

Interview training for young researchers – Young People at a Crossroads project

Recap of training part 1

Before the training sessions, you were sent a sheet with five interview questions for parents, and suggested topics for adding your own questions.

1. Reflecting on your own interview experience

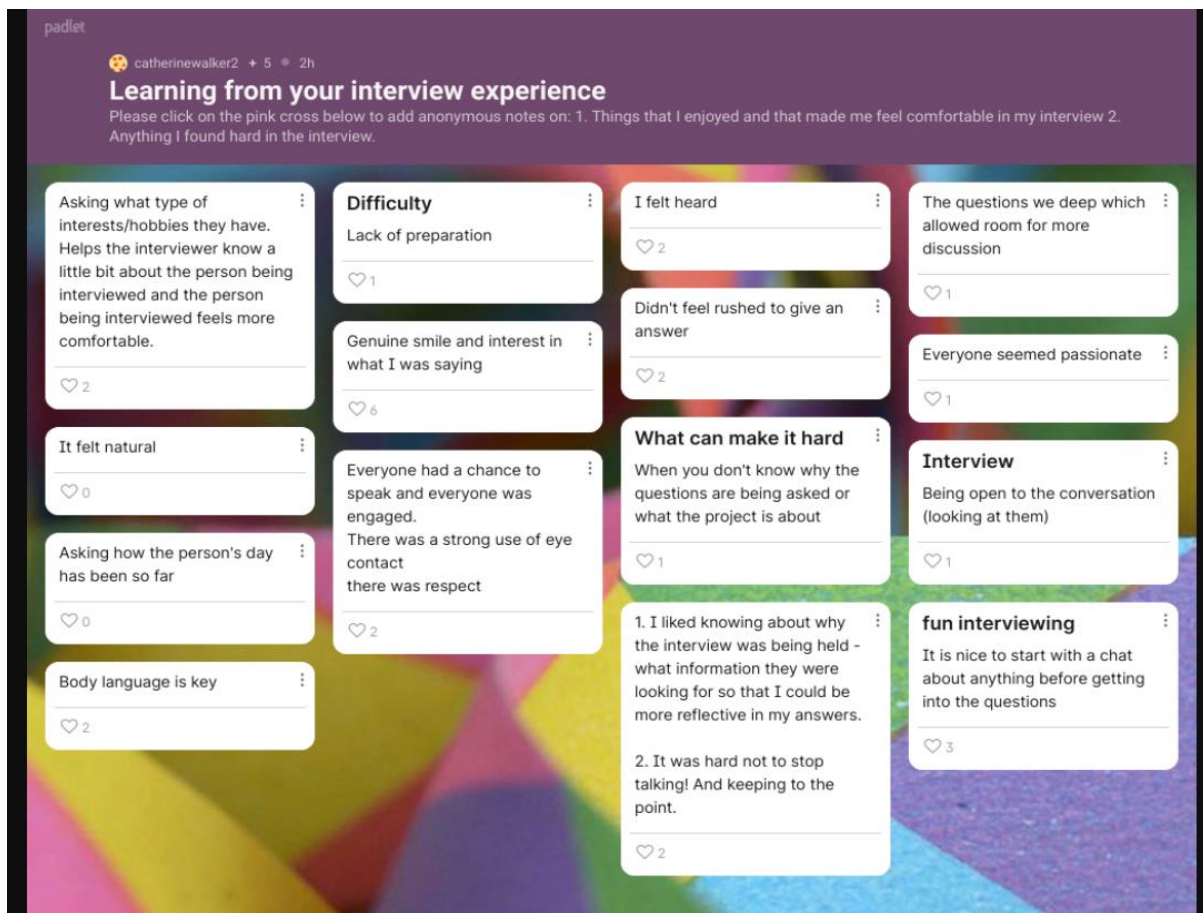
We talked about:

1. Things you enjoyed in interviews you've been part of, in particular your interview for the Young People at a Crossroads project.
2. Anything you found hard in the interview.

Things people mentioned were:

- They felt at ease because the interviewer was friendly.
- They were nervous about meeting new people and doing an interview online.
- They felt that they went off topic at times, but the interviewer steered them back.
- They enjoyed the interview because they felt their opinions were heard and valued.
- They liked the calm and open atmosphere of the interview.
- It is good to be told there is no right or wrong answer.
- When interviewing, it can be hard to respond when participants don't say very much, but using open questions can help with this (this is something we will discuss more in session 2).

On the next page is a screenshot of a Padlet board discussion from the previous time we ran the training, which also shows some things that other young researchers on the project enjoyed or found hard about being interviewed. It is worth thinking about the things that you and others found made you feel at ease in interviews, so you can make your parents feel at ease in the interview you do with them.



Keep thinking about: Based on the experiences people have added here, what do you think you could do or avoid doing to make your parent feel at ease before the interview starts and during the interview? For example:

- What to do if participants don't want to answer a question (and how to let participants know this is ok in advance)
- The importance of not accidentally asking two or more questions at once
- Long pauses
- Allowing time for interviewees to ask their own questions or go back to anything
- Explaining to participants what the data is being used for
- Giving enough context so that participants know why you are asking a question

2. The 'big questions'

Most research projects begin with a puzzle or a question – something that doesn't quite make sense, something that you're curious about, or a question you think no one else is asking.

E.g. 'big questions' in the Young People at a Crossroads project – how are families talking about climate change where parents and children were born in different countries? What can different generations learn from one another? How can climate change education in the UK and Australia include perspectives from people experiencing climate change in different parts of the world?

