AL/HR-TR-1997-0043

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
ARMSTRONG LABORATORY

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING
INTERVIEWS

Thomas W. Watson

HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORATE
COGNITION AND PERFORMANCE DIVISION
7909 Lindbergh Drive
Brooks AFB, TX 78235-5352

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AIR FORCE MATERIEL COMMAND
ARMSTRONG LABORATORY
HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORATE
7909 Lindbergh Drive
Brooks Air Force Base, TX 78235-5352

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This report has been reviewed and is approved for publication.

THOMAS W. WATSON   R. BRUCE GOULD
Project Scientist   Technical Director

WILLIAM E. ALLEY
Chief, Cognition and Performance Division
Human Resources Directorate

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE	Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188), Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE June 1997	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Final May 1995 - May 1997

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Guidelines for Conducting Interviews	5. FUNDING NUMBERS PE - 62205F PR - 1123 TA - A7 WU - 05
6. AUTHOR(S) Thomas W. Watson	

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Armstrong Laboratory Human Resources Directorate Cognition and Performance Division 7909 Lindbergh Drive Brooks Air Force Base, Texas 78235-5352	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER AL/HR-TR-1997-0043
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

12a. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)

This report provides practical guidance for anyone, inside or outside the Air Force, interested in conducting interviews, especially for general data gathering and evaluation purposes. The report begins with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of interviews relative to survey or naturalistic observation and the skills and characteristics interviewers should possess. Then, interview ethics are discussed from free speech and privacy perspectives with emphasis upon the need for ensuring voluntary participation and maintaining confidentiality. Following this, discussion focuses on preparing for and conducting interviews. Issues such as sampling, selecting the type of interview, interview protocol development, and what to do to prepare for and conduct successful interviews are discussed. This includes practical suggestions on how to write questions, how to develop probes, and how to clarify understanding of what is being said. Finally, techniques for analyzing and reporting results are presented.

14. SUBJECT TERMS Confidentiality Free Speech Question Construction Data Analysis Interviews Voluntary Participation Interviewer Characteristics Sampling Privacy Rights Interview Protocols Surveys Ethics	15. NUMBER OF PAGES 85
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89) (EG)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239.18
Designed using Perform Pro, WHS/DIOR, Oct 94

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PREFACE

This text provides practical assistance to people in the Air Force and elsewhere who need help with interviewing. The manuscript was written in response to the many people who came to me for interviewing advice and training over the past several years. The people in the quality offices at the San Antonio Air Logistics Center (SA-ALC) and at Intelligence Command (IC), Kelly Air Force Base, were the first to come to me for assistance. Mr. James H. Smith of the SA-ALC first asked me to provide interview training to his staff.

I take a strong stand on some issues and readers may not agree with me. Also, my views do not necessarily reflect those of the Armstrong Laboratory, the Air Force or the United States Government.

I thank my colleagues in the Armstrong Laboratory's Human Resources Directorate for their valuable comments on this manuscript. Special thanks go to Dr. Walter G. Albert, Dr. R. Bruce Gould, Mr. Larry T. Looper, Col. Gary D. Zank, Dr. Patrick C. Kyllonen and Dr. M. Jacobina Skinner. Dr. Albert was especially helpful. He frequently provided many helpful comments and gave the manuscript a thorough final edit. Dr. Gould improved the manuscript by encouraging me to include content on employee selection and other forms of evaluation interviews.

Ms Virginia Moody of the Human Systems Center Quality Office also encouraged the preparation of this manuscript. She recommended that I give it a careful review, and provided several excellent suggestions.

In the ethics chapter and in a few appendices there is discussion of legal and Constitutional issues. I thank Judge Arthur J. Doran Jr. and attorney Arthur J. Doran III for reviewing the manuscript and attesting to the veracity of the legal discourse. I also thank Ms. Jane Tuck for inspiring my devotion to the Constitution and to the Bill of Rights.

I thank Ms. Sharon L. McDonald and Ms. Kathryn J. Hawk of the Human Resources Directorate who often helped me with word processing problems. Thanks also go to Ms. Elizabeth M. Knippa for reviewing an earlier draft.

Ms. Marilyn Goff, Ms. Deborah A. Hann and Ms. Laura Gomez of the Human Resources Directorate's Technical Library provided valuable assistance by ordering books through interlibrary loan and by finding obscure information.

Use of First Person Pronouns: Notice that I use "I" and "me" above. It is uncommon to write technical reports in the first person using personal pronouns. However, this report is in large part a personal expression of the author's experiences in research and consultation over several decades in which he provides personal examples. Initially "the author" was used. This term was awkward and sounded stilted. Thus, throughout the report, I now use "I" "me" or "my" to refer to myself.

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

Chapter 1

An Introduction and Discussion of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews

Introduction

Several years ago, people in the quality offices at the San Antonio Air Logistics Center and Intelligence Command at Kelly Air Force Base asked me to train their people to interview on quality progress. They wanted me to discuss interviewing for a few hours and then respond to specific questions of concern to them. Each year, as new people were tasked with interviewing, these training requests continued. To help prepare for this training, and to provide a useful handout, I wrote a brief narrative called **Notes on Interviewing**. This short document provided only limited guidance. This text was written to provide far more information useful to anyone who conducts interviews. The text is especially applicable to people conducting voluntary interviews for information gathering purposes. Some content also focuses on evaluation interviews, such as those for employment selection, promotion or training decisions. Some types of interviews are not covered in this text, for instance, law enforcement interrogations, clinical interviews, legal interviews with clients or witnesses, or interviews conducted by investigative reporters. However, professionals who conduct these other types of interviewers may find useful content here.

This text should not only be helpful to people conducting information gathering or evaluation interviews, but also to participants who are asked to provide information. It will help interviewers and interviewees tell the difference between well conducted and poorly conducted interviews. Also, I hope to heighten the sensitivity of both data gatherers and information providers to ethical issues. Interviewers will learn about their ethical responsibilities to participants. Participants will learn under what conditions they may have the right to refuse to participate if interviewers, out of ignorance or insensitivity, do not live up to these responsibilities (see Chapter 3).

Sometimes examples are provided in the text. They are placed in a simple border like this:

Examples are framed like this.

Sometimes advanced topics are discussed that might not be of interest to all readers. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing, employment selection interviewing, some sampling issues, and some analysis topics fall into this category. Such optional reading is placed in a shadowbox like this:

Optional, more advanced topics are framed like this.

Three appendices are provided. They contain information that may distract from the flow of the text and may only be of interest to some readers. Their content is as follows:

- Appendix A contains a discussion of the rights perspective which provides a foundation for the interview ethics chapter.

- Appendix B provides ethical principles that are relevant to interviews from the American Psychological Association's (APA's) Ethics Code.

- Appendix C provides a First Amendment discussion of why specific information about job-irrelevant organizational membership should be avoided.

- Appendix D provides an example of an interview protocol with instructions for administering a brief survey beforehand and "lessons learned" comments about the interview.

The text contains intentional redundancies. This is because readers are expected to enter and exit the manuscript at any point that provides content useful to them. Also, they may or may not read what is in the shadowboxes. The contents pages are quite detailed so readers can find what they want and go immediately to it. If you do not have time to read the text but are interested in a summary of recommendations, go to the Postscript immediately after Chapter 7. The Postscript also provides a good overview of the content of each chapter.

In some situations, interviews may not be the best approach to gathering information. For instance, you may need to gather data from a large number of people who are widely dispersed geographically. Alternatively, you may want data that can be analyzed easily using quantitative methods. You may also want to use multiple methods. For instance, you may want to conduct interviews as an initial step to gather information concerning the appropriate content of a survey. If you are interested in surveys, see the companion manuscript, **Guidelines for Conducting Surveys** (Watson, 1997). You may want to seek the assistance of organizations which conduct interviews or surveys. Bradburn and Sudman (1988, Chapter 4) provide an extensive list.

Do you want to take a more anthropological approach? You could place yourself more fully in a setting to get a feel for its "culture." For those interested in naturalistic observation, see Patton's (1980) Chapter 6, **Evaluation Through Observation**, or Jorgensen (1989).

The following discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of interviews should help you decide which method or methods to use.

The Advantages of Interviews

Interviews are better than surveys if you wish to tease out extremely rich information in a flexible way and in the respondent's own words. Interviewing is also a good choice if you are working with a small sample and you are content to analyze and interpret qualitative rather than quantitative data. This is especially true if you have sufficient personnel to devote to this labor intensive task, and you have the time to prepare them to become skilled interviewers. The advantages of interviews relative to surveys are discussed below.

You Usually are Face-to-Face: Relative to paper-and-pencil mail surveys or telephone interviews, person-to-person interviews have the benefit of being face-to-face. They are, therefore, more

intimate. They provide interviewers with the opportunity to establish a brief social relationship, to observe social dynamics and use them to good advantage, and to observe verbal and non-verbal cues. Interviewers can bond with those being interviewed. If interviewers are kind, sincere, and interested in what interviewees have to say, they may be liked and trusted, creating a situation where people feel free to talk, even about sensitive issues. Being face-to-face facilitates the process of getting people to open up. Being present with those who are interviewed also gives interviewers a chance to observe how interviewees interact--with interviewers, colleagues, friends, family, or strangers. Much can be learned from non-verbal cues, such as posture, facial expressions, hand gestures and level of nervousness or threat. Such input would not be available from a survey and it would be more camouflaged in a telephone interview. The face-to-face interview helps interviewers detect reactions ranging from acceptance and liking to mistrust and cynicism. Interviewers can also gain a sense of openness and honesty or defensiveness and deception. They can also sense the strength and character of participant reaction to the content of the interview--emotionally and intellectually.

If the interviewer is selecting a participant for some opportunity (selection, promotion, training, etc.), facets of personality and interpersonal or cognitive skills can be assessed in a way that would complement and enhance information obtained from a survey, a personality instrument, or an achievement test.

Interviewees are Unconstrained in How to Respond: In interviews, unlike in surveys, respondents get to answer questions in their own words. They can also define the question and shape the answer quite broadly. Answers may be more difficult to quantify, but the information obtained is richer and more complete than the knowledge derived from answers to survey items. In addition, participants can provide verbal narrative responses to interview questions more easily than if they had to write lengthy narratives on a survey comments page.

Because responding is unconstrained, interviews are sometimes similar to therapy sessions. Participants can ventilate their feelings and frustrations in a supportive, protective environment. This can help them, while providing the interviewer with rich information.

You Can Clarify and Probe: In an interview, unlike on a survey, the interviewer can follow-up immediately on what a person says to clarify and probe for greater understanding. It is a process of exploration that allows the interviewer to tailor questions to responses given to get a fuller understanding of what participants are trying to say. Face-to-face interviews are ideal for this, but Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), sometimes referred to using the broader term Computer Assisted Data Collection or CADAC (Saris, 1991), also provides these advantages. Automated survey technology can be easily programmed to probe for additional information based on responses given, but flexibility is reduced due to the lack of a human interface. Clarification and probing are far more difficult to accomplish using paper-and-pencil surveys.

You Are In A Better Position to Motivate Participation and Establish Rapport: Your role as an interviewer is not only to collect information, but to motivate participation. You do not have to rely on less personal means such as a survey cover letter. Because interviewers are usually face-to-face, they are in a better position than a survey developer to explain why participation is so important and to persuade reluctant respondents to take part. This is called a "conversion attempt."

Usually in surveys, only modest incentives are provided, if at all. In interviews, especially ones for commercial purposes, the incentives provided are more substantial. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) report that at the time of publication of their book, commercial research organizations were paying approximately $25 for focus group interviews lasting about two hours. They also mention that meals, transportation and lodging are sometimes provided.

The Disadvantages of Interviews

Interviews also have their disadvantages, as discussed below.

Quantitative Analyses are Limited: Interview data are not as easily analyzed using quantitative methods as are survey data. This is a key disadvantage. Some limited quantitative analyses are usually possible. For instance, interviewers could code some data on standard response scales and later perform simple analyses. However, to only collect such data would defeat the purpose of the interview. A content analysis of themes can be conducted on the richer information typically collected in interviews (see page 51). However, this is labor intensive and time consuming. Some computer programs allow theme identification via semantic analysis, but the automated technology for simplifying analysis of transcribed narrative comments is in its infancy.

Labor is Intensive: Unlike in survey research, interviewing is labor intensive since it takes so much time. In addition, fewer people can be interviewed at one time than can be surveyed. For instance, interviewing more than 10 people per session may not be wise, while surveying hundreds of people in a single location is possible if suitable facilities are available.

Skill Requirements are High: Successful interviewing takes special cognitive and interpersonal skills. Therefore, it is important to carefully select and prepare interviewers (see Interviewer Skills and Characteristics on page 8).

They are Most Suited to Small Samples: It is too expensive and time consuming to interview large samples. Thus, if you use an interview method exclusively, you may not be as confident in your results as you would be if you collected data from a larger, more representative sample, especially if the population is highly variable on the characteristics you wish to measure. However, you may not need as large a sample because your data may be more complete. If the population you are dealing with is small (for example, a small company), a small sample will suffice and the interview method may be very attractive.

If you which to make accurate inferences about a large, highly variable population, a survey approach is preferred. However, do not automatically reject using interviews. You may wish to use **both** methods. First, you could interview a small, representative sample to identify relevant issues or themes and get an idea of the kinds of items to include in your survey. Then, you would construct the survey and administer it to a larger sample. This would give you greater confidence in your results and the ability to analyze a large amount of rapidly gathered quantitative data.

They are Not Well Suited for the Geographically Dispersed: Interviews work best with small samples in one or a few locations, because you avoid the expense of sending interviewers to many locations or to interview large numbers of people. If you must interview a large dispersed population,

consider using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). You forfeit face-to-face contact but retain personal contact via phone.

Interviewees May Distort Their Responses More Than On Surveys: On voluntary, anonymous surveys, not responding to sensitive items is easy, especially if the survey is mailed to respondents. No one is there to pressure respondents to answer or to observe what responses are given. Individual identity of respondents is often unknown. Survey respondents are also likely to care little about the survey developer's reaction to their responses since the developer is distant and unknown. Thus, little pressure to intentionally lie or to distort responses is present unless the survey is not anonymous and respondents fear confidentiality will be breached. This is a common apprehension, even on anonymous surveys. However, social desirability bias may lead to distortion, even on a survey. This is the tendency to give socially acceptable responses.

Even in a group survey there is usually little pressure to answer every item or to distort responses. Administrators typically maintain confidentiality and do not look over the shoulders of survey takers to see their individual responses. Good administrators also maintain an intentional disinterest in responses when surveys or scan sheets are collected.

The dynamics of interviews are different. Interviews are usually not anonymous since interviewer and interviewee are typically face-to-face. Unlike on group surveys where the administrator has little or no knowledge of individual responses, answers to interview questions become clearly known. Interviews are also social events which constitute a brief social relationship. The person being interviewed may like and respect the interviewer and wish these feelings be reciprocated. The interviewee may even feel deference. On the other hand, he or she may not trust the interviewer to maintain confidentiality. In a group interview, social pressures may increase. Because of these dynamics, interviewees may feel more pressure than on a survey to respond and to protect themselves from disapproval or harm. Offensive questions cannot simply be skipped without possibly incurring the wrath of the interviewer or others. Thus, interview participants are likely to answer threatening questions even if they would rather not do so. They may deny activities they actually participated in or provide a distorted account of their attitudes, beliefs or values if they fear disapproval or harm. They may do this intentionally or unintentionally.

Since interview participants may be interested in pleasing the interviewer (who is present or on the phone), they may put a positive spin on their responses. Thus, whether a question is threatening or not, they may respond in a more socially desirable way. Relative to a survey, the direct contact with an interviewer may heighten this tendency.

That such distortions may occur does not mean they will occur. Skilled interviewers who emphasize and maintain confidentiality, who treat those being interviewed with kindness and respect, and who establish rapport and trust, can usually elicit frank disclosure of even the most sensitive information. Also, if interviewers make clear they have no vested interest in the responses given, they are more likely to get honest responses. This will also be true if the interviewer's belief in the worth and dignity of participants is obvious, regardless of the behaviors or views they share.

Employment Interviews May Have Low Reliability and Validity: Evaluation interviews for personnel selection have been criticized for their low reliability and validity. Thorton and Byham (1982) summarize some specific findings, as follows:

- Interrater reliability is typically low, especially with unstructured interviews.

- Even when reliability is high, predictive validity is usually low. Interviews make little or no predictive contribution over job performance or other tests.

- Material is often covered inconsistently in unstructured interviews.

- Multiple interviewers tend to weigh the same information differently.

- Decisions to hire or not hire are made early in such interviews.

- Negative information has more weight than positive information.

- Interviewers let their own attitudes interfere with the evaluation process.

- Candidates may not be evaluated independently; the quality of previous interviewees can influence the evaluation.

> The verdict on employment interviews may not be quite as bad as Thorton and Byham and other scholars suggest. Dipboye and Gaugler (1993) caution that reviews conducted between 1949 and 1982 were pessimistic. However, they criticize them for often not covering unpublished as well as published studies and for relying on uncorrected correlations that may underestimate their validity. Data from more recent meta-analyses, they report, have been more positive. Dipboyle and Gaugler argue that well-structured employment interviews may be good selection tools. They say even unstructured ones may be sufficiently valid.

If you wish to use interviews for selection or other forms of evaluation, do so with caution and try to overcome the shortcomings indicated above. Do not base decisions only on evaluation interviews. Use multiple methods to increase fairness and accuracy.

To Interview or Not: Which Method Should You Select?

Because of their strengths and despite their weaknesses, interviews are useful. They tend to be deficient, due to potential bias or unfairness, when specific individuals are evaluated for selection or other opportunities. However, if such interviews are well structured, based on appropriate content and conducted by well trained interviewers, their shortcomings can be reduced. Moreover, interviews are especially useful, if conducted under supportive conditions, for gathering in-depth information on a variety of issues.

Seriously consider which method to select. Consider the costs and the benefits of the methods you contemplate using. You are not limited to a single method. Perhaps you have a large, geographically dispersed population to sample, but you want the richness of interview data. You could

interview some of your sample and survey the rest. I typically work with large samples, but usually conduct interviews first to identify as many facets of an issue as possible. I then use this information to construct a survey to sample the larger population.

You may want the best of all worlds: the richness and personal contact of an interview, a large, dispersed sample, quantitative and qualitative analyses, and rapid turnaround. If so, you might select an approach that has the benefits of a survey, is fast to administer and analyze, and approximates the richness and flexibility of an interview: Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI).

If CATI is too expensive and you want rapid administration and return with extensive quantitative analyses, consider an automated (computer) survey approach. If you want rich interview-like data as well, request general or item-specific comments.

In some settings, a variety of approaches are used in combination. For instance, Assessment Centers are used frequently to assess managerial performance. Here, interviews are used in conjunction with experiential exercises and more traditional assessment techniques for selection, training and career development (see Thornton & Byham, 1982, especially pp. 164-170 & p.190). Interview simulations are also included where assessment center personnel play the role of, say, a customer or subordinate, in an encounter with the assessment center participant.

Chapter 2

Interviewer Skills and Characteristics

Skills Required of Interviewers

Interviewing requires great skill--both interpersonal and cognitive. Prior to the interview, the interviewer must be able to develop a good sampling methodology and generate good interview questions. These tasks require good research skills. In addition, the interviewer must make arrangements with organizations, groups and individuals to conduct interviews. This requires research skills, political savvy and the ability to relate well to strangers.

Skills required during the interview are particularly numerous. In the interview, the interviewer must be able to do the following:

- establish rapid rapport and motivate participation,
- establish trust,
- overcome unwillingness to speak freely about sensitive topics,
- honor the right to not respond and avoid undue pressure,
- value respondents regardless of the beliefs or behaviors they divulge,
- listen actively and intently,
- speak effectively and persuasively, but not too much,
- interpret and respond to a variety of different verbal and nonverbal cues,
- be attentive to both the interview process and content,
- encourage everyone to speak,
- maintain non-coercive control over the interview process,
- accurately record what is said,
- transition effectively from one question or topic to another,
- insightfully interpret, explore, link and paraphrase incoming information,
- maintain neutrality, keeping personal biases and beliefs outside the interview,
- avoid leading questions or distortion of responses through reinforcement,
- take possible abuse without becoming flustered,
- be kind, considerate, and professional at all times, and
- know when and how to terminate the interview.

