

Sociology 108 ~ Advanced Methods: Indepth Interviewing

Fall 2013

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office hours – Mondays, 11:45-1:45

sign up on-line: <http://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/bvvzo>

Course Overview:

Scientists regularly gather data through observation: biologists look at bacteria, astronomers look at stars and paleontologists look at fossils. Sociologists also use observation, studying human behavior in society. However, unlike biologists and astronomers, sociologists can go a step further and *ask* the objects of their studies about their lived experiences, their motivations, their feelings and their aspirations for the future. This course teaches students how to engage in scientific research using question-based data.

Over the semester, you will read about indepth interviewing and learn about it by doing it: you will design, implement, analyze and write up your own indepth interview project based on at least five interviews. As you do your project, we will examine the benefits and drawback of indepth interviewing as a research methodology, and we will examine sociological research studies that use interviewing. This upper-level course targets students interested in conducting their own research, especially would-be honor students. It is also open students who might use interview techniques in future academic or professional settings.

Pre-requisites:

Successful completion of Sociology 5, or an equivalent course, with the permission of the instructor. Priority is given to sociology students planning to do independent research.

Evaluation:

Dreaming up, doing and writing up your own original research is hard work! To keep you on track, you must do a series of assignments. These will make it much easier to put the final paper together. Here is the break-down of how you will be evaluated:

10%	class attendance and seminar participation
5%	reflection memo (September 19)
5%	review of existing literature and existing questions (September 26)
5%	completion of CITI modules (October 3)
10%	draft of your own questionnaire (October 10)
5%	transcription assignment (October 31)

10%	incipient coding assignment (November 7)
5%	'research question' and 'methodology' draft slides (November 14)
10%	poster sessions (December 5)
35%	final research paper (December 16)

Seminar participation: You are expected to attend class, be familiar with the readings and contribute to class discussion. Everyone should join in, even those who are shy. The quality of your comments is more important than the quantity. You will be expected to engage your peers actively in their research and help each other by providing constructive feedback.

Assignments: Instructions for all assignments are found in text boxes the day they are due. For some assignments, I provide detailed instructions at the end of the syllabus. **Read these instructions carefully!** All assignments worth 5% will be evaluated on a simple 'check,' 'check +' or 'check -' system. Assignments worth 10% will be assigned letter grades.

Final research paper: Building on your work over the semester, you will hand in a double-spaced 10-16 page research paper that uses your interview data to answer a sociological research question. Your paper should follow the standard format of an academic article: statement of purpose, relevant literature, discussion of methodology, data analysis & discussion, and conclusion. It will also contain a "methodological appendix" where you discuss the research process. We will talk more about the paper in class.

Late policy: If you hand in an assignment one day late (on Friday), your grade drops one full letter grade or down to a check-minus. No assignments handed in after Friday will be accepted.

Ethical Considerations in Social Science Research:

All social scientists must be aware of their ethical and professional obligations. We will discuss research ethics throughout the semester. Students should become familiar with the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics (<http://www.asanet.org/ecoderev.htm>) and the rules of Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects (<http://cphs.berkeley.edu/>).

Course Materials:

Audio recorder – You will need an audio recorder to conduct interviews. This can be a digital one or an old-fashioned tape recorder. If this presents a problem, please see me in the first two weeks of class so we can make arrangements.

Readings – You must purchase the Weiss book, marked with an asterisk (*). I encourage you to buy the other books, but I will make .pdf copies of the assigned chapters available on bSpace. All other materials are also available on the class bSpace site (<https://bspace.berkeley.edu>).

REQUIRED:

*Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

RECOMMENDED:

Hochschild, Arlie. 2012 [1989]. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. Penguin.

Munson, Ziad. 2009. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, Sandra Susan. 2007. *Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Class Schedule:

August 29

Week 1 – Introduction

No required readings – start on the readings for the next two weeks now!

September 5

Week 2 – How do we use indepth interview data?

Munson, Ziad. 2009. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-95).

Hochschild, Arlie. 2012 [1989]. *The Second Shift: Working Families and the Revolution at Home*. Penguin. Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

For each reading, (1) identify the author's key research question(s); (2) how s/he characterizes the existing empirical research (that is, what data exist and what are the problems with these data?); (3) how s/he justifies the use of indepth interviews (explicitly or implicitly); and (4) identify how indepth interview data are used by the author to develop his/her argument. Be prepared to discuss your analysis in class.

