interviews as traditionally discussed and understood, the

interviewer's responsibility is to provide a supportive, non-therapeutic environment in which the participant feels comfortable to provide in-depth descriptions of the life experiences of interest to the researcher.

Christine Sorrell Dinkins (2005) has provided an alternative form for phenomenological interviewing that she calls the 'Socratic-Hermeneutic Inter-view.' In this form of interview, the interviewer and interviewee (referred to as 'co-inquirer') 'engage in a dialogue through questions and responses that encourage the researcher and co-inquirer to reflect together on the concepts that are emerging and taking shape within the interview itself' (2005: 112–13). In this description, Dinkins refers to a central focus of hermeneutic study, that of examining the process of understanding and interpretation. Drawing on the hermeneutic phenomenology of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger, Dinkins rejects the neutral stance taken by phenomenological researchers seeking detailed stories about specific experiences. Instead, Dinkins makes use of a Socratic method of inquiry in which speakers question one another in order to clarify understandings, and search for and develop insight concerning research topics. In this kind of dialogue,

Socrates puts himself very much into the inquiry. He expresses surprise when an interlocutor says something he didn't expect, he challenges beliefs that seem to conflict, and he acknowledges his own assumptions and allows them to affect the dialogue. He is never passive, and he never simply asks a question and lets the answer lie. (Dinkins, 2005: 116)

Although the kinds of research questions posed may be similar to those of other phenomenological studies, the way in which the kind of interview proposed by Dinkins will unfold is radically different to the phenomenological interview described in numerous methodological texts. It is worth exploring further some of the concrete suggestions that Dinkins draws from Socratic dialogues that might be used to generate data for phenomenological and hermeneutic inquiries.

Similarly to Socratic dialogues, the Socratic-Hermeneutic Inter-view begins with definitions. That is, the interviewer first asks the research participant to provide a definition for the phenomenon that is the focus of the investigation. Like Socrates in his dialogues, interviewers will make use of analogies to help interviewees think about difficult questions and clarify what they believe and mean by terms used in descriptions; use examples to explore the co-inquirer's descriptions; point out conflicting statements in an effort to have participants explore what that means; re-word co-inquirers' statements in the researcher's words in order to identify potential misunderstandings on the part of the researcher; and ask participants for their ideas about 'ideal' experiences in addition to those that are 'actual.' Dinkins proposes that the structure of this kind of interview is a back and forth process of 'continual reexamination' that resembles Heidegger's hermeneutic circle (2005: 137–40). Finally, in this kind of interview, interpretation is seen to be part of the interview process itself, rather than a separate phase that takes place after the interview when the researcher analyzes data and writes the report from her study. Dinkins suggests that the interpretations from this kind of interview are likely to be incomplete or lacking in resolution, with interviewees having gained

insights about their experiences, which they reflect on further, and researchers left with more questions to ask (2005: 142–3).

As we can see here, traditional models of interviewing are being continuously revisited, and researchers are suggesting alternatives and innovations – some of which draw on ancient understandings and practice. It is useful, then, to think of the various forms of interviews described in this chapter not as fixed practices, but flexible forms that researchers take up, alter, and reformulate to align with the theoretical presuppositions upon which they base their work.

Ethnographic Interviewing

The purpose of ethnographic interviewing is to explore the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language. Whereas the focus of phenomenological interviews is to gain descriptions of particular lived experiences, the focus of ethnographic interviews is on generating participants' descriptions of key aspects related to the cultural world of which he or she is a part – that is space, time, events, people, activities, and objects (Spradley, 1979). Thus, researchers must generate data that not only includes participants' 'folk' terms and language to describe that culture, but explanations and definitions of those terms and how they are routinely used by members of the culture studied. Drawing on two ethnographies in which he was involved (Spradley, 1970; Spradley and Mann, 1975), James Spradley describes how to develop and conduct ethnographic interviews for the purpose of writing ethnography (Spradley, 1979). Embedded in extended field work involving participant observation (Spradley, 1980), Spradley comments that ethnographic interviews share similarities with friendly conversations; the key difference being that the researcher introduces 'ethnographic elements' to 'assist informants to respond as informants' (1979: 58–68). Because of the conversational style, ethnographic interviewing appears to be highly unstructured, yet this kind of interviewing relies on the researcher's ongoing analyses of data generated via field notes of observations, participation in the research settings, development of rapport with informants, and multiple interviews over extended periods of time.