After the interview, interviewers must be able to complete documentation, analyze and interpret the results, and report results in aggregate form to audiences ranging from those interviewed to academicians. Interviewers must also be able to maintain confidentiality by not disclosing the sources of comments despite possible pressure. Selecting interviewers who already possess, or who can develop these skills, and training them well is critical.

Desirable Personal Characteristics of Interviewers

Some people have difficulty being good interviewers even with training. Others have characteristics that suit them well to interviewing that may be enhanced through training. Below are personal characteristics I consider essential to a good interviewer.

Ability to Relate Well Based on Genuine Caring: One essential characteristic is the ability to relate well to a variety of people with whom you can quickly establish rapport. You need to have the interpersonal skill to draw people out so they will communicate with you and with each other. This does not mean you relate well because you are a slick manipulator of people. Rather, you relate based on a heartfelt concern for the people being interviewed and a desire to understand what they have to say. Thus, you need to be genuinely warm, friendly and interested in the well being and views of those you interview. In applied research or program evaluation, your objective is not just to understand but to make things better. Therefore, it is advantageous if you want the information gathered used for the benefit of those interviewed as well as for those who asked you to conduct the interviews. Both constituents are your clients.

Genuine caring connotes concern for the welfare of those you interview regardless of their expressed views or reported behaviors. You may personally disagree with them and not condone their behaviors. However, this does not diminish your concern for their well being.

Kindness and Courtesy: Related to the first point, you have to be kind and courteous and be able to treat everyone interviewed with equality, dignity, and respect, even if you find their views or behaviors offensive.

Empathy: To interview well you must tune into another person's thoughts and feelings. This is the ability to experience and understand at an intellectual and emotional level what another person is telling you, as if you were that person. However, while doing so you remain in touch with your own sense of self. Being empathic is like the ability of an actor to become the person he or she portrays. Empathy probably facilitates the willingness of others to open up to you.

Humility: Humility and a willingness to not steal the show are essential. You may be the interview expert, but those you are interviewing are the content experts and without their feedback you would know little or nothing about the topic you are exploring.

Integrity: If you have integrity, you can be trusted. Thus, if you promise to keep individual responses confidential and not use what is said to hurt anyone, people will believe you and open up to you. To a limited extent you may be able to convey integrity during the interview. Over time, if you develop a reputation for integrity, your credibility as an interviewer will increase.

Enthusiasm, Calmness and Flexibility: You must be enthusiastic enough to communicate the importance of the interview and your interest in it. Yet you need to be calm and able to take abuse while maintaining subtle control without getting angry. Also, you should be flexible to deal comfortably with the unexpected and accept things not going as you planned. In addition, you need to be able to listen to and understand content you may disagree with. You must also be able shift course based on interviewee reaction or the content of the discussion.

Tolerance and Open-Mindedness: It is essential to be tolerant of others and open-minded rather than judgmental. People will not communicate freely and you will have difficulty understanding their perspective if you are intolerant of their views or behaviors. You need to value cultural diversity. Above all, you need to be able to refrain from letting your own views or values interfere with the

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interview process and your understanding of what is said. During an interview you must not be dogmatic. You must not try to force your views on others or to be critical of what they say. However, your own views and values can help you. Do you believe people should express themselves freely and participate in decision making? Do you value understanding the views or behaviors of others, even if divergent from your own? Do you value gathering information to help others? If so, your skills as an interviewer should be enhanced.

Assertiveness, Articulation and Ability to Listen: You need to have the contradictory qualities of assertive articulation and the ability to be quiet and listen. You must have a good sense concerning when to switch from one mode to the other, and you must be comfortable listening most of the time. You also need to be able to reflect back what has been said, to express your empathy and to provide a veracity check on your understanding.

Tolerance of Ambiguity, Intuitiveness and Abstract Conceptualization: Interviewing is an inductive process where pattern and meaning emerge from data rather than being imposed on them beforehand (Patton, 1980). As an interviewer, you need to be tolerant of ambiguity since you are constantly fitting the pieces of an incomplete, sometimes contradictory, puzzle together. You need to be intuitive and insightful, synthesizing and integrating more than analyzing, while fitting diverse, seemingly unrelated, bits of information together. You must be able to think abstractly, eventually putting the diverse, incomplete, pieces of information together to see the "big picture."

Chapter 3

Interview Ethics: Gaining Important Information
While Protecting Individuals From Harm

Here are just a few reasons why interviews are conducted:

- assess customer needs and satisfaction,
- evaluate the success or failure of organizational interventions or social programs,
- improve organizational or societal functioning by identifying problems which need resolution,
- improve the quality or marketability of products or services,
- understand the incidence and range of social, political, spiritual, or religious attitudes,
- determine how knowledgeable the public is about certain issues,
- identify the incidence of various behaviors, some of which may be disapproved of or illegal,
- measure the recall of or reaction to felt or displayed emotions,
- measure facets of personality,
- anticipate or understand respondent reactions to a variety of issues or events,
- evaluate individuals for employment, promotion and other purposes, and
- facilitate grass-roots participation in the political process through "town hall" meetings and public polling.

Interviews are by their nature intrusive. Information about attitudes, beliefs, interests, values, behaviors and background is collected which at the level of the individual may be personal or private and which at any level may sometimes be controversial. If some of this information were linked to specific individuals, it could put them in jeopardy of harassment, social ostracism, denial of opportunities, and even incarceration. Thus, safeguards must be taken to protect individuals who provide such information from harm.

In the discussion below and in the appendices, a detailed account of ethical considerations in interview or survey work is provided. For other detailed accounts, applicable to all forms of research with human subjects, see Kimmel (1988) and Sieber (1992). Older interview and survey texts frequently failed to discuss ethical issues. Newer ones usually give some attention to ethics and there is strong agreement that interviews and surveys should be voluntary, based on consent, confidential, and that privacy rights should be protected. Thus, what I say in greater detail here is consistent with the recent writings of other interview and survey research experts (Fink & Josecoff, 1985; Fowler, 1993; Salant & Dillman, 1994) and other applied social researchers (Kimmel, 1988; Sieber, 1992).

Rights Perspective: Facilitating Free Speech by Protecting Privacy

The ethical principles which guide data gathering via interviews are rooted in two basic human rights: free speech and privacy. More specifically, interview participants have the right to:

- speak freely, without constraint, even if others may not like what they say, and

- remain silent, or if they speak, to set limits on the personal information they divulge, and have what they say as individual information providers remain confidential (unless they consent to disclosure).

Interviewers should encourage unconstrained speech to gain a thorough understanding of attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors. When speech becomes so unconstrained, and since interviews are intrusive, the privacy of respondents should be protected and confidentiality should be guaranteed to prevent harm. If information about specific individuals is disclosed, it should be with their consent.

Potential respondents should be given the right **not** to participate. Interviewers motivate **voluntary** participation by creating a "safe haven" so that most potential respondents will feel comfortable enough to participate. Hopefully, potential participants will want to respond (not just feel comfortable doing so) if the interviewer conveys the importance of the interview and explains the positive outcomes that are likely to accrue.

The rights to free speech and privacy which are the foundation of my ethical perspective are rooted in the US Constitution, various state constitutions, and in American common law. The rights perspective, which may only be of interest to some readers, is discussed in Appendix A.

We need not only look to the Constitution and the rights perspective to find ethical principles to guide interviewers. Professional ethical codes also provide sound guidance.

Professional Ethics: The Data Gatherer's Responsibility to the Information Provider

Ethical implications for conducting interviews and protecting respondents can be drawn from professional guidelines. Interviewers come from diverse professional and technical backgrounds. Most professions, through professional associations, specify ethical principles to guide professional behavior. Ethical guidelines exist for psychologists, social workers, physicians, lawyers and many other professionals. Despite this, there are opinion research associations which provide disclosure rules and codes of ethical conduct. For instance, the National Council on Public Polls and the American Association of Public Opinion Research have such guidelines (Fink & Kosecoff, 1985, p. 51). The ethical principles guiding different professionals are usually similar. The predominant messages are clear. Respect peoples' rights and dignity. Help rather than harm your clients. Protect the privacy of individuals who provide information. In all but the rarest situations do not release information about specific individuals. If you must release such information, do so only after receiving their consent. Confidentiality and preventing harm are such core ethical principles that Kimmel (1988) reports they appear in all American and European ethical codes for psychological research.

Professional ethical guidelines are based in part on two key legal and ethical concepts: **privilege** and **informed consent**. Privilege refers to the (usually) inviolate confidentiality of communications between certain professionals (lawyers, doctors, clerics, mental health professionals) and their clients and the right of testimonial privilege in courts of law. Privilege is a well established principle in the civilian community. However, it is less well recognized in the Federal Government, including the Department of Defense (DoD), as discussed in the shadowbox below.

> The Privacy Act and the Limits of Privacy Protection in Federal Facilities. A Wall Street Journal article by Pollock (1996) raised my consciousness about the limits on privilege in Federal facilities. Pollock described an Air Force mother's unsuccessful attempt to keep the notes of an Air Force psychiatrist about her daughter's alleged rape out of the hands of lawyers for the accused--notes obtained by Air Force investigators against the will of the parties involved. Pollock consulted a Pentagon lawyer for clarification. He explained that the armed forces do not recognize privilege since all medical and mental health records on a base belong to the Government and can be examined by military officers in the performance of their duties. Checking further into this, I obtained an informal document used by medical clinic practitioners at Brooks AFB titled "Legal Issues Affecting Medical Administration" in which it is stated that the "Federal Privacy Act allows access to patient records (without patient consent) by persons in the Department of Defense who have a legitimate duty purpose for the information" including law enforcement officials, trial counsel, commanders, federal investigators and congressional staffers. The text of the Privacy Act of 1974 (Public Law 93-579, United States Code, Title 5, Part 1, Chapter 5, Subchapter II, Section 552a), confirms this. This act can be accessed on the internet and is also included as appendix B in Bushkin & Schaen (1976). Although this act was designed in part to protect people from having records about them disseminated without their consent, it contains many exceptions that make it relatively easy for federal officials to obtain personal information from records in federal facilities without the consent of the person involved. In addition, Air Force Instruction 41-210, Patient Administration Function (Attachment 3: Releasing Medical Information), states that Federal investigative agents are to be granted access to medical records (in an Air Force facility) upon proper identification and can seize records if they leave a copy. Related to this issue, see the comments of McGuire on page 15 about being careful what you write down and disclose if you work in a Federal facility.

Informed consent refers to the necessity of providing clients with an understanding--in language they can easily comprehend--that participation with a practitioner or researcher is voluntary, informing them of the anticipated consequences of participation or nonparticipation and the factors which could reasonably influence their decision, protecting prospective participants from harm if they decline to participate, explaining other aspects about which they may inquire, and letting them know about the limits of privacy, if any. As discussed in the shadowboxes below, there could be conflict between professional associations and the DoD on this issue as well.

Professional ethical guidelines focus most attention on the ethics of the professional's relationship with clients. Although I often refer to the client as the person or organization who requested the interview, each interview respondent is also a client. Interviewers must behave ethically in their relationships with both types of clients.

Like physicians and others, interview professionals protect individual data from disclosure. They do so by protecting the identity of individual participants and by reporting aggregated (grouped) data. If individual data (such as verbatim quotes) are shared, the identity of the information source is not shared unless he or she has given prior consent. However, unlike priests, physicians or lawyers, interviewers do not have automatic testimonial privilege. Subpoenas can be used to force disclosure of confidential research information. In 1988, Congress provided some relief by passing a law allowing researchers to seek a certificate of confidentiality to protect them from the risk of having their data subpoenaed (Sieber, 1992, pp. 59-60). As Fowler (1993) indicates, researchers have even sent their data abroad to prevent breaches of confidentiality in United States courts. The American Psychological

Association (APA) encourages members to familiarize themselves with steps to protect data from disclosure short of noncompliance with the law. The APA has prepared a document on strategies for coping with subpoenas or compelled testimony, which is available from their Office of Legal Affairs (American Psychological Association, 1995, 1996).

I am most familiar with the American Psychological Association's **Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct** (American Psychological Association or APA, 1992; hereafter referred to as the Ethics Code). I have reviewed these ethical guidelines and an APA book on the Ethics Code (Canter, Bennett, Jones & Nagy, 1994), extracting principles and standards relevant to interviewers. The portion of the Ethics Code pertaining to interviews is included as Appendix B.

Conflict Between the APA Ethics Code and Societal or Organizational Expectations

Ethical principles are sometimes in conflict with the law or with organizational expectations. The Ethics Code is somewhat vague on how to deal with conflict with the law. It is stated therein that if ethical responsibilities conflict with the law, professionals should make clear their commitment to the code and resolve the conflict in a responsible manner (Ethical Standard 1.02). The precise nature of the action to be taken is not clear, but there is an implied moral superiority of the Ethics Code and the recommendation that the Ethics Code not be violated. In discussing this standard, Canter et al. (1994, p. 33) state that the standard "does not always require conformity with the law." The professional is also encouraged to clearly state his or her ethical views. According to Canter et al., this could be in the form of a letter or memo to one's employer or supervisor.

The APA's stand on conflict between the Ethics Code and organizational demands is clearer. If organizational demands conflict with the Ethics Code, the professional is expected to clarify the nature of the conflict, make known his or her commitment to the code, and resolve the conflict with adherence to the Ethics Code (Ethical Standard 8.03). In discussing ethical standards 1.02 and 8.03, Canter et al. (1994) indicate that professionals are expected to be proactive in resolving conflicts. They claim that failing to do so is an ethical violation in itself.

Conflict Between the APA Ethics Code and DoD Directives

In the APA ethics committee report for 1993 (American Psychological Association, 1994) it is indicated that military psychologists are frequently faced with conflicts between the Ethics Code's confidentiality provisions and the DoD's directives to provide information without consent. The ethics committee refers to ethical standards 1.02 and 8.03 (see discussion in the shadowbox above and Appendix C) which acknowledge that conflicts can sometimes arise between ethical standards and laws or organizational practices. The ethics committee states that these standards "establish an affirmative duty on the part of the psychologist (or other practitioner) to address the conflict, not just to follow the law or institutional rule without looking for alternatives" (p. 665). They further state that if a practitioner cannot guarantee confidentiality, clients should be informed of confidentiality limits at the beginning of professional contacts. In addition, they recommend practitioners be proactive in dealing with their organization about ethical misgivings. For instance, they could discuss their concerns with their commander when they are initially assigned to a clinical position. Canter et al. (1994) acknowledge that individual professionals may have limited power to affect organizational policies and practices.

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However, if pressured to do something unethical under the code, they recommend professionals make their objections known, explain the code requirement, and suggest solutions to accommodate the code without placing an unacceptable burden on the organization.

In discussing the limits of confidentiality between clinical providers and patients in the DoD, McGuire (1995/1996) explains that he always responded as a psychologist rather than as a Naval officer. McGuire (p. 4) describes his decision rule as simple: "if the confidential information does not, in my opinion, directly threaten the welfare of the nation or other members of society, then I maintained confidentiality, including what I chose to put into the official medical record. This is essentially the same rule now supported by the Ethics Code of the APA." He advises young military clinicians (p. 5) to "know when to just plain shut up!" Recognizing that looking after others is as important as looking after oneself, he goes on to say "The expression 'Don't make waves' doesn't just apply to your personal welfare; it often applies to those servicemen and women and their families who come to you for help and not judgment." Anderson (1995/1996) supports McGuire's position and explains that military personnel cannot be held accountable for failure to report noncriminal conduct that may be reported to them in a clinical interview. He refers to statements about homosexuality and explains that health care providers are not legally accountable for failure to report statements made about sexual orientation or behavior the military happens to disapprove of. This medical example also applies to military survey or nonclinical interview professionals to whom similar information may be divulged. Of course, taking care not to divulge confidences that could hurt people applies to a broader range of issues that just sexual orientation.

Ethical decisions ultimately reside with the individual. You have the right to conscientiously object to institutional or societal practices you consider unethical. If you are sincere and express your objection with logic, determination and politeness, you may be successful and suffer no adverse consequences. However, you must be willing to accept the consequences, or to defend yourself against adverse actions through peaceful, legal means.

Your Ethical Obligations to Interview Participants

What do ethical concerns mean in practice? What do you do to ensure that your interviews are ethical? In this section, communicating your ethical sensitivity, ensuring voluntary participation and safeguarding confidentiality are discussed. The issues of limiting excessively intrusive content and eliminating illegal content are also discussed.

Ensure Voluntary Participation: The right to privacy and the right to avoid self incrimination usually give people the right to refuse to be interviewed, or to not answer specific questions. Bradburn and Sudman (1988, p. 201) state that all professional organizations conducting surveys and interviews recognize this right. I strongly recommend that voluntary participation be assured and coercion be avoided. Only friendly persuasion should be used, such as in a "conversion attempt" at the beginning of a telephone interview.

A Possible Exception: There may be job relevant exceptions to making all interviews voluntary. For instance, your company's quality enhancement office may want to interview you to assess quality progress. Alternatively, your supervisor may want you to brainstorm with colleagues about improving products or services. Both examples constitute a job-related interview that would not invade personal

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privacy. Participation in such activities is, reasonably, an expected part of one's job. They do no harm and may enhance workgroup functioning. However even in situations such as these, making participation explicitly mandatory is probably unnecessary and counterproductive. Most people would willingly participate.

I base my prohibition against mandatory participation partly on ethical considerations. However, this position is also based on practical concerns. Requiring people to participate, or placing pressure on them to respond to specific questions, is likely to result in untrustworthy data, or no data. This is especially true if people are asked about engaging in illegal or other disapproved activities. Sieber (1992) cautions that respondents should not be asked directly if they engaged in illegal behavior. If they had, they would be unlikely to answer honestly since they might place themselves in legal jeopardy. It is not only questions about illegal or disparaged activities that could lead to dishonest or distorted responses. If persons are forced to participate and they are uncomfortable with the interview questions asked, they may give misleading responses. They may say as little as possible in response to specific questions. However, if an interview is voluntary, if the interviewer is trusted not to breach confidentiality, and if excellent rapport is established, honest communication will likely occur. Also in a voluntary interview, especially under the conditions just described, participants are likely to feel comfortable declining to answer specific questions they believe are inappropriate.

As mentioned previously, the practice of ensuring voluntary participation is based on the principle of informed consent. However, interview participants usually need not sign a consent form, since as Sieber (1992) indicates, respondents can refuse behaviorally by hanging up the phone, walking out of the room, or declining to answer certain questions. Also, participation under voluntary conditions implies consent. However, Fowler (1993) states that consent forms may be appropriate if participants are asked to provide information, which if misused, could hurt them. The consent form would provide a record that the participant was informed about the potential for harm and the limits on privacy. Note that a consent form is also necessary if you plan to do something participants may not expect and may object to, like audiotaping or videotaping the interview.

Maintain Confidentiality and Non-Attribution: In most interviews, unlike in survey research, anonymity would be difficult to achieve. Anonymity means no data exists to link responses to individuals. In face-to-face interviews the interviewer sits with respondents whose identities are usually obvious. In a telephone interview, the phone number could be used to identify, at least, the household or office called. Thus, maintaining confidentiality (not linking data to individuals even though you could) is especially critical for interviewers. The phrase "not for attribution" is often used, meaning that individual comments will not be attributed to individuals. That is, they are not to be identified as the source).

Although interviewers keep individual responses confidential, except when consent is given or in special cases mandated by law, hiding individual identity would not be expected in a "celebrity interview." Here again, consent must be given and only that which is "on the record" is divulged and linked to the person interviewed.

As discussed in Appendix B, interviewers have an obligation not to harm respondents or diminish their dignity. Improperly protected interview data could do both. For example, in interviews about organizations, participants may express animosity toward or distrust of organizational leaders.

