Person-Centered Interviewing and Observation

Interviewing techniques are important in all areas of sociocultural anthropology but especially so in psychocultural anthropology, where the relationship between the individual and his or her social and cultural context is of primary interest. This course will focus on the use of minimally structured, open-ended, nondirective interview techniques in the development of field data. We will examine the contributions of this methodological approach to the development of both theory and ethnography in anthropology and the social sciences.

Participants are required to conduct an extended series of in-depth, tape-recorded interviews with a single "respondent." These tapes will then become the focus of seminar discussion and critique. The overall objective is to improve one's interviewing and listening skills by practicing, and then analyzing, the interview process.

Most of the required reading in this course will come in the first two or three weeks, while participants are finding interview respondents. We will discuss the ethics of anthropological field research and how one goes about obtaining "informed" consent. We will discuss also the history and development of person-centered ethnography as a research tool, and why such an approach is important in the development of sociocultural theory.

Once respondents are found and engaged, we shift our attention to the specifics of how one goes about developing an interview process. We discuss techniques for opening, maintaining, and ending the interview process, we examine how the dynamics of the interview process develop over time and with rapport, and we discuss how the emotional reactions of the interviewer and the respondent may both facilitate and impede the interview process. We do all this by examining, analyzing, and critiquing participants' tape-recorded interviews.

Course Requirements: active participation in seminar discussions and one paper (approximately 20-30 pages in length) that analyzes your interview process, summarizes its emerging psychocultural themes, and discusses the relevance or lack of relevance of this methodology for your own research interests or subfield.
Schedule of Topics and Activities

Week 1:  Introduction, Ethics, Informed Consent; find respondent

Week 2:  How to do person-centered interviewing and observation; the intersubjective nature of the interview process; find respondent

   Levy & Hollan, Person-Centered Interviewing and Observation in Anthropology
   Hollan & Wellenkamp, Appendix (from Contentment and Suffering)
   Obeyesekere, Strategies for Fieldwork in Psychocultural Interviews (in Medusa's Hair)
   Devereux, Selected Chpts from From Anxiety to Method
   Crapanzano, The Life History in Anthropological Field Work; preface and introduction to Tuhami
   Eagle, A Critical Evaluation of Current Conceptions of Transference and Countertransference

Week 3:  Grounded Theory

   Sapir, Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry
   Hollan, Developments in Person-Centered Ethnography
   Hollan & Wellenkamp, Methodological Developments in Psychocultural Anthropology
   (introduction to Contentment and Suffering)
   Glaser and Strauss, The Discovery of Grounded Theory and Generating Theory (Chpts 1 and 2 in The Discovery of Grounded Theory)

Week 4:  Culture, Mind, and Behavior; life experience as context; discussion of initial contact

   Kleinman & Kleinman, Suffering and Its Professional Transformation: Toward an Ethnography of Interpersonal Experience
   Wikan, Interpreting Everyday Practice (Chpt 2 in Managing Turbulent Hearts)
   Shore, Rethinking Culture as Models (Chpt 2 in Culture in Mind)
   Strauss & Quinn, Introduction and Anthropological Resistance (Chpts 1 and 2 in A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning)
   Hollan, Constructivist Models of Mind, Contemporary Psychoanalysis, and the Development of Culture Theory.

Copies of articles are available at Westwood Copies, 1001 Gayley, in Westwood Village. Phone: 208-3233

Weeks 5-9:  Analysis of interview recordings

   In the first of these weeks, we focus on issues of methods and techniques: how to get the interview process going and how to sustain it; what kinds of questions to ask, and how and when to ask them.
After participants have mastered some of these basic techniques, we turn our attention to issues of analysis: what kind of data have we produced, and how do we make sense of it?

Week 10: How to conclude the interview process; discussion and analysis of the course; paper presentations

We conclude by discussing how to end the interview process humanely and ethically, and by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the course. Finally, participants will present brief outlines or summaries of the papers they will be writing.

Papers due: June 13
Readings for

Anthro 239P: Person-Centered Interviewing and Observation

1. Materials related to Ethics and Informed Consent

2. Levy, Robert I. and Douglas Hollan
   Handbook of Research Methods in Anthropology. H. Russell Bernard, ed. Walnut Creek,
   CA: Altamira Press.

3. Hollan, Douglas W. and Jane C. Wellenkamp

4. Obeyesekere, Gananath
   Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

5. Devereux, George
   1967. Chpts 5 (Pp 41-46), 7 (Pp 83-96), 11 (Pp 129-132), and 17 (Pp 197-216) in From

6. Crapanzano, Vincent
   1977. The Life History in Anthropological Field Work. Anthropology and Humanism
   Quarterly 2:3-7.

7. Crapanzano, Vincent
   Press.

8. Eagle, Morris N.

9. Sapir, Edward
   1958 [1932] Cultural Anthropology and Psychiatry. Pp 509-521 In Selected Writings of

10. Hollan, Douglas

11. Hollan, Douglas W. and Jane C. Wellenkamp
    1994 Methodological Developments in Psychocultural Anthropology. Pp 3-10 in
12. Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss  

13. Kleinman, Arthur and Joan Kleinman  

14. Wikan, Unni  

15. Shore, Bradd  

16. Strauss, Claudia and Naomi Quinn  

17. Hollan, Douglas  