**Interview Commentary** Meredith McEntee

ANTH 323 11.10.09

I conducted my recorded interview in the Browsing Room of the library on the first floor. Despite a concert going on the other side of the doors, my informant and I could hear each other well and we were comfortable sitting at our table in the corner. We held this interview at mid-day on Friday, which proved to be a low-key and quiet time of day—there was no one else in our room and there were few other people in the library. Also, we were both alert and ready for an interview. One change I would make for future interviews would be to relocate to a sofa set-up so that the conversation would seem even more relaxed and casual.

In reviewing this interview on tape, I’ve learned that my interview style is weighted more towards listening than an active line of questioning. I’ve also noticed that I often stumble on my words when asking questions and if you listen carefully to the tape, you can hear my muttering—words like “um” and “that’s really great”—useless filler words that make me feel like I’m contributing to the dialogue, but not really progressing the conversation in any way. They are hardly audible and they’re not pointed questions or guiding statements for my informant. I could improve my style by keeping better track of upcoming questions and being direct with my informant when asking those questions. I tried not to write notes down while she spoke, yet I think this would have helped me to process her comments and highlight points I want to expand on.

I employed some specific interview techniques, but mostly because they are part of my interview style. It would have served me better to re-read the list of techniques immediately before the interview to have the various methods fresh in my mind and be able to make a conscious effort to use them in conversation. These techniques are useful though and the different strategies help the interviewer to access the essential comments and responses from the informant.

My pre-made questionnaire was great to have on hand and helped me out at moments when my mind blanked for follow-up questions. It would have been more useful to me if I had actually made some notes on the paper to keep track of which questions I had asked already, but ultimately I covered all of my critical questions and left out only a couple of the entire list. I improvised on maybe two questions, both of which were follow-up.

**Coded Sections**

Positives

1. (15:31-16:16) I asked a pointed follow-up question here (the second one) that probed deeper into my informant’s comments.

2. (2:13-3:40) This part marks a brief commentary that encourages her to expand on her response.

Negatives

1. (0:08-0:31) My opening question was jarring and made for a poor starting point.

2. (17:35-18:36) This filler comment sound ridiculous. Fortunately, it sparked an interesting comment from my informant.

3. (30:43-:47) My final comments that brought the interview to a close were abrupt and unnecessary. I panicked because I could not think of another question, believed I had covered all the important points and so I resorted to ending the conversation prematurely. In retrospect, it would have been better to wait just a few more seconds as I searched my written questionnaire for another question.