

## Qualitative Interviewing

### Variations in Interview Instrumentation

Type of Interview	Characteristics	Strengths	Weaknesses
Informal conversational interview	Questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things; there is no predetermination of question topics or wording	Increases the salience and relevance of questions; interviews are built on and emerge from observations; the interview can be matched to individuals and circumstances	Different information collected from different people with different questions. Less systematic and comprehensive if certain questions do not arise naturally. Data organization and analysis can be quite difficult.
Interview guide approach	Topics and issues to be covered are specified in advance, in outline form; the interviewer decides sequence and wording of questions in the course of the interview.	The outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed. Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational.	Important and salient topics may be inadvertently omitted. Interviewer flexibility in sequencing and wording questions can result in substantially different responses from different perspectives, thus reducing the comparability of responses.
Standardized open-ended interview	The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees are asked the same basic questions in the same order. Questions are worded in a completely open-ended format.	Respondents answer the same questions, this increasing comparability of responses; data are complete for each person on the topics addressed in the interview. Reduces interviewer effects and bias when several interviewers are used. Permits evaluation users to see and review the instrumentation used in the evaluation. Facilitates organization and analysis of the data.	Little flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances; standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers.
Closed, fixed-response interview	Questions and response categories are determined in advance. Responses are fixed; respondent chooses from among these fixed responses	Data analysis is simple; responses can be directly compared and easily aggregated; many questions can be asked in a short time.	Respondents most fit their experiences and feelings into the researcher's categories; may be perceived as impersonal, irrelevant, and mechanistic. Can distort what respondents really mean or experienced by so completely limiting their response choices.

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### Question Options

Kind of Question	Description	Example
Experience and behavior questions	Questions about what a person does or has done aim to elicit behavior, experiences, actions and activities that would have been observable had the observer been present	If I followed you through a typical day, what would I see you doing? What experiences would I observe you having If I had been in the program with you, what would I have seen you doing?
Opinion and values questions	Questions aimed at understanding the cognitive and interpretive processes of people ask about opinions, judgments, and values. Answers to these questions tell us what people think about some experience or issue. They tell us about people's goals, intentions, desires, and expectations	What do you believe? What do you think about ____? What would you like to see happen? What is your opinion of ____?
Feeling questions	Feeling questions aim at eliciting emotions –feeling responses of people to their experiences and thoughts. Feeling tap the affective dimension of human life.	How do you feel about that?
Knowledge questions	Knowledge questions inquire about the respondent's factual information –what the respondent knows.	Certain things are facts, such as whether it is against the law to drive while drunk and how the law defines drunkenness. These things are not opinions or feelings.
Sensory questions	Sensory questions ask about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled. Responses to these questions allow the interviewer to enter into the sensory apparatus of the respondent.	When you walk through the doors of the program, what do you see? What does the counselor ask you when you meet with him? What does he actually say?
Background/Demographic questions	Age, education, occupation and the like are standard background questions that identify characteristics of the person being interviewed. Answers to these questions help the interviewer locate the respondent in relation to other people. Asking these questions in an open-ended rather than closed manner elicits the respondent's own categorical world view.	