Although ethnographic interviews may resemble everyday conversations, the researcher is focused on findings answers to very specific questions. Spradley (1979) divides questions that can be asked in ethnographic interviews into (1) descriptive, (2) structural, and (3) contrast questions. In the early stages of ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher focuses on asking open-ended questions aimed at gaining participants' descriptions of space, time, events, people, activities, and objects (Spradley, 1979). Spradley describes five different kinds of descriptive questions that can be asked of participants to get at the details of participants' cultural worlds. The exemplar questions provided in Box 1.1 are drawn from Spradley's study of men who had been arrested for public drunkenness (1970), and James Spradley and Brenda Mann's study of the world of a cocktail waitress (1975).

Box 1.1 Types of descriptive questions

- (1) Grand tour questions
Could you describe the inside of the jail for me?
- (2) Mini-tour questions
Could you describe what you do when you take a break at Brady's Bar?
- (3) Example questions
'I was arrested while pooling': Q: 'Can you give me an example of pooling?'
- (4) Experience questions
You've probably had some interesting experiences in jail, can you recall any of them?
Native-language questions

How would you refer to the jail? (Spradley, 1979: 78–91)²

From Spradley. *The Ethnographic Interview*, 1E. © 1979 Wadsworth, a part of Cengage Learning, Inc. Reproduced by permission. www.cengage.com/permissions

After analysis of data generated from early interviews, Spradley provides examples of structural and contrast interview questions that can be generated from information already gleaned. The researcher uses these kinds of questions to verify or disconfirm hypotheses generated from data analysis. In this way, the researcher seeks to generate data in succeeding interviews to systematically check his or her understandings of what participants have already said, and refine ongoing analyses and interpretations of data.

There is some debate as to what counts as ethnographic interviewing. For example, some researchers who claim to have used ethnographic interviews do not engage in extensive fieldwork, nor do they engage in analyses with the purpose of gaining an understanding of how people use language and make meaning of events and objects in specific cultural settings. Rather than use the term ethnographic interviews as a loose synonym for qualitative interviews in research studies that do not exemplify the kinds of ethnographic fieldwork commonly practiced by anthropologists and sociologists (see, for example, DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002; Emerson et al., 1995; Lofland et al., 2006), novice researchers might consider how their use of ethnographic interviews aligns with or challenges the ethnographic traditions that have been developed in the fields of cultural anthropology and qualitative sociology.

Data generated from ethnographic interviews may be analyzed in a number of ways, including ethnographic analytic methods such as domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis (Spradley, 1979, 1980), grounded theory

²I have included only one example of each of the five kinds of description questions here. Spradley provides many sub-categories for each of these that are worth reviewing by those seeking to do ethnography.

methods (Glaser and Strauss), or a more open process described by Harry Wolcott as 'transforming qualitative data' (1994). Given the emphasis on culture and symbolic meaning, many studies also make use of symbolic interactionist theory as an interpretive lens (for a review of symbolic interactionist studies that have used a variety of interview methods including structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews as well as focus groups, see Herman-Kinney and Verschaeve, 2003).

Researchers using ethnographic interviews frequently become participants in the settings that they are studying. For example, Mitch Duneier's (2000) study of street vendors in Greenwich Village in New York City combined participation observation and ethnographic interviews. His questions developed from what he observed and experienced during his fieldwork, and were frequently undertaken during the course of everyday business; for example, one chapter deals with the reasons why some street vendors chose to sleep on the sidewalk.

Feminist Interviewing

Feminist interviewing as a specific label developed in the 1970s and 1980s when feminist researchers began to use open-ended, intensive, and unstructured interviews as an alternative to the social scientific standardized survey (see DeVault and Gross, 2007 for examples). Ann Oakley's (1981) influential article 'Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms' was one of a number of critiques arguing that research methodologies and the tools of social scientific inquiry alienated and objectified women, and contributed to the development of knowledge that reinforced patriarchy (see also Finch, 1984). In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist researchers were promoting the development of a sociology for women, and feminist standpoint theory emerged (Harding, 2007; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1987). For some feminist researchers, this has meant exclusive use of qualitative research methods, such as ethnography and unstructured interviews, while others have argued that this has ultimately hindered feminist causes (see, for example, Oakley, 1998, 2000). In her much-cited 1981 article, Oakley provided specific recommendations for how feminist interviewing might be undertaken, including establishment of intimacy and openness through self-disclosure on the part of the researcher, and a willingness to engage in continuing relationships with research participants beyond the conclusion of the study. Much attention has been paid to this kind of advice by feminist researchers conducting qualitative interviews.