This could incur the wrath of these people and retaliation from them. In other surveys, they may report behaviors which some people consider immoral, confess to illegal behaviors, or express social, political or religious views that are not shared by most people. In the wrong hands, such data linked to individuals could damage them. Interviewers determine the incidence of attitudes or behaviors in **groups** of individuals. They examine aggregate rather than individual data. They use this information to gain greater understanding of issues, to improve policies, practices, products or services, and to help people rather than harm them.

If you know of institutional or legal constraints on confidentiality (for instance, company or court directives forcing disclosure) mention these to participants up front so they can make an informed decision about participation.

The concern about confidentiality is reasonable due to the possible misuse of data and the potential for harm. Confidentiality creates the condition where sensitive information can be shared without threat if interviewees trust confidentiality will be maintained. To gain the cooperation of interview participants, explain how their statements will be used, and how confidentiality will be safeguarded. Stress that data will be shared with management or other clients in a way that does not link comments to specific individuals. Explain that aggregate summaries will be reported. Even when individual comments are shared (for instance, in verbatim quotes), by-name references to specific individuals are removed except when the reference is obvious, such as to a commander or CEO.

If group interviews are conducted, the interviewer is not the only person responsible for confidentiality and non-attribution. Participants share this responsibility. Stress that comments made by group members should not be attributed to specific individuals and comments about specific individuals should not be divulged. However, there may be some situations in which confidentiality is not a concern. Sieber (1992) discusses techniques for creating consent and shared trust. In community based research, representatives of a target population are often brought together with researchers to negotiate conditions in consent forums. Mentioning focus group meetings for such purposes, she explains that plans formulated in such meetings are likely to get back to the community via the grapevine, often resulting in additional feedback from the community.

Infrequently, clients may pressure you to reveal the statements of specific individuals. If this happens, refuse such requests without exception.

Confidentiality protection need not only pertain to individuals. As Bradburn and Sudman (1988, p. 202) report, many social scientists believe that the confidentiality protection should extend beyond individuals to organizations. Thus, for instance, data obtained from a specific organization would be combined with data from similar organizations and reported by organization type--say "Ivy League colleges" or "environmental groups." Likewise, data from organizational subunits within a large organization would not be shared with other subunits. Individual subunits may be contrasted, but to avoid counterproductive comparisons by subunit managers and employees, these data may be held at higher management levels. Subunits could also be contrasted with the organization as a whole or other larger aggregation (e.g. all manufacturing units) rather than with other subunits.

Limit Objectionable or Intrusive Questions: I recommend that you limit, but not necessarily eliminate, potentially objectionable, threatening, or very intrusive questions. Such questions may be

legitimate in some interviews since is it important to study controversial issues to deal with them effectively. Arvey and Sackett (1993) caution that requesting information considered to be an invasion of privacy will be perceived as less fair in a selection situation than requesting information which is not so invasive. Regardless of the purpose of your interview, your ethical obligation to maintain confidentiality and protect people from harm becomes especially critical when you include very intrusive content.

If you must include such content, ask yourself if you really need to know the information. Be sensitive in how you ask for such information. Often, it is wise to ask for it indirectly (see Make Objectionable Questioning More Acceptable on page 37). If such questions are asked, emphasize your commitment to confidentiality and do not betray that pledge. Much like the "there are no right or wrong answers" statement we often see, explain that your intent is not to judge the correctness of expressed attitudes or the appropriateness of reported behaviors. Explain that you are trying to determine the prevalence of attitudes or behaviors and have no interest in linking them to specific individuals for punitive purposes. Try to develop trust, and include your most intrusive content in the middle of the interview after you have established some rapport. Do not pressure participants to respond.

Illustrative Examples of Intrusive Questions. What topics are particularly threatening? Bradburn, Sudman and associates (1979) queried nearly 1200 interview participants indirectly about their uneasiness concerning questions they had just been asked. They did so by phrasing exit questions in terms of making "most people" (rather than themselves) feel very uneasy. Their list is illustrative, but not exhaustive. At the top of the "very uneasy" list was **masturbation** (56%), followed by **marijuana use** and **sexual intercourse** (42%). A sizable percentage of people in general were judged to be very uneasy about questions concerning stimulant and depressant drug use and intoxication (31% and 29% respectively). Ten to 13 percent of people were judged to be very uneasy about questions concerning drinking alcohol, gambling with friends, and revealing their income. In contrast, questions concerning other leisure time, social and sports activities were hardly threatening. Respondents believed that only 12 to 21 percent of the population would **not be threatened at all** about questions concerning sexual activity, illicit drug use, or intoxication.

Despite feelings of uneasiness, most questions were not too personal for respondents themselves to answer. Interviewees seldom refused to answer even the most threatening questions. Only the sexual questions (intercourse, masturbation) were too personal for them, with 34 percent indicating this to be the case. However, only about seven percent of the sample chose not to answer these questions despite the fact interviewers stressed up front that some questions might make them uneasy and they did not have to answer them. Bradburn, Sudman, and their associates concluded from this disparity that instead of refusing to answer, participants sometimes reported not engaging in threatening activities that they had engaged in. This allowed them to appear to be good respondents while projecting a socially desirable image.

The apparent willingness of people to answer threatening questions deceptively in an interview brings up the following points of comparison between surveying and interviewing:

In face-to-face interviews, more than on surveys, data gatherers know the identity of participants. Since information providers cannot remain anonymous and interviewers can tie responses to respondents, participants may feel more threatened than they would in answering a survey. If they admit

to holding attitudes or engaging in behaviors that the interviewer or others may disapprove of, they could be ostracized or otherwise harmed. Answering deceptively provides a benign way to avoid possible negative consequences.

It is easy **not** to respond to objectionable or intrusive items on a voluntary, anonymous survey. Respondents are told the survey is voluntary. By implication, individual items are voluntary, and the survey developer is usually not present to disapprove of skipping them. It is more difficult to say no to a persuasive, persistent interviewer. Doing so may be rude or socially inappropriate. At worst, a person could get into trouble or be denied employment or some other opportunity. Thus, an interviewee could experience enormous social pressure to respond.

The interview creates a social relationship. The participant may like and want to please the interviewer and be respected by him or her. This could result in heightened social desirability bias in an interview--regardless of whether a question is threatening.

There is no good, cost effective way to check the veracity of responses to interview questions. Interviewees can, therefore, lie or distort their responses with impunity. Survey respondents can deny attitudes or behaviors also, but would feel less need to do so. Of course, some deceptive responses may be motivated more by denial than by willful intent to deceive.

Avoid Illegal Questions: Skilled interviewers studying legitimate but controversial topics can often obtain accurate information about threatening topics because of their non-punitive role, their confidentiality safeguards, and their ability to establish rapport and trust. Within limits, it is acceptable for them to do so. Illegal questions are a different story. If they are asked, respondents have every right not to respond. As discussed in the shadowbox below, illegal questioning is discussed in two contexts:

- during employment or other evaluative interviews where discrimination may result and opportunities may be denied based on responses to certain irrelevant questions, and

- during any interview, concerning job-irrelevant organizational memberships, where First Amendment rights may be constrained and where harassment (or fear of it) may result from knowledge of such affiliations by potentially hostile parties.

Employment Interview or Other Evaluative Interviews. Sometimes the purpose of an interview is to evaluate individuals. In these situations, certain questions are illegal or have to be asked only in certain ways. Laws have been enacted to protect people from discrimination and other unfavorable outcomes in situations such as job selection, leasing or buying property, and obtaining credit. See Medley (1984) for a list of these laws for California and New York. They are representative of similar laws in other states. Campion and Arvey (1989) also discuss taboo behaviors (subject to litigation) in an interview. Smart (1983) discusses legal considerations and provides questions that can and cannot be asked.

Alderman and Kennedy (1995, pp. 277-290; see also Nachman & Ryan 1994, p. 25) provide a detailed account of one of the first serious challenges to psychological testing for pre-employment screening. (Psychological tests frequently take the form of a survey or interview.) The case (Soroka v. Dayton Hudson Corp.) involved a person applying to be an asset protection specialist (guard to prevent

shoplifting) for a large national department store. The individual was asked to take a 704-item Psychscreen inventory which contained very personal items (for instance, about sexual matters like "I've never indulged in any unusual sex practices" and religious beliefs like " I believe in the second coming of Christ"). This instrument had been formed by extracting items from other instruments developed decades ago (the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory or MMPI and the California Personality Inventory or CPI). Many items, especially from the MMPI, were developed to assess psychopathology and were intended to be used for clinical purposes. Soroka considered many items ridiculous and irrelevant to his application for employment. He was so upset he photocopied the instrument to provide evidence of how bad the items were. He then sued the store. The California court of appeals, backed by a strong state constitution with good privacy protection provisions, found the store did not demonstrate a compelling interest or a job-related purpose (the nexus requirement) in asking applicants to respond to these kinds of items. The store settled out of court, and while not admitting liability, it stopped using the test for this type of applicant in California and created a $1,300,000 fund to compensate the plaintiff and other Californians who had taken Psychscreen.

As Alderman and Kennedy (1995) indicate, the psychological exam used was argued to be a medical exam. Soroka and his legal team believed the Americans With Disabilities Act would support this view, providing additional grounds for restricting the use of such instruments to prevent employment discrimination against disabled persons.

Examples of items/questions or behaviors that may be illegal or constrained (depending on jurisdiction) on an evaluation application or in an evaluation interview are:

- age
- ancestry
- arrest record
- birth control usage
- birthplace
- citizenship in a specific country other than United States (e.g., questions about naturalization papers; parents' citizenship)
- disability not related to work
- ethnic group
- family, spouse, children, relatives (e.g., questions about family members or relatives who are not employees of the company)
- gender
- language (e.g., native language or how a foreign language was learned)
- marital status
- mental illness or treatment by a mental health professional
- military experience (outside the United States)
- miscellaneous (anything not related to work or employment eligibility)
- name (original or maiden)
- national origin
- organizational membership (not considered relevant by the applicant to job performance; also memberships related to race, religion, national origin, etc.)
- pregnancy; plans to have children
- physical limitations not relevant to work

- race
- religion or religious views
- sexual orientation, views or behaviors
- request for sexual favors

It is also sometimes unlawful to ask questions that would indirectly reveal these facts. In some instances, sensitive questions are unlawful if asked directly. For example, "What is your age" is prohibited. However, it is all right to inquire more broadly, for instance, if a person is "between 18 and 65 years of age." Likewise, you cannot ask about an arrest record, but you can ask about convictions if there is legitimate "business necessity" involved. However, a conviction is usually not grounds for being denied employment, unless directly tied to the job or if it would put an employer at considerable risk (Medley, 1984; Smart, 1983). It is important in an employment or other evaluative interview to be fair and to document fairness in case you are challenged in court. These issues are discussed in the next shadowbox.

Organizational Membership. As indicated above, asking for information about job irrelevant organizational memberships may be illegal during evaluation interviews. Such questioning may also be unlawful on constitutional grounds.

Bond (1994) wrote about two cases demonstrating the legal precedent prohibiting forced disclosure of membership in private groups. These cases involved the First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly. They also pertain to privacy rights (see Shattuck, 1977, Chapter 2, for a discussion of the privacy of association and belief and several other examples). Both cases involved groups protecting their membership lists from disclosure to government entities. The first case involved the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) versus the State of Alabama in 1958. The second case occurred in 1994 and involved the Texas Knights of the Ku Klux Klan versus the Texas Commission on Human Rights. For further discussion of the First Amendment and privacy rights rationale for not asking for job-irrelevant organizational membership, see Appendix C.

Organizational membership lists can be amassed from interview data. Given the legal precedents mentioned and possible harm to people due to intolerance based on other peoples' associations and beliefs. (see Appendix C), I recommend that requests for specific information about job-irrelevant organizational affiliations be avoided.

Ensure Fairness and Develop Legal Safeguards: Ethics requires fairness. Laws also protect people from unfair practices. You could face litigation if you act unfairly. For a recent, comprehensive discussion of fairness in employment selection, see Arvey and Sackett (1993).

If you conduct an interview to select a person from among a group of eligibles for something they all desire (a job, a promotion, training, etc.), make sure everyone is treated fairly (that is, about the same). Take notes and save them, or use other documentation to demonstrate fairness. Not documenting the interview, changing notes or rationale after the fact, or throwing away documentation may result in an employer losing a lawsuit (Campion & Arvey, 1989). This is important since employment interviews are among the least reliable and valid predictors of job performance, and discrimination has been well documented (Arvey, 1979; Arvey & Campion 1982, Campion & Arvey, 1989, Thorton & Byham, 1982).

However, as Dipboye and Gaugler (1993) report, the validity of employment interviews may have been understated in early literature reviews. Well prepared, structured interviews may be quite fair.

Dipboye and Gaugler (1993) provide the following suggestions for increasing the validity of employment interviews. This advice pertains to features of structured interviews, which they recommend be used in selection situations.

- Standardize your questioning of applicants.

- Base interviews on a job analysis.

- Don't preview other data (test scores, reference letters, etc.) **prior to** the interview.

- Take notes to facilitate accurate recall, but remember to maintain rapport.

- Use well defined scales such as behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS).

- Decompose overall ratings into component dimensions.

- Use multiple, well-trained interviewers.

In summary, several things can increase the fairness of selection interviews. Do not ask illegal questions that might be used to discriminate unfairly. Advertise the opportunity broadly rather than have it be known only to a few people in the organization's inner circle. Develop questions carefully and scrutinize them for job relevance and sources of bias. Base them on a thorough job analysis. Develop good job descriptions and use reasonable, publicly specified selection criteria. Treat each candidate in about the same manner and with the same kindness and cordiality. Ask the same questions of everyone. Have each interview last about the same time. Anticipate probable probes beforehand so they can be somewhat standardized. Use multiple interviewers who are well trained and culturally diverse. Review the decisions made by interviewers. Provide feedback to interviewees about the reasons for non-selection and recommend how they could enhance their competitiveness. Keep good records. Use objective evaluation forms such as BARS. Such scales provide a description of behaviors at different levels of performance along a performance continuum. They allow candidates to be judged along the same metric (see the example on page 40).

Know Your Appropriate Role: Don't Become a Therapist: Interviews often provide an unstructured, intimate, emotional, protected environment quite similar to a therapeutic situation for the interviewee. Interviews are safe places for venting hostility or frustration. They are also situations in which very personal and potentially troubling matters are discussed. Interviewers may be tempted to act as therapists. However, as Seidman (1991) stresses, the interviewer's role is not, and should not be, that of therapist. Your role is to gather information, not to treat. You probably have not been trained as a therapist. Even if you had clinical training, your relationship with the interviewee is too brief for you to be of much therapeutic value.

Ethical Implications for Prospective Interview Participants

Ethical implications thus far have been discussed from the perspective of the obligations of interviewers to participants. Focusing now on interview participants, I contend they have the right to decline to participate. They can do so by refusing to be interviewed or by not responding to selected questions, if they believe any of the following conditions are true:

- The survey is not voluntary: respondents are told they must respond and they desire not to, or other forms of coercion are used, such as the threat of punishment.

- Insufficient information is given upon which participants could come to a decision based on informed consent.

- The survey is requested as a part of one's job, but some or all content is not job relevant, including questions about job irrelevant organizational memberships or privileged information the respondent desires not to share.

- Privacy may not be protected: the survey is not anonymous, confidentiality may be breached, analysis and reporting of non-narrative data may occur at the level of the individual respondent or at a low level of aggregation which might permit disclosure of identity, or personal identifying information may not be excised from narrative data, except where the identity of a prominent individual (e.g., a CEO or Commander) would be difficult to conceal.

- The requested information may be used to discriminate unfairly against respondents, harass them or harm them in other ways.

- The items or questions are needlessly intrusive, or they are too offensive.

Has the interviewer demonstrated obvious commitment to the ethical principles discussed in this chapter? Has he or she convinced participants about the importance of the interview? Do prospective participants trust that confidentiality will be maintained? If so, they should probably participate and express themselves honestly.

Your Ethical Obligations to Interviewers

Interviewers can be placed at risk because they are often in face-to-face contact with interviewees and sometimes conduct interviews in potentially dangerous locations. Let's say you hire others to perform interviews for you. Fowler (1993) describes two ethical obligations you have to them. First, you must be detailed and honest about the research so they can represent it honestly to participants without being uninformed or deceptive. Second, you must protect interviewers from harm. If your research design calls for interviewing people in their homes, interviewers should never be forced to visit neighborhoods or households in which they feel unsafe. In addition, they should not have to conduct interviews at times of the day (say, after dark) when they would be at greater risk. Ways of increasing safety should be considered, such as hiring a protective escort.

Chapter 4

Preparing for Your Interview

Select Your Sample

Sampling is a complex, technical issue that can lead to misleading findings if not done well. Sampling is briefly covered here. For more detail, consult Sudman (1983). The discussions of sampling by Bradburn and Sudman (1988) and Salant and Dillman (1994) are also recommended. They are practical and easy-to-read.

Random Sampling Versus a Census: Interviewing a portion of the population is called **sampling**. If you interview the entire population of interest, you have a **census**. Unless your population is small, you will likely need a sample rather than a census. The incremental statistical benefit of gaining more subjects falls off as your sample gets large. Usually, large samples are not of great concern to interviewers since interviewing large numbers of people is impractical. Researchers who need large samples typically opt for a survey.

Let's say you are in an organization of 300 people and you wanted to assess quality of worklife. You could probably get an accurate picture of this issue by interviewing a representative third of the organization's population (or less). There is, however, a **political perspective** to consider. People like to be consulted on important issues which impact them. If they are left out, they may be annoyed. Thus, sometimes the decision is made to go to an entire population so everyone can express themselves. This may be feasible in the example given, especially if everyone is located in the same general area. However, if the population is larger and geographically dispersed, interviewing the entire population may be difficult unless Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) is used. But CATI is costly. If you want to consult everyone in a large population, you might interview a representative subset first and survey the rest using paper-and-pencil or automated technology. It is wise to interview first and then do your survey work since interviews are an excellent source of themes and items for surveys.

People lament being "surveyed to death." They may feel the same about interviews. When planning to interview, consider if your target population was surveyed or interviewed about other issues in the recent past. Adjust your schedule, or, if necessary, your sampling strategy.

The **representativeness** of a sample is critical. Representativeness means that your sample adequately reflects or represents the target population of interest. Several means are used to achieve a representative sample. For instance, you may make sure your sample is randomly selected so that everyone has an equal chance of inclusion. As described on page 26, you may first stratify your sample and then select randomly within the strata. Sometimes a random sample may not be appropriate. You may want your sample to be more targeted. For instance, maybe you know there is little variance in your sample on a particular measure. An example is performance ratings, a common criterion variable despite often being inflated. To correct for this problem, you might intentionally select people whose scores differ on this performance measure. As discussed on page 26, you may also choose purposeful sampling rather than random sampling.

Sometimes, representativeness is violated. For instance, professors sometimes have limited access to funds and to diverse groups of people to serve as subjects. However, they have a captive population of students who tend to be young, Caucasian, and middle to upper class. So professors tend to use these subjects extensively in their research and probably get results of limited generalizability. Also, the responses provided may be distorted due to the status imbalance between students and professors and the fact that the students are known to the investigator.

As another example, the **Literary Digest** incorrectly predicted a Landon victory over Roosevelt for president in 1936 (Fishkin, 1995; Salant & Dillman, 1994; Dillman, 1978). This prediction was based on a huge, unscientific sample of people who had either telephones or cars. In those days only about 35% of the population had phones. Cars were also less common than today. People with these items tended to be affluent. Less affluent people, who were more likely to vote for Roosevelt, were left out of the sample. Fishkin (1995) provides a detailed account of this debacle. Interestingly, the magazine based its tabulation on millions of postcards solicited from the biased sample described. During this period, George Gallup gained national recognition by challenging the **Literary Digest.** He publicly predicted the magazine would be way off the mark in their estimate. Promising to give his newspaper clients their money back if he failed, he demonstrated he could predict the election outcome much more accurately using a scientifically selected sample of only few thousand people. Gallup accurately predicted Roosevelt's victory and the success of his firm is history. **The Literary Digest** went out of business.