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Wording questions	Description
<p>☉ Truly open-ended questions</p>	<p>A truly open-ended question does not presuppose which dimension of feeling or thought will be salient for the interviewee. The truly open-ended question allows the person being interviewed to select from among that person's full repertoire of possible responses those that are most salient. In qualitative inquiry one of the things the inquiry is trying to determine is what dimensions, themes, and images/words people use among themselves to describe their feelings, thoughts, and experiences.</p> <p>☉ How satisfied are you with this program?            ☉ How do you feel about ____?            ☉ What is your opinion of ____?            ☉ What do you think of ____?</p>
<p>☉ Dichotomous questions</p>	<p>Avoid dichotomous response questions. These provide the interviewee with a grammatical structure suggesting a Yes or no answer.</p> <p>☉ Were you doing a formative evaluation?            ☉ What were the purposes of the evaluation?            ☉ Were you trying to find out if the people changed from being in the wilderness?            ☉ What were you trying to find out through the evaluation?            ☉ Did you interview people both before and after the program?            ☉ What kinds of information did you collect for the evaluation?</p>
<p>☉ Singular questions</p>	<p>One of the basic rules of questionnaire writing is that each item must be singular; that is, no more than one idea should be contained in any given question.</p> <p>☉ What you think are the strengths of the program. What you like. What you don't like. What you think could be improved or should stay the same.            ☉ What would you say are the strengths of this program?            ☉ What about weaknesses?</p>
<p>☉ Illustrative examples in questions</p>	<p>One kind of question wording that can help establish neutrality is the illustrative example format. When phrasing questions in this way I want to let the person I am interviewing know that I have pretty much heard it all –the bad things and the good things– so I am not interested in something that is particularly sensational, particularly negative, or especially positive. I want to elicit open and honest judgments from people without making them worry about my judging what they say.</p> <p>☉ Ok, now I'd like to ask you to tell me how you were treated in the group home by the parents. Some kids have told us they were treated like one of the family; some kids have told us that they got knocked around and beat up by the group home parents; some kids have told us about sexual things that were done to them... how have you been treated in the home group?</p>
<p>☉ Role-playing and simulation questions</p>	<p>Providing context for a series of questions can help the interviewee hone in on relevant responses. A helpful context provides cues about the level at which a response is expected.</p> <p>☉ Suppose I was a new person who just came into this program, and I asked you what I should do to succeed here. What would you tell me?</p>
<p>☉ Presupposition questions</p>	<p>Presupposition questions involve a twist on the theme of empathic neutrality. Presuppositions have been identified by linguists as a grammatical structure that creates rapport by assuming shared knowledge and assumptions.</p> <p>☉ What is the most important experience you have had in the program? This question presupposes that the respondent has had an important experience.</p>
<p>☉ Prefatory statements and announcements</p>	<p>Is a technique for facilitating responses that involves altering the interviewee to what is about to be asked before is actually asked. Think of it as a warming up the respondent.</p> <p>No preface: How have you changed as a result of the program?            Preface: Now, let me ask you to think about any changes you see in yourself as a result of participating in this program. (pause) How, if at all, have you been changed by your experiences in this program?</p>
<p>☉ Probes and follow-up questions</p>	<p>Probes are used to deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and depth of responses, and give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired.</p> <p>☉ When did that happen?            ☉ Who else was involved?            ☉ Where were you during that time?            ☉ What was your involvement in that situation?</p>

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interviewing techniques	Description
Rapport and neutrality	As an interviewer, I want to establish rapport with the person I am questioning, but that rapport must be established in such a way that it does not undermine my neutrality. concerning what the person tells me. Neutrality means that the person being interviewed can tell me anything without engendering either my favor or disfavor with regard tot the content of her or his response. I cannot be shocked, angered, or embarrassed. Nothing the person tells me will make me think more or less of the person. At the same time I am neutral with regard to the content of what is being said to me, I care very much that that person is willing to share with me what she or he is saying.
Process of feedback during the interview	You ,a s the interviewer, must maintain awareness of how the interview is flowing, how the interview is reacting to questions, and what kinds of feedback are appropriate and helpful to maintain the flow of communication.
Support and recognition responses	Provide reinforcement and feedback. This means letting the interviewee know from time to time that the purpose of the interview is being fulfilled. Words of thanks, support and even praise will help make the interviewee feel that the interview process is worthwhile and support ongoing rapport. © It's really helpful to get such a clear statement of what the program is like. That's just the kind of thing we're trying to get at.
Maintaining control and enhancing the quality of responses	Time is precious in an interview. Long widened responses, irrelevant remarks, and digressions reduce the amount of time available to focus on critical questions. Control is facilitated by 1) knowing what you want to find out, 2)asking focused questions to get relevant answers, 3) listening attentively to assess the quality and relevance of responses, and 4) giving appropriate verbal and nonverbal feedback to the person being interviewed.

**1. What qualities do you have that will help you be an effective interviewer?**

One week before the beginning of the semester I have conducted two interviews with students designing a piece of instruction. I was assigned the task to help them develop those materials, and as a way to understand the task to be done I interviewed them. After we covered the topic of interviewing during the first week of class, I went back and tried to identify my interviewing strengths and weaknesses. After reflecting on those interviews, I consider qualities that make me a good interviewer are that I am a very friendly person and I am a good listener. I could identify that I established rapport and neutrality, I also processed feedback during the interview and provided reinforcement. Another habit I have is to sometimes summarized what I have being just told, something like "let me see if I understood your answer, did you mean that...." and I would like to know if that is something effective to do during an interview.

**2. What can you do to improve your interviewing skills?**

What I definitely need to improve my interviewing skills is more practice. Fortunately for me, the data I have collected for my research was done together with my advisor. Now that I have read the chapter, I can definitely identify how he applied all these interviewing techniques. Fortunately for me, I can always go back to the video and see how my professor conducted the interviews and learn from him.

From my informal interviews I did with the two graduate students I identified I need not to provide too much prefatory and supposition questions. When I reviewed the video of such interviews, I found out that I was speaking too much.