In the writing of the 1980s and early 1990s, open-ended interviews were thought to provide a context that promoted an egalitarian relationship among women researchers and women participants with the aim of producing knowledge about previously unknown and unstudied facets of women's lives. Instead of asymmetrical relationships in which the researcher reserved the right of topic selection, and posed the kinds of questions of relevance to researchers, feminists argued for a qualitative or feminist interview that promoted equitable relationships between researchers and participants, in which the conversation was guided by the interviewee, rather than interviewer. Furthermore, some argued that for some topics, only women interviewers could interview women (Reinharz, 1992: 23–6; although see Harding, 1987).

In recent decades, feminist qualitative researchers have embraced the use of semi-structured interviews, as well as unstructured, in-depth, and open-ended interviews (Reinharz, 1992), life history interviews (see, for example, Behar, 1993), and focus groups (Wilkinson, 1999), and many prefer to use the label 'feminist interviews' to describe their methods. Interview research framed as feminist has made frequent use of open-ended questions, and multiple, rather than one-off interviews.

Readers may be asking the question: Given that feminist interviewers use semi-structured and unstructured interviews, what distinguishes the feminist interview from other kinds of qualitative interviews? As in every other area of scholarly research, there is considerable debate about this question (see, for example, DeVault and Gross, 2007; Harding, 1987). A number of issues have been highlighted with respect to what feminist interviews involve (Reinharz, 1992; Reinharz and Chase, 2002). Feminist interviewers:

- Maintain that ethical issues are heightened in doing social science research.
- Argue that participants should be believed (Reinharz, 1992: 27–30).
- Work to ensure that they are trusted by research participants (Reinharz, 1992: 29–30).

Others have argued that these are problematic positions, and that the shared category of woman does not necessarily mean that researchers can generate meaningful data from women who ascribe importance to other category positions (for example, race, class, status, or sexual orientation among others), or that interactions in interview contexts will always go smoothly (see, for example, Best, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 1999; Kezar, 2003; Naples, 1996; Riessman, 1987; Tang, 2002). Sandra Harding (2007) has also outlined a number of 'futile strategies' used by feminist researchers that she argues do not serve the purposes of feminist work well. These include use of 'empathy, careful listening, or "going native,"' in an attempt to erase the power differentials inherent in the researcher-researched relationship (Harding, 2007: 53); use of confessional subjectivity statements to locate the position of the researcher in relation to the topic and research participants; and finally, attempts to omit 'theoretical or conceptual input into the research process itself' by simply recording women's voices (2007: 54). Although these strategies relate to research more generally, they may be noted frequently in feminist interview research. Harding's critiques, therefore, are useful to consider for researchers taking a feminist approach to interview research. Yet, the critiques of feminist practice outlined above provide productive avenues for development of feminist methods.

For example, Marjorie DeVault (1990) has argued that in order to engage in respectful and ethical ways with others in feminist research, there are a number of concrete strategies that researchers might follow. DeVault's recommendations for engaging in feminist interview research focus on language-use, both within the interview setting, and beyond, as the researcher represents others in research reports. These include:

- Using the terms and categories used by women in their daily lives, rather than the research 'topics established by the discipline' (DeVault, 1990: 101). Here, researchers work to 'interview in ways that allow the exploration of incompletely articulated aspects of women's experiences' (DeVault, 1990: 100).

- Listening carefully to how women construct their accounts in order to examine 'not-quite-articulated experience' (DeVault, 1990: 103). This involves researchers in noticing 'ambiguity and problems of expression' within the interview interaction, and then drawing on their experience within the research context to fill in 'what has been incompletely said' (DeVault, 1990: 104).
- Considering carefully how women's speech is represented in order to portray participants respectfully (DeVault, 1990: 109).
- Representing research in a way that can be understood by new audiences to feminist work. DeVault asserts that '[p]art of the task of feminist writing, then, should be to instruct a newly forming audience about how to read and hear our words' (1990: 112).

Harding's (2007: 54) advice to feminist researchers to guard against the colonizing effects of social science research at each stage of the research process through the use of feminist standpoint theory is useful in thinking about how feminist researchers can use interviews in ways that align with feminist assumptions. The four stages reviewed by Harding are the selection of the research problem and design of the study; the conduct of the research; interpretation and representation of findings; and dissemination of the research. The strategies outlined by DeVault show possible ways that researchers can address the issues that Harding outlines within the research process.

