ASSIGNMENT #5: EDUCATOR/ADMINISTRATOR/ARTS OR DESIGN PROFESSIONAL INTERVIEW

The goal of the professional interview is to learn more about your own art/design/educator interests and goals through examining goals and practices of professionals in your field. After developing a resume or academic cv, an artist/designer/educator statement, one can move toward opportunities for your future. Research and select a person of interest in a foundation, residency program, non-profit or institution that connects to your goals. Consider the results of the SWOT and PEST analyses and individuate this research through a careful in person or online interview. By doing a reflective interview, one may learn effective methods and models of practice, a trajectory example of an individual artist, designer or educator in combining practice and teaching, or just a general inspirational story of balance and creativity based in arts and design fields. You may select a person you have known from undergraduate, summer or graduate or work experiences or a person or agency that you want to know more about. Research online profiles and the attached guidelines for this assignment and plan an effective interview strategy. Then introduce yourself to the person you want to interview, setting up the context of the interview within Arts in Context seminar. Share preliminary questions you want to broach and then prepare for an online or in person interview. It may take several back and form questions and responses or up to an hour in person interview.

Goals:

- To familiarize oneself in new venues that may become sites for future internships, jobs, or continuing education.
- To understand the range of types and locations of positions within specific institutions.
- To learn and transpose effective elements within non-profits to your own learning and professional goals.
- To discover pathways and transitions in art and design from successful professionals.
- To create a profile of a relevant educator, designer, administrator, entrepreneur or artist today.

Learning Outcomes:

- An in-the-round view of a professional practitioner. 25%
- Establishment of a relationship in the sphere of your goals. 25%
- Preparation for meaningful and unbiased interview techniques. 25%
- A 3-to-5-page summary of the interview that may contain a short bio, images of work or excerpts from writings, or examples of student outcomes of that faculty. 25%

Assessment:

<u>Basic Competency</u>

- Minimal preparation and rote and predictable questions. No real connection to one's own questions or research.
- 2-4 pages without revisions or insights. Seems to exist separate from one's own interests.
- A cursory summative reflection is done. Minimal sense of engagement in the project.

Advanced Competency

- A proactive interest is displayed in the written assignment and summary presented.
- The interview has a form and structure, transitions to different topics, and includes a reflective summary.
- It may be divided into special content areas, there may be questions that the interview sparked as an ending reflection, or images supporting the interview add valuable information.
- A focused conversation reveals ready to apply abilities and ideas for the graduate's future endeavors.

Resources:

- View sample interviews at: https://wordpress.com/page/collegiateteachinginartanddesign.com/1515
- Read Professional Interview Guide for Qualitative Questions and Unbiased Questions attached.
- Please share any discipline-specific teaching and learning blogs that your interview may expose. An example is: https://www.photopedagogy.com/teaching-photography--teaching-photography.html

Read:

1. OWL Purdue University
   https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/conducting_research/conducting_primary_research/interview_and_survey_question s.html

When creating questions, you want to avoid:

Biased questions: Biased questions are questions that encourage your participants to respond to the question in a certain way. They may contain biased terminology or are worded in a biased way.

> **Biased question:** Don't you agree that campus parking is a problem?
> **Revised question:** Is parking on campus a problem?

Questions that assume what they ask: These questions are a type of biased question and lead your participants to agree or respond in a certain way.

> **Biased question:** There are many people who believe that campus parking is a problem. Are you one of them?
> **Revised question:** Do you agree or disagree that campus parking is a problem?

Double-barreled questions: A double-barreled question is a one that has more than one question embedded within it. Participants may answer one but not both or may disagree with part or all of the question.

Double-barreled question: Do you agree that campus parking is a problem, and that the administration should be working diligently on a solution?
Revised question: Is campus parking a problem? (If the participant responds yes): Should the administration be responsible for solving this problem?

Confusing or wordy questions: Make sure your questions are not confusing or wordy. Confusing questions will only lead to confused participants, which leads to unreliable answers.

Confusing questions: What do you think about parking? (This is confusing because the question isn't clear about what it is asking--parking in general? The person's ability to park the car? Parking on campus?) Do you believe that the parking situation on campus is problematic or difficult because of the lack of spaces and the walking distances or do you believe that the parking situation on campus is ok? (This question is both very wordy and leads the participant.)
Revised question: What is your opinion of the parking situation on campus?