Interviewers often interview in a variety of settings. Make sure that your settings, and the people interviewed in them, are representative. Are you interested in the views of people in an entire region or state? If so, do not just interview people in cities. Go also to suburban and rural areas as well since attitudes are likely to differ based on where people live. If you interview households, interview in poor neighborhoods as well as in rich ones. Interview people on corner lots (usually bigger and more affluent) as well as elsewhere on the block. Go to households in neighborhoods all over town. In organizations, interview people at all levels and in all roles. Do not just consult managers. If you interview households, do not just talk to the head-of-household or parents--talk to the children and adolescents as well. In schools, talk not only to the teachers and administrators, but to the students as well. Of course, the people you interview depend on the issues you are studying. Thus, sometimes you would go only to a subgroup within a setting.

In a recent telephone example (U.S. News and World Report, 1995), people have been reported to use their answering machines to screen out pollsters, just like they would undesirable callers. This could make obtaining a representative sample via phone difficult.

Another example where representativeness is ignored is in the increasingly popular use of self-selected listener opinion polls (see, for example, Fishkin, 1995, pp. 38-39). Here, radio or television audiences are asked to call in to express their agreement or disagreement with a question presented to them, or to provide their reaction to an event. In such unscientific polls, participant reactions would likely be unrepresentative of those of the general population.

One way to obtain a representative sample is to generate a **random sample** where everyone has an equal chance of being selected. For instance, this would ensure that everyone exposed to an intervention had an equal chance to provide feedback on it, rather than the interview being given only to

those likely to favor it. Random sampling is appropriate when the investigator wishes to generalize from a sample to a larger population. If you want to ensure that different parts of the population are well represented, you can use stratified sampling. In stratified random sampling the population is divided into parts and the sample is drawn randomly from each of these "stratum." See also the discussion of purposeful sampling below.

Some small subgroups may be underrepresented in your population. If you just ask to interview a random sample of individuals, you may end up with too few individuals from the underrepresented groups. One solution is **intentional oversampling** of selected groups such as minorities and women. Although the situation is improving, women have historically been underrepresented in positions of senior leadership (Kanter, 1977). Therefore, if you wish to examine women in senior positions, you may need to select all women in such positions.

The goal of representativeness was described above in terms of selecting a representative sample at a **single point in time**. As Fishkin (1995) reminds us, to accurately represent opinions, a single snapshot in time may not provide the best view. Although some constructs are likely to be rather consistent over time (for example, interests, values and personality), others may be rather transitory (for example, satisfaction with supervision and perceptions of other organizational climate dimensions). Moreover, some constructs (for example, opinions about political office holders or candidates) may fluctuate widely over a short time. Thus, to achieve a representative view and monitor trends, you may want to gather data from a representative sample on **multiple occasions**. Interviewing in this manner, using the same or different subjects each time, is called **longitudinal research**. Such research can be accomplished with interviews or surveys, but is especially easy when automated techniques are used. Sometimes longitudinal data gathering takes place over brief time, say a few days before and after a special event or an election. At other times the interval is several months to several years, for example when measuring retention intent or quality progress.

Purposeful Sampling: Patton (1980, pp. 100-106) contrasts a variety of forms of **purposeful sampling**, which are intentionally not random. This form of sampling is appropriate when the investigator's purpose is to study select cases without generalizing to all cases. Here "case" may be an intervention or program at a particular site. A program has been instituted nationwide. You know it is working well at most locations. However, at a few sites it is disastrous. Rather than choosing a random sample, you could select a purposeful sample and go to selected sites for intensive study.

There are multiple forms of purposeful sampling. Patton describes the option of **studying extreme cases**--one or more of the best and the worst of them. They do not even have to be randomly selected best and worst sites. They can be the ones you are likely to learn the most from. Another approach he describes is studying the **typical case**, especially if limited resources prevent getting information from enough sites to make generalizations. Instead, in-depth information could be obtained from a few typical programs. Another strategy he describes is **maximum variation sampling**, referring to individuals within a site, or sites within a region. For example, programs could be spread throughout a state in urban, suburban and rural locations. The interviewer may not have enough funds to gather a truly random, representative sample of sites. However, he or she could increase the variation or diversity in the sample. Likewise, people at a site identified by staff to have had quite different experiences with an intervention could be interviewed. This would allow the investigator to better understand variations in the program and the varied experiences of people affected by it.

Sometimes you do not have the time or resources for a complete sampling strategy. I provide an example from his own recent experience in the following shadowbox. In this situation, a relatively small number of people at a few locations in the United States were interviewed to identify issues of concern to Air Force medical personnel world-wide; however, although I did not visit facilities outside the United States, got good information was obtained upon which to base survey development.

I based the **USAF Medical Service Objective Medical Group (OMG) Survey** on individual and small group interviews at one headquarters site and four medical facilities varying is size and geographic location, since these factors probably influence perceptions about the OMG structure. All facilities visited were in the continental United States. This was done mainly to save time and money. Military and civilian personnel were interviewed at all organizational levels since role and position influence perceptions. The total sample was small. Only about 150 people-were interviewed. Face-to-face interviews were augmented with phone conversations with personnel at other sites. Despite the small sample and the selection of sites based more on opportunity and cost considerations than on science, a comprehensive, detailed view of issues concerning OMG implementation was obtained. Well over 100 pages of notes served as the basis for identifying 33 themes used to generate about 370 survey items which were later reduced to 113.

Size and Diversity: With the exception of Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI), interviewers typically work with small samples. This is usually due to practical constraints since interviewing is labor intensive (involving skilled, expensive personnel) and time consuming. Ideally, whether you are conducting interviews or surveys or using qualitative or quantitative analyses, your sample should be sufficiently large and carefully selected that you can have confidence in your results. Certainly, having very small samples should be avoided in most research applications. On the other hand, if you are conducting "celebrity interviews" you may only be interested in one or a few people. However, interviewers should try to obtain a reasonably large sample within practical constraints. But whereas survey researchers may send surveys to hundreds or even thousands of people, interviewers may be fortunate to have access to fewer than a hundred people, individually or in groups. Usually these smaller samples will suffice, especially if care is taken to ensure that the full range of the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors in the population is represented in the sample. Also, the ease with which skilled interviewers can get more in depth, richer information than would be possible on a survey helps make up for the loss of sample size, as does the flexibility interviewers have relative to their survey counterparts in asking follow-up questions. For example, if it becomes obvious that particular subtopics are important, interviewers can probe to focus attention on these critical areas. They can learn and adapt during the interview.

Diversity is a critical feature in selecting a sample. For instance, if you are interested in identifying problems in an organization, make sure to interview sufficient numbers of people at different organizational levels and in different roles to get a full range of perspectives. Therefore, sampling and sample size need not refer to the number and type of human subjects alone. Sample size can be an important factor in terms of the number of non-human units in which your interviews are conducted. "Units" as used here refer to the types of geographical or social-group entities in which you conduct your interviews. Units could be work groups, companies, organizations, schools, medical facilities, bases, households, neighborhoods, etc.

Larger Sample Interviews and Sample Size Determination. If you are conducting **telephone interviews** (especially using CATI) it is much easier for you to gather data from a larger sample and obtain information that can be analyzed using quantitative methods. You gain most of the advantages of surveys without losing many of the advantages of interviewing (except for those related to face-to-face contact). With the larger samples and quantifiable data that CATI affords, your data set would lend itself more easily than regular interview data to performing inferential as well as descriptive analyses.

At the Armstrong Laboratory, scientists often perform complex analyses (including subgroup analyses) and can usually obtain large samples. Thus, some of my colleagues may be uncomfortable with fewer than 200-300 people in each analysis subgroup. Most investigators do not have this opportunity. Sudman (1983) recommends at least 100 cases in major subgroups and at least 20-50 cases in smaller subunits. In consulting applications, my experience has been to oversample small groups. Sometimes you may not have subgroups large enough to perform quantitative analyses with confidence, or subgroups may be so small that the individuals within them could be identified through background data. You would usually not report quantitative results on subgroups of less than 10 persons. If the subgroups are a bit larger, but still small (say 10 to 15 cases) you might consider reporting the results. However, if you do, inform your customer if you believe the sample is too small for you to have confidence in your findings. Also avoid inadvertently divulging the identity of your respondents. Beware that as you perform more multiway analyses, your chance of having cells with extremely small (thus, person-identifiable) frequencies increases dramatically. In a recent analysis of a large-scale survey, my colleagues and I decided not to share output of a four-way distribution (organization by job group by grade range by item response) with our client. We did this because individuals could have been identified on the basis of extremely small frequencies in some cells. For instance, in many cases, there were only one or two individuals in the organization that had the same job, were of the same gender, and were in a particular grade range.

Salant and Dillman (1994, p. 55) provide a useful table for determining the sample size to use at different levels of sampling error, population size and variability. For example, if you require only + or - 3% error at a 95% confidence level, a sample size of 516 is recommended if your population contains 1,000 cases and you use a rather conservative estimate of variability (50/50 split). Assuming the same variability, a sample size of 964 would be needed if your population contains 10,000 cases. If your population contains 25,000 to 100,000,000 cases you would need a sample of between 1,023 and 1,067 people. For very large populations, it is interesting to note that about the same sample size would be needed regardless of population size. Keep in mind that the probable (but often unknown) variability in the population on the characteristics being measured is an important consideration in determining sample size. The larger the variance, the greater the need for a large sample.

Assistance From Points of Contact: You may arrange for assistance from points of contact (POCs) at different interview locations. They can:

- help gain the cooperation or "buy-in" of management at their site,
- help you identify those to be interviewed,
- schedule the interviews, and
- arrange for a suitable location for the interviews to take place.

Basically, you provide POCs with guidance and they identify your sample and set up interviews for you. The role of POCs is important and it is helpful to establish a good relationship with them. POCs may arrange for your lodging and serve as your host and problem solver. They may locate no-shows and reschedule participants while you are interviewing. They are likely to become interview participants themselves. On the down side, you may not know for sure if your sampling guidance was followed. Also, their dual role as POC and interviewee may place them in an awkward position. They may be considered closely tied to management and a potential threat to confidentially.

Decide on the Type of Interview: Individual Versus Group and Amount of Structure:

Both individual and group interviews have their merits and it is often advantageous to conduct both. Whether you conduct individual or group interviews (or both) will depend on your needs and opportunities, and on the needs and expectations of others.

Individual Interviews: In an individual interview you can focus undivided attention on a specific individual and try to elicit his or her most unguarded comments about the topics of discussion. If an individual is being interviewed, he or she need not worry about the reactions of other interviewees to what is being said. Also, an individual interviewee need not worry about breaches of the promise of non-attribution by other interviewees. He or she need only worry about you. Hopefully, you will be skilled enough to overcome most apprehension.

What is the down side of conducting individual interviews? In such an interview, the interviewee is in a better position to engage in "impression management" by trying to impress you and by putting a positive spin on what is said. Since there is no one else to refute what the interviewee says, you may be unsure if you are getting an accurate picture. This would be especially true if you are trying to gather facts to assess the success of an intervention rather than just tapping personal attitudes (which you would expect to vary). However, when you conduct other interviews you get the perspectives of other knowledgeable people on the same topics. This provides you not only with additional information, but with a veracity check.

Another disadvantage of individual interviews is the lack of synergy that sometimes occurs when one interviewee reacts to the comments of other interviewees. This kind of social influence can result in individuals responding in creative ways they would not have explored if they were just in a dyadic exchange with an interviewer. They may also have more opportunity to explore differences in points of view if they are reacting to what others say. On the other hand, multiple interviewees can also stifle what individual participants are willing to say due to fears about sounding stupid, being disapproved of, or breaches of confidentiality. In an individual interview, they may be more willing to open up to a skilled interviewer.

Sometimes interviewing someone individually just makes sense. If you are only interested in interviewing a specific individual, you would conduct your interview with him or her and forgo a group interview. This individual may be a movie star, a celebrity athlete, a respected senator, a renowned general, the CEO of a corporation, or someone else with heroic or celebrity status. Usually, the information you gain from individual interviews is combined with information from other interviews, so confidentiality is not a problem. In celebrity interviews, that would not be true. Like a journalist, you would negotiate with the person being interviewed about what was "for attribution."

Interviewing someone individually may be expected of you. When a person in the Air Force goes to a site to conduct interviews it is usually expected that he or she will first meet with the POC and then briefly visit the commander or other high-ranking official. Usually, this is just a courtesy visit consisting of a brief hello and show of support before you interview others. It is common, however, that you will be scheduled to return later to interview the commander and other executives. Usually, such people are interviewed individually, and perhaps also included in a group interview with those they supervise. See Group Interviews on page 31 for cautions about having a commander or other supervisor present in a group interview.

Note that if you interview facility commanders, CEOs or other dignitaries, they may reverse roles and interview you. This is acceptable to a degree. However, do not let them turn your interview into a debrief where you are pumped for specific information about what has been said by organizational members. It is all right to discuss in general terms emerging impressions formulated on the basis of your interviews. You may even talk generally about concerns raised in their facility. However, it is not acceptable to comment on specific statements made by their people or to link specific statements to individuals. If you are in this situation, convey impressions about issues that are widely shared and not necessarily specific to their site. If there are site-specific problems, discuss them in ways that protect your information sources.

Dignitaries are not the only people who should be interviewed individually. Lets assume you go to a site to conduct mostly group interviews. These group participants have the right to be interviewed individually if they wish. Perhaps some are shy or intimidated in the group setting. Perhaps they want to share a confidence they could not comfortably discuss in the group. Perhaps there is a critical problem they can only discuss privately. This does not happen often, but make yourself available for individual discussions with group interviewees, regardless of their position or role.

Sometimes while conducting an individual interview, the person interviewed recommends that others be invited into the discussion. Usually, this is a good idea that should be encouraged. Beware, however, that they may be stacking the deck with people who support their perspective.

Sometimes you may conduct an interview with someone and others come to visit. For instance, you may be in someone's office and a colleague comes by. Consider encouraging such people to become a part of the interview if you believe they would have knowledge to add to the interview. Recently, I was interviewing a mid-level officer at a medical facility and a junior enlisted woman came to visit her. This woman became a source of valuable additional information about the interview topic and the veracity of what she said was confirmed by the officer.

Except for the structure you bring to an individual interview in terms of predetermined questions and perhaps response coding sheets, individual interviews are generally rather **unstructured**. Because of the one-to-one nature of the interview it is relatively easy to maintain control. You do not have the potential problem of a free-for-all as participants banter back and forth. There is an important exception to this generalization. **Evaluation interviews** are more successful if they are structured (Thorton & Byham, 1982, Dipboye & Gaugler, 1993).

Group Interviews: Group interviews allow multiple people to express their thoughts about the issues discussed. They save time since several people are interviewed at once. They provide input greater than the sum of individual contributions had each person been interviewed alone. Synergy is created when people are influenced by and react to the comments of others.

Group interviews can create problems, especially in hierarchical structures. If great disparities in grade or rank exist, or if the head of a group is present, this could result in domination by those who are higher graded or in a position of authority. The presence of such people could also intimidate those lower in the hierarchy. For this reason, it is sometimes wise to exclude mid- or executive-level supervisors from group interviews, or to interview them as a separate group, and to request everyone be of about the same grade or rank. Homogeneous groups are not always desirable. You may want heterogeneous groups so the full range of perspectives can be aired and discussed. You can encounter domination or intimidation in any group. If so, engage others in the discussion and do what you can to lessen these effects.

Fishkin (1995) is concerned about polls, democracy and the participation of an informed public in political processes. He suggests group interviews can help reinvent democracy on a direct rather than representative level by creating the conditions where people get together to discuss issues face-to-face. He advocates the use of deliberative polling in which randomly selected citizens from throughout the nation gather where they can interact under conditions favorable to sustained deliberation. This could also be done using computerized means or through videoteleconferencing, negating the need to be physically in one place. In this way, rather than just asking people individually about topics they may know little about and be disinterested in (as on a national poll), you create an engaged, informed public working together in microcosm to discuss and resolve issues. Skillful facilitation would be critical to the success of such efforts.

Some group interviews can be quite **unstructured**, allowing participants to interact rather freely among themselves and with the interviewer. An example of a group which is often unstructured is a "focus group" (Krueger, 1988, Morgan, 1988, Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Focus groups were first used in radio research in 1941 (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) and are used extensively in marketing and community-based research and for other purposes. In such a group, about 8 to 12 people get together to share their views on a product, service or process. The interviewer often creates conditions wherein the interaction among group members becomes intentionally permissive to elicit a wide array of opinions. Typically, focus groups are adaptable and the level of focus and degree of structure varies depending on the information needs of the interviewer (sometimes called the "moderator" or "facilitator" in such interviews). There is no need to reach consensus in such a group and taking full advantage of group dynamics, you can get more varied insights than from an individual interview since responses spark the responses of others. Responses are influenced not only by personal thoughts and feelings, but also by the thoughts and feelings of other participants. Appendix D contains a protocol used for focus group interviews.

Even a rather structured focus group may be too permissive for some purposes. You may want a more **structured** format. You may want to brainstorm about issues in a more orderly or controlled fashion. To do this, the "nominal group" technique can be used to eventually evaluate, combine and rank-order issues. Here, the facilitator becomes the conduit for communication. Group members communicate with each other only through him or her.

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Decide What to Ask and Develop an Interview Protocol, if Necessary

Since the purposes and circumstances of interviews vary, the questions asked range from extemporaneous (largely formulated in the interview) to precisely specified (thought out and written before the interview). Somewhere in the middle is the situation where the interviewer jots down notes about what to ask in the approximate question order.

What I call an interview protocol is loosely defined here. It is a guide created beforehand to assist the interviewer in conducting an interview and collecting data from it. In what Patton (1980) calls an informal conversational interview, it may be unnecessary. The interviewer just talks to people about their perspectives and spontaneously generates questions based on the conversation flow. If a protocol is used, it can range from notes to yourself on questioning, with space for notes from the interview, to something more elaborate. An elaborate protocol may contain a list of questions to be followed verbatim, with possible probes, and well-thought-out response sheets with coded responses and scales, with room for brief or extended narratives. Advice on preparing to ask questions is provided below. See also Patton's chapter on Qualitative Interviewing (Patton, 1980, pp. 195-263). Appendix D contains an interview protocol which was used in small, relatively unstructured groups for the purpose of conducting a preliminary evaluation of refined civilian appraisal forms and instructions for the Air Force. It also includes information about the administration of a short survey given just before the interviews and "lessons learned" comments on the interview questions. Interviewers were also given copies of the questions with more space between them for note taking.

Don't Ask Too Many Questions: Your interview should be short. Otherwise participants may lose interest, or become agitated and eventually decline to continue. Unlike survey items, interview questions are phrased to elicit an extended narrative. Thus, they take time and you will not have time to ask many questions. You could even ask a single question and get an hour's worth of rich response. The following example is really two questions phrased as one, asked of groups of about 6 to 12 medical personnel per session. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the interview and with only occasional encouragement, I elicited a continuous stream of input using the following general statement:

I would like to find out from you what you all like or dislike most about the Objective Medical Group structure.

The newly instituted OMG structure in Air Force medical facilities was such a key issue for those involved that most people had strong opinions. All I needed to do was sit back, listen, take some notes, and occasionally probe for additional input of a positive or negative nature. If some responses pointed in more specific directions, probes were used to get more detail. Questions were also asked to determine how widespread attitudes were about specific likes and dislikes.

This is an example of a shotgun question. Usually questions are more focused. Nonetheless, you won't have time for lots of questions. Five or six well constructed questions is about all you should attempt in one sitting.

