



FRED HUTCHINSON CANCER RESEARCH CENTER
SEATTLE BIOMED
SEATTLE CHILDREN'S

QUALITATIVE METHODS: CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

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Agenda

- What are interviews & focus groups
- Discussion/interview guides
- Logistical planning
- Facilitation skills
 - ▣ Body language
 - ▣ Reflective listening
 - ▣ Guiding conversations
- Practice!!!

Interview

Focus Group

Complex subject matter and knowledgeable respondents,

Promote discussion between participants on a specific topic

When interviewing one person at a time will yield the best info (ex. sensitive topics)

When interaction among interviewees will yield the best info (ex. community norms)

When interviewees are unique or may be in conflict with each other

When interviewees are similar and cooperative with each other

When interviewees are being asked about information that they are unlikely to give in a group of people that they don't already know (ex. when peer pressure or social desirability are a threat)

When individuals might be reluctant to give info one-on-one (ex. good for idea generation, problem identification and definition, evaluating messages for an intervention)

Interviews

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- Type of interview:
 - ▣ Informal, Unstructured, Semi-structured, Structured
 - ▣ Telephone, face-to-face

Advantages:

- Most in-depth
- Collect information about why behaviors are practiced, how people think, and conceptualizations of behavior
- Gain knowledge of exact words/language people use
- Emic (insider) perspective

Disadvantages

- Based on a few people
- Interviews very long, lots of data, time consuming to analyze
- Need people who aren't hesitant to speak and share ideas

Focus Groups

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- Optimal size: 6-10
- How many people do I recruit for each focus group?
 - ▣ Rule of thumb: more than you need (2x)

Advantages:

- Some people are more comfortable and talk more openly in group settings
- Natural way some people talk about problems and personal issues in some cultures (BUT culturally dependent)
- Collects information on social norms (ex. Norms around concurrent sexual relationships)
- Good for feedback on materials, campaigns, etc.

Disadvantages

- Difficulty to assess practice of personal or sensitive behaviors in groups, may only learn about behavior that people will admit in front of others
- Individual behavior when it's unique will be subsumed by group behavior
- Transcription is time consuming, difficult to identify speakers, analytic challenge

Participant Observation

- When a researcher inserts themselves in social event or group under study and records observations

Advantages:

- Deep detailed data
- Observations by outsider rather than self-reported data

Disadvantages

- Difficult to systematically collect data, especially in middle of important moment
- Hard to take notes so details may be forgotten
- Ethical considerations: tell or not tell group being studied that it is a study

The Social Organization of Commercial Sex Work in Moscow, Russia

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FG: Order of Operations

- ▣ Welcome
- ▣ Informed Consent
- ▣ Ground Rules
- ▣ Demographic questionnaires
- ▣ Start recorder
- ▣ Focus group discussion
- ▣ Stop recorder
- ▣ Thank you & Incentives

Designing FG/Interview Guides

Interview Guide for HIV-positive Persons

Hello, my name is _____. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. As mentioned earlier, I am interested in understanding your thoughts and opinions on depression and HIV infection, where people get care, and stigma related to this. We are hoping to integrate into ART clinics a system of screening HIV-positive people for depression and referring them for care. I will be asking you some questions which you are free to answer in any way you wish. Please feel free to elaborate any of your points. If a question is unclear to you please feel free to ask me to explain it. I would like to tape record the interview, so I don't miss anything that you say, but will not include your name on any documents or in the tape recording. Your answers will be kept confidential. Is it okay if I tape record our discussion