In summary, unlike phenomenological and ethnographic interviews, feminist interviews do not identify with particular ways of asking questions, or structuring interviews, although oral history, life history, and semi- and unstructured interviews have been frequently used. The distinguishing feature of feminist interviews is that they are used for the purpose of doing feminist work, and contributing to the advancement of women's causes in a patriarchal, capitalist society. Rather than re-produce the exploitive relationships of traditional forms of social scientific research, feminists aim to work with participants in respectful and ethical ways that allow women's voices to be heard.

Ongoing scholarship in this area shows that the self-reflexive critique with which feminist work has long been identified has produced insightful findings about how interview interaction is accomplished, and how we might use interviews for feminist purposes (see, for example, DeVault and Gross, 2007; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007; Moss, 2007). Above all, in writing on feminist interviewing, we see a focus on particular kinds of relationships that researchers strive to develop with interviewees – those that are ethical, non-exploitive, sincere, and genuinely interested in free and open dialogue with women participants.

Oral History Interviewing

Oral history involves the collection of oral narratives from ordinary people in order to chronicle peoples' lives and past events. There has been a proliferation of terms often used synonymously: life story, biography, personal narrative, and memoir (Yow, 2005: 3–4). Whereas the audio- and video-recordings of qualitative research interviews are frequently erased (this is frequently required by Institutional Review

Boards in the US), in oral history, interviews are often transcribed in addition to being indexed and deposited in archival collections in libraries and museums for public access (see Ritchie [2003] for further information on archiving oral history interviews). With the proliferation of information in the digital age, oral history work is frequently accomplished by members of community groups with the purpose of recording local history (see, for example, one archive at <http://www.centerforthequilt.org/qsos/qsos.html> in which members of quilting guilds are encouraged to collect oral histories of local quilt makers).

One historian, William Moss, argues for the need for using other forms of evidence in conjunction with oral histories in order to construct 'good history' (1977/1996: 113). What Moss is referring to here is the need for verification of the information provided by interviewees in oral history in order to construct realist accounts. This is accomplished through checking and comparing information from interviews with other kinds of historical evidence, including *transaction records* such as laws, contracts, deeds, wills, treaties, diplomas, certificates, licenses, patents, proclamations, orders, instructions, advertisements, and so forth (1977/1996: 109); *contemporary descriptions*, including audio and video recordings of events, still photographs, or running descriptions (e.g. from broadcasts) (1977/1996: 109); *recollections* in the form of diaries, stories told by grandparents to children, information gained from eyewitnesses by investigators, and information from other oral history narrators (1977/1996: 110–11); *reflections* in which narrators simultaneously recollect events and actions from the past, and make these relevant to the present; and *accounts* by historians, journalists, writers of government reports, and others that have involved careful and critical examination and comparison of records (1977/1996: 113).

Two common features appear in the literature on oral history, these are that oral history narratives and personal commentaries form collective memories that contribute to documentation of 'public history' (Ritchie, 2003), and that these are recorded and made available for posterity. While historians such as Moss argue that an integral feature of doing oral history interviews is to verify the information provided by interviewees, others disagree. Dunaway, for example, stresses the interdisciplinary nature of oral history, and comments that the fourth generation of oral historians draws on post-modern and critical theories, and makes use of modern technologies (1996: 7).

Shifts in theoretical perspectives used by historians has meant a move from 'presenting facts as received wisdom to presenting theoretical analyses as specific to a given time and place and society' (Dunaway, 1996: 9). Thus, not all researchers using oral history interviewing aim to construct realist accounts. For example, feminist researcher Delores Delgado Bernal (1998) used oral history interviews to generate stories and memories of women's experiences of the East Los Angeles Blowouts which occurred in 1968 when thousands of students walked out of schools to protest inferior educational opportunities. Delgado Bernal states that 'I was used to my grandmothers' storytelling in which absolute "Truth" was less important to me than hearing and recording their life experiences' (1998: 571). Here, Delgado Bernal's espoused theory as a Chicana feminist informs her use of oral history interviews, rather than using various forms of interview and documentary data as a means to construct an accurate and truthful historical account of what may have actually happened.

