

Living Religions Fieldwork Project

Interview Report

1,000 word minimum (12 point, double-spaced)

Submit as a Word attachment via email to your instructor

Name your file with your last name, followed by a space, followed by "Interview"
(e.g., Maaia Interview)

Each researcher must conduct her own interview,
but both researchers must be present at both interviews

Due:

This is a narrative descriptive paper based on qualitative research, in this case, a face-to-face interview with an informant at your research site.

Your informant: Someone at the site. It could be an official person who leads the community, an employee, or a member. You might even want to interview a neighbor about what he/she knows about this organization or community.

You need to explain to your informant that you are going to use this information for research about religion in the greater Washington metropolitan area for a course in school. You also need to tell the person the general topic of the interview but it is your choice whether or not you want to give the person the specific questions before the interview. Explain that while aspects of the research might be disclosed to others, the identity of the interviewee will be protected.

You must give this person contact information at the school that they can address any questions that they have with someone here at NCS. We will give you a letter explaining the project that you should give to them.

Religious Studies Department
National Cathedral School
Washington, D.C. 20016
Tel. 202 537 5619

In your email to your instructor, send the name and contact information of your informant (email address, mailing address, or telephone number). We are not planning to contact your informant but all research needs to have transparency between the researcher and the supervisor of research. You must do this before you conduct the interview. You need to inform your parents when and where you are conducting the interview; you should not conduct an interview without someone knowing the circumstances of your interview. Plan to meet your informant in a public place or in an open environment at his/her workplace.

Your Fundamental Research Questions: What are the unifying and diversifying elements of your religion? In other words: What does your community share with the rest of the greater tradition? What makes your community unique and different from other expressions of this religion?

Your Audience: Imagine that this course was part of a larger online course and the other students were at peer schools in in L.A., New York, London, Shanghai, and Mumbai. Your tone and style ought to be professional and publishable, i.e., friendly, but formal.

Your Protocol: There are four groups of questions to ask in order to get a full understanding of the informant's position on this research question. You may decide to have as many as a total of 20 questions, including an ice-breaking and a wrapping-up question to gain depth and clarity in your understanding of the responses of your informant.

- Ice-Breaking Question to establish rapport
- Group 1: Demographic Questions that you think are important for this research question
- Group 2: General Questions that expand the main research question. Here are some examples:
 - What is religion? What does “religion” mean to you? Is there a difference between religion and spirituality?
 - What are the functions of religion? How does it function in your life? What are some reasons you practice/believe in your religion? What is the role of religion in the lives of individuals? What is the role of religion in society?
 - What religion are you? Are you a different religion than you were raised?
 - What are the unifying and diversifying elements of your religion? In other words: What does your community share with the rest of the greater tradition? What makes your community unique and different from other expressions of this religion? Is there anything you think people misunderstand about your religion?
 - What is your view of other religions? If you had to choose a different religion, which one would you choose? How would you feel if your children decided someday to convert to a different religion from yours?
 - How serious are you about the practices? (In other words, how exactly must you practice your religious rituals and customs?) How serious are you about the beliefs? (In other words, how closely must you adhere to the official beliefs of your religion (if there are any)?)
 - Why do we suffer? Is there a way out of suffering? What happens when I die? How should I live?
- Group 3: Common Class Research Questions: In class, we may decide on one or more questions that each class member will ask during their interview, such as “Have you ever had a religious experience?”
- Group 4: Personal Research Questions: Questions that reflect your own special interests to help you better understand the informant, e.g. What is the role of art in religion? How do you view science in relationship to religion? What should be the role of prayer? How is religion different from culture? Can you be religious without being part of a group or community? What is the effect of a religious community that creates a formal institution or organization for itself? What rituals are helpful? What sacred texts are important enough that everyone should know them?
- Sample Wrapping Up Questions –
 - What haven't I asked you that you think that I should have?
 - Who else do you think would be a good person to interview about this topic?

Some notes about questions -

- Ask as many open-ended questions as possible instead of closed-ended questions. When the informant finishes, you can encourage the informant to continue by giving a non-leading response such as “I see” or “For example?” or “Could you say more about that?”
- Brainstorm ways to ask a question in more than one way, in case you need to elicit a better response.)
- Pay attention to the difference between normative questions and descriptive questions, e.g. the difference between asking someone “What is the role of religion in politics?” as opposed to “What should the role of religion be in politics?”
- Note that there are two kinds of research projects. In some kinds of traditional social science research it is vital to get through all the questions completely and in a specific order. That is the kind of research where you are trying to prove some hypothesis and you want data to back up your theory. That is not this kind of research. In this type of research, based on something called grounded theory, you are not trying to prove an intellectual claim but, rather, are trying to get enough information, i.e., data that you could use to propose an intellectual claim or hypothesis that you might later on want to try to prove.

Also, if you have an especially good experience or are inspired by someone...

- Give contact information for anyone from this site who might be willing to perform at an NCS Cathedral Service and a very brief description of what kind of music they could do.
- Give contact information for anyone you think might be appropriate to invite to an NCS Cathedral Service or to one of the three NCS divisional chapel services.
- List any congregational singing hymns or songs or chants used at this site that you think might be appropriate for an NCS Cathedral Service or one of the three NCS divisional chapel services.

Citation and Annotation

Post an annotation of your paper in the “Papers” section of the WordPress Wiki using this citation model. Insert your submission in the proper order in the bibliography.