September 12

Week 3 – How do we use indepth interview data? (Part II)

Smith, Sandra Susan. 2007. *Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism Among the Black Poor*. NY: Russell Sage Foundation Press. Chapter 1 and 3.

Bloemraad, Irene. (Forthcoming 2014). "Ascriptive" Citizenship and Being American: Race, Birthplace and Immigrants' Membership in the United States. In *The Nation and Its Peoples: Citizens, Denizens, Migrants*, edited by John Park and Shannon Gleeson. Routledge.

For each reading, (1) identify the author's key research question(s); (2) how s/he characterizes the existing empirical research (that is, what data exist and what are the problems with these data?); (3) how s/he justifies the use of indepth interviews (explicitly or implicitly); and (4) how indepth interview data are used by the author to develop his/her argument. Be prepared to discuss your analysis in class.

September 19

Week 4 - How do we develop questions? Questionnaires and research design

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 1.

Rubin, Herbert J. and Irene S. Rubin. 2012. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 3rd edition. Sage. Chapter 9-10 (pp. 131-169).

Smith, Sandra Susan. 2007. *Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Appendices B and C.

Reflection memo on indepth interview material as scientific data (max. 3 pages): Write a synthesis of the readings from Weeks 2 and 3 that discusses how scholars use indepth interview material. What sorts of similarities and differences do you see? Concentrate on analytical strategies and the purpose of the interview material. Organize your synthesis around 2-4 key points of similarity and difference.

September 26

Week 5 – Who do we interview? Sampling considerations

Robert S. Weiss. 1995. *Learning from Strangers*. Free Press. Chapter 2: "Respondents: Choosing Them and Recruiting Them."

Munson, Ziad. 2009. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Works*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Appendix: Study Methodology.

Smith, Sandra Susan. 2007. *Lone Pursuit: Distrust and Defensive Individualism among the Black Poor*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Appendix A.

Questionnaire assignment – review of existing literature (max. 3 pages): Find at least three books and/or articles on the topic about which you will write your final paper. At least one must use survey interviewing and one must use indepth interviewing. Provide the full bibliographic reference and a short abstract of each. Make sure your

abstract specifies how interview data is used in the research project. (You can modify the existing abstract but do **not** just copy and paste it.) On a separate page, list actual interview questions that these researchers used and which you might want to ask or which you might modify for your project. The questions can be in a list or bullet points.

October 3

Week 6 – How do we protect those we interview? Ethical imperatives

Yanow, Dvora & Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. 2008. "Reforming Institutional Review Board Policy: Issues in Implementation and Field Research." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41: 483-494.

Katherine S. Newman. 2002. "Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31(2): 123-130.

CITI Training: By this week, you must have completed the first two modules of Berkeley's training in research ethics and best practices. (See the end of the syllabus for more instructions.) Hand in a print-out of the screen showing you have completed this.

October 10

Week 7 – How do we conduct a productive interview? Doing the Interview

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Read pp. 51-59 of Chapter 3, all Chapter 4.

Hermanowicz, Joseph C. 2002. "The Great Interview: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed." *Qualitative Sociology* 25 (4): 479-499.

Questionnaire assignment – developing your own questionnaire: Hand in a draft of the interview questionnaire that you plan to use to collect data for your seminar paper. See the detailed instructions at the end of the syllabus.

October 17

Week 8 – Interviewing dilemmas and challenges

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 5.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. 1987. "When Gender is Not Enough: Women Interviewing Women." *Gender and Society* 1(2): 172-207

Khan, Shamus, and Colin Jerolmack. 2013. "Saying Meritocracy and Doing Privilege." *The Sociological Quarterly* 54(1): 9-19.

For each reading, identify what problem(s) the author highlights and the nature of the problem(s). Which problems relate to interviewing techniques and logistics? What can we do to ameliorate such problems? Which problems relate to the very nature and value of interview

data? How do you think researchers – including yourself – should respond to critiques of the value and nature of interview data?

October 24

Week 9 – Transcriptions and understanding interviews

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

Katherine Borland. 1991. “That’s Not What I Said”: Interpretative Conflict in Oral Narrative Research,” *In Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, pp. 11-25. New York: Routledge.

Consider the problems and issues we discussed in Week 8. How do this week’s authors suggest we address such problems? Do you agree with their proposed solutions?