Life History Interviewing

Although oral history and life history interviews are similar in some respects, they are not necessarily the same. While life history interviews may contribute to the production of oral history, life history interviews are used in many disciplines other than history, and for purposes other than contributing to oral history. Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles define life history inquiry broadly, commenting that this kind of research aims to understand the:

human condition by coming to know and understand the experiences of other humans. It is about understanding a situation, profession, condition, or institution through coming to know how individuals walk, talk, live, and work within a particular context. (2001: 11)

The 'life narrative or life story' is a 'written or oral account of a life or segment of a life as told by an individual' (Cole and Knowles, 2001: 18). Donald Ritchie defines a life history interview as one in which interviewees 'relate their entire life, from childhood to the present' (2003: 40). Robert Miller (2000: 19) teases out some of the transitions in terminology that have transpired in the later decades of the 20th century. He comments that *life story* originally referred to 'the account given by an individual about his or her life' (2000: 19). When validated by external sources, the story was called a *life history*. With the influence of narrative work, Miller argues that 'life history' is now used to refer to 'a series of substantive events arranged in chronological order. Confirmation or validation by external sources is no longer a necessary requirement for a life history' (2000: 19).

Life history research typically involves small numbers of participants over a lengthy period of time. Oral history, in contrast, may not necessarily be restricted to small numbers of participants, particularly when the purpose is to archive recollections of specific events, periods of time, or groups of people. For example, in the US, the Federal Writers' Project undertook oral history interviews across 17 states during the 1930s with 2000 former slaves about their experiences of slavery (Waters, 2000).

Given that biographical research is often conducted with older people, interviewers are likely to schedule multiple meetings to allow participants time to reflect, and recount their stories, and interviews are likely to take many hours to complete. Similarly to oral history research, multiple forms of data are used – including interviews, field notes of observations, and documents and artifacts (Cole and Knowles, 2001: 13), although the focus of the use of other data may not be on verification of evidence as described by oral historians. Cole and Knowles comment that:

These data are then thematically interpreted and considered in relation to relevant discipline-based theories and represented in the form of detailed and rich life history accounts. These accounts represent both the researcher's interpretation of the research participants' lives, and the researcher's theorizing about those lives in relation to broader contextual situations and issues. (2001: 13)

Using Miller's typology of approaches to biographical and family history research – 'realist,' 'neo-positivist,' and 'narrative' – Cole and Knowles are situated in a 'narrative'

approach to life history, in which data are jointly constructed by interviewer and interviewee, and 'questions of fact take second place to understanding the individual's unique and changing perception' (Miller, 2000: 13). This is a decidedly different perspective on research than that taken by a realist oral historian, who seeks to construct participants' accounts based on factual empirical material, or the neo-positivist researcher seeking to test theories using factual data (Miller, 2000: 13).

Dialogic and Confrontational Interviewing

In the approaches to interviews outlined above, with the exception of oral history interviews in which the interviewer is advised to ask challenging questions of interviewees in order to pursue topics when necessary (Ritchie, 2003) and the Socratic-Hermeneutic Interview proposed by Dinkins (2005), interviewers are usually described as taking non-adversarial roles in relation to interviewees. We are familiar from watching journalists' encounters with politicians, however, with interviewers who take confrontational and combative roles. There are few descriptions available in the social science literature of research interviewers who purposefully take on an oppositional role with interviewees. Given that researchers rely on the good will of people to engage in social science research, and there are limited direct benefits of participating in inquiries, this is hardly surprising. Yet some researchers have discussed how participants resist the interviewer's role by 'fighting back' and disagreeing with assumptions embedded in interview questions. In addition, researchers have begun to think about how they might instigate dialogue, and perhaps even arguments in their conversations with research participants.

Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale have outlined a contrasting perspective to 'warm, empathic, and caring interviews,' that, they argue, 'neglect real power relations' (2005: 170). Alternatives to these kinds of interviews include the psychoanalytic interview in which the therapist intervenes on behalf of the client by actively creating conflict, the Platonic dialogue in which speakers provide 'reciprocal critique of what the other says', agonistic interviews in which the interviewer 'deliberately provokes conflicts and divergences of interests', dissensus research, which exposes the arguments of opposing sides, and advocacy research, in which representatives of different positions in a social setting (e.g. managers and workers, teachers and students) 'critically interpret the texts, and potentially, as in court, cross-examine the witnesses' (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005: 171, 172, see also Kvale, 2006). These models of interaction are very different to the kinds of research interview outlined earlier in this chapter. While some of these kinds of talk are clearly not research interviews (e.g., Platonic dialogues, or therapeutic psychoanalytic interviews), these researchers seek to purposefully introduce 'challenge' in interviewer-interviewee interaction for the purpose of social research. Below, I examine these proposals in further.

