

## **Elite Interviews in Field Research for Political Science: Techniques, Tools, and Practices**

**28-29 May 2025**

Instructor: **Dr. Nele Kortendiek (EUI)**

Guest Instructor: **Dr. Mariam Salehi (FU Berlin)**

Faculty Sponsor: **Prof. Dr. Stephanie Hofmann**

Organisers: **Raffaele Mastrorocco, Pablo Cañete Pérez, Nina Lopez Uroz**

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### **Dates and schedule:**

Wednesday    28 May @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156), 10:00 – 13:00  
and 14:00 – 16:30

Thursday        29 May @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2 (BF156), 10:00 – 15:00

This two-day workshop will equip researchers with the skills and strategies needed to conduct elite interviews during fieldwork. It will explain when, how, and why to use and carry out such interviews. Participants will learn how to gain access, establish contact with high-level respondents, and use interviewing techniques. It will deep dive into the different stakeholders that comprise the 'elites', from government officials, national and international bureaucrats, interest groups, and (far-right) politicians. The sessions will cover questions concerning, among others, the preparation process, power relations in interviews, the ethical concerns involved, and how to use interview data in research. By the end of the workshop, researchers will be confident in their ability to engage with elite figures and extract meaningful data in their research.

**Credits: 10**

**Requirements:**

- Attendance of **at least** 80% of the sessions
- Preparation of a three-minute pitch on your research: What is your main research question and why/how do you (plan to) use interviews for your project?
- Submission of a plan for conducting elite interviews as part of fieldwork after the workshop

**Readings:**

Please note that there are no required readings prior to class. We nonetheless provide some of the texts of the recommended readings lists on Brightspace.

**Day 1: 28 May****Session 1: 10:00 – 11:15****Before fieldwork (I): Why elite interviews?**

- Introduction to interviews: Why interviews?
- Introductions of participants' projects (3 min. each)

**Readings:**

Fujii, Lee Ann, *Interviewing in Social Science Research: A Relational Approach* (London: Routledge, 2018)

Li, Lantian, 'Interviewing Elites', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0016>, accessed 9 Feb. 2025.

Magnusson, Eva, and Jeanne Marecek. *Doing Interview-Based Qualitative Research : A Learner's Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Print.

Luker, Kristin. "Field (and Other) Methods." In *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*, 155–89. Harvard University Press, 2008. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1kmj7x0.10>.

Soss, Joe, 2015. Talking our way to meaningful explanations: A practice-centered view of interviewing for interpretive research. In *Interpretation and method* (pp. 161-182). Routledge.

Döringer, S. (2021). 'The problem-centred expert interview'. Combining qualitative interviewing approaches for investigating implicit expert knowledge. *International journal of social research methodology*, 24(3), 265-278.

## **Session 2: 11:30 – 13:00**

### **Before fieldwork (II): How to prepare for elite interviews?**

- Sampling: Who do you want to talk to? Interviewee identification
- Access: How to reach out to them? Gatekeepers and snowballing, positionality and power dynamics
- Pre-fieldwork logistics: IRB and ethics approval, consent, data management plan, online or in-person interview?

### **Readings:**

Beitin, B. K. (2012). Interview and sampling. *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*, 243-253.

Kapiszewski, Diana, Lauren M. MacLean, and Benjamin L. Read. *Field research in political science: Practices and principles*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Brooks, Sarah M. "The ethical treatment of human subjects and the institutional review board process." In *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 45–66. Cornell University Press, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1xx5wg.7>.

Wieviorka, M. (2019). The specificities of researching evil. In *Researching Far-Right Movements* (pp. 13-22). Routledge.

Mayka, Lindsay, and Jessica A. J. Rich, 'Developing a Flexible Data-Collection Plan', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024),

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0013>

Turner, Robin L., 'Qualitative Research as a Minoritized Scholar', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0025>

Bliesemann de Guevara, B., & Poopuu, B. (2021). Preparing for fieldwork interviews. *The Companion to Peace and Conflict Fieldwork*, 65-83.

### **Session 3: 14.00 – 15.00**

#### **Before fieldwork (III): How to design a questionnaire?**

- Which (type of) questions are you going to ask them?
- Designing the questionnaire: Researching interviewees' profile, taking notes of expectations, setting a sequence, preparing probes

#### **Readings:**

Rathbun, Brian C., 'Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities', in Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology* (2008; online edn, Oxford Academic, 2 Sept. 2009), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199286546.003.0029>

Adler-Nissen R. Methods and analytical strategy. In: *Opting Out of the European Union: Diplomacy, Sovereignty and European Integration*. Cambridge University Press; 2014:198-217.