Interviewing: You have nothing to hand in, but you should have completed one full interview by now. Start transcribing the interview. See the detailed instructions at the end of the syllabus.

October 31

Week 10 – Analyzing interviews

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 6.

Transcription assignment: Bring to class a hardcopy of a complete transcription of one interview. We will discuss these in class, and you will hand in the transcript.

November 7

Week 11 – More on analyzing data

Recommended but not required:

Lofland, John, et al. 2006. *Analyzing Social Settings*, 4th edition. pp. 200-219. (“Strategy Three: Coding,” “Strategy Four: Memoing,” “Strategy Five: Diagramming,” and “Strategy Six: Thinking Flexibly.”)

Incipient Coding Assignment: You will hand in a 2-4 page memo identifying two or three concepts, processes or other theoretically interesting ideas emerging from your research. For each idea, you will include a few interview quotes as the data source for your ideas. See the detailed instructions at the end of the syllabus. We will discuss the coding assignments in class, and you will hand in the assignment at the end of class.

November 14

Week 12 – Writing up and presenting your results

Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press. Chapter 7.

“Research Question” and “Methodology” slides: For class, bring in a hardcopy print-out of the first two slides for your poster session [Week 15]: (1) research question & its place in the existing literature; and (2) methods [sampling, recruitment, ethics, etc.]. You may also bring a longer written version, based on these two slides, which are early drafts of sections for your final research paper. We will discuss the slides in class.

November 21

Week 13 – no class – complete your final interviews, if you haven’t already!

November 28 – no class

Week 14 - Happy Thanksgiving!

December 5

Week 15 – poster sessions – sharing early results

“Early results” poster session: You will share short (3-5 minutes) ‘early results’ presentations. You should have 5 slides: (1) research question & its place in the existing literature; (2) methods [sampling, recruitment, ethics, etc.] (3-5) select data from interviews and analysis. These slides are setting up the major ideas for your final paper.

****FINAL PAPER – Due Monday, December 16, by noon in 410 Barrows Hall.****

Instructions for CITI Training Assignment:

- Go to <https://www.citiprogram.org/>
- Click “register” under “Create an account”
- Set up a username and password
- Make sure you select “University of California, Berkeley” as your institution
- For courses, select “Social and Behavioral Research” (Group 2)
- Ignore the part about working with animals
- Under the section “Responsible Conduct of Research,” check the last box, “Not now”.

Once you’ve set up your account, you will find 18 modules for the “Basic Course” for Social and Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel. For Soc 108, you must do the following:

- Agree to the conditions of taking the CITI training (in the top box, under “You have unfinished modules remaining”).
- “Introduction” – read through the Belmont Report – skim the first part, and read Part B and C attentively.
- “Students in Research” – read carefully through this module and take the quiz at the end. If you don’t earn 8/10 points or higher the first time, review your mistakes and take the exam again. Pay particular attention to the following:
 - Assessing risk
 - Informed consent
 - Privacy and confidentiality
 - Vulnerable populations
- Once you’ve finished these first two modules, print out a copy of the web page (black and white is fine), showing your name on top, ‘date completed’ for the first two modules, and your quiz score for “Students in Research.” Hand this in.

This training will likely take you one to two hours to do carefully.

NOTE: UC-Berkeley’s Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects requires that graduate students who do research with human subjects complete the entire CITI course when they apply for IRB approval for their research. Undergraduates doing human subjects research as part of a class are not required to do the entire training. This exemption can also include honors thesis classes, but might not extend to special undergraduate research programs (such as McNair, Haas, George Miller, etc.). Berkeley’s rules are changing, so if you will use your interview data for an independent research project, check with your program or department. If you plan to publish your research (including in an undergraduate journal) or hope to use it later for an MA, your project should go through CPHS review and you will be required to do the entire CITI module, which might take 6-10 hours. Once you have a CITI profile, this is saved and you can go back at a later date and complete the other modules.

Draft Interview Questionnaire Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to write a solid first draft of an interview guide that you will use for your in-depth interviews. Your interview will be semi-structured: guided by a questionnaire, but carried out like a conversation through “prompting”. I will offer feedback for improving this guide before you do your first interview.