Writing from the field of psychology, and similarly to Dinkins (2005), Brinkmann (2007) has forwarded the idea of 'epistemic interviews' inspired by Socratic dialogues as an alternative to those interviews informed by a therapeutic Rogerian model. The

purpose of Socratic dialogues was to move conversationalists 'from a state of being simply *opinionated* to being capable of *questioning* and *justifying* what they believe is the case' (Brinkmann, 2007: 2, emphasis in original). Here, Brinkmann (2007: 4) has extended Holstein and Gubrium's (1995, 2004) notion of the active interview – in which interviews are viewed as interactional and interpretive – to focus on an interview practice that *develops knowledge* rather than simply *conveying experience*. An example of this kind of interviewing that is used by Brinkmann (2007: 16) is the well known study *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al., 1985), in which the researchers aimed to investigate public and private life in the US with a view to examining the 'relationship between character and society' (1985: vii). Bellah et al. argue for 'social science as public philosophy,' and state that they used an 'active, Socratic' approach to interviewing in which, while seeking not to impose their views on their participants, they 'did attempt to uncover assumptions, to make explicit what the person [they] were talking to might rather have left implicit' (1985: 304).

Another example used by Brinkmann in his argument for epistemic interviews is that of Pierre Bourdieu et al.'s (1999) *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. In one of the cases presented, Bourdieu actively interviews two young men from the north of France, openly challenging them to justify their accounts (Bourdieu et al., 1999: 64–76). Bourdieu also draws on a Socratic notion of dialogue in his discussion of interview methods, stating that it is the interviewer's responsibility to offer:

the respondent an absolutely exceptional situation for communication, freed from the usual constraints (particularly of time) that weigh on most everyday interchanges, and opening up alternatives which prompt or authorize the articulation of worries, needs or wishes discovered through this very articulation, the researcher helps create the conditions for an extraordinary discourse, which might never have been spoken, but which was already there, merely awaiting the conditions of its actualization. (Bourdieu et al., 1999: 614)

Brinkmann cautions that this kind of interviewing is neither suitable for all research purposes, nor certain kinds of interviewees. The use of epistemic interviews, then, rests on the researcher's interest in promoting interaction between interviewers and interviewees that seeks to foster public dialogue on topics of concern. In this kind of dialogue, interested citizens – including the interviewer – must be willing to justify, argue, defend, and perhaps even change, their accounts.

Similarly, Lene Tanggaard (2007a, 2007b) has outlined adversarial roles for interviewers and their participants, also building on Holstein and Gubrium's (1995) notion of the active interview. Tanggaard (2007a) uses the metaphor of 'discourses crossing swords' in a 'battlefield' to envision the 'antagonistic character of conversations and encounters' that take place in qualitative interviews. Here, rather than a site of consonance and agreement between interviewer and interviewee, interaction is analyzable as a site of dissonance in which 'discourses cross each other' (Tanggaard, 2007b: 3). Both Tanggaard (2007a, 2007b) and Brinkmann (2007) point to the possibilities of producing more objective understandings of data when the dialogues produced and interpreted show how both interviewers

and interviewees challenge one another, and interpret topics within the interview interaction itself, rather than leaving interpretation as a sole feat performed by the researcher after the interview has been completed. Here, Tanggaard and Brinkmann are using Latour's (2000) notion of 'objectivity' in which the subject of research is able to 'object' to the researcher, just as objects of study in the natural sciences object to scientists' claims by 'behaving in the most undisciplined ways, blocking the experiments, disappearing from view, dying, refusing to replicate, or exploding the laboratory to pieces' (Latour, 2000: 116).

In the examples of interview interaction given by Tanggaard (2007a, 2007b), she shows confrontational dialogue between interviewers and interviewees in which the interviewer asks leading questions, and the interviewee disagrees and disputes the researcher's interpretations. Tanggaard (2007a, 2007b) asserts that through confrontational interactions such as these, in which the interviewer and interviewee challenge each others' assumptions and inquire into one another's viewpoints, that knowledge is produced. Brinkmann (2007) cautions that ethical practice requires that participants to these kinds of interviews must know what it is that they are participating in, and argues that researchers can proceed ethically with epistemic interviews, given that they too take risks by participating fully in the dialogues.