Questions that do not relate to what you want to learn: Be sure that your questions directly relate to what it is you are studying. A good way to do this is to ask someone else to read your questions or even test your survey out on a few people and see if the responses fit what you are looking for.

Unrelated questions: Have you ever encountered problems in the parking garage on campus? Do you like or dislike the bus system?

2. "Are you really listening? Tips for conducting qualitative interviews" 25 APRIL 2017 - BY KATH MCNIFF

As a qualitative researcher, you wear many hats. For any given project, you need to:

- Read widely and have a thorough grasp on what's happening in your field
- Understand and choose between research methodologies
- Come up with a focused yet flexible research question
- Manage the paperwork involved in getting research approved
- Organize a timetable and potentially manage team members
- Design the research; including data collection, management, coding and analysis
- Recruit and manage participants

All of the above before doing a single interview.

Much of this work is procedural or administrative and tends to be a conversation between you and your computer. It requires efficiency, organization and a methodical approach. But when it comes to interviewing flesh and blood participants, you need to switch gears and focus on social skills like active listening, rapport and empathy. The transition can be a little daunting and it pays to be prepared.

These simple strategies will get you up to speed in no time:

Make a Plan. Start out by creating an interview guide. This guide spells out the questions or type of questions you want to ask. It provides a space to think carefully about your overarching research goals and the data you need to support them. It also helps you avoid "awkward, poorly timed, intrusive questions that you may fill with unexamined preconceptions". (Charmaz, 2014, Kindle Location: 2116)

The guide shouldn't stifle productive conversation, but a focused approach to questioning can pay off when it comes time to analyze the results.

Ask the right kind of questions. Not all questions are created equal. During a qualitative interview, you want to elicit detailed and thoughtful responses, so try to

- Ask open-ended questions – "What attracted you to this area?" rather than "Did the lifestyle attract you to this area?"
- Avoid leading questions – "How did you feel about the treatment?" rather than "How good was the treatment?"
- Encourage story-telling – "Tell me about that day" or "Can you describe that process?"
- Acknowledge emotion – "You seem passionate about that issue; can you tell me more?" or "That seems to upset you, can we explore it further?"
- Avoid interrogation – instead of making the participant defensive by asking "Why did you do it that way?" try "Can you take me through your decision process?"

Practice: Run a pilot interview with a friend or colleague. This can help you gauge the effect of different questioning styles. Consider recording the pilot interview to evaluate your own performance. Are you listening and responding in ways that encourage participation and elaboration? Do you interrupt too often or have any annoying verbal tics? Ask your pilot participant for honest feedback and take it on board. Also, practice active listening in your day-to-day conversations. See if you can keep your ego in check and really focus on what the other person is saying.

Use active listening techniques:

Active listening means giving the participant your full attention:

- Make eye-contact, nod, smile and lean-in attentively.
- Don't fiddle with your phone, computer or other device.
- Use occasional and well-timed verbal encouragement like 'Uh huh', 'yes' and 'I see'.
- Paraphrase your participant's words and reflect them back…"So what you're saying is…"
- Refer to something your participant said earlier – this shows you are paying attention and is a good way to seek clarification or keep the interview on track.
- Avoid interrupting or completing your participant's sentences.
- Give participants time to think and embrace the productive pause.
- Be prepared to challenge inconsistencies.
- Stay in the moment – don't spend time planning what you're going to say next.
- Assess what you're hearing to make sure there is enough detail but don't mentally criticize or judge.
- Strive for empathy – let go of preconceived ideas and try to understand your participant's unique perspective.

Remember that your job is to listen, not to educate, correct, console, advise or commiserate.

Listen between the lines

While you're engaged in active listening you also need to aim for a "deeper understanding that deconstructs and challenges the surface account." (Bazeley, 2013, p. 203)

Pay attention to body language and the words your participant is using to describe their experience.

During an interview, participants might be on their best behavior and use words like "challenging" and "fascinating" when they really mean "totally impossible" and "it makes no sense at all".

Seidman calls this the "outer voice" and you need to be on the lookout for it. (Seidman, 2013, Kindle Location: 1758)

By developing a sensitivity to the language of your participants and the effect that the interview process has on their responses, you'll know when it's appropriate to dig deeper.