Mosley, Layna, editor. *Interview Research in Political Science*. Cornell University Press, 2013. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1xx5wg>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2025.

### **Session 4: 15:15 – 16:30**

#### **Doing the fieldwork: How to conduct interviews?**

- During the interview: how to ask the questions to avoid bias?
- Immersion, unpredictability, troubleshooting
- Positionality and power dynamics
- Fieldwork diary
- Recording techniques, note taking

- After the interview:
  - Write up how the interview went and update your expectations
  - Triangulation
  - When should we stop ? Leaving the field, returning the field

### Readings:

Pfadenhauer, Michaela (2009): At Eye Level. The Expert Interview - a Talk between Expert and Quasi-Expert. In: Alexander Bogner, Beate Littig und Wolfgang Menz (Hg.): Interviewing Experts. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan (Research methods series).

King, Nigel; Horrocks, Christina (2010): Interviews in Qualitative Research. London: SAGE., Chapter 4: Carrying out qualitative interviews.

Howlett, Marnie. 2022. "Looking at the 'Field' through a Zoom Lens: Methodological Reflections on Conducting Online Research During a Global Pandemic." *Qualitative Research* 22 (3): 387-402.

Eggeling, K. A. (2023). Embracing the 'inverted commas', or How COVID-19 can show us new directions for ethnographic 'fieldwork'. *Qualitative Research*, 23(5), 1342-1358.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/14687941221096594>

Kurd, Dana El, and Calla Hummel, 'Mental Health, Identity, and Fieldwork', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024),

<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0026>

Niu, Huidan. "Navigating Power Dynamics in Elite Interviews." *Journal of educational administration and history* (2024): 1–26. Web.

Ayrton, Rachel, 'Power Dynamics between Researcher and Subject', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0012>

Fujii, Lee Ann. "Politics of the "Field"." *Perspectives on Politics* 14.4 (2016): 1147-1152.

Kortendiek, Nele, ' Researching Global Governance on the Ground', *Global Governance on the Ground: Organizing International Migration and Asylum at the Border* (Oxford, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 19 Dec. 2024),

## **DAY 2: 29 May**

### **Session 5: 10:00 – 11:15**

#### **After fieldwork (I): How to analyze your interviews?**

- Transcribing your interviews?
- Coding or not coding? How?
- Re-evaluating your findings

#### **Readings:**

Kvale, Steinar; Brinkmann, Svend (2009): *InterViews. Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 2. ed. Los Angeles: SAGE. Chapter 10: Transcribing Interviews.

King, Nigel; Horrocks, Christina (2010): *Interviews in Qualitative Research*. London: SAGE. Chapter 9: An introduction to interview data analysis.

Bleich, Erik, and Robert Pekkanen. "How to report interview data." In *Interview Research in Political Science*, edited by Layna Mosley, 84–106. Cornell University Press, 2013.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1xx5wg.9>.

Miles, Matthew B., Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña: *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. Sage. (The newest edition is from 2019).

### **Session 6: 11:30 – 12:30**

#### **After fieldwork (II): How to publish your interview research?**

- Ethics of co-producing knowledge and anonymization
- Publishing research that includes elite interviews

#### **Readings:**

Knott, Eleanor. "Beyond the field: ethics after fieldwork in politically dynamic contexts." *Perspectives on Politics* 17.1 (2019): 140-153.

Majic, Samantha, 'Ethics of Transparency and Data Sharing', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0038>

Goodman, Sara Wallace, and Jennifer Cyr, 'Publishing Qualitative Research', in Jennifer Cyr, and Sara Wallace Goodman (eds), *Doing Good Qualitative Research* (New York, 2024; online edn, Oxford Academic, 30 Apr. 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197633137.003.0040>

Berli, Monique Jo (2018): Saving the Savivors. Security Practices and Professional Struggles in the Humanitarian Space. In: *International Political Sociology* 12 (1), 70-87.

Stierl, Maurice (2023): Rebel Spirits at Sea. Disrupting Europe's Weaponizing of Time in Maritime Migration Governance. In: *Security Dialogue*, 096701062311639.

Menzel, Anne, & Salehi, Mariam (2024). Global Hierarchies and Unequal Pressures in the Report-Making of Truth Commissions. *International Studies Review*, 26(2), viae022. Methods supplement.

## **Session 7: 13:30 – 15:00**

### **Wrap up**

- Group discussions on interview plans and fieldwork