

**Ethnographers Guide**  
FVAP: Military spouse and dependents  
2014

I. **Ethno Set Up**

- A. Record date, time, city, country and military base (if relevant).

II. **Standard introduction (5 min.)**

- A. Ethnographer's name, conducting research on behalf of FVAP.
- B. Logistics of ethno and why we are doing an ethno: "Spending some time with you today is going to help us learn what the process of voting is like for people like you, who are stationed away from home with their families. You're the expert here, so I want to learn from you today. As long as it's ok with you, I'm going to record our session today just to help me remember everything you teach me."
- C. Sign release so we can use video and audio for research purposes only.
- D. Reiterate that participation is voluntary: "Your participation is voluntary, and refusal to participate carries no penalty. You are also free to discontinue participation at any time during this interview, without penalty."
- E. Have respondent introduce themselves. Do not start audio and video recording until they have already introduced themselves (i.e., do not have them state their name or other identifying information on video/audio).
- F. Make clear: **YOU ARE NOT INTERESTED IN WHO THEY VOTED FOR, ONLY THE VOTING PROCESS. (UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR PERSONAL POLITICAL BELIEFS, WHICH CANDIDATES YOU VOTED FOR, POLITICAL PARTIES YOU SUPPORT, ETC.)**

III. **Warm-up and Voting Process (15 minutes)**

- A. What is it like to vote here?  
1. How is it different from other times or places you have voted in the past?
- B. Thinking back to the last time you voted here, describe for me where you were and what you did.  
1. Ask for details on what, who, where, when, how.
- C. Do your best to draw where you were and what you did. [PARTICIPANT DRAWS ON EASEL OR BLANK SHEET OF PAPER, BE SURE TO POINT CAMERA TOWARD DRAWING]
- D. Ask participant to explain the drawing and explain the steps in the process. [BE SURE TO HAVE THEM DRAW HOW THEY 'MOVED

THROUGH THE SPACE' AND WHERE THEY HAD TO STOP, ETC.  
MAKE NOTES ON THE DRAWING IF NECESSARY]

**IV. Vote History (10 Minutes)**

- A. Tell me about your history with voting.
  - 1. About how long have you been voting?
  - 2. Where/how did you vote first, and where/how have you voted in the past?
- B. Why do you vote? Does your spouse feel the same way? How about other people you know here?
- C. Number of times you have voted while away from your permanent home?
  - 1. Any time that stands out as different than others?
- D. Have you voted as an absentee voter while in the US? If yes, how did the process differ being an overseas voter?
- E. Does it feel like the people in the electoral process care about your ability to vote? Are there some who care and some who do not care? Identify the election personnel.

**V. Information on Voting (15 minutes)**

- A. How did you first hear about the idea of voting from here? Did someone mention it to you? If so, who? [Probe: Family member? Friend?]
- B. Once the idea occurred to you to vote overseas, what questions came into your head? What information did you look for? Where do you get information on how to vote? Did you ask someone? If so, who? Do you get information from the following:
  - 1. County
  - 2. Voting Assistance Officer
  - 3. Family member
  - 4. Friends
  - 5. What information did you receive from each source used?
  - 6. Do you get different types of information from different sources?
  - 7. [If didn't use one of the sources noted above]: Why not?  
[IF CONSULTED INTERNET SITE, HAVE THEM GO TO THE SITE AND SHOW YOU HOW THEY GOT THERE. POINT CAMERA AT WEBSITE.]
- C. In general, are there resources available for people like you who are stationed away from home with their families? Tell me about that.  
[PROBE ON SPECIFIC RESOURCES]

- D. What is your biggest concern about voting from here?
- E. Are you familiar with the FVAP web site? If yes, is it helpful? How would you describe the site to others? What would have been more helpful to you or is there anything you would change?
- F. Where do you get information on candidates? [If non-party web sites, have them show you, and record.] How are the sites helpful or not helpful? What do you wish you could find out about candidates overall? [POINT CAMERA AT WEBSITE]

**VI. Voting Logistics and Concerns (25 minutes)**

- A. How did you request your ballot: FPCA, state form, did a relative get one for you?
- B. Roughly how long did it take to receive the ballot? When did you request it and when did you receive it?
- C. [IF RESPONDENT DID NOT RECEIVE BALLOT]: Tell me about that. Did you ever find how why you didn't receive it?  
PROBE: Did you hear from your local election official about that? Did you contact anyone about it?
  - i. Do you remember if you provided your e-mail address as another way your local election official could contact you?
- D. How did you submit your ballot? (mail, fax, e-mail) Why did you use that mode? Did you consider using a different mode? If so, why did you choose not to use that mode?
- E. Where did you keep your ballot before you voted? What else do you keep there? Were you worried you might lose your ballot?
- F. Roughly how many days before the election did you submit your ballot? What triggered you to submit your ballot at that time?
- G. Did you have any concerns when you submitted your ballot?
- H. Were you concerned your ballot might not be counted? Why?

**VII. Simulation 1: Request for Ballot, filling out the ballot (20 minutes)**

- A. [View and record simulation.]
- B. [Probe specific steps in the process after they have finished.]
- C. [If requested ballot online]: what web site did you go to? [Record them on the site and how they went on the site.]
- D. [Present ballot from their home state (ideally, their home county).] I don't want you to actually fill out this ballot, but just describe for me what you did when you received this ballot. [Do not allow to fill out ballot, have the respondent walk through the steps he/she took to fill out]  
Probe: Was any particular section or part of this ballot confusing to you?
- E. Anything you're not sure of on the ballot?
- F. Anything you think other voters might be confused by?

- G. Anything about the process of requesting a ballot you would improve?
- H. Anything about filling out the ballot that you would improve?

**VIII. Simulation 2: Sending the ballot (15 minutes)**

- A. [View and record simulation.]
- B. [Probe specific steps in the process after they are finished]
- C. Anything about sending the ballot that concerned you?
- D. Anything about the simulation done today that is different from the last time you voted?

**IX. WRAP-UP (10 min.)**

- A. Some people have said that allowing overseas voters to vote online or by e-mail would increase the number of votes from overseas. Do you agree or disagree with that? Why?
- B. Other people say that if you allow overseas voters the opportunity to vote online or by e-mail, that there would be more vote fraud. Do you agree or disagree with that? Why?
- C. If you were responsible for reducing the number of vote failures among voters like you, who are stationed overseas or away from home, what would you do?

[At end of interview, ethnographer should give participant business card/contact information and invite them to contact you if there is anything they think of later on that they'd like to add]

Sometimes in a session like this, people think of something they want to add or something they want to clarify later on. If that happens to you, please feel free to reach out to me.