**Background Information:**

Interviews can be used for exploratory research or for hypothesis-testing research. There are three general types of interviews:

1. Unstructured interviews
   1. Interviews in the form of a conversation. The researcher asks a few very broad questions and allows the respondent to set the tone and pace of the interview.
   2. This form of interviewing is often used for theory development.
2. Structured interviews
   1. Interviews in which many people are asked the exact same close-ended questions. The goal is often to “count” categories of answers across respondents.
   2. More appropriate for hypothesis testing projects than exploratory projects.
3. Semi-structured interviews
   1. There are goals of what we want to learn and pre-determined questions (like in a structured interview), but questions are open-ended to allow respondents to elaborate (like an unstructured interview).

There are a few tips for successful interviewing.

1. Build rapport with respondents.
   1. Be professional and kind.
   2. Be prepared (know who they are and what their expertise is) but try not to come off as threatening (like you know everything about them and want to catch them in inaccuracies).
2. Show that you are listening
   1. Repeat back key ideas and ask follow-up questions.
3. Order questions strategically.
   1. Ask easier (or less controversial/threatening) questions first.

**Activity Instructions:**

In this exercise, you will be conducting interviews with your classmates to practice hypothesis-testing style interviews. Follow the instructions below. When it comes time to conduct the interviews, students should get into groups of six and arrange desks so that three desks in a row face three more desks in a row.

1. Write a broad research question below (one for which interviewing classmates would help you answer the question).
   * For example, “How do students balance school, employment, and social activities?” or “What motivates students to become Political Science majors?”
2. Sketch a simple, preliminary path model that communicates a potential explanation for an answer to your question. This should include at least two variables (an independent and dependent variable) but can include more.
3. Below, write a preliminary hypothesis for your question. The hypothesis should be stated in terms of the observable implications of your theory in the context of the research method. That is, state your hypothesis in terms of what evidence you would observe in an interview.
4. Write down three things you will do to build rapport with your interview subjects.
5. Below, sketch out an interview protocol. A protocol includes the questions you will ask, the order in which you will ask them, and potential prompts for each question (Remember you want to get information from your subjects that will answer your hypothesis). You will have about 5 minutes to conduct each interview.

Respondent 1, notes

Respondent 2, notes

Respondent 3, notes

**Post-Interview Questions**

1. Based on the interview responses, do you have an answer for your research question? Describe it below.
2. As an interviewer, were you able to get the information you wanted from your respondents? Which questions or which types of questions elicited the most useful answers?
3. Re-write your hypothesis (for Prof A’s benefit). Did the interviewees’ responses provide evidence in support of your hypothesis? If so, how so? If not, why not, and did their answers suggest an alternative hypothesis?
4. If you were to do this activity all over again, what changes would you make to your interview protocol and why?
5. As a respondent, did you notice any particularly useful tactics or types of questions the interviewers asked you?
6. Do you think you could use interviews in your research project? Why or why not?