

## Interview Checklist

### First, determine if a interview is the best choice for data collection:

- What is the topic? Is it a very sensitive subject? Is confidentiality particularly important?
- What is your timeline? Interviews require more individual appointments but are easier to schedule.
- How large is the population?
- Do you have a budget? Will you provide food to the group? Is there an incentive for participating?
- How easily can I fit this method into my annual responsibilities? Individual interviews conducted regularly may be easier than focus groups or other methods.
- Who might be able to conduct interviews for this endeavor?

### Consider your sample

#### Who will you interview

- Purposeful- choose subjects that you believe will be able to provide you with important information- “stratified” means purposefully choosing from various sub-groups. Types of purposeful sampling: “maximum variation”, “typical case”, “critical case” and “extreme or deviant case” (Patton, 1989, pg 100-107).
- Key informant-a specific person that you believe will give you the most information-sometimes used to develop interview questions or to begin snowball sampling.
- Snowball-you ask the participants to provide you with names of those that will be able to provide you with important information.
- Convenience- simply asking anyone to whom you have easy access.-avoid this if possible.
- Random table/random selection of pool to invite.

#### How Many

- Is the sample reflective of the variation of the group you are interested? (Seidman, 1998)
- Have you reached “saturation”: Are you hearing the same information repeatedly? (Seidman, 1998)
- Do you have the funding/resources to continue?
- When you decide to stop, have a reason.

#### Invitations

- Send invitations to possible participants.
- Blind copy invitees so they can't see who is invited (if by email).
- Include:
  - How sample was chosen (why them?)

- Information about the study (what is the topic, why are you studying it, what you plan to do with the data)
  - Information regarding incentives
  - Confidentiality
  - Respond by date
  - Dates/time location of interviews
- Do follow ups/reminders.

## Structuring your questions

### Order

- Introduction-purpose of the study, tape recording, confidentiality, relationship of interviewer to the subject, how data will be used
- Less “risky” questions first
- Natural flow

### Wording

- Ask specific, thought-provoking questions. Avoid yes/no questions-Open ended
- Avoid leading or biased questions
- Use common language/their language when possible

### Debrief after the session, provide info if needed, reassure confidentially, ask for permission to contact for clarity

- Ask a colleague to listen to the questions as you ask them; ask for feedback on flow, understandability of the questions, etc.

## Facilitating the Interview

- Be on time, and be prepared with interview questions, tapes, paper and pen/pencil.
- Establish rapport: speak slowly and clearly, show that you are engaged through eye contact, nodding, repeating a summary of a response when appropriate, leaning in slightly, etc.
- Try to stay focused-ask all the questions, but ask follow-up questions as appropriate to get the depth of information you need.
- Ask the interviewee to repeat what they said if necessary, but only do this when it is something important.
- Make sure that the interviewee is the one doing most of the talking. It is not intended to be a conversation.
- Take good notes.
- More information in *The Active Interview* by Holstein and Grubrium, –see resources at the end.

## Data Analysis

- When analyzing data you should have an open mind.
- **Step One:** Reframe: re-familiarize yourself with the purpose of the study (Marshall and Rossman, 1999) - what are you trying to find out? This may sound unnecessary but it is very easy to get caught up in related data that is not really part of the study!
- **Step Two:** Listen to the tapes to verify transcripts and read the data once without trying to develop themes/codes.
- **Step Three:** Re-read data and take preliminary notes on a separate sheet (or in the margins) This is the beginning stages of organizing themes. You will then use the notes to develop primitive outline or system of classifications into which data are sorted initially- the broad “regularities” you see will form the first categories (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). “The researcher does not search for the exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories of the statistician but, instead, identifies the salient, grounded categories of meaning held by participants in the setting” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999, p.154).
- **Step Four:** Continue re-reading text and developing more detailed codes within codes while highlighting the quotes that are relevant- \*keep track of line numbers on the list of codes\*. These codes are what Marshall and Rossman (1999) call “Analyst-constructed typologies [which] are those created by the researcher that are grounded in the data but not necessarily used explicitly by participants” (p. 154-155).- this just means you get to decide what to call the themes you see.
- **Step Five:** Using the list of numbers for each code, remove text related to certain themes and reassemble by codes on a separate sheet of paper (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).

## Tips to Ensure Quality

- Emergent understandings-as new patterns emerge later in data review, the researcher reviews earlier data to ensure that nothing was missed (Marshall and Rossman, 1999).
- Negative case analysis-watch for and note those things that conflict with what you think you see as themes (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, Marshall and Rossman, 1999).
- Krueger (1994, p. 149-151) suggests that researchers consider the following factors when coding and analyzing data:
  - Not only consider the words but also the meaning of the words used by participants. A variety of words will have the same meaning.
  - Consider the comment or question that triggered a particular response and the tone used by the participant. Note takers should make notes of any changes in tones that are noteworthy-you can also go back and listen to the tape if you think the tone is important. What is the context?
  - Take note of changes in opinions/positions-this is more likely in interviews due to the level of interaction.
  - Take note of the “frequency or extensiveness” (p.150) and passion of certain responses. These responses may be of special importance.
  - Responses that are more specific may be more important than vague comments.
  - Do not miss the big ideas because you are so closely analyzing each individual comment.

**References and Additional Information:**

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