Consider the setting. What do Jerry Seinfeld, James Corden and parents of surly teens have in common?

They appreciate the beauty of a car-based interview.

Subjects can feel more relaxed sitting beside you than facing you across a meeting room table. Other contexts can work too - Annabel Crabb interviews politicians in the kitchen while they cook, and Louis Theroux talks to his participants as they go about their daily lives.

While it's not always practical, you may want to consider alternative settings for your interviews. Particularly if you're working with kids or participants from cultures where continuous eye-contact may be problematic.

Respect participants

This may seem like a no-brainer, but respect can easily get lost in the excitement of data gathering. Make sure you:

- Handle issues of informed consent and tell participants how the results will be shared.
- Keep things formal until you get more familiar with a participant; ask if you can use their first name, hold the door, offer a cup of tea, don't sit until they are seated - all hallmarks of common courtesy but they go a long way to developing trust and rapport.
- Ask delicate or difficult questions by prefacing them with "May I ask you" or "Is it ok if we talk about…".
- Be conscious of and sensitive to issues of race, gender, age and power.

Keep control of the interview

Conducting a great interview is a delicate balancing act.

It requires active listening, empathy and a detective's instinct. At the same time, it demands that you keep track of time, stay focused and respond to shifts in energy.

Luckily, you're a qualitative researcher and swapping hats is what you do best!

What do you think makes a great interview? We'd love to hear your tips, ideas or experiences in the comments below. NVivo can help you organize and analyze your interview data. Download a trial to find out more.

References

Charmaz, Kathy. Constructing Grounded Theory (Introducing Qualitative Methods series) (Kindle Locations 2121-2122). SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.

Seidman, Irving. Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences, 4th Ed. Teachers College Press. Kindle Edition.

Bazeley, Patricia. Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies (p. 203). SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition.

3. https://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/files/sociology/files/interview_strategies.pdf

Strategies for Qualitative Interviews

A Few General Points

- Stop and Think: should interviews be included in your research design?
    - Are there alternative ways of answering your research question through documentary review, observation or unobtrusive measures?
    - Be clear about the possible biases and limitations of interviews.
- The point of a qualitative interview is to let the respondent tell their own story on their own terms.
- THIS IS NOT A SURVEY! The guide acts as a prompt, reminding you of necessary topics to cover, questions to ask and areas to probe. As such, it should be simple so that your primary focus can stay on the respondent. It's best to memorize your guide!
- How much time will you spend with each respondent? Adjust your guide accordingly (it may take several interviews to judge the correct length).
- Try out a new guide (or parts of it) on friends and get their feedback before using it in the field.

Should you record and transcribe interviews?

PROS:

- It helps to correct the natural limitations of our memories and of the intuitive glosses that we might place on what people say in interviews
- It allows more thorough examination of what people say
- It permits repeated examinations of the interviewees' answers
- It opens up the data to public scrutiny by other researchers, who can evaluate the analysis that is carried out by the original researchers of the data (that is, a secondary analysis)
- It therefore helps to counter accusations that an analysis might have been influenced by a researcher's values or biases
- It allows the data to be reused in other ways from those intended by the original researcher—for example, in the light of new theoretical ideas or analytic strategies.

CONS:

- It introduces a different dynamic into the social encounter of the interview and recording equipment may be off-putting for interviewees.
- Transcribing is a very time-consuming process. It also requires good equipment, usually in the form of a good-quality tape recorder and microphone but also, if possible, a transcription machine. Transcription also very quickly results in a daunting pile of paper.

