

# How do we conduct in-depth interviews?

## 1. Plan

- What is(are) your research question(s), aim(s)? (*What is the specific purpose of the interviews? What information am I interested in exploring? What am I going to do with it?*)
- Identify the persons to be interviewed (your participants), contact them and settle a term and place to run the interview.
- Identify what information is needed.
- Ensure research will follow international and national ethical research standards.

## 2. Develop instruments

- Develop an interview checklist—the rules that guide the administration and implementation of the interviews (instructions that are followed for each interview to ensure consistency): *what to say to interviewees when setting up the interview; what to say to interviewees when beginning the interview, including ensuring informed consent and confidentiality of the interviewee; what to say to interviewees in concluding the interview; what to do during the interview (notes on paper? audiotape? videotape; Zoom, MS Teams, WhatsApp, Skype or any other online channel?); what to do following the interview.*
- Develop an interview guide that lists the questions or issues to be explored during the interview (no more than 15 main questions to guide the interview, and probes should be included where helpful).
- If necessary (if you will not run the interviews in English only), translate guides and test the translation.

## 3. Collect data

- Set up interviews with your participants (be sure to explain the aims, why it was chosen and the expected duration of the interview).
- Do not forget about the informed consent of the interviewee (the best is written).
- Inform the participants whether and how the information will be kept confidential, and the use of a note taker or tape/video recorder or any other.
- If interviewee has consented, conduct the interview.
- Summarize key data immediately following the interview.
- Verify information given in interviews if necessary (contact again the participant and clarify the issues).

#### **4. Analyse data**

- Transcribe and review data.
- Analyse all interview data.

*How to do it?*

**Methods of data analysis** - depend on the theoretical and methodological background: 1) Grounded theory and symbolic interactionism (we are looking for symbols that have emerged to give meaning on how people are interacting); 2) interpretative phenomenological analysis (we work with experience and its structure); 3) analysis of themes that popped up during interview

- a) read through the interview responses and look for patterns among the responses.
- b) if you get too many topics/patterns, see if you can group them in a meaningful way, such as by type of participant.
- c) you can check how the responses were offered - with enthusiasm or very brief (just few words).
- d) if necessary read more than one the transcripts of the interview
- e) the whole analytical process is gradually run starting from the simplest issues and ending with the more complex issues/model of understanding.
- f) you should use coding for themes, meanings (they can be words or sentences as the interviewed person expressed them). Continue with a next phase of coding when you can use theoretical concepts to code the meanings/themes identified within the first phase. In the next phase, you can build up a model of understanding based on elements of coherence or differences.

#### **5. Disseminate findings**

## **GUIDELINES**

### **Introduction key components:**

- *Thank you*
- *Your name*
- *Purpose*
- *Confidentiality*
- *Duration*
- *How interview will be conducted*
- *Opportunity for questions*
- *Signature of consent*

### **Questions:**

- *No more than 15 open-ended questions*
- *Ask factual questions before opinion ones*
- *Use probes as needed*

#### **Closing key components:**

- *Additional comments (Is there anything more you would like to add?)*
- *Thank you*

## **WRITING GOOD IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS**

- 1. Ask open-ended questions:** Questions should reveal what participants are thinking—not what you think they are thinking. They should encourage an extensive, detailed reply. Use open-ended questions especially at the beginning of an interview to identify themes. Closed-ended questions are not off-limits: use them to narrow responses later in the guide, to bring greater focus to key questions, or clarify and confirm points.
- 2. Ask effective probing questions:** Probes reveal detail by clarifying or expanding upon earlier responses. Good probing generates conversation: the focus is on the response, not on the person providing the response. Examples include, *What else, what does that mean to you, help me understand, etc.*
- 3. Ask respondents to think back:** Ask participants to “think back” to a specific event and reflect on their personal experience. This strategy invites concrete, specific responses, and grounds participants in their own experiences, attitudes and beliefs, as opposed to having responses that are based on “what others have said” or popular opinion.
- 4. Keep questions simple:** Think of the shortest, most direct way to ask a question. Avoid questions with multiple interpretations, or a question that is really asking two questions at once.
- 5. Avoid asking “why”:** “Why” puts participants on the defensive mode; these questions can sound like an interrogation, sometime feel rude, or have unpleasant associations. Consider alternatives. Instead of “Why do you prefer that ...,” ask “What are the major reasons you prefer that type...? What do you like about it?”
- 6. Be cautious about giving examples:** By giving examples, you risk limiting participants’ responses (they may not think beyond the example). Consider using examples as part of your probing questions, after participants have already given their input.
- 7. Move from general to more specific questions:** Asking broader, more general questions first will provide a context and prepare participants to give more considered responses to the more focused, specific questions that will follow.
- 8. Ask positive questions before negative questions:** Ask participants to talk about both the positive and negative aspects of an experience, situation, program, etc., but ask them to talk about the good parts first—this usually makes people feel more comfortable talking about the bad parts.
- 9. Ask unaided questions before aided questions:** Get participants to respond to a question in their own words before following up with specific probing questions.