Through the use of dialogic and confrontational interviews, these researchers are seeking to generate data in which people's reasoning practices and justifications are made explicit in the ongoing dialogue. At this point in time, there are few examples of qualitative interviewers who have discussed this kind of approach in their practice – although Dinkins' (2005) adaptation of the Socratic dialogue for use in phenomenological interviews is one resource. Key questions, among others, concerning this kind of interview relate to how researchers might use this approach in an ethical manner in which participants are fully informed, what kinds of topics are best suited to this approach, and what analytic methods best represent the talk generated.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined a number of different interview forms used by qualitative researchers. Beginning with an examination of question-answer sequences, I showed how research interviews are built on sequences of open and closed questions, usually arranged in semi-structured or unstructured ways. I then reviewed different kinds of interview formats, including the phenomenological, ethnographic, feminist, oral history and life history, and dialogic or confrontational interview. While each of these forms uses questions and answers, the research purposes differ. Phenomenological interviews are commonly used to elicit detail concerning descriptions of concrete lived experiences. Ethnographic interviews are frequently used by ethnographers studying questions to do with culture. A multitude of interview formats, including life history, semi- and unstructured, ethnographic, and phenomenological interviews have been used by feminist researchers as a way to contribute to work that benefits women. One way to think about the feminist interview is that it

is conducted in a way that is consonant with the theoretical assumptions associated with the strand of feminist theory underpinning a researcher's work. Oral history interviews have been used by historians to construct historical accounts, and contribute to public knowledge concerning events and people's lives. Life history interviews are used by researchers from a wide range of disciplines to capture the range of people's experiences in the examination of a multitude of topics. Finally, dialogical or confrontational interviews have been proposed by researchers as an alternative to 'neutral' interviews that aim to elicit descriptions of individuals' psychological and interior states. In contrast, these researchers want to investigate participants' justification and reasoning practices, show how interviewers themselves are implicated in the production of research accounts, and both instigate and examine public discourse and dialogue about research topics.

The forms of interviewing that I have discussed in this chapter might also employ stimulus texts and photographs to elicit data. That is, the researcher either brings texts or images to an interview setting, or participants generate images such as drawings, time lines, or photographs according to guidelines provided by the researcher. In both cases, the images and texts become topics of talk for the interview. These methods have been used effectively to work with children, battered women, and people with illnesses, although these methods are by no means restricted to these kinds of populations (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Frith and Harcourt, 2007; Frohmann, 2005).

In the next chapter, with my co-author, Anna Liljestrom, I discuss group interview formats, and what researchers have learned about designing and conducting interview studies with multiple participants. I specifically discuss focus groups as one particular form of group format.

Further Reading

Phenomenological Interviewing

- Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Seidman, I. (2006) *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 3rd edn. New York: Teachers College.

Ethnographic Interviewing

- De Leon, J.P. and Cohen, J.H. (2005) 'Object and walking probes in ethnographic interviewing', *Field Methods*, 17 (2): 200-4.
- Heyl, B.S. (2001) 'Ethnographic interviewing', in P. Atkinson, A. Coffey, S. Delamont, J. Lofland and L. Lofland (eds), *Handbook of ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 369-83.

Feminist Interviewing

- DeVault, M.L. and Gross, G. (2007) 'Feminist interviewing: Experience, talk, and knowledge', in S.N. Hesse-Biber (ed.), *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 143-54.

Reinharz, S. and Chase, S.E. (2002) 'Interviewing women', in J. Gubrium and J.A. Holstein (eds), *Handbook of Interviewing: Context and Method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 221–38.

Oral History and Life History

Frisch, M. (2008) 'Three dimensions and more: Oral history beyond the paradoxes of method', in S.N. Hesse-Biber and P. Leavy (eds), *Handbook of Emergent Methods*. New York & London: The Guilford Press. pp. 221–38.

Starr, L. (1977/1996) 'Oral history', in D.K. Dunaway and W.K. Baum (eds), *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Walnut Creek, London & New Delhi: Altamira Press. pp. 39–61. Reprinted from the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, 20: 440–63.

Digital Archives

University of Southern California, Shoah Foundation Institute

<http://college.usc.edu/vhi/>

This website contains videos of oral history interviews conducted with Holocaust survivors.