Decide How Rigorous or Flexible Your Questioning Should Be: How rigid or flexible do you want your questioning to be? You may want a structured protocol with specific questions to be followed rigorously. An employment interview would be an example where standardized, structured interviewing would be desirable to ensure fairness. If multiple interviewers are conducting interviews at different sites, a structured interview ensures that the same questions are asked. They are memorized beforehand but presented in a conversational fashion that appears unrehearsed during the interview. On some occasions, you may need little structure. This would be true if you were just introduced to the administrator of a facility at which you were about to conduct more formal interviews. It would also be the case if someone from a group interview wanted to speak to you individually. Usually, however, you will need well crafted questions going into your interview. But if verbatim narration is not required, it has been my experience that reviewing the questions just before the interview and writing some notes to remind yourself of what you want to say is usually sufficient. I often give interviewers permission to paraphrase so they are comfortable with the wording. Also, if a question has already been answered in response to an earlier question, then interviewers should skip the answered question. For instance, if you ask respondents how they feel about something and in answering they tell you how to it could be improved, you could skip a later question dealing with improvement. As another example, if a "How do you feel about..." question results in lots of comment, you could skip a subquestion such as "What do you like or dislike about it" if respondents have already told you their likes and dislikes. On the other hand, if the original general question does not evoke much response, the subquestion about likes and dislikes may help get people talking. See Appendix D for other examples. Sometimes, you need just enough structure to get those being interviewed to begin talking, and then you can base follow-up questions (probes) almost entirely on what has been said. At other times, as you gain progressively more information going from one interview to the next, your questions, or how you word them, may change due to your improved understanding of issues. Interviewers need to be flexible and willing to modify their protocol if doing so makes sense. For consistency across interviews, it is wise to discuss desirable changes with your fellow interviewers in "lessons learned" sessions.

Regardless of question rigidity or flexibility, do not go into an interview blind. Even anticipated conversations should be thought through beforehand. Consider ahead of time what your purpose is, what you intend to get from the interview, and the questioning you intend to pursue in situations you are likely to encounter.

Keep Questions Simple and Related: Keep questions short and easy to comprehend. Use simple words everyone can understand. Avoid acronyms or professional jargon unless the terms are understood by all. Go from general to specific. Treat questions as part of a whole. They should be logically arranged in a manner that makes sense to the interviewee. Questions should flow one to the other. They should be relevant to the topic and interesting to the interviewee. The interview should flow in a conversational, yet purposeful, manner. As interviewer, you should do little of the talking. Your questions should be perceived by the respondent as "in context" with other questions. If you go from one context to another, use clear transition statements. The first questions should be consistent with your introduction and interesting enough to motivate participation.

Use Introductory and Transition Statements: Remember that since information is conveyed by speech rather than written down, as in a survey, introductory comments and transition statements are critical. Pay as much attention to getting them right as you do your questions. If the person you are

interviewing has gone off on a tangent, try to link in what has been said with the next question, if a relationship exists.

Phrase Questions to Get at Process: "Why" questions are sometimes not recommended because they may put people on the defensive and they assume a rational, well thought out answer. They may also seem too pointed, as if an interrogation is being conducted. "How" questions are often used to get at process issues. Stay away from questions that elicit short dichotomous answers such as yes or no. Process questions can deal with how things work as well as with interpersonal aspects. For instance, you may not only be interested in how a product was redesigned to work better, but also how the team began to work more effectively together to produce the improved solution.

Group Questions Within Topics: Group questions by topic and use transitional statements. Avoid asking too many questions and vary topics to maintain interest. Avoid redundancy.

Keep Questions Neutral: How questions are phrased is important. Phrase them in an unbiased or neutral way; that is, one that does not predispose a certain response or suggest a desired answer. For instance, you would **not** say:

What is your opinion of Senator Smith's poor performance during the last congressional session?

Rather, you might say:

Based on his voting record, explain how well you think Senator Smith performed during the last congressional session.

Not only was the question made more neutral, the performance criterion was made more specific since it was based on voting record. The word "explain" was included to discourage a "He did well" brief response.

Problems with such questioning may develop. What if interview participants had no idea about Senator Smith's voting record? This could be handled in the following ways:

- ask the question only if respondents are likely to be familiar with the senator's voting record,

- summarize his voting record verbally yourself or have a synopsis of it available, or

- ask for general opinions about the senator's job performance without specific reference to his voting record, while giving people the option of claiming ignorance.

You do not just ask questions in an interview. You communicate in other ways. For example, you send out nonverbal cues and make statements in response to the information provided. Some mild positive reinforcement is constructive to motivate continued participation and maintain your bond with respondents. But strong positive or negative reinforcement is inappropriate. By word or gesture, do not communicate disdain or disgust for what is said. Likewise, do not communicate enthusiastic endorsement either. While listening, you might nod or say "uh huh," but you would not say "right on!" You might say "Thank you" or "That's an interesting (helpful, useful) comment," but you would not say

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"Wow, that's a great idea!" You might say "Thanks for sharing your views on that issue." You would not say "What a stupid opinion." If someone told you of behaviors or views you did not approve of, you would not say "How could you think that," or "How could you have done that," or "That's disgusting (immoral, perverse)!" You could legitimately probe about how they came to a particular viewpoint, or why they behaved in a particular way. Keep in mind how obvious nonverbal language can be. Do not frown and shake your head if you disapprove of what you hear.

Use Probes to Encourage Elaboration: Interview questions should be phrased to discourage brief responses. Sometimes you get these anyway. Consider the example of Senator Smith's job performance above. Let's say you decided interview participants may not have detailed knowledge of his voting record. However, because of his flamboyant personality and extensive media exposure, you believe they would have strong opinions about him. Let's say also that you want to focus on his performance in Congress rather than on aspects of his personality. You decide to ask the following less-than-perfect question:

What is your opinion of Senator Smith's recent performance as the senior senator from your state?

Assume a participant gives you the following response:

He's done a good job.

What could you say to gain more information about his or her opinion of the senator? You could use one of the following probes:

Why do you think he has done a good job?
Could you elaborate on why you feel he has done a good job?
Why do you feel this way?
Could you explain to me what you mean?

Ensure Understanding Through Clarification and Feedback: Sometimes participants need clarification about what you said. They may not understand the meaning of a question as you phrased it, or want elaboration. They may have forgotten what you asked. They may be unsure of the definition of a term you used. Prior to your interview, consider how to clarify or elaborate upon a question, or define a term, so you and other interviewers can do so effectively and be consistent across interviews. For instance, you may need to explain the meaning of "Total Quality" or other quality-related terms since they are jargon. I have had people frequently ask me what is meant by "organization" or "workgroup" or "top management" or "second-level supervisor" or "career planning information." If you intentionally do not wish to provide a specific definition, you could say "However you define it" or "Whomever you conceive them to be." For example, perhaps you wish to get a broad impression of the trust people have or do not have in distant officials who influence whether an Air Force base closes. Perhaps you want to know if people think these leaders really care about the people who may lose their jobs. Are they sincerely looking after the best interests of those involved? Assume you do not wish to identify a

specific leader or type of leader (elected officials, appointed officials, career civil servants, military officers, members of Congress, the President or Vice President, etc.), at least not yet. Assume also that at this point you are not interested in specific assistance strategies. You could say:

> People have different degrees of trust for leaders in Washington and different reasons for trusting or distrusting them. Explain to what extent you do or do not trust leaders in Washington DC to look after your best interests and those of other workers at the base. Explain why you feel as you do.

If participants wanted clarification of which leaders and you wanted to keep it general, you could say:

> Whichever leaders come to mind.
>
> Whomever you think will have the greatest impact on the future of workers at your base.
>
> Whichever leaders you would like to speak about.

In using this example, I am not recommending that you **remain** so general. Depending on the responses to the general question, you could then focus on feelings of trust or distrust for various categories of leaders in Washington DC (senators, congress persons, the president, political appointees, career civil servants, etc.). You could ask similar questions about leaders in the local community or at the base. You could ask questions about base closure and about how such leaders could assist people to either keep their jobs or make a career transition.

Interview participants and interviewers need help understanding what is said. In particular, interviewers need to let participants know that they are trying to prevent or minimize distortion of the meaning of what is said. Therefore, provide respondents with feedback occasionally during the interview concerning what you believe they are saying. Give them an opportunity to clarify what they said. You could use any of the following statements:

> Let me see if I understand the point you are making here.
>
> Let me see if I understand where you are coming from.
>
> So from your perspective...
>
> In your opinion, then...
>
> Let me make sure I understand what you are saying.
>
> If I understand what you mean, you are saying that...

Then paraphrase in your own words what was said. If you have not captured the meaning correctly, encourage participants to help you clear up your misunderstanding.

You are the interview expert, not the subject matter expert. Participants are the subject matter experts. It is reasonable, therefore, for you to sometimes not fully understand what is being said. Use this to your advantage. Occasionally, say something like:

I didn't completely follow what you were saying. Could you clarify what you were trying to say?

I'm sorry, I think I missed the point you were trying to make.

Could you please explain a bit more why that is true?

I'm not sure I understand your viewpoint. Could you elaborate on what you mean?

Ask Questions About Topics Your Client Can Do Something About: When developing questions, ask yourself this practical question: can the people who will use the data reasonably help resolve the issue? If the answer is no, think twice about asking the question. Of course, you may anticipate doing something about a problem in the future, or you may arrange for someone else with authority to address the issue. However, if your client has little or no chance of effectively rectifying a problem, you are just wasting your time, and the time of your interview participants, by bringing it up. You will also raise false expectations among participants by giving them the impression the problem will be resolved.

Keep Questions Relevant to Your Purpose, Especially if Very Intrusive: Let's say you must include very intrusive questions in an interview to screen people for particularly sensitive positions. For example, you may include questions about drug use. Questions about current use, or use in the recent past, may be reasonable given the sensitive nature of the job and because behavior in the present and recent past is most predictive of future behavior. However, it is inappropriate from a privacy invasion viewpoint and irrelevant and invalid from a predictive viewpoint to probe about such use years ago. Respondents may decline to answer such intrusive questions, or they may give misleading answers even to questions concerning current or near-term behavior. As Koral (1988, p. 57) warns after summarizing legal privacy issues, "Don't get information you don't really need--snooping can get you in trouble, and having information that is not really necessary can get you in trouble if you use it." The principle of not asking irrelevant questions applies regardless of how intrusive they are. Shorten your interview by excluding irrelevant questions.

Make Objectionable Questions More Acceptable: In Chapter 3 I recommended limiting or avoiding objectionable or intrusive items. I acknowledge they should be included sometimes since controversial issues need to be understood. Dillman (1978, pp. 105-108), and Salant and Dillman (1994, p. 96) provide suggestions for making objectionable content more acceptable. They discuss how to do so in the context of survey research, but what is said also applies to interviews. These suggestions, and additional ones of my own, are discussed below.

Dillman and Salant and Dillman, cite total family income or company profit as topics many people find objectionable. As mentioned on page 17, Bradburn et al. (1979) also found income questions to be threatening. Rather than ask for specific total income or profit, Salant and Dillman suggest questions concerning income be phrased as ranges covering several thousand dollars. These ranges should not be too narrow or people may think you are trying to get a precise income figure.

Dillman and Salant and Dillman also suggest that objectionable content be placed in a balanced context to soften its impact and to convey that an objectionable attitude does not reflect the data gatherer's own view. Salant and Dillman use a welfare example. Dillman uses an example of a survey item expressing a strongly negative view toward the church as a "parasite on society," presumably because churches are exempt from taxation. This is a strongly worded negative item many people would find objectionable since Americans typically have a high regard for religious institutions. Dillman suggests the addition of a positively worded item about the topic as a counterbalance. In an interview, questions would typically be less specific than survey items. But you could establish a context in which participants are comfortable making positive or negative comments, even about a respected institution. Dillman recommends a lead-in that could be part of an interview script: mention that people have different opinions about the role of the church in society. Notice that this simple lead-in is neither negative nor positive. It is dated and implicitly equates organized religion with Christianity through the use of the word "church." Today, such questioning might relate to the role of religious groups and be broadly worded so anyone could answer, regardless of their religious views or affiliations.

For example, an interview question could be phrased like this:

> Some people believe that religious group members should be politically active to help change society. Other people believe they should focus on the spiritual needs of their members. What is your perspective on these points of view?

The phrasing of this question is probably not offensive. (This assumption should be pretested. See Prestest and Practice Your Interview on page 41.) It could also be answered easily by anyone. Respondents could agree with one stated perspective or the other, neither perspective, or both perspectives. They could elaborate on both perspectives and give "it depends" conditional statements.

Dillman also explains that the most difficult items are those which could lead to respondent condemnation or incrimination. He suggests an easy way to make such items or questions less objectionable. Rather than asking people about themselves and their behaviors or controversial views, solicit their attitudes toward others who engage in such activities or hold such views. You could also ask about general attitudes toward the topic. If you must ask questions about the respondent's own behavior, Dillman recommends you lead up to them by placing them after more general attitude questions.

The same principle applies to questions about organizations or organizational membership. Instead of asking direct questions about membership, ask respondents about their attitudes toward various groups or organizations, or toward employees or members.

You may be able to get indirectly at racist or sexist attitudes by asking people about the racism or sexism of those with whom they work or otherwise associate. However, their attitudes may differ from those around them, especially at work.

You could indirectly assess the threat of interview content by asking how threatened **other people** would be by certain questions, as Bradburn et al. (1979) did (see page 17).

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Make Note Taking and Response Coding as Simple As you Can: In addition to writing down your interview questions and having them available during the interview, do what you can to make note taking and data gathering simple, fast, and effective. In many situations it is wise to develop a response form that allows you to take notes or annotate/code responses with the least amount of writing. This can be part of, or as an adjunct to, your interview protocol. It is easiest when you have a good idea of the array of likely responses and can list them and then check the frequency with which they occur. Such a form is most useful if your interview is complex, if you need a detailed account of what was said, if you have categorical or quantitative content, and if you are interviewing alone rather than with a partner.

Because interviews give you the opportunity to get more detail and elaboration in the words of the participant than would be possible in a survey, interview questions are usually different from survey items. They are typically broad, open-ended, and not easily codified. This is less true in a telephone interview which combines the qualities of surveys and interviews. However, you may have some content that is similar in format to a survey and which would allow you to categorize likely responses beforehand or use rating scales. If this is the case for you, prepare response forms that will make it easy for you to annotate responses. What might you include on such a form? You could list possible options and provide space to either circle or check them. You could provide space for writing brief narrative words or phrases next to questions or anticipated probes. You may want to develop coding that allows keeping track of responses easier or which allows you to quantify responses. Also, you could have space to jot down notes pertaining to unexpected or "other" responses. You could include notes to yourself about branching or skipping and space to annotate simple numerical information such as dates or times. You may want to include graphic response scales. They could be the type you typically find on a survey, or the behaviorally anchored type described below.

A Performance Rating Scale Example: It is convenient when conducting an **evaluation interview** (say, for promotion) to use assessment tools developed in advance. Assume you want to evaluate a person's promotion eligibility and past performance relative to widely agreed upon standards. Here you could have behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS) available. These could provide a basis for reporting job motivation, job knowledge, past job performance and other motivational or performance facets. On the basis of your interview, or in conjunction with other information available to you (resume, references, etc.), you could check where the person being interviewed falls on the anchored continuum. An example of a BARS is provided below. Even this type of scale has drawbacks. The verbal descriptors used are just examples. They represent a small sample of possible behaviors that could demonstrate a ratee's performance at different levels. Raters may be uncertain how to categorize job behaviors they observe but are not included as verbal anchors on the scale. Also, the ratee may demonstrate some but not all of the of the behaviors at a particular level, or may demonstrate behaviors reflecting multiple levels (say superior and average performance). Consequently, the rater may be confused about just how to rate the employee. The fact that there are more than twice as many scale points as verbally anchored levels could also cause confusion.

```
Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS) Example
```

Job Motivation

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

<u>Poor</u>   <u>Average</u>   <u>Superior</u>

Shows less enthusiasm ` for the job than expected for the position.	Shows enthusiasm, drive and initiative consistent with the position level.	Takes the initiative and overcomes obstacles to get the job done.
Gives up easily when faced with obstacles and adversity.	Takes on assigned tasks and completes them when expected.	Goes out of his or her way to identify and solve problems.
Resists doing extra work or spending extra time on the job.	Is willing to do extra work and spend extra time when asked.	Volunteers to work extra hours when needed.

A Special Case: Interviews for Studying Emotion: Arvey, Renz, Watson and Driskill (1997) recommend that emotional expression in organizations be studied to improve the prediction and understanding of job performance and other outcomes. Interviews and surveys are two methods they recommend for this purpose. As in a survey, participants can be asked to recall past episodes in which they felt or expressed emotion. Or they can be asked about their attitudes toward emotional expression and their reaction to emotion expressed by others. Interviews have the advantage of allowing emotionality to be examined in more ways than would be possible with a survey. Induction can be combined with naturalistic observation as people in a group are asked about topics that may be controversial or about which there is likely to be disagreement. In such situations, emotional expression is likely to occur. It can also be intentionally facilitated in individual or group interviews by building stress into the interview. For instance, a person's views might be challenged by the interviewer. In addition, simulations can be used. For example, two people might be asked to play the roles of irate customer and customer service representative. In situations where people are likely to express intense emotion, it is extremely important to not harm participants. They should be informed beforehand what to expect (disagreement, strong emotions, challenge to stated positions, etc.), participation should be voluntary, and the personal impact of felt or expressed emotions should be discussed after the interview or simulation. Since simulation participants are actors playing roles, they should be encouraged not to take what is said personally.

Chapter 5

Preparing Yourself to Interview

Know Your Questions Well

In very structured interviews, you should stick to the script. In order for the interview to not seem stilted, you should know the script so well, like an actor, that it sounds conversational. In less structured interviews, you may not care if your questions are exactly the same from interview to interview. In such situations you could review your questions beforehand and have an easy-to-follow prompt in front of you while you interview. This prompt could be part of a simplified interview protocol. Instead of, or in addition to the question itself, it could contain a highlighted phrase to remind you of the question. Whether verbatim or paraphrased, you should know your questions so well that you do not have to rely on your notes, except perhaps to glance momentarily at them. Questions should come freely and sound natural rather than contrived.

Even in a very structured interview, do not be a slave to your interview protocol. Retain some flexibility and individuality. With probes, you can introduce flexibility and tailor your questions to specific respondents. Use them to gain greater understanding. You can generate probable probes before going into the interview and include them in your protocol. However, probes usually need to be partly improvised to be well tailored to the specific comments of interviewees. They are usually exploratory requests for clarification or elaboration of the prior statements and have to be crafted in the context of the interview itself.

Pretest and Practice Your Interview

Pretest your interview. Share your questions or complete interview protocol with colleagues and ask for feedback. Also, go through the complete interview with them or with representatives of your target population. Probe about question phrasing and about the substantive topic. Use the feedback received to refine your interview.

Do not just pretest your interview. Practice it after refining it but before conducting interviews in the field. Have a colleague assume the role of interviewee, or find someone from your target population to sit through the interview. Do this several times. Videotape your practice interviews if you can. Videotapes allow you to see how you ask questions. They allow you to assess your tone of voice, your warmth or coldness, your body language, etc. They also allow you to see how people react to you and your questions. Look for shortcomings in your interview style and for quirky mannerisms (we all have them). Do you ask questions in an easy, conversational manner without stumbling or having to rely too much on your notes? Are you friendly rather than aloof? Do you refrain from showing anger or disdain? Do you avoid leading participants to respond in particular ways? Can you keep yourself from fiddling with your hair, appearing nervous, or avoiding eye contact? With the knowledge gained from the videos and lots of practice, you can probably overcome most shortcomings.

Schedule Plenty of Time

When you schedule your interviews you will specify (or negotiate) the desired number of people per interview and the probable length of each interview with your POC. In a group interview, the size should be about 5 to 10 or 12 people. It is unwise to interview large groups at once. I recommend that interviews be scheduled for between thirty minutes to one hour, with some leeway to continue longer if the interview is going well and the participant or participants are agreeable. I had a pleasant experience a few years ago while interviewing a group of three senior physicians. At the start of the interview, one participant complained that he was very busy and objected to the anticipated length of the interview (about 30 minutes). However, once underway, he became an enthusiastic participant along with his colleagues and the interview comfortably lasted twice as long. After the group interview, I was invited to the office of the initially reluctant physician where the discussion continued and relevant materials were cordially provided.