Student’s Surname, Student’s First Name. “Title of the Paper,” *Living Religions*, National Cathedral School, 10 September 2013. [write 3 to 6 sentences describing your paper]

Recommended Report Organization (See Below)

Recommended Report Organization

- Title – Give your paper a descriptive title that is informative and catchy.
- Paragraph 1 – Tell your reader 1) the *general* research topic and why it is important, i.e., interviewing the wisest person you know about the nature of religion. Tell your reader the most important 3 to 6 *specific* questions that you asked and 2) the thesis statement, a single declarative statement that answers the question: what did you learn.
- Paragraph 2 – Describe the person you chose with important demographic information (education, occupation, age, in what city they live, marital status, children, race, religion, ethnicity ... your choice about what you think is important to mention) about your informant. Explain why you chose this person. You should give your informant a pseudonym and use this and other considerations to disguise their identity. Refer to this individual by the **pseudonym**. Include a footnote that identifies this as a pseudonym. Do not refer to this individual as “my mother” or “my grandfather,” thus, giving away the identity of your informant.
- Paragraph 3 - Give a description of the interview itself: where, when, etc. What was the atmosphere like? Give a rich description of the time and the space. Explain the mood of the experience (tense, friendly, warm, rushed . . .)
- Paragraph 4 and additional paragraphs – Write a narrative description, not a transcript, of your interview. Give concrete details. Do not, however, give your own personal, running commentary about what you think of what your informant said. N.B. Report as accurately and as sympathetically as you can what your informant said, regardless of whether or not you agree with your informant. Ideally, you ought to be able to finish the interview without your informant having any clue what you think of what she/he has said. Your job as a researcher and as a reporter of your research is to blend into the background as much as you can; neither your informant nor your reader ought to know your personal opinion about the subjects being described. Your task is to document an accurate and sympathetic voice to your informant about these questions.
- Concluding Paragraph – Do not repeat the thesis; tell your readers what follow-up you think would be worthwhile research, e.g. what other questions would you like to ask this informant in another interview or what other informant would you like to ask these same questions. Tell your reader what other future researchers might do next as a result of this initial work. For example, you might suggest new questions for a second round of interviews with this individual. On the other hand, you might suggest asking the same questions of other individuals with different demographic backgrounds.

Required Supplementary Personal Reflection

Put this on a separate page and labeled “Supplementary Personal Response.” Although this is required, it is not assessed and is not included in the word count requirement. You don’t need to answer all the following guiding questions. Choose as many as you think appropriate to explain what you learned in doing the assignment. This is the time for you to sit back, think about the entire process, and figure out what you’ve gained from the experience. Reread your notes and your report. Which question was the most interesting, the most difficult, the most important, or the most intractable? What was easiest or hardest: choosing your informant? Doing the interview? Writing up your notes? Writing the report? The bottom line here is to ask yourself what the key feature of the entire process was that best gives insight into what is fundamental to the experience of being a living human being. What did you learn from this process of analysis about yourself?

Sample Interview Protocol
(Not necessarily in this order)

1. Ice-breaking question to build rapport
2. Demographic Question 1
3. Demographic Question 2
4. Demographic Question 3
5. Demographic Question 4
6. Demographic Question 5
7. Demographic Question 6
8. General Background Question 1: What is religion?
9. General Background Question 2: What is the role of religion in the lives of individuals?
10. General Background Question 3: What should be the role of religion in the lives of individuals?
11. General Background Question 4: What is the role of religion in society?
12. General Background Question 5: What should be the role of religion in society?
13. Common Class Research Question 1. ***What elements unify your religious tradition?***
14. Common Class Research Question 2. ***What elements make your community different from others within your religious tradition?***
15. Common Class Research Question 3
16. Your Personal Research Question 1
17. Your Personal Research Question 2
18. Your Personal Research Question 3
19. NCS Research Question 1 – Is there anyone here who might be willing to offer a musical contribution that is representative of this religious tradition at an NCS worship service?
20. NCS Research Question 2 – What are the most representative songs, hymns, or chants of this religious tradition?
21. Concluding Question 1 - What haven't I asked you that you think that I should have?
22. Concluding Question 2 - Who else do you think would be a good person to interview about this topic?

Field Work #4: Interview Grading Rubric

4 – Yes, and... 3 – Yes 2 – Yes, but... 1 No, but... 0 - No			
Category	Components	Points	Comments
Base Points	Interview with someone connected to your fieldwork site or the religious community Assignment is on-time and complete. Report Length (About 1000 words) Report Title (Per Instructions, including Title, Student Name, date)		
Supplementary Personal Reflection	Includes required individual reflection on the assignment. (Some suggestions: What worked well? What was challenging? What came naturally? Were there any surprises? How did you feel about the assignment before and after completing it?)		
Identity	Does the report contain appropriate demographic information about the interviewee and a description of the interview setting? Is the interviewee’s identity protected?		
Thesis/Theme	Does the report articulate the general research topic and/or a clear thesis statement? Does the content support the theme/thesis? Does the report suggest questions for future research?		
Background Knowledge	Does the report make connections to the knowledge of the tradition? Is there explanation of concepts and practices that are specific to the religious community?		
Content	Does the interviewer ask the primary questions and any necessary follow-up questions? Is there an effective mix of retelling and direct quotation of the interviewee’s responses? Are the ideas complete?		
Organization	The organization is effective. It is clear and sequential. The work flows. Transitions between parts of the paper are smooth. There is a hook, introduction, body, and conclusion.		
Voice	The tone of voice is well-developed, nuanced, and enhances the meaning. It is appropriate to the assignment. It draws in the audience, enhancing the reception and understanding of the material.		
Grammar	Clear sentences, with a variety of simple and complex sentences. Grammar is correct. Punctuation aids meaning. No typographical errors.		
Logistics	Instructions are followed for spacing, font size, margins, word count, proper heading, consistent formatting, etc.		