Keep thinking about: What do you want to find out from your interviews with your parents? What are the 'big questions' that got you interested in this project? There are no right/wrong answers but these will help shape the questions you ask in the interview

3. Questions to start you off

We talked about five questions that we would like all young researchers to ask parents in their interviews - feel free to reword them to make it sound more like you :)

- What do you remember doing in your everyday life as a family to look after the environment when you were growing up, and how do you think these things were shaped by your environment and by cultural norms/ideas?
- How did you learn about British/Australian **[delete as appropriate]** cultural norms/ideas about looking after the environment when you first moved to the UK/Australia?
Follow up questions: Was there anything you found confusing? How do you feel about this now?
- When you were growing up, were there any environmental challenges or difficulties you faced as a family (e.g. to do with the weather, accessing everyday resources, environmental hazards) and how did you adapt to these?
- Have these experiences of adapting to environmental challenges growing up made a difference to how you have brought up your children? **Note:** As this question is partly about you, you can also respond to what your parent says here! As we will discuss in the research training, an interview is a conversation :)
- What do you think people in the UK/Australia can learn from people living in the country you grew up to look after the environment better? And is there anything that people in the country where you grew up could learn from people in the UK/Australia?

In the training, we talked a little about these questions, and in particular cultural norms. We talked about how these are the values that people stick to in a society, that feed into their everyday behaviours and practices. They are behaviours that are considered normal in society, like holding a door open or queueing. A cultural norm relating to the environment might be recycling.

We also had a chance to see two interview facilitators ask one another the first question here, and then young researchers had a chance to ask the question to the facilitators themselves in break out rooms.

4. Semi-structured interviewing

Semi-structured interviewing is a combination of questions you have written down in advance, and questions that you come up with on the spot in response to what the person you are interviewing says.

You will have seen this in practice as this is the method that Catherine and Ellen have been using in this project with you.

This method works well to allow both structure and flexibility. It allows you to see interviews like a conversation where you would naturally ask a follow up question if someone says something that interests you.

However, it also keeps you on track as if you have some pre-prepared questions this will make it more likely that you find out what you want to know from the interview and you can keep coming back to these questions (in the second session we will think more about what to do if an interviewer wanders off topic).

Some tips for preparing a semi-structured interview:

1. Make sure to have some clear questions prepared, but not so many questions that there is no time for follow up questions.
2. Look over your questions and anticipate where you might ask follow-up questions.
3. Ask quite open questions initially, and then follow up questions that allow you to get to more detail such as 'when was that? What did you do? How did people respond?'
4. Remember it's just what we do in a conversation – a semi-structured interview is 'a conversation with a purpose'.

Before moving on, try practicing semi-structured interviewing with someone else. Have a question prepared, and then come up with one or more follow on questions for them based on how they responded to your first question.

5. Other methods of interviewing

With interviewing, it's important to play to your strengths and those of the person you are interviewing. If you have a parent who loves telling stories, ask questions in a way that allows this. If they give brief responses, having more prompts for stories could work better. You know your parents best.

Below are some ideas for how you could ask questions in your interview. There is no pressure to use any of these, but we are just giving you as many ideas for you to work with as possible.

Oral history interviewing– this involves looking back and getting people to think about the big moments that shaped their life, e.g. 'looking back over your life have there been any key events that have changed how you think about the environment?'

A day in the life – this involves asking participants to tell you about a typical day and using that as a starting point to ask follow on questions. It is good for picking up on routines and practices that people might take for granted – e.g. 'talk me through a day in your life when you were my age' and then follow up question 'in what ways do you think what you did was shaped by the environment?' or 'how does this make you view other people's environmental practices?'

Narrative interviewing – asking questions in a way that causes people to tell stories (e.g. 'tell me about a time when you experienced a shortage or an abundance of water...?'). Trying to trigger memories. In research interviewing we want to be able to really picture the stories that we are told. So ask open questions and then ask follow up questions such as: when was that? What did you do? How did people respond? Can you give an example? Can you tell me more about that?

Interviewing with photos or objects - Ask your parent to bring a photo to the interview that best illustrates the impacts of climate change on their country of origin. Then in the interview you can ask how this scene connects to family members' experiences.

Mapping/drawing interviews - get parents to draw a basic map of how much they can remember of where they grew up. Key thing is to get conversation started and prompt stories – the map doesn't need to be accurate! Make sure you are clear about what you want to find out through the mapping, and have some questions prepared. Parent could draw the town/village where they grew up and show any places that they think were already environmentally harmed (degraded/ polluted) or could be environmentally harmed by climate change in the future. This method will work best if you have already asked your parents some questions about growing up and the parent can visualise this place.

Remember: all of these ideas are options only. Think about what you want to know, what you think your parents would enjoy and be comfortable with.

6. Reflecting on what we've learned so far

Think about the following questions:

- a. Do you think the interview questions you have will allow you to answer the 'big questions' you want to know about through this research? Is there anything you would add?
- b. Think about the interview styles and creative methods (oral history, a year in a life, narrative, interviewing with a photo or mapping). Are there any questions you would add to your list, or any way you might adapt the questions you originally wrote based on what we've talked about in the training so far?

7. Next session

In the next session, we'll have more time to practice interview questions in small groups and get feedback from a facilitator. We'll also talk more about the practicalities of the interview.

Please come to the second session with a list of interview questions you think you'd like to ask parents. These can include the five 'questions to start you off' listed above and a minimum of 5 additional questions for parents.

Between sessions one and two, if you have an idea for an interview topic that you don't quite know how to translate into a question, or anything else that you want to discuss with Catherine, please just get in touch.

IMPORTANT: We won't record all of session two so please do all you can to attend the session. You can still interview your parents without having attended both sessions in person but you will definitely benefit from having the chance to hear from experienced interviewers, and to practice interviewing with others on the project before your interview with parents.