Recommended interview session lengths vary depending on which expert you consult. Seidman (1991) recommends interviews be scheduled for as long as 90 minutes but that they be terminated after the time initially agreed upon. Patton (1980, p. 98) reports interviewing children for up to two hours. He also indicates having conducted in-depth interviews lasting between six and eight hours over a period of a few days. Regardless of whether or not you permit the interview to continue longer than scheduled, schedule more time than you need and allow at least a half hour between interviews. You may not have complete control over how long your interview takes. For instance, the person interviewed may be interrupted and you may have to "stop the clock" for a while. The time between interviews can be valuable to you for writing notes or relaxing since interviews are not easy and can be exhausting. If you use interview teams as recommended below (see Use Two Person Teams; More For Evaluation Purposes), it is good for the team to discuss interviews immediately after they occurred. Interviewers can also jot down or elaborate on notes between interviews while comments are fresh in their minds. The bottom line is to schedule more interview time than you expect to use and plenty of time between them. This not only helps you; it helps the interviewee to not feel rushed and prevents you from having to abruptly terminate an interview because the next person or group is waiting.

Sometimes interviewers have the inconvenience of having to interview at several locations in an unfamiliar setting. These interviews may not even be in the same building or at the same site. You may have difficulty going from one interview location to the next and may even get lost along the way. In such a situation, scheduling lots of time between interviews becomes even more critical.

Arrange for Comfortable Surroundings

If possible, conduct the interview in comfortable surroundings and away from the person's office. You do not want the interviewee to be distracted by phones or other job demands. Be sensitive to power dynamics. Get people out from behind their desks if you can. Also, a round table is preferred to a rectangular one since there is no "head of the table." It may be good to not have a table between you and the person or persons interviewed. Keep the setting as intimate as possible. Fit the room to the number of people involved. Do not interview a few people in a very large room. However, the room should not be so small that people feel cramped or claustrophobic. Be flexible about closing the door to the interview room. It is a good idea from the viewpoint of confidentiality. On the other hand, participants

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may feel trapped or uncomfortable with the door closed. Be sensitive to this and perhaps ask for their preference.

Use Two Person Teams; More For Evaluation Purposes

Do not gang up on interview participants. For instance, in most contexts, 4 or 5 people should not interview 1 or 2 persons (but see caveat below). In many situations, two-person teams are ideal. The two people usually play different roles. The main interviewer is the facilitator, focusing most of his or her attention on the person being interviewed (active listening, maintaining eye contact, encouraging, asking questions and probes). The other interviewer may focus on note taking (see cautionary note below) while still being attentive to the person interviewed. The note taker is not restricted from asking questions (especially probes), but this activity is secondary. These roles can be switched during different interviews.

Sometimes it is wise **not** to take notes during an interview. Note taking may be distracting to the person(s) being interviewed, or may cause them to restrict what they say for fear of disclosure. Most people want their statements not-for-attribution and note taking suggests that their statements may be attributed to them. This is a judgment call. You may want to stop taking notes, and stop any audiotaping or videotaping, if a person begins to get into something that is very personal and distressing to them, or which may be used against them. Notes can always be written immediately after the session. Also, since controversy exists over who should have access to notes and informed consent is not always honored, it may be wise to not take notes in some situations, or to be selective in what you write down (see the comments by McGuire on page 15).

> In an **employment interview** or similar evaluation situation, multiple interviewers are preferred. The more interviewers, the less likely that the biases of any one interviewer will overly influence the evaluation decision. Thus, in a context like this, three or more interviewers is appropriate. As Thorton and Byham (1982, p. 164) indicate, multiple interviewers can increase employment interview validity.

Present A Professional Appearance

Dress professionally for the interview and groom yourself well. Get a haircut, clean and cut your nails, shine your shoes, etc. Do not wear perfume or aftershave that is overpowering. Usually, conservative business clothes are appropriate. However, if those being interviewed might feel uncomfortable around interviewers who are very dressed up, dress more casually. For instance, "blue collar" workers, or inner city youth may feel uncomfortable if you interview them dressed in a formal suit. You want to lessen status differences and need only enough status to establish your credibility as an interviewer. Conform to the dress expectations of those being interviewed, but dress nicely.

Chapter 6

Conducting the Interview

Motivate Participation

Greet People and Introduce Yourself: As people come to the interview, greet them in a warm, friendly manner. Often, it is wise to shake hands with those being interviewed. However, if the group is too large, or you think they may be uncomfortable with this gesture, do not do it. Frequently, people are already seated for the interview and it may be cumbersome to shake everyone's hand. You can at least wave a friendly hello as you are introduced. You will likely be introduced by others in a formal way, but do not be too formal yourself. For instance, introduce yourself by your first name instead of using Mr., Ms., Dr. or Colonel.

Knowing the names of the persons you are interviewing is advantageous, but it may not be practical. If you do know their names, use this knowledge when addressing them. However, beware--do not assume you can call everyone by their first names. Some people would consider this an affront; especially from a stranger or someone they consider subordinate; others would welcome it. Use good judgment. Perhaps even ask. Especially in southern states and in the military, use "Sir" or "Ma'am."

Indicate the Probable Length of the Interview: The person or persons interviewed may be busy and believe they have more important things to do than answer your questions. Keep the interview short. Be honest and realistic up front about how long you expect it to take. Thirty minutes or less is ideal, but an hour or more may be acceptable. Depending on your success once the interview is underway, you may be able to continue longer. Participants may already know the expected length of the interview since you negotiated it when you scheduled your interviews. But it is good to repeat your expectations to the group. If they believe the length to be reasonable, this will heighten their motivation to participate.

Overcome Reluctance and Heighten Interest: Establish good rapport with participants early in the interview. If the anyone is reluctant, you can make a "conversion attempt" (jargon for trying to change the person's minds about participating). Briefly give them an idea of who you are. Explain why you have come and who your client is. Also explain what the interview is about, why it is important, and why their participation is critical. Your first few minutes are critical--you must convey quickly that you know what you are doing and capture the interest of those being interviewed.

Some persons interviewed may feel ill at ease. In such cases, be sympathetic and friendly and try to reduce the threat. Put the persons at ease. Make it clear you are not there to judge or to punish but to gather useful information in a way that will help rather than harm participants. Sometimes interviewees may be shy and unaccustomed to responding to questions face-to-face. Try to bring such people out. In establishing rapport, initially ask the interviewee a few easy questions about themselves or their job to "break the ice," even if this is not central to the issues you want to cover.

Sometimes respondents may be reluctant to participate because you failed to convince them of the importance of the interview. At other times they may be concerned about privacy or confidentiality. Probe the reasons for refusal and gently do what you can to heighten their interest and allay their fears.

One way to get people interested is to describe how their input should help bring about constructive change. (Do not promise this unless you are confident such change will occur.) You can also offer to share the aggregate results of the interviews and explain steps your client is likely to take to resolve the issues raised.

Reward Participation: The person interviewed should feel his or her time is well spent. The rewards of participation should outweigh the costs. Rewards can be subtle: anything from the pleasure of interacting with you to feeling consulted and able to have a positive influence. People like being consulted; it suggests they, and their views, are valued.

Interviewees sometimes receive monetary payment. It is usually modest. If it is too great, intrinsic motivation may decrease. People can also be paid by receiving a discount or coupon. For instance, if you asked questions about a restaurant or restaurants in a marketing research interview, you may give participants a coupon for a free dinner. Note, however, that you would not want to introduce bias by giving a coupon to only one restaurant if several restaurants were being evaluated. Participants may be influenced to evaluate the coupon provider more favorably than the competition.

You reward participation subtly throughout the interview by listening intently, saying things like "Uh huh," maintaining eye contact, and thanking participants for sharing their views. Remember, however, that you must remain neutral and should refrain from endorsing what is being said (for instance by saying "What a wonderful idea"). On the other hand, you must never express disdain for what is being said, or condemnation of the interviewee's views or behaviors.

Explain Ethical Safeguards

Voluntary Participation: As discussed in Chapter 3, voluntary participation is important. Explain early in the interview that participation is voluntary. If anyone is uncomfortable and expresses a desire not to participate, gently probe why. If you can convince them to stay, fine; if not, let them leave and thank them for coming. Voluntary participation may not be an issue when participation is self-motivated, as in an employment interview, or where it is clearly an expected part of a person's job. However, it is wise to be subtle about your expectations for participation and not make such interviews explicitly mandatory.

Confidentiality and Non-Attribution: Emphasize confidentiality and non-attribution early in your introductory comments. If anyone is concerned about confidentiality, try to allay their fears. If you are conducting a group interview, request that all participants agree not to attribute specific comments to individuals when they leave the interview.

Tape Only With Consent or Not at All: Interviews are frequently audiotaped and sometimes videotaped. Taping is often recommended so verbatim transcripts can be made (Patton, 1980, Siedman, 1991). For instance, Seidman. (pp. 86-87) states:

> "There is no question in my mind that in-depth interviews must be tape recorded...I believe that to work most reliability with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text for study."

Seidman admits, however, that there is a lack of agreement in the literature on this issue. The advantages and disadvantages of taping are discussed in the shadowbox below.

What are the **advantages of taping** an interview?

- Note taking is cumbersome and distracting. It can detract from the interview process. Taping can dramatically lessen note taking and free interviewers to relate to the people being interviewed. (However, as Patton, 1980, cautions, taping does not completely relieve the interviewer of note taking.)

- Taping provides accurate, precise, original verbal data free of interpretation. The interviewer need not fear having missed something important or be as concerned about misconstruing what was said because he or she can go back to the original narrative. A tape can also be used to check transcription accuracy.

- Interviewers can defend themselves against accusations of not following an interview protocol, not noting critical comments, or distorting what was said.

- Interviewers can study their own performance and learn from their mistakes.

- Videotaping can help to track what is being said in a group interview and provide a record of nonverbal communication.

- Seidman (1991) mentions that participants benefit from an accurate record of what they said to which they could have access. They are, therefore, better protected against irresponsible reporting.

What are the **disadvantages of taping** an interview?

- You may consider note taking good enough for your purposes and not want to spend hours transcribing or listening to tapes.

- Participants may not want you to tape and refuse to participate, or not speak as freely, due to the presence of the recorder.

- Interviewing is intrusive by nature and taping (especially videotaping) may be a heightened form of privacy invasion.

- The recorder may be considered a threat to confidentiality because it creates a permanent, irrefutable record of what was said, linked to a participant's voice (audio) or face (video). Participants could not plausibly deny they were the source of a statement.

- The tapes may fall into the wrong hands and be more harmful than notes.

- The operation of a recorder can interrupt the interview. Parts of the conversation may not be recorded if the recorder malfunctions, the tape runs out, or an interviewer changes a tape while conversation is ongoing.

- Use of a recorder may lull interviewers into not listening as intently or not taking good notes since they expect to get pertinent details later.

- The fidelity of audiotaped interviews is sometimes poor--almost to the point of not being decipherable.

- In group interviews, it is difficult to follow on audiotapes what is being said by multiple participants in conversations that can overlap. Videotaping could lessen this problem, but heighten resistance on the part of participants.

- Audiotapes are usually transcribed. This is a difficult, expensive, labor-intensive process and a potential source of error. Patton (1980, p. 249) provides suggestions for "How to Keep Transcribers Sane."

- Taking notes is cheaper than taping.

As the benefits and liabilities of taping suggest, it is easy to argue for or against the practice. Regardless of the merits or demerits of taping, the decision to tape should be a joint one. Informed consent is an important ethical issue. If you decide to tape your interviews, get the permission of the people you interview.

Perhaps in some contexts, taping is important. However, I usually do not tape interviews and recommends against the practice. If you decide to tape, make sure that reference to specific individuals is deleted from your transcription.

Be Friendly Yet Professional

As you transition from introductory comments to interview questions, continue to make use of your social skills. Be friendly and warm as the interview continues but also be professional and purposeful. Don't be chatty as you may have been before the interview when you were trying to build rapport.

Maintain Subtle Control

As the interviewer, you are "in charge." You have the right, if not the obligation, to maintain control of the interview. However, you should be subtle. Steer clear of authoritarian tactics. In more permissive interviews you can even give up some control.

Avoid Rank Intimidation: In most organizational settings, hierarchy and status are important. Where you are in the hierarchy may be an issue, especially in the military, where "rank has its privileges." Naturally, **all** persons interviewed should be treated with dignity and respect. However, do not be intimidated by rank. Do not treat those of higher rank with special deference in the interview.

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The same courtesy and kindness should be extended to all. Consider all views equally important and do not mentally weight comments by the rank of the persons making them. However, rank and other interviewee characteristics are sometimes noted for demographic comparisons. People of different grades or ranks--or genders, ages, positions, etc.--usually have different views and it is informative to identify these differences.

As interviewer, you are in charge of the interview. However, do not flaunt your power. If you are of higher grade or rank than those being interviewed, lessen status differences by treating others as your equal and doing other things to deemphasize the status differential. Do not sit at the head of the table. Encourage others to call you by your first name and downplay your rank or title. If you are military, consider not wearing your uniform. On the other hand, wearing your uniform may be expected and may help you establish rapport with other military members.

Avoid Authoritarian Control: You may have power by virtue of your position back at your organization, but you are just a visitor when conducting interviews at other locations. Your sources of power are limited. Do not alienate those being interviewed because they can keep their mouths shut or treat you like a substitute teacher. Those used to command roles may need to be more subtle than usual when trying to maintain control in an interview.

Trying to be in charge without command authority can be difficult. You may have power based on the prestige of your organization or the client who sent you to interview (like the Surgeon General). You may have "expert power" because you are reputed to know what you are doing. You may have developed a reputation as a caring person who can be trusted not to betray confidences. But your main source of power is the liking, acceptance and respect you generate in the interview. Use your expertise, charm, communication and interpersonal skills as sources of power to maintain control without being heavy handed. Do not demand anything of people. Instead, politely request their cooperation.

Watch for Distortion: Positive Spin

Watch for distortion. In a situation where you are assessing quality progress, selecting someone for a job, or are evaluating them in some other way, you may be given an overly positive picture. If assessing quality progress, ask for specific, tangible examples of quality improvement. The employment interview is an evaluative situation where an individual's future is at stake. Look for "walk-on-water" embellishments of accomplishments or capabilities.

You may encounter social desirability bias. The interviewee may want to please you by telling you what they think you want to hear rather than accurately stating their own views or behaviors. Alternatively, an interviewee may have an overly negative attitude, finding fault with everything. By being sensitive to these possibilities, and by interviewing several people with different roles and responsibilities, you can get a more balanced picture.

Be Sensitive to "Demand Characteristics"

Relative to telephone interviews, face-to-face contact provides more information about both interviewer and interviewee. Unfortunately, the presence of an interviewer can add unwanted "demand characteristics" to the situation. Bias can be introduced. As discussed earlier, the interviewee may want

to respond in a socially desirable way. The interviewee may be influenced by interviewer characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, social class, status, organizational position, age, attractiveness, grooming, or manner of dress. Participants may be offended by interviewers who are abrasive, insensitive, haughty, or rude.

Be Sensitive to Cultural Differences

Cultural Diversity: We live in a multicultural, pluralistic society with people from different ethnic, racial, national and spiritual backgrounds. They are of different genders and ages and have different lifestyles, political views, interests, values and sexual orientations.

Cultural diversity is increasing in the workplace. Future workplace composition will most likely include more women and minorities. Interviewers must have knowledge of cultural diversity and be sensitive to multicultural issues when they interview. They should be open and flexible enough to appreciate diversity and considerate enough not to offend representatives of different groups. Interviewers should get people of differing backgrounds or lifestyles to interact with them and with each other, frankly expressing their views.

Language Barriers: The interviewee may not speak English, or he or she may be more comfortable in another language. If this is the case, use bilingual interviewers whenever necessary.

Common Ground: Establish common ground between those being interviewed and those conducting the interview. A pre-interview chat about things you have in common (sports, music, a family, etc.) may help. Usually you do not have time for this, or you may have little idea of what you have in common. Outwardly obvious things can help establish common ground (like gender, race, age or military/civilian status) and make interviewees more comfortable. If you are interviewing a diverse workforce, use mixed interviewer teams which mirror such diversity, and tailor the team to the persons being interviewed.

Maintain Your Neutrality

Just as your questions should be neutral, you should also be neutral. Your personal opinions are not relevant. Do not convey your own views or you may bias responses. Do not criticize or be judgmental about the views or behavior of interviewees. Likewise, do not show strong endorsement. Listen attentively, but avoid conveying your own enthusiasm or disdain for particular responses.

Seidman (1991, p. 67) argues that interviewers should also guard against reinforcing responses with 'yes' or 'uh huh' statements. It is my experience that most interviewers are comfortable with the use of such modestly reinforcing statements in an interview, especially if they are uttered with a neutral tone.

Handle Abuse by Keeping Your Cool

Do not be surprised if you are verbally attacked during an interview. An interviewee may object to something you say and lecture you. I remember well a young man in a group interview wanting to impress his coworkers by denigrating a statement I made about the importance of keeping the customer

satisfied. He went into an elaborate tutorial about why I was wrong. If something like this happens to you, patiently listen without getting angry or defensive. Try to understand the other person's perspective and convey that understanding without being argumentative. Within limits, take the verbal abuse; it will be over soon. After giving the person reasonable time to express his or her concerns, politely but assertively return to the interview task.

If a person's wrath is directed to the interview itself--for instance, it is considered too invasive, or a waste of time--excuse the person. Do not become angry or unprofessional and do not take the hostility personally.

Allow For Reflection and Probe For Clarification

Interviewees may feel pressured to provide a quick response and, having little time for deliberation, may answer too soon, giving a short or superficial response. Allow them time to reflect, and probe (ask a follow-up question tailored to the response) if the answer given seems insufficient.

Listen More than You Speak

Interviewers must be articulate, and occasionally, verbally assertive. However, it is not the interviewer's role to dominate the conversation. Your job is to get others to speak and to listen for the meaning in what they say. They are the content experts. Interviewers should talk little and listen a lot. They should also avoid interrupting others who are speaking. During pauses, the interviewer can interject a comment, probe for clarification, or move to another topic.

Encourage Everyone's Participation

If you are in a group interview, pay attention to and encourage everyone's participation. Do not let the men (or women) dominate, or the highest-ranking, or the managers, or the loudest, or the most opinionated. Encourage shy participants to speak. Ask them what they think of your question or of what others are saying.

Terminate the Interview

At the beginning of the interview the interviewer should indicate the approximate time the interview will take. How long it actually takes depends on how well it is going and how enthusiastically engaged participants have become. If you exceed the allotted time, ask if continuing is acceptable unless it is going so well that you do not want to break the flow. If you must interview for extended periods, schedule multiple sessions over several days. Schedule additional interviews in advance and be sensitive to the interviewee's own schedule. Be sensitive also to subtle cues that it may be time to leave and thank people for their participation when you terminate the interview. Avoid having to rush people out so the next group can come in.

Chapter 7

Analyzing and Reporting

Analyze and Interpret Results: Unlike with surveys, interview analyses are usually more **qualitative** than quantitative. They are complex from the perspective of an investigator having to sort out emergent meaning, but analysis of interview data does not usually involve sophisticated mathematical or statistical methods. However, they can be extremely labor intensive as the interviewer plows through pages of notes or transcripts. However, in the process of interviewing, interviewers gain much knowledge and start to form implicit interpretations of what they have heard. This helps later as they begin to make sense of notes or other documentation and start to identify themes.