A Successful Interviewer is:

1. *Knowledgeable*: is thoroughly familiar with the focus of the interview; pilot interviews of the kind used in survey interviewing can be useful here.
2. *Structuring*: gives purpose for interview; rounds it off; asks whether interviewee has questions.
3. *Clear*: asks simple, easy, short questions; no jargon.
4. *Gentle*: lets people finish; gives them time to think; tolerates pauses.
5. *Sensitive*: listens attentively to what is said and how it is said; is empathetic in dealing with the interviewee.
6. *Open*: responds to what is important to interviewee and is flexible.
7. *Steering*: knows what he/she wants to find out.
8. *Critical*: is prepared to challenge what is said, for example, dealing with inconsistencies in interviewees' replies.
9. *Remembering*: relates what is said to what has previously been said.
10. *Interpreting*: clarifies and extends meanings of interviewees' statements, but without imposing meaning on them.
11. *Balanced*: does not talk too much, which may make the interviewee passive, and does not talk too little, which may result in the interviewee feeling he or she is not talking along the right lines.
12. *Ethically sensitive*: is sensitive to the ethical dimension of interviewing, ensuring the interviewee appreciates what the research is about, its purposes, and that his or her answers will be treated confidentially.

The Interview as an Interpersonal Encounter

- The social skills of empathy, warmth, attentiveness, humor (where appropriate), and consideration are essential for good interviewing.
- Any judgmental attitudes, shock or discomfort will be immediately detected.
- Never answer a question for the respondent.
- One must be completely engaged with the respondent, while at the same time keeping track of the questions one needs to ask.
- Use every active listening technique at your disposal:
    - Repeating back
    - "Wow!
    - Tell me more about that!"
    - "That is really interesting."
- Don't be afraid of silence; you can use it to prod the respondent to reflect and amplify an answer
- Don't follow the interview guide—follow the respondent. Follow up new information that he or she brings up without losing sense of where you are in the interview.
- Try not to think about time—relax into the interview.

Guidelines for Developing Interview Questions

- Questions should be simple. Do not ask more than one question at a time.
- The best questions are those which elicit the longest answers from the respondent. Do not ask questions that can be answered with one word.
- Don't ask questions that require your respondents to do your analysis for you. This is YOUR job.
- Likewise, do not ask for hearsay or opinions on behalf of the group they are a part of "What do people around here think of x?" You rarely get anything interesting.
- Don't be afraid to ask embarrassing questions. If you don't ask, they won't tell.
- Types of questions or other interview talk:
    - *Direct questions*: 'Do you find it easy to keep smiling when serving customers?'; 'Are you happy with the way you and your husband decide how money should be spent?' Such questions are perhaps best left until towards the end of the interview, in order not to influence the direction of the interview too much.
    - *Indirect questions*: 'What do most people round here think of the ways that management treats its staff?', perhaps followed up by 'Is that the way you feel too?', in order to get at the individual's own view.
    - *Structuring questions*: 'I would now like to move on to a different topic'.
    - *Follow-up questions*: getting the interviewee to elaborate his/her answer, such as 'Could you say some more about that?'; 'What do you mean by that . . .?'
    - *Probing questions*: following up what has been said through direct questioning.
    - *Specifying questions*: 'What did you do then?'; 'How did X react to what you said?'
    - *Interpreting questions*: 'Do you mean that your leadership role has had to change from one of encouraging others to a more directive one?'; 'Is it fair to say that what you are suggesting is that you don't mind being friendly towards customers most of the time, but when they are unpleasant or demanding you find it more difficult?'

Step-By-Step Guide to Writing Interview Questions

1. Write down the larger research questions of the study. Outline the broad areas of knowledge that are relevant to answering these questions.

2. Develop questions within each of these major areas, shaping them to fit particular kinds of respondents. The goal here is to tap into **their** experiences and expertise.

3. Adjust the language of the interview according to the respondent (child, professional, etc.).

4. Take care to word questions so that respondents are motivated to answer as **completely** and **honestly** as possible.

5. Ask "how" questions rather than "why" questions to get stories of process rather than acceptable "accounts" of behavior. "How did you come to join this group . . .?"

6. Develop probes that will elicit more detailed and elaborate responses to key questions. The more detail, the better!

7. Begin the interview with a "warm-up" question—something that the respondent can answer easily and at some length (though not too long). It doesn't have to pertain directly to what you are trying to find out (although it might), but this initial rapport-building will put you more at ease with one another and thus will make the rest of the interview flow more smoothly.

8. Think about the logical flow of the interview. What topics should come first? What follows more or less "naturally"? This may take some adjustment after several interviews.

9. Difficult or potentially embarrassing questions should be asked toward the end of the interview, when rapport has been established.

10. The last question should provide some closure for the interview, and leave the respondent feeling empowered, listened to, or otherwise glad that they talked to you.