

# QUEST Methodological Focus

## Individual interviews: Techniques & approach



Duyen Thi Kim Nguyen, PhD

[duyen@sjhdc.ca](mailto:duyen@sjhdc.ca)

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# Outline

- What is an individual interview?
- Reasons to conduct an interview?
- Methodological considerations
- Interviewee → Interviewer → Interview questions
- Interview process
  - Pre-interview
  - During the interview
  - Post-interview
- Analysis
- Budget
- Advantages & disadvantages

# What is an individual interview?



One on one interaction where one person is asked questions about a topic

- E.g. job interview, reporter on the news, school interview

# Reasons to conduct an interview?

## Conduct an interview when...

- you are seeking detailed, in-depth understanding/info of participants (e.g., experiences, perceptions, reasoning)
  - to understand ‘why’ behind behaviors or actions – motivations, attitudes, logic
  - “interested in better understanding a particular topic from the perspective of participants in order to develop a survey to draw upon a larger, generalizable sample” (Rosenthal, 2016, p. 510)
- the topic is complex and you want to be able to probe further
- you require interaction with the participant (e.g., showing slides, etc.)
- NOT generalizability

## Considerations

## Options

# The interviewee

## Research question (RQ)

- What purpose does the interview serve? Who is the best informed to provide rich information? Is there more than one group/pop'n that can inform the RQ?
- How many participants to interview? Based on previous similar studies, saturation of the data, your resources (time, \$, human resources)

## Ethical process

- Access/Recruitment; vulnerability

## What are the needs of the interviewees?

- Possible considerations: SES, past experiences, cultural background, physical/mental condition, developmental milestone
- Info re. interviewees will inform the characteristics needed of the interviewer, development of interview questions, and methodology

# The interviewer

Able to conduct the interview in a systematic manner

- Behaving similar across all interviews; follows the interview approach

Body language

- Help make the interviewee feel comfortable; read other body language to know how to respond to the interviewee
- Non-judgemental cues

Listening & communication skills

- Not interrupting; knowing when to follow interesting leads; knowing when to pause and give time for response; knowing when to probe/add to the question

Considerations:

- Sensitivity of the research topic
- Interviewer's ability to build rapport with the interviewee

# Gaining rapport

## Putting participants at ease

- Professional and generally knowledgeable, but less knowledgeable than the participant
- Friendly & curious
- Remind participants information is confidential

## Listening

- Restating the participant's response, using his/her language
- When clarifying, best to ask for 'use' than 'meaning'. E.g., 'When would you use that?' vs. 'What do you mean by that?'

**Tips:** 1) *Ensure rapport does not affect neutrality*

2) *Above all, convey: i) respect & interest; ii) empathy and understanding in a non-judgmental way*

(Leech, 2002)



# Interview question design

Do

Don't

**Tips:** 1) Know terms to avoid. 2) Don't ask information that you can get elsewhere.

# Types of questions

- 1) Open-ended
- 2) Closed-ended
- 3) Dichotomous
- 4) Grand tour
- 5) Examples
- 6) Prompts
- 7) Experience & behavior
- 8) Sensory
- 9) Opinion & value
- 10) Knowledge
- 11) Feelings/Emotions
- 12) Background & demographics

**Tip:** Take into consideration the characteristics of the interviewee & their perspective when designing and formulating questions. Try to anticipate their answers (Leech, 2002; Patton, 2002)

# Interview process

## Prior to the interview

- Build rapport with interviewee immediately
- Ensure interviewee understands the study and has signed the consent form
- When scheduling interviews, build in time for reflection
- Provide meeting reminder 1-2 days prior, including any necessary documents & contact information in case of cancelation or emergency
- Test interview questions, test all equipment, pack extra supplies/documents
- Arrive early to ensure a safe and welcoming interview environment; limit distractions
- Gather all available information prior to the interview (e.g., demographics)

**Tip:** *After pilot testing the interview guide, listen back to assess the interviewer and his/her technique.*

# Interview process (cont'd)

## During the interview

- Upfront, reiterate clearly key research information, expectations, & other housekeeping
- If conducting remotely, confirm how to reconnect if technical issues arise
- Build rapport throughout interview; Be aware of non-verbal cues
- Enunciate clearly and loud enough, for the recorder
- Use a recorder when possible; check recorder periodically for function
- Only jot down key information (minimal note-taking)
- Allow interviewee enough time to process and respond to the question

**Tip:** *If recording, ensure to narrate any non-verbal actions, for the transcript. E.g, “here” vs. “so you are referring to the diagram on page 3, paragraph 2?”*

# Interview process (cont'd)

## After the interview

- Reflect journal, jot down important details of the interview
- Listen back on your interview
- Get interview transcribed
- Ensure transcript accuracy by comparing transcript to audio, & make necessary corrections
- Analyze data
- Adjust the interview questions and provide interviewer feedback, if necessary

**Tip:** Do not let too much time pass after the interview is complete to write in your reflective journal or review the transcript. Data can accumulate very quickly and become unwieldy.

# Analysis (briefly)

- Different types of analysis depending on RQ and theoretical framework
  - e.g., content analysis, thematic analysis
- Analysis can be conducted concurrently with data collection
- Valuable to become very familiar with the data
- Transcriptions (detail & cost can vary)
- Richness of quotes dependent on interview questions & interviewer
- Anonymity
  - If sample is very small you may not be able to ensure anonymity when quoting
- Member checking, if necessary

# Budget

## Interviewer

- Interviewer fee per interview or hour
- Cost for travel
- Parking

## Interviewee/Participant

- Participant compensation
- Cost for travel
- Parking
- Child care

## Resources, etc

- Audio recording device/app
- Transcriptions (e.g., rev.com)
- Analyst
- Analytical software (e.g., Nvivo, atlas.ti)
- Participant recruitment strategy
- Timeline



## Advantages

- Can gather specific, detailed information
- Adds insight and greater understanding to a topic
- Can inform other research questions and data collection tools

## Disadvantages

- Time-consuming
- Cannot sample a large group easily
- Costly
- Challenging
- Cannot generalize



# References

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