Typically, on the basis of notes, prepared coded sheets, or transcripts, interviewers perform a **content analysis** to identify themes and subthemes, much as with survey comments sheets. This process is not very sophisticated, but a great deal of useful information can be derived from it. For an extended description of content analysis, see Krippendorf (1980), Patton (1980, pp. 299-326 and Appendix 9.1) or Stewart and Shamdasani (1990). As a first step, the interviewer (or interviewers) involved in the qualitative interpretation process of content analysis will identify or highlight what they consider interesting, important content. Note that this process is best done by people who had previously served as interviewers since they already have a rich understanding of the fuller meaning of any notes. If you used multiple interviewers across multiple interview sessions, you may ask them to write not only good, legible notes for each session, but also a summary **across** sessions of what they consider to be major themes or recommendations. Note that it is harder to interpret notes and summaries of other interviewers than notes you have taken yourself. Thus, the process of content analyzing multiple within-session and across-session notes from many interviewers is more time consuming and probably less accurate than if you had conducted the interviews yourself. On the positive side, you can collect more information from more people than you could have done yourself. To overcome the ambiguity of interpreting the notes of others, consult with other interviewers after they give you their notes. You may bring them more fully into the interpretation process, or at least check with them on the veracity of your conclusions and recommendations.

Based on your own notes or notes of others, interviewers look for themes and subthemes with the eventual intent of creating a taxonomy of issues. As a taxonomy of themes and subthemes begins to emerge, it is written down like a table of contents. This content outline grows and changes as the interviewers involved in interpretation gain more understanding. To make the task easier, numerical codes can be assigned to themes and subthemes.

It is a good idea to input notes or narratives into a computer. This will allow a search for key words or phrases and moving notes or narratives around as themes are identified. However, before doing anything that could alter your original data, keep an **intact copy of your original notes** or narrative transcriptions. It is always a good idea to save "raw data" since you may want to start from scratch. It also documents your starting point should there be questions about your data later or should another researcher want to perform additional analyses (under strict ethical safeguards). With the original data safely stored, you can then use scissors or your word processor's cut and paste capability to cull out unimportant content and combine narratives or notes covering particular themes or subthemes.

> Computerized Semantic Analysis. Computerized semantic analysis procedures could be used to identify common themes in a content analysis of computerized interview narratives or notes. Such a procedure matches on the meaning of words (nouns, verbs, etc.) or phrases. The procedure has been used by scientists at the Armstrong Laboratory to determine the similarity of tasks when occupations are combined in order to merge task lists and remove duplicates.

People may criticize content analysis claiming it is more art than science. This claim is sometimes made since the themes identified are not necessarily the themes others would select based on the same input. To make the process more rigorous and less subject to criticism, have several people participate. At first they would work independently to identify important content and the themes and subthemes it contains. After each person goes through this process, collectively discuss the themes identified and their basis for them and begin negotiating and consensus building to develop a taxonomy everyone can agree upon.

When you report the results of your content analysis to your client, you can report themes in narrative fashion in either original or summarized form. You can also count the frequency with which different topics are mentioned and the percent of people mentioning each theme. When reporting to your customer, you can even quote some of the most representative comments on critical themes, even if you originally summarized this information. When you summarize what others have said, you risk interjecting your own meaning. Thus, it is a good idea to supplement summaries with quotations.

If you developed your own specialized response forms and have numerical data such as scale ratings, you can perform **quantitative analyses** such as computing **descriptive statistics** (means, standard deviations, frequencies and percents). If you have multiple scale ratings from several interviewers on individual candidates, for instance for employment selection, you could compute **interrater reliability** to determine the degree of consistency across raters. If you used CATI, you can probably treat your data as you would if you conducted a regular survey and perform more complex analyses. For guidebooks describing how to conduct descriptive and advanced quantitative analyses using the popular windows software, see Norusis (1993a, 1993b).

Report Results: Since interview data do not usually lend themselves to complex quantitative analyses, it is easy to keep reporting simple. Usually, busy executives like simple reporting. They do not want their time wasted. They want to easily understand the data presented. Most importantly, they want to quickly assess recommendations and draw implications for practical remedial action.

Executive summaries are usually well received. You can also provide more visual data. With interview data, you can simply present the frequency with which various themes or subthemes were mentioned, and if known, the percent of interviewees mentioning the themes. You can present representative examples of specific comments. If you do not have specific comments, you can write a brief narrative from your notes capturing the issues mentioned.

If you have more quantitative data available, these can be analyzed using more sophisticated methods and reported in numerical summaries or in visual format using graphs, histograms or pie charts. You can supplement simplified results of descriptive analyses (for instance histograms of aggregate percent agreeing or percent responding to each response category) with additional detailed statisticsI have often supplemented briefings or executive summaries with notebooks containing detailed statistical

summaries. Data in these notebooks usually provide descriptive response scale data that are not aggregated (typically frequencies and percents and possibly means and standard deviations). Keep in mind, however, that the data should be aggregated in terms of individual responses combined with those of others at a level to prevent disclosure of individual identities. These notebooks could contain descriptive statistics of individual items or of multiple-item scales, interrater reliability coefficients, behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS) data or more detailed information on any quantitative data collected. Depending on the sophistication of your client, such a notebook may also contain a brief tutorial on how to examine and interpret this information. For instance, these tutorials can explain the meaning of measures of central tendency (usually the mean) and the population distribution under the normal curve. If standard deviations are provided, the notebooks should also explain the meaning of this statistic. Although these recommended notebooks may not get much use, this information should be made available for customers since they may want more detail.

Multiple Time Assessment

Data analysis of either a qualitative or quantitative nature is not necessarily a one-time event. You may want to assess changes in attitudes or behaviors over time. You may be interested in assessing improvements in performance or in acceptance of a product or service. You may be evaluating the effectiveness of a program, product or service before and after you intervene to improve it. This is sometimes referred to as "quasi-experimental designs" using Time 1- Time 2 assessments (Cambell & Stanley 1963, Cook & Campbell, 1979) and it is an approach often used in program evaluation and marketing research. Sometimes programs or products are assessed while they are undergoing improvement (formative evaluation) as well as when after they have been refined as much as they are going to be at a particular point in time (summative evaluation). Also, in any kind of multiple time assessment, researchers are not just interested in the results at any given time, but in comparing and contrasting results across time, looking for improvements or trends.

Postscript: By-Chapter Summary of Recommendations

Introduction and Discussion (Chapter 1)

Interviews have the advantage of being face-to-face, allowing participants to respond in their own words, allowing interviewers to clarify and probe, and placing interviewers in a better position to motivate participation and establish rapport.

Interviews have the disadvantage of collecting data that are often difficult to analyze quantitatively. They also have the disadvantage of requiring skilled interviewers and being labor intensive. They are also not well suited to large groups or geographically dispersed populations, and responses given may be more distorted than on surveys.

Evaluation interviews may have low reliability and validity and should be used with caution along with other evaluation methods.

Do not automatically select an interview approach; consider other methods as well.

Interviewer Skills and Characteristics (Chapter 2)

Since interviewing takes special skills or personal characteristics, it takes a special kind of person to interview well. Interviewers should be carefully selected and trained.

Interviewers should be able to:
- establish rapid rapport and motivate participation,
- establish trust,
- overcome unwillingness to speak freely about sensitive topics,
- honor the right to not respond and avoid undo pressure,
- value respondents regardless of the beliefs or behaviors they divulge,
- listen actively and intently,
- speak effectively and persuasively, but not too much,
- interpret and respond to a variety of different verbal and nonverbal cues,
- be attentive to both interview process and content,
- encourage everyone to speak,
- maintain non-coercive control over the interview process,
- accurately record what is said,
- transition effectively from one question or topic to another,
- insightfully interpret, explore, link and paraphrase incoming information,
- maintain neutrality, keeping personal biases and beliefs outside the interview,
- avoid leading questions or distortion of responses through reinforcement,
- take possible abuse without becoming flustered,
- be kind, considerate, and professional at all times, and
- know when and how to terminate the interview.

Survey Ethics (Chapter 3)

Since you create the conditions for unconstrained speech and may gather information about potentially offensive attitudes or behaviors, or even illegal actions, you must protect your respondents from harm.

Ensure that participation is voluntary and never use coercion.

Maintain confidentiality. Do not share individual data with anyone without the respondent's informed consent, except for comments data which may be transformed verbatim (with references to specific individuals removed). Share **aggregate** information with management (or other clients). Your aggregations should be sufficiently large that specific individuals could not be identified by their demographic characteristics. Prevent unauthorized access to your raw data.

If your ethical responsibilities place you in conflict with organizational or societal expectations, explain the basis of your ethical position and try to resolve the issue in a way that is consistent with professional ethical standards.

Limit very objectionable or intrusive content. If you must ask such questions, carefully word them and emphasize confidentiality. Allow participants to not respond without the threat of punishment. Replace specific questions pertaining to respondents with general questions about attitudes or values related to the potentially objectionable or threatening issues.

Are your interviews for evaluation purposes which could result in the denial of an opportunity (for employment, promotion, etc.)? If so, avoid asking for information which could be used to unfairly discriminate against participants on the basis of personal characteristics such as age, ethnicity, race, gender, marital status, job-irrelevant organizational affiliation, religion, etc. Such questions are now often illegal.

Avoid asking questions about membership in specific job-irrelevant organizations. Legal precedent protects organizations and their members from forced disclosure of such information. Substitute general attitudinal items pertaining to the organizations of interest or their members.

If interviewers follow the ethical guidelines discussed, motivation to participate should increase. If these ethical standards are not met, prospective participants have the right to refuse to be interviewed or not answer questions they consider objectionable or too intrusive.

Preparing for Your Interview (Chapter 4)

Select a sample that adequately represents your target population, either through random or purposeful sampling. Oversample underrepresented groups. If responses are likely to fluctuate over time, use multiple time assessments.

Representiveness not only pertains to people interviewed but to larger aggregations such as households, neighborhoods, states, organizations, workgroups, etc.

Seek the assistance of points of contact to help you identify your sample and arrange for your interviews.

Consider both individual and group interviews.

Consider both structured and unstructured interviews.

Develop a simple or detailed interview protocol, as needed, for your specific purpose.

Do not ask too many questions.

Decide if you need to be rigorous or flexible with your questioning.

Keep questions simple and related; use transition statements.

Group questions within topics and keep them (and yourself) neutral.

Use probes to encourage elaboration and use clarification and feedback to ensure understanding.

Keep the questions you ask relevant to your purpose and ask questions about topics your client can do something about.

Take steps beforehand to make note taking and response coding simple during your interview.

Preparing Yourself to Interview (Chapter 5)

Know your questions so well that they seem conversational.

Pretest your interview and practice it beforehand.

Schedule plenty of time for your interview and between interviews.

Make sure the interview location is comfortable.

Use two person teams. If you are conducting evaluation interviews, using more than two interviewers is desirable.

Dress professionally and in a fashion that interview participants will be comfortable with.

Conducting the Interview Itself (Chapter 6)

Motivate participation and indicate the probable length of your interview at the start. Politely overcome resistance and explain the importance of your interview. Do not force participation.

Make the interview rewarding in subtle, intrinsic ways. Enjoying the opportunity to talk to an interviewer can be rewarding as can the belief that one's views are valued and that you can have a positive impact. Avoid too much emphasis on extrinsic rewards.

Explain ethical safeguards by emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality. Think twice about audiotaping or videotaping your interview and tape only with consent.

Be friendly yet professional and maintain control in subtle ways.

Be aware that interviewees may put a "positive spin" on their comments. Also, be sensitive to sources of bias you may introduce.

Appreciate cultural diversity. Be sensitive also to language barriers. Try to establish common ground.

Remain neutral. Keep your own opinions out of the interview. Accept what participants have to say without showing personal endorsement or disdain.

Be prepared for verbal abuse and handle it by keeping your cool.

Encourage participation by all and provide participants time for reflection. Probe for clarification or elaboration, but listen more than you speak.

Analyzing and Reporting (Chapter 7)

As a minimum, perform a qualitative content analysis of your interview notes or transcripts. Using a computer may facilitate this process.

If you have quantitative data, at least perform simple descriptive statistical analyses.

If you are using CATI, perform more advanced quantitative analyses.

Keep your results reporting simple for non-academic audiences.

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Appendix A. Rights Perspective: Free Speech and Privacy

Overview: Americans have the right to speak freely and surveys can facilitate this. However, unconstrained speech in response to a survey is unlikely unless steps are taken to protect individual privacy. This is achieved by not forcing participation, by making surveys anonymous (or keeping the responses of individuals confidential), and, with few exceptions, by sharing only aggregated data. Survey developers must do these things not only to get accurate data, but also to honor their ethical obligations to respondents. If privacy is guaranteed, respondents are protected from harm and their dignity is maintained. Thus, their motivation to participate and to provide undistorted information is likely to be increased.

The ethical justification for voluntary participation and confidentiality is based on two basic human rights: free speech and privacy, as discussed below.

Guaranteeing Free Speech: Some of our founding fathers considered the Constitution, as originally written in 1787, flawed. They believed it did not sufficiently protect individuals against the power of government. After years of debate, the first ten amendments (the Bill of Rights) were added to our Constitution in 1791 to protect individual liberties (Glasser & Adelman, 1991; Alderman & Kennedy, 1991). Alderman and Kennedy (1991, pp. 13 & 15) explain that these amendments, collectively, "outline the most comprehensive protection of individual freedom ever written;" however, in a 1987 poll, 59 percent of Americans queried could not identify this document. It is not that these amendments **give us** rights. As Glasser and Adelman (1991) indicate, our founders believed such rights as free speech were fundamental rights of human beings. The Bill of Rights was added **to protect** such inalienable rights.

The First Amendment protects religious freedom, freedom of speech (and expression), freedom of the press, the right of people to peacefully assemble, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. (See Text of the Constitution of the United States, 1992, for the specific wording of this and other amendments. For a discussion and description of legal cases pertaining to each amendment, see Alderman & Kennedy, 1991.) It took a long time for First Amendment rights to be realized in practice (Glasser & Adelman, 1991, Chapter 3). However, this amendment helped protect the right of Americans to speak and otherwise express themselves in largely unconstrained ways and to peacefully protest government actions.

In exploring the historical defense of free speech, Alderman and Kennedy (1991, p. 32) cite the views of John Milton, and more recently, Justices Holmes and Brandeis. The basic idea is that people should be free to discuss and debate ideas without the censorship of prevailing doctrine. To paraphrase Homes and Brandeis, in the free market place of ideas, good counsels remedy bad ones. For free speech advocates, the antidote for offensive speech in a free, pluralistic society is counterspeech, not prohibition. As Alderman and Kennedy explain, this view is based on idealism and respect for the principle of free speech, even if you dislike the unreasonable or intolerant views that free speech may unleash. Ultimately, it was thought, good ideas and truth would prevail.

The First Amendment protection of a free press also supports free speech. In a 1964 deliberation over First Amendment protections of a free press, the Supreme Court indicated a "profound national

commitment to the principle that debate on public issues should be uninhibited, robust and wide-open" (Alderman & Kennedy, 1991, p. 46).

Permitting free speech does not guarantee it will occur. Despite constitutional safeguards, speech and other forms of expression are usually constrained. Some laws constrain speech and expression. More pervasively, organizational, family, group and societal norms constrain speech to that which is accepted or expected in certain contexts. Fear of harassment or punishment also constrains speech. Thus, much goes unsaid. Much of what remains unsaid could be helpful to parents, teachers, health and social service agencies, politicians, manufacturers, employers, and others who wish to understand and effectively deal with a wide array of organizational, social, and consumer issues. For instance, consider these situations:

- An Air Force commander or a corporate chief executive officer wants to know what personnel practices are disliked by employees and their suggestions for making them better.

- Parents, teachers, and school and community leaders want to know about the nature of gang activities among middle and high school students in their district.

- Politicians and law enforcement officials want to know about attitudes toward and use of illicit drugs in their community.

- Politicians want to know the attitudes of citizens toward the economy, crime, welfare and the environment, and changes in these attitudes over time.

- A manufacturer with slumping sales wants to know how to produce products customers will really want and be more likely to buy.

- Senior military leaders want to know the support they have for a planned deployment a few days away.

In some of these situations, those in the best position to provide information would be unlikely to volunteer it and they would have limited access to decision makers. In addition, without a systematic way to collect information from those who could provide it, the input received may be biased. It may come mostly from those discontented enough to contact the officials--or from their immediate colleagues. In the last situation described, decision makers may not get accurate information rapidly enough.

Protecting Privacy: People have as much right not to speak as to speak. Our founding fathers were sensitive to the right of persons not to express themselves if they wished--to be let alone, having a right to privacy. They had experienced first-hand oppression from a distant government and many early settlers came to America to escape religious persecution. Influenced by John Locke, they also believed in natural or fundamental rights, independent of government and limiting its power (Glasser & Adelman, 1991; The Constitution of the United States: A Commentary, 1982).

Despite the sensitivity of our founding fathers, the Bill of Rights is vague about privacy. As Shattuck (1977, p. 49) notes, "The right of 'privacy of association' and the 'right to anonymity' are

nowhere explicitly delineated in the constitutional text." However, there are several amendments which involve privacy interests (see Shattuck, 1977, Kauper, 1990). The courts have established that the First Amendment includes privacy linked to the freedom of association within its "penumbra;" that is, in a peripheral, less clearly defined region. The Third Amendment prevents peacetime quartering of soldiers in homes without the owners consent, nor in times of war, except as prescribed by law. The Fourth Amendment ensures that people must be "secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures." The Fifth Amendment, protecting people from self-incrimination, proclaims that no person shall be "a witness against himself." The Fifth and Fourteenth amendments also protect persons from the deprivation of life, liberty or property without due process of law. The Fourteenth Amendment also prevents the states from denying constitutionally protected rights.

In recent times, the 1965 Griswold v. Connecticut case is famous for helping to establish the right to privacy. Justice Douglas, in a decision involving this case (see Beaney, 1990, p.4), concluded that earlier cases "suggested that specific guarantees in the Bill of Rights have penumbras formed by emanations from those guarantees that help give them life and substance." According to Beaney, Douglas then asserted that the First, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Ninth amendments provide "zones of privacy." As Kaukper (1990) discusses, Douglas spoke of rights that were peripheral (hence the "penumbra" terminology) to those explicitly expressed in the first eight amendments, but without them, the more explicit ones would be less secure.

The Ninth Amendment, is sometimes cited as the most compelling Constitutional amendment dealing with privacy rights because it is generic, pertaining to retained, unenumerated rights that should not be denied. Alderman and Kennedy (1991) discuss the Ninth Amendment almost exclusively in terms of privacy protection, and Shattuck (1977, p. xiv), states:

> "to the extent that historic or novel privacy interests may not be sufficiently protected by the First, Fourth, Fifth, and Fourteenth Amendments, it has sometimes been suggested that they are safeguarded by the Ninth Amendment, which provides that 'the enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage those retained by the people.'"

There is debate over the applicability of this amendment to privacy. However, in Griswold v. Connecticut, the majority of US Supreme Court Justices invoked the ninth amendment to support the right to marital privacy (Emerson, 1990). In more recent Supreme Court decisions, substantive due process has been used to defend privacy rights (see Alderman & Kennedy, 1991, pp. 321-323 & pp. 387-388). This concept refers to fundamental, nonprocedural, individual rights not explicitly articulated in the Bill of Rights but considered indispensable in a free society.

Although privacy interests were only partly articulated in the Bill of Rights and the legal basis for the right to privacy was clarified only recently in court decisions, this concept has a long history in American common law. In 1890, an article appeared in the Harvard Law Review that created a new chapter (Hixon, 1987) or revolution (Shattuck, 1977) in common law. The article titled "The Right To Privacy" was authored by Warren and Brandeis. (Brandeis later became a US Supreme Court Justice.) They argued that the law must be extended beyond the protection of property and contracts from violation to include protection of the "inviolate personality" (Warren & Brandeis, 1890, p. 205). They also argued that invasion of privacy could create mental pain greater than suffering inflicted by bodily injury. Especially relevant to survey work, Warren and Brandeis (pp. 195 & 198) cited Judge Cooley's

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1888 admonition that people had the right "to be let alone" and the 1769 case of Millar v. Taylor in which it was argued that every man had the right to keep his own sentiments and to judge whether they be made public. They concluded:

> "The common law secures to each individual the right of determining, ordinarily, to what extent his thoughts, sentiments, and emotions shall be communicated to others. Under our system of government, he can never be compelled to express them (except when upon the witness stand); and even if he has chosen to give them expression, he generally retains the power to fix the limits of the publicity which shall be given them."

