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Collecting Cooking and Preservation Oral Histories

In Tasks 2-5, 3-6, and 4-6, the team collected oral histories about connections between food and your community's culture, identities, and histories. It is helpful to document and collect data from a variety of perspectives so you can become aware of these types of connections in the community. This will be particularly useful when you develop your community action and communication plan in Part 7.

Objective



In this task, the team will continue to interview people in the community to collect oral histories about cooking and food preservation. Remember that oral history refers both to the method of documenting an oral testimony and to the product of that process. In this task, the team will be focusing on the following questions from the question map:

- What are the connections between culture, identities, histories, and food in a community?
- What evidence could we collect to help define food- and nutrition-related problems in our community?

1. Go to the Task 5-5 folder and get the list of interview questions, interview tips, and safety tips to use when conducting interviews in the community.



Pre-Interview

1. Read through the list of interview questions.
2. Make a list of people in your community you could interview. Think about interviewing the same people from Tasks 2-5, 3-6, and 4-6, or the people you collected food journals from in Task 3-2. Consider:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Neighbors
3. Identify any equipment the team could use to record audio or video of interviews.
4. Practice interviewing other team members, taking notes, and using



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audio/video recording equipment (if available).

5. Read through the pre-interview tips to keep in mind in the task folder.

Interview

1. Read through the interview tips to keep in mind in the task folder.
2. Set up and conduct the interviews.

Post-Interview

1. Compile all notes and any audio/video recordings from the interviews.
2. Analyze the notes and recordings.
 - Describe what you noticed in the interviews.
 - What are some interesting stories or information in the responses?
 - Identify any foods or stories that you were unfamiliar with.
 - Identify any foods or stories that you were familiar with.
 - Which questions did most people in the community have similar responses to?
 - Which questions did people in the community have different responses to?
3. Discuss how these oral history interviews could be useful when thinking about the question, **What are the connections between culture, identities, histories, and food in a community?**
4. Discuss how these oral history interviews could be useful when thinking about the problem question, **How do we ensure good nutrition for all?**



Research Tip

Use the field safety tips in the safety documents on Learning Lab before going out into the community to survey or interview people. Be polite, never go alone, and always be aware of your surroundings.





Task 5-5. Collecting Cooking and Preservation Oral Histories

Interview Questions

1. What types of foods or meals did you cook when you were a child?
2. Do you still cook the same foods you ate as a child? What has changed over time about the foods you cook? What caused those changes?
3. Who most commonly cooks food in your home? Why does that person most commonly do the cooking?
4. Where and how did you learn how to cook?
5. Do you use any food preservation methods, such as pickling or drying, in your home? Have you always used these methods or have they changed over time?

Pre-Interview

Practice interviewing, taking notes, and using audio/video equipment (if available).

Tips to keep in mind:

- The interview should feel like a conversation. It is okay to skip between questions or ask them differently to help the person understand the question better.
- Sometimes the best question is, “Can you tell me more?”
- If your interviewee has paused, give them time to gather their thoughts instead of rushing ahead with the next question. They might be about to say something interesting.
- If you are using equipment to record the interviews, conduct test interviews to make sure the equipment is working properly. When the audio or video is played back, is it clear and easy to hear/see?
- If you are writing down the answers to the questions, practice taking notes while someone is talking. Consider conducting interviews in groups so that more than one person can help write down answers. Then after the interview, teammates can compare their notes for accuracy and consistency.

Interview

Tips to keep in mind:

- If possible, find a quiet, comfortable space that is free from external noise. This is especially important if you are recording these interviews.
- If you’re using audio/video recording equipment, test all of the equipment before the interview.
- Make sure you have a pencil and paper to take notes.
- Introduce yourself to the interviewee and explain the research you are conducting and the purpose of the interview. Explain to the interviewee that your team is interested in learning more about the connections between food and local community culture, identities, and histories.
- At the end of the interview, thank the interviewee for participating.



Post-Interview Analysis

1. Compile all notes and recordings from the team interviews.
2. Read the notes or listen to/watch the recordings of the interviews.
 - Describe what you notice.
 - What are some interesting things you first notice in their responses?
 - Identify any things they discuss that you are unfamiliar with.
 - Identify any things they discuss that you are familiar with.
 - Identify any responses that are useful when thinking about the question: *What are the connections between culture, identities, histories, and food in a community?*
 - Discuss how the responses from these oral history interviews could be useful when thinking about the problem question: *How do we ensure good nutrition for all?*