For this assignment:

1. Specify a **targeted** research question you want to answer. You need to identify a research question to structure your interview questionnaire, to direct your recruitment of respondents, and to keep you on-track during the interview. Consider a study you like (or dislike!) and think of an extension. Consider what sort of people you might interview and what type of life experiences or world-views you want to investigate.
2. Identify a few broad topic areas that will help you answer your research question. Within each topic area, draft a series of questions you plan to ask your respondent. (*Review class readings and resources on creating a strong interview guide.*)
3. Consult other studies on your topic and try out some of these questions to see if they work; brainstorm other ways to get at the data you need. Refine your interview guide.
4. Write up your interview questionnaire in the form you would use it during your research. Include probes that you might ask during the interview.

Hand-in the following:

- A **one-page cover sheet** with your name, your targeted research question, and 1-2 single-spaced paragraphs explaining why the interview questions you plan to ask will help you answer your research question. Convince me that your interview questions will elicit data useful in answering your research question.
- Your **draft interview guide**, as you plan to use it for your first interview. Include probes and your informed consent statement.

Interview Transcript Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to provide a chance to see how the interview guide works and how you are doing with in-depth interviewing. The transcription will also allow you to consider modifying your interview schedule somewhat for future interviews.

Once accepted, you will use your questionnaire to interview people for your final seminar paper. Request permission to tape the interviews, explaining that the interview is confidential. Ensure that you meet the standards of human subject protection. At a minimum, this requires informed consent and protection from harm.

For this assignment, you will take one interview (ideally, an early one), which should last for 30-90 minutes. Fully transcribe the *entire* interview.

WARNING: It usually takes three to five hours to transcribe one hour of audio.

Hand-in the following:

- **Short summary:** At the top of the first page write a short summary of the interview – whether it went well, where it took place, whether the respondent was nervous, and additional information relevant to understanding the transcript (e.g. had to turn off the recording at some places; there was an interruption in the middle of the interview, etc.).
- **Write up the interview:** Include everything that is said. This means writing up partial sentences, small digressions, grammatical mistakes, etc. Also include non-verbal things (e.g. respondent pounds the table or shrugs his shoulder). Single space the dialogue of one speaker and separate speakers' words with a single space. Use "I" to designate the "interviewer" followed by a colon and several spaces or a tab. Use the letter "R" followed by a colon to designate what the "respondent" said. [Also consult class readings on writing up a complete transcript, as well as the resources on bSpace.]

Incipient Coding Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to get you thinking about arguments for your final seminar paper. It will also start a dialogue between your interview data and theoretical abstractions, such as concepts, processes, mechanisms and other ideas that you generalize from the data.

Researchers use diverse techniques to code and analyze interviews. Consult the readings, and consider these two strategies as you do this assignment.

➤ **MORE DEDUCTIVE - from concepts/ theory to data**

- 1) On the top of a blank page (hardcopy or electronic), summarize in your own words a key concept, idea, process or theory from the academic literature that applies to your interviews (or, which seem contradicted by your interviews). Include references to the specific pages from which you are drawing your summary/ ideas.
- 2) Go through your interviews for examples that speak to the idea. It can be a story someone told, the way they speak, a discussion of emotions, etc. Copy and paste the quotations or paraphrase the stories into your concept document (step 1). Or, highlight passages on the full transcripts in a specific color (e.g. yellow for one concept, green for another).
- 3) Look over your theoretical concept/ idea(s) and the interview quotes. Under the quotes, write notes to yourself *interpreting* the interview material. Why do you think the quotation or story is relevant to the academic idea? Does the quotation lend support to the academic idea or undermine it? Does it change the way we need to use the concept? Does it suggest a new mechanism for a model or theory?

➤ **MORE INDUCTIVE - from data to concepts/ theory - coding can go in the opposite direction**

- 1) Read through your transcript and interview notes. What themes or ideas seem to come out of the interview? Cut & paste or highlight quotations that seem to speak to a more generalizable idea.
- 2) Consider the quotations and stories, then think about relevant academic readings. How do these quotes fit with or challenge what other people find or argue in the literature? Identify relevant readings, and do step (1) in the prior section.
- 3) Integrate the interview data and existing scholarship. Write notes to yourself about the relationship between data and theories/ concepts as outlined in step (3) above.

Hand-in the following:

- A 2-4 page memo divided into two or three sections. In each section, identify a concept, process or other theoretically interesting idea emerging from your research. Include references as needed. Discuss the idea in a paragraph, and then for each idea, include a few interview quotes as illustrative data source. After the quotes, explain why you think these particular parts of the interview are relevant to the concept or the theory that you laid out in the first paragraph.