In 1928, Justice Brandeis reiterated and expanded his view in a dissenting opinion concerning the rights protected by the Fourth Amendment He contended that the makers of our Constitution:

> "sought to protect Americans in their beliefs, their thought, their emotions and their sensations. They conferred, as against the Government, the right to be let alone--the most comprehensive of rights and the right most valued by civilized man. To protect that right, every unjustifiable intrusion by the Government upon the privacy of the individual, whatever the means employed, must be deemed a violation of the Fourth Amendment" (Alderman & Kennedy, 1991, p.136).

Alderman and Kennedy (1991, p 136-137 & 377-378) report that almost a half century later the Supreme Court adopted this interpretation of the Fourth Amendment. The Fourth Amendment protects people, not just places, from intrusion and an individual's "reasonable expectation of privacy" should be respected.

As Beaney (1990) argues, legal privacy rights are particularly important as individuals and groups experience increasing and more varied assaults on their inner life and thoughts. He includes the widespread use of surveys (and by extension, interviews) in government and industry as one form of such assault. He suggests that if Congress and government agencies develop a heightened sensitivity to potential threats to dignity and privacy, the need for judicial intervention will decline.

In recent years, however, litigation for privacy rights violations has increased dramatically. This litigation has been initiated by employees against overly intrusive employers (see, for example, Alderman and Kennedy, 1995, pp. 273-320, Privacy in the Workplace). Much privacy litigation is based on torts. Koral (1988, p. 3) defines a tort as "a civil wrong for which the law recognizes the victim is entitled to a remedy from the person responsible." Lawyers have invoked common law principles and federal and state constitutional provisions to successfully represent employee plaintiffs. Between 1985 and mid-1987 there were nearly 100 privacy verdicts against employers and the average workplace-privacy jury award during this time was $316,000 (Hendricks, Hayden and Novik, 1990; Nachman & Ryan, 1994). Alderman and Kennedy (1995, p. 305) report that "Government workers are protected by the federal and state constitutions and certain statutes which often enable them to be more successful than their private sector counterparts when suing their employer." Thus, safeguarding privacy is not only an ethical necessity; it also makes good legal and business sense.

For additional information on legal privacy rights, see Shattuck (1977), Hixon (1987), Hendricks, Hayden and Novik (1990), Murphy (1990) and Alderman and Kennedy (1991, 1995). For a discussion of privacy, confidentiality and the necessity of ensuring voluntary participation and informed

consent in ethical research, see Sieber (1992). For a discussion in lay terms of employee rights to privacy, see Koral (1988) or Nachman and Ryan, (1994).

Interview Implications of the Rights Perspective: When the rights to free speech and privacy are combined, a few conditions for effective interview data collection become clear. If you want accurate information, especially about sensitive issues, give respondents the opportunity to **not** respond and create conditions which encourage them to respond, despite possible apprehension, by protecting their privacy. Thus, interviews should be voluntary and individual responses should remain confidential unless consent to disclosure is given by the information provider. Interviews facilitate free expression by providing respondents with a safe haven due to their voluntary and confidential nature. Attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviors, and background data that respondents may have kept to themselves can be expressed without threat and without normative limitations if ethical principles are scrupulously followed. That which is personal becomes public in grouped data to provide valuable information while protecting privacy and preventing harm.

Appendix A References

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Appendix B: APA Ethical Principles and Standards
Relevant to Interviews

The principles and standards described below constitute a selective list. Others provided by the APA also apply. Due to their almost legal nature, relevant parts are often quoted verbatim. However, I have also paraphrased to shorten the narrative. Paraphrasing occurs outside quotation marks or in parenthetical expressions. You need not be a member of the APA or a psychologist to follow these principles. Each time you see "psychologists" substitute in your mind "interviewers."

General Principle D. **Respect for People's Rights and Dignity**. "Psychologists accord appropriate respect to the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of all people. They respect the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, self determination, and autonomy, mindful that legal and other obligations may lead to inconsistency and conflict with the exercise of these rights. Psychologists are aware of cultural, individual, and role differences, including those due to age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status. Psychologists try to eliminate the effect on their work of biases based on those factors, and they do not knowingly participate in or condone unfair discriminatory practices."

Note: The list of cultural, individual and role differences included above is used elsewhere in the Ethics Code and is referred to hereafter as "human differences."

General Principle E. **Concern for Other's Welfare**. "Psychologists seek to contribute to the welfare of those with whom they interact professionally."

General Principle F. **Social Responsibility**. Psychologists are expected to be socially responsible. They "are aware of their professional and scientific responsibilities to the community and the society in which they work and live." They are "concerned about and work to mitigate the causes of human suffering."

Ethical Standard 1.02. **Relationship of Ethics and the Law**. "If psychologists' ethical responsibilities conflict with law, psychologists make known their commitment to the Ethics Code and take steps to resolve the conflict in a responsible manner."

Ethical Standard 1.08. **Human Differences**. Where cultural and lifestyle diversity may affect work concerning individuals or groups, psychologists get the training/consultation they need to provide competent services or they make referrals.

Ethical Standard 1.09. **Respecting Others**. "In their work-related activities, psychologists respect the right of others to hold values, attitudes and opinions that differ from their own."

Ethical Standard 1.10. **Nondiscrimination**. "In their work-related activities, psychologists do not in engage in unfair discrimination" (based on human differences).

Ethical Standard 1.11. **Sexual Harassment**. "Psychologists do not engage in sexual harassment."

Ethical Standard 1.12 **Other Harassment**. "Psychologists do not knowingly engage in behavior that is harassing or demeaning to persons with whom they interact in their work" (based on human difference factors).

Ethical Standard 1.14. **Avoiding Harm**. "Psychologists take reasonable steps to avoid harming their patients or clients, research participants, students or others with whom they work."

Ethical Standard 4.02. **Informed Consent**. "Psychologists obtain appropriate informed consent...using language that is reasonably understandable to participants." It is obtained freely and without undue influence.

Ethical Standard 4.05 **Sexual Intimacies With Current .... Clients**. "Psychologists do not engage in sexual intimacies with current .... clients."

Ethical Standard 5.01. **Discussing the Limits of Confidentiality**. "Psychologists discuss (with participants and clients) (1) the relevant limitations on confidentiality...and (2) the foreseeable uses of the information generated through their services."

"The discussion of confidentiality occurs at the outset of the relationship."

"Permission for electronic recording of interviews is secured from clients and (participants)."

Ethical Standard 5.02. **Maintaining Confidentiality**. "Psychologists have a primary obligation and take reasonable precautions to respect the confidentiality rights of those with whom they work or consult."

Ethical Standard 5.03. **Minimizing Intrusions on Privacy**. "Psychologists discuss confidential information...only for appropriate scientific or professional purposes and only with persons clearly concerned with such matters."

Ethical Standard 5.04. **Maintenance of Records**. "Psychologists maintain appropriate confidentiality in creating, storing, accessing, transferring and disposing of records under their control."

Ethical Standard 5.05. **Disclosures**. "Psychologists disclose confidential information without the consent of the individual only as mandated by law, or where permitted by law for a valid purpose....Psychologists also may disclose confidential information with the appropriate consent of the (client), unless prohibited by law."

Ethical Standard 5.06. **Consultations**. "When consulting with colleagues, (1) psychologists do not share confidential information that reasonably could lead to the identification of (anyone) with whom they have a confidential relationship unless they have obtained the prior consent of the person or organization...and (2) they share information only to the extent necessary to achieve the purposes of the consultation."

Ethical Standard 5.07. **Confidential Information in Databases**. "If confidential information...is entered into (databases, etc.) available to persons whose access has not been consented to (by the

information provider), then psychologists use coding or other techniques to avoid the inclusion of personal identifiers."

Ethical Standard 5.08. **Use of Confidential Information for Didactic or Other Purposes.** "Psychologists do not disclose (in writings, lectures, etc.) confidential, personally identifiable information" without consent. They disguise such information to prevent identification or harm to the individuals involved.

Ethical Standard 6.11. **Informed Consent to Research.** "Psychologists use language that is reasonably understandable to research participants in obtaining their appropriate informed consent." .... "Using language that is reasonably understandable to participants, psychologists inform participants of the nature of the research; they inform participants that they are free to participate or to decline to participate or to withdraw from the research; they explain the foreseeable consequences of declining or withdrawing; they inform participants of significant factors that may be expected to influence their willingness to participate...and they explain other aspects about which the prospective participants inquire."

Ethical Standard 6.12. **Dispensing With Informed Consent.** "Before determining that planned research (such as research involving only anonymous questionnaires, naturalistic observations, or certain kinds of archival research) does not require the informed consent of research participants, psychologists consider applicable regulations and institutional review board requirements, and they consult with colleagues as appropriate."

Ethical Standard 6.13. **Informed Consent in Research Filming or Recording.** "Psychologists obtain informed consent from research participants prior to filming or recording them in any form unless the research involves simply naturalistic observations in public places and it is not anticipated that the recording will not be used in a manner that could cause personal identification or harm."

Ethical Standard 6.15. **Deception in Research.** "Psychologists never deceive research participants about significant aspects that would affect their willingness to participate, such as .... unpleasant emotional experiences (etc.)."

Ethical Standard 6.16. **Sharing and Utilizing Data.** "Psychologists inform research participants of their anticipated sharing or future use of personally identifiable research data and of the possibility of unanticipated future uses."

Ethical Standard 6.17. **Minimizing Invasiveness.** "In conducting research, psychologists interfere with the participants or milieu from which data are collected (as little as possible)."

Ethical Standard 6.18. **Providing Participants with Information about the Study.** "Psychologists provide a prompt opportunity for participants to obtain appropriate information about the nature, results, and conclusions of the research, and psychologists attempt to correct any misconceptions that participants may have."

Ethical Standard 6.19. **Honoring Commitments.** "Psychologists take reasonable measures to honor all commitments they have to research participants."

Ethical Standard 6.21. **Reporting of Results**. "Psychologists do not fabricate data or falsify results." They correct or retract significant errors.

Ethical Standard 8.03. **Conflicts Between Ethics and Organizational Demands**. "If the demands of an organization...conflict with this Ethics Code, psychologists clarify the nature of the conflict, make known their commitment to the Ethics Code, and to the extent feasible, seek to resolve the conflict in a way that permits the fullest adherence to the Ethics Code."

Appendix C: Rights Rationale For Not Asking For
Job-Irrelevant Organizational Membership

In the text, I cite legal precedent for avoiding items about job-irrelevant organizational membership. This appendix provides more elaboration of this view from First Amendment and privacy rights perspectives. The issue involves privacy of association and belief which is protected by law because without privacy protection, first amendment rights could be inhibited (see Shattuck, 1977, Chapter 2, for an extended discussion and numerous legal examples). As discussed in Appendix C, the Court has interpreted the Bill of Rights to include peripheral rights. Thus, the penumbra of the First Amendment includes the right to privacy of association (see Kauper, 1990, pp. 242 & 243).

Organizational memberships can reflect the core of an individual's attitudes, beliefs and values as well as his or her style of First Amendment protected religious, political or social expression. Virtually every group is going to be unpopular with some people in our pluralistic society, regardless of where they are in the political spectrum. Even members of unpopular groups have the right to gather and to peacefully express their views. They have the right to work within the law for reform as they see it. If membership lists get into the hands of potentially hostile parties, rights could be jeopardized since members could be harassed by those who object to their expressed beliefs or to their lawful activities. They could be inhibited from associating due to the threat of public disclosure. Thus, even in the most democratic of societies such as ours, democratic processes at the grass roots could be stifled.

In a case described by Alderman and Kennedy (1991, Freedom of Assembly: Hobson v. Wilson, pp. 69-88), government agents attempted to disrupt, discredit and create discord among members of organizations planning a protest demonstration in Washington DC. A jury found the agents' actions unlawful. The appellate court reduced the monetary award but was clear in stating that such actions were intolerable. It wrote: "Whatever authority the Government may have to interfere with a group engaged in unlawful activity ... it is *never* permissible to impede or deter lawful civil rights/political organization, expression or protest with no other direct purpose and no other immediate objective than to counter the influence of the target associations" (p.86).

Appendix C References

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**Revised Interview Questions for the 1997 Civilian Appraisal Evaluation
With Survey Instructions**

Morning Session Survey and Interview

General Instructions

Survey Administration. Get everyone comfortably sitting around the table. Don't sit at the "head of the table" yourself; sit among the participants. First, ask people to take out their survey and one of their answer sheets. Give them each a number 2 pencil. Mention that their responses are confidential and they need not put their name on the answer sheet. See note below on the voluntary nature of participation.

Then ask them to complete the morning session portion of the survey. Explain that if they want to write comments, there is a morning session comments page at the end of the survey which they can tear out and write on. Explain that they will also get to comment during the interviews.

Wait patiently as people fill out the survey and comments page. This should take about 20 minutes. Once everyone is done, collect the answer sheets and any forms supervisors have filled out (in collaboration with their employee) from the morning activity session. Also collect the pencils. Participants should still have blank copies of the morning session forms,

> **Note: voluntary participation.** Participation should be voluntary but don't mention this since showing up is implied consent to participate. However, if anyone refuses to participate in the survey or the interview, try to motivate participation but don't insist on it. Also, anyone has the right to skip specific items, to not fill out a comments page, or to remain silent during the interviews.

Transition to Interview: As an icebreaker, you could ask participants **what they think of the off-site activities** this morning. Then transition to the following items with the lead-in that you would like to ask them some questions about their reaction to the materials they have been using this morning.

Make sure you **know the questions** so well that they **appear conversational**. You do not need to phrase the questions exactly as they are worded here--**you can paraphrase** using words that are comfortable for you. If a question has already been answered in response to an earlier question, skip it.

Morning Interview Questions

1. What do you think of the **Periodic Feedback Worksheet**?

1a.   Will it be a **fair and effective tool** for providing feedback? Explain why or why not.

1b.   What did you **like best and least** about it?

2. What do you think of the **Civilian Promotion Appraisal** form?

2a.   Will it be a **fair and effective tool** for appraising promotion potential, even if the factors will only change on an "as needed" basis for competitive inservice placement? Explain why or why not.

2b.   What did you **like best and least** about it?

2c.   Consideration has been given to **phasing out** this form. What do you think of that idea?

(Note that question 3 may have already been discussed in responses to questions 1 and 2. Be flexible.)

3. **How would you improve** the

3a.   **Periodic Feedback Worksheet?**

3b.   **Civilian Promotion Appraisal** form?

(Shift from forms to process--to questioning that is less specific and more creative. You are asking participants to describe how they would design feedback and appraisal systems themselves.)

4. **How would you improve**

4a.   The way performance feedback is provided (the **performance feedback process)?**

4b.   How people are evaluated for promotion suitability (the **promotion appraisal process)?**

5. Historically, civilian promotion appraisal factors were combined with an overall performance rating on a single form and evaluated yearly. **What do you think of keeping the promotion appraisal separate and on an "as required" basis at the end of the evaluation cycle?**

6. Explain **how Air Force Instruction 36-1001 was helpful (or not helpful)** to you in either **providing an overview** of the refined appraisal process or in **understanding the purpose and use of the forms.** (Focus on Chapters 1 and 12 and the Periodic Feedback Worksheet and the Civilian Promotion Appraisal form.)

7. What specific **recommendations do you have for improving the portions of the Air Force Instruction** which you read this morning?

9. Are there **other issues** related to your activity this morning that you would like to discuss?

Afternoon Session Survey and Interview

Perform the afternoon survey in the same way as the morning survey was conducted. Have them use a second answer sheet, and after everyone is done, collect the answer sheets, afternoon session comments pages, and completed forms. Participants should still have blank copies of the afternoon session forms.

Again, as an icebreaker, you might ask participants if they enjoyed lunch and what they think of the off-site activities since you last talked to them. Then transition to the following items with the lead in that you would like to ask them some questions about their reaction to the materials they used this afternoon.

Afternoon Interview Questions

1. What do you think of the **Civilian Rating of Record** form?

1a.   Will it be a **fair and effective tool** for rating performance? Explain why or why not.

1b.   What did you **like best and least** about it?

(Note that question 2 may already have been answered in response to question 1.)

2. How would you **improve the Civilian Rating of Record** form?

2a. What did you think about having **a single unacceptable rating category rather than two** as in the current system?

3. What do you think of the **Recognition** form?

3a.   Will it be a **fair and effective tool** for determining who should get recognition and rewards? Explain why or why not.

3b.   What did you **like best and least** about it?

(Note that question 4 may already have been answered in response to question 3.)

4. How would you **improve the Recognition** form?

(Now shift from forms to process--to questioning that is less specific and more creative. You are asking participants to design a performance appraisal process themselves.)

5.   How would you **improve the performance appraisal process**? Consider how you might design the best possible system and how it would differ from the current or proposed ones.

6. Explain how **Air Force Instruction 36-1001 was helpful (or not helpful)** to you in either **providing an overview** of performance evaluation or **describing the purpose and use of the forms**. (especially Chapter 2 and the Civilian Rating of Record and Recognition forms)

7. What **specific recommendations** do you have **for improving the Air Force Instruction** to **provide a better overview** or to make your **use or understanding of the Civilian Rating of Record or Recognition** forms easier or more effective?

7b. Were there **performance issues** that the portion of **Air Force Instruction 36-1001** which you received **failed to address** adequately? What were they?

8. From what you have experienced today, do you **consider the refined appraisal process an improvement** over the current system? Why or why not and in what ways?

9. Are there **other issues** related to your activities this afternoon or to civilian appraisal that you would like to discuss?

Lessons Learned

This interview protocol was used by over twenty volunteer interviewers, most of whom had little prior experience and who were given only brief dydactic training by me lasting about one hour and thirty minutes. Interviews were conducted by interviewers assigned in pairs with one interviewer serving primarily as an interviewer while his or her partner took notes. They could switch roles from interview to interview. Most interview partners came from different organizations and were at first strangers.

Interviewers were understandably uneasy at first, but by about the third interview began to consider themselves rather skilled. By the end of the four days they were quite confident about their interviewing abilities.

Most of the interviewers enjoyed the experience and established rapid rapport with each other. They also became interested in helping each other gain skill and were usually very willing to alternate the interviewing and note taking roles. Most interviewers established good rapport with participants.

Willingness to do the job and having the right personal characteristics to do it well appeared to be much more important than occupational or educational background or grade/rank. People of different ages and backgrounds served equally well as interviewers.

Brief "lessons learned" sessions of all interviewers at the end of each day were valuable for sharing the major themes and making recommendations for improvement. They also helped interviewers develop a sense of cohesion as a group.

Interviewers with the least experience tended to want to follow the script almost exactly even though they were informed that they didn't have to. Some interviewers wanted to stay with the script even when a question was already answered in response to previous questions. These problems were

handled effectively during the "lessons learned" sessions and in conversations with their partner after each interview.

If participants were shy about speaking, main questions and subquestions could be asked all at once (for example, 1, 1a and 1b of either the morning or afternoon sessions). This would facilitate the flow of comments and group interaction under such circumstances. However a "What did you think about..." lead in was often sufficient to open a floodgate of comments. For example, the "How would you improve..." questions were often unnecessary since suggestions for improvement were given in response to the earlier "What did you think" questions.

Question 2c during the morning session was rather useless since participants would immediately say something like "it depends on what you would replace it with" and the possible replacement was unknown.

Questions about the specific forms and Air Force Instruction were easy to respond to and probably the most important questions for the purpose of making improvements to a refined appraisal system. Questions of a "the sky is the limit" nature such as Question 5 during the afternoon session were much more difficult for participants to address.

Some interviewers were civilian personnel specialists. It was sometimes difficult for them to refrain from giving a tutorial about the personnel system (which was not the purpose of the interview).

Some interviewers had difficulty keeping their own opinions about the personnel system to themselves.