1. How common do you think depression is among HIV-positive patients? (probe about the common mental health problems faced by HIV-positive persons)
2. Who do you think would be the most appropriate person for addressing mental health concerns of HIV positive patients and why do you think so?(e.g., psychiatrists, general physicians, trained counselors, other?)
3. What do you think of the idea of integrating a system of screening for depression into the ART clinics? (Probe: whether patient believes that this is something that is needed or not needed and his/her basis for holding these opinions).
4. Have you ever felt depressed? If so, did you seek care? Where did you go? What was it like to seek care for being depressed? If you did not seek care, why not?
5. If you've never felt depressed, do you know anyone else with HIV who has felt depressed? Do you know if this person sought care? If they did, do you know where they went? If they did not, do you know why they did not seek care?
6. What are the things that would make integrating a system of screening for depression into the ART clinics difficult? (Probe: whether it be in terms of inadequate infrastructure and trained personnel, poor understanding and awareness of depression both from HCPs and patients, issues concerning stigma associated with seeking mental health care etc)
7. Of these barriers to integrating a system of screening for depression, how could we overcome some of them?
8. What kinds of things would make it easier to integrate a system of screening for depression into the ART clinics and your reasons for these?
9. Is there anything else that you think we should know before we try to do this?
10. Do you have any other ideas on how best we could incorporate mental health care in ART clinics?



Intro Information

Opening Qs

Body of Interview
Qs

Closing Qs

Facilitation Team

Ex. FG with 2 Facilitators



Clearly define each person's role ahead of time

The Art of Open-Ended Questions

Closed

Tend to encourage a short or single-word answer, such as Yes/No. Most survey questions are closed-ended.

Have you been tested for HIV?

Do you think giving your daughter the HPV vaccine is a good idea?

Open

The Art of Open-Ended Questions

Closed

Open

Designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the subject's own knowledge and/or feelings

How do you feel about having an HIV test?

What has your experience been like with having an HIV test?

Tell me about your last HIV test.

Activity: Open-Ended Questions

Develop 3 open-ended questions to use in a focus group/interview guide for your project.

Key starter phrases:

- What do you think about...
- Tell me about...
- How do you feel about...
- What was it like for you...

Logistics: Space

- **Visit** the space
- Check **acoustics**
- Consider **accessibility**
- Ensure **privacy**
- Plan for **transportation**
- Make **signs** clear & discrete



Logistics: Time

- **How long** will FG/interview last?
- Plan to start **15-20 minutes after** tell pts to arrive
- Keep early arrivers **busy** (informed consent, demographics qs)
- What time is optimal to hold the FG/I?



Logistics: Recording

- Bring **2 recorders** (back up)
- **Memory**
- **Microphone**
- Extra **batteries** (insert new before interview)
- Learn how to use it before your 1st interview
- **Test** ahead of time
- **Check** your recording afterwards



Logistics: Food & Incentives

- When selecting:
 - ▣ Think about your population
 - ▣ Seek advice of local partners
 - ▣ Use local vendors
- **Food (Pros & Cons):**
 - ▣ Logistics, cost, etc.
- **Incentives:**
 - ▣ Transportation \$
 - ▣ Cash vs. gift cards



Setting Ground Rules for FG

- Confidentiality:
 - ▣ Try not to use names or tell personal stories
 - ▣ What happens in FG stays in FG
- Try to use words that people will understand
- Respect other people's opinions
- Speak one at a time (and also speak loudly for the recording)
- **Turn off cell phones**

“Is there anything we should add?”