Numerous oral history projects are located at national archives, and audiofiles and transcriptions of interviews are accessible via the Internet, for example:

The Smithsonian Institution – <http://www.si.edu/>

The British Library – <http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/history.html>

National Library of Australia – <http://www.nla.gov.au/digicoll/audio.html>

Library and Archives Canada – <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/>

Photo Elicitation and Use of Stimulus Texts

Cappello, M. (2005) 'Photo interviews: Eliciting data through conversations with children', *Field methods*, 17 (2): 170–82.

Clark-Ibáñez, M. (2004) 'Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47 (12): 1507–27.

Crilly, N., Blackwell, A.F. and Clarkson, P.J. (2006) 'Graphic elicitation: Using research diagrams as interview stimuli', *Qualitative Research*, 6 (3), 341–66.

Frith, H. and Harcourt, D. (2007) 'Using photographs to capture women's experiences of chemotherapy: Reflecting on the method', *Qualitative Health Research*, 17 (10): 1340–50.

Frohmann, L. (2005) 'The Framing Safety project: Photographs and narratives by battered women', *Violence Against Women*, 11 (11): 1396–419.

Radley, A. and Taylor, D. (2003) 'Remembering one's stay in hospital: A study in photography, recovery and forgetting', *health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, 7 (2): 129–59.

Torronen, J. (2002) 'Semiotic theory on qualitative interviewing using stimulus texts', *Qualitative Research*, 2 (3): 343–62.

Interview Practice

Select one or more of the following types of interviews, and practice interviewing another person. Audio-record the meeting, aiming for a 45–60 minute interview.

Activity 1.1 Exploring phenomenological interviews

Arrange to interview a friend or relative about one of the topics listed.

- *The experience of transformation*
- *The experience of joy*
- *The experience of frustration*
- *The experience of learning*

You will need to check if your interviewee has had the kind of experience that you have selected before you start. If not, select another topic. One way to start the interview is to elicit a story using the following question:

Think of a time when you had a _____ experience. I would like you to tell me about that in as much detail as possible.

Possible probes that you can use to follow up on your interviewee's description are:

- *You mentioned _____ tell me more about that.*
- *You mentioned _____ what was that like for you?*
- *You mentioned that you _____ walk me through what that was like for you.*

Activity 1.2 Exploring ethnographic interviews

Consider a 'cultural' group with which you are familiar. This might be a group that you belong to or a community in which you live. Using the exemplars of 'descriptive' questions included in the section on ethnographic interviews in this chapter, formulate some questions that might be asked about group members' use of space and time, or events common to the group, as well as people, activities and objects.

Conduct a conversational ethnographic interview in which you pose questions to a member of the group in order to elicit descriptions of cultural knowledge. The ethnographic interview could entail observational activities, and demonstrations of routine activities. For example, a member of a potters' group might demonstrate how clay is routinely prepared for a project in addition to describing the process orally. A resident of a retirement home might take you on a tour of the building while describing a 'typical' daily routine.

Activity 1.3 Exploring feminist interviews

Using an unstructured format, interview a woman in order to elicit descriptions of her daily life. Consider how you might incorporate spaces for your interviewee to ask questions of you, as well as providing opportunities for her to steer the conversation towards topics of interest to her.

Activity 1.4 Exploring oral history or life history interviews

Interview a person you know in order to gain descriptions of a significant event that has taken place in the community in which you live. If possible, search for other kinds of data that might be used to complement the interviewee's narrative, including photographs, newspaper accounts, and historical records. Try to elicit data that answers questions concerning who, what, where, when, how, and possibly why. Possible topics might relate to the weather (e.g., floods, droughts or storms), or community events (e.g., workers' strikes, building projects, celebrations).

Activity 1.5 Exploring dialogic interviews

Select a topic that is currently of public interest. Make a note of the issues related to the topic that you might discuss with another person. Explain your interest in facilitating a 'dialogue' concerning this topic with a participant. In your dialogue, ask questions that call upon your participant to justify their opinions and clarify their understandings. Make sure to let your participant know that they can question you and call on you to explain your viewpoints and defend your statements.

Activity 1.6 Debriefing questions

- Which interview format felt most comfortable to you as an interviewer? Why?
- Which interview format felt most uncomfortable to you as an interviewer? Why?
- What did you notice about interviewees' responses to your questions?
- What did you notice about your responses to interviewees?
- Is there anything you would change about the way you conducted your interview? If so, what? Why?