Considerations for working in another culture or language

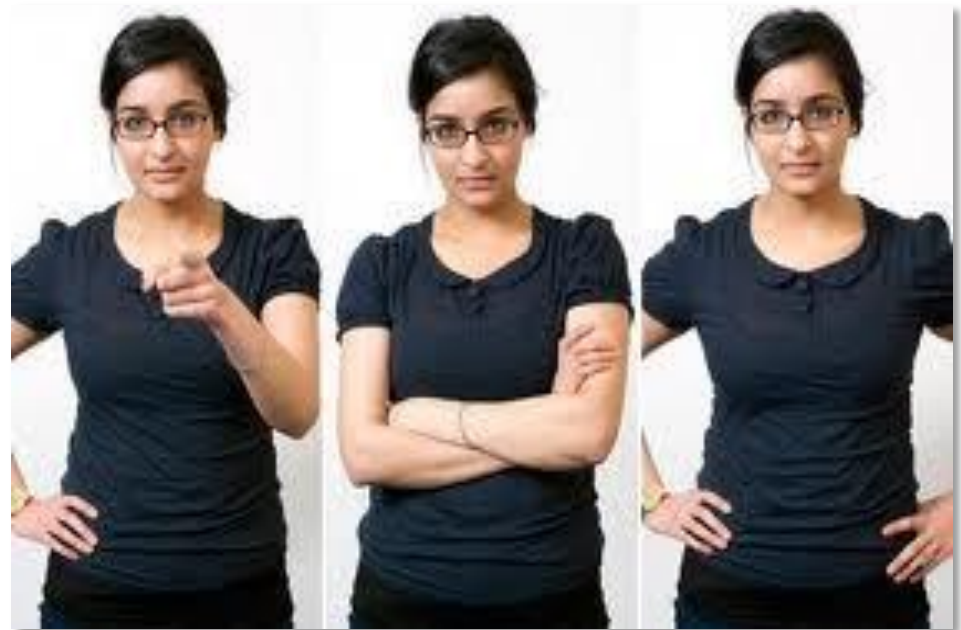
- The quality of your data depends on:
 - ▣ Highly skilled interviewers
 - ▣ Highly skilled translators
 - ▣ Knowledge and understanding of local context and language
- Recommendations:
 - ▣ Work with trained interviewers or conduct training with them
 - ▣ Include local interviewers on analytic team
 - ▣ Include bilingual members on teams

Facilitation skills



Body Language: Body

- Open and inviting **posture**
- Be aware of your **position** in the room
- Avoid distracting motions (pacing, bouncing, tapping)



Body Language: Face



Body Language: Face

- Keep facial expressions **neutral**
- Show that you are paying **attention** (nodding, verbal cues) without positively or negatively reinforcing answers
- **Eye contact**

Body Language: Voice



- Practice projecting your voice
- Set the standard for how loud people need to speak to be heard on the recording
- Show interest with your voice
- Pace (moderate-not too fast or too slow)

Reflective Listening

- A **communication strategy** involving two key steps:
 - seeking to understand a speaker's idea
 - offering the idea back to the speaker, to confirm the idea has been understood correctly
- **Non-judgmental**
- **Non-directive**
- **Benefits:**
 - Check the accuracy of your interpretations
 - Participant can offer more detail
 - Summarize or elicit agreements or disagreements
 - Use this to make a smooth transition to a new question or speaker

Reflective Listening

- So what I hear you saying is...
- It sounds like...

*“It sounds like a few of you feel that HIV testing is important for all women, including married women.
What do other people think?”*

Guiding Conversations

- Give neutral responses and use neutral language
- Build transitions through questions
 - Well designed guides will help do this
 - **Redirecting** can be used
- Probes
 - Tell me more about that...
 - Does anyone else feel that way or feel differently?



Redirecting

- How do you know how long to let someone talk before guiding them back to TOPIC?

“Can you tell me how that relates to [the topic]?”

“Earlier you said [x], and can you tell me a little bit more about that?”



Activity: Interviews

- Pair up with someone new
- Interview each other for 5-10 minutes (2x)
 - ▣ Try to get to all of your questions
 - ▣ Use reflective listening
 - ▣ Use redirecting
 - ▣ Probe
- Debrief

Strategies to keep people engaged

- Treat your participants as **experts**
- Act as if you hearing what they are telling for the first time (even if it's the 20th)
- Keep the conversation **flowing** smoothly
 - ▣ Managing dominant talkers
 - ▣ Encourage quieter people to speak
 - ▣ Allow people to respond to each other, not just the facilitator

Dealing w/ Difficult Situations Gracefully

- Interviewer/Personal Questions
 - ▣ What do YOU think about [x]?
- Flirtatious or Inappropriate Participants
 - Are you married?
- Difficult types of participants (ex. drug users)
- Arguments
- Questions that don't work or fall flat

Closing

- Debrief
- Other questions
- Evaluations