

Individual Interviews & Focus Groups

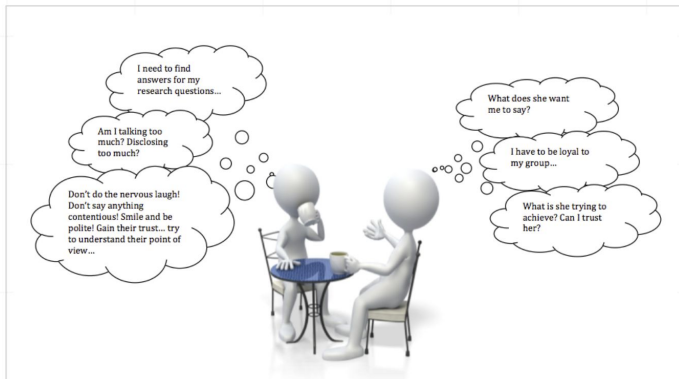
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Agenda

- ▷ Overview of Interviews & Focus Groups
- ▷ Examples of Types
- ▷ Researcher Considerations
- ▷ Process Considerations
- ▷ Examples of Data
- ▷ Practice

“It takes a really good interview...for most interviewees to get deeply into the complexity of the thing being studied”
(Stake, 2010, p. 97)

Qualitative interviewing: uncovering truth or constructing knowledge?



Picture Source: thought bubbles added

<https://sturtsnotebook.wordpress.com/2014/07/30/qualitative-interviewing-uncovering-truth-or-constructing-knowledge/>

Qualitative Data Source

Based on research questions seeking experiences, understandings, & perspectives

- ▶ Focus is on collecting data from participant voices

Structured, unstructured, semi-structured

- ▶ Questions that guide the interview or focus group

Stand alone method or part of a larger research design

*Research
Question
Examples*

- ▷ What are the perspectives of first generation college students in a business program?
- ▷ How is trauma understood by survivors of accidents involving fatalities?
- ▷ How do non-binary or gender non-conforming students describe their experiences of middle school?
- ▷ What are the experiences and perspectives of veterans who participated in an archaeology training program?
- ▷ How do four preservice elementary teachers use language to negotiate personal and professional borderland discourses to construct identities as teachers?

*Structured,
Unstructured, or
Semi-Structured?*

- ▷ Structured Interviews or focus groups are based on scripted questions
- ▷ Unstructured interviews or focus groups are open-ended and can be more story telling or phenomenology
- ▷ Semi-structured interviews or focus groups using guiding questions that can be adapted based on participant responses

Structured Example

Please reflect on and answer the following questions:

- ▷ How did/has this program impacted your Mission – Purpose – Focus? Please provide examples.
- ▷ What stays with you about the program?
- ▷ How has the program continued to impact you?
- ▷ Looking back at the program, what went well regarding the academia/military/non-profit collaboration?
- ▷ What did not go well regarding the academia/military/non-profit collaboration?
- ▷ What recommendations would you make regarding the academia/military/non-profit collaboration?

*Unstructured
Examples*

Tell me about your experiences as a person who has experienced _____.

Reconstruct that experience for me.

Talk to me as if I have never experienced _____.

Semi-structured Example

Guiding Questions

- ▷ What went well with the program?
- ▷ What went well regarding the academia/military/non-profit collaboration?
- ▷ What do you think did not go well?
- ▷ What did not go well regarding the academia/military/non-profit collaboration?
- ▷ What changes would you recommend in for future programming?
- ▷ What changes would you recommend regarding the academia/military/non-profit collaboration?

Semi-structured Example

Guiding questions for initial interview:

- ▷ What are your views of elementary teachers?
- ▷ What has influenced these views (i.e., teacher education program)?
- ▷ What experiences in the teacher education program specifically influenced your views of teaching and teachers?
- ▷ What teacher education artifacts/course assignments are memorable to you? Why?
- ▷ Tell me about your practicum/student teaching experiences.
- ▷ Tell me how these experiences contributed to your views of teaching and teachers?
- ▷ Do you see yourself as a teacher? Why?
- ▷ What other influences would you name as significant in your views of teaching and teachers?
- ▷ What kind of a teacher do you hope to be?
- ▷ What is your philosophy of education?

Subsequent interview/meeting topics will be gathered from previous interview topics.

Researcher Considerations

- ▷ Knowledge of the topic
- ▷ Identities, cultures, experiences
- ▷ Silence, laughter, body language
- ▷ Existing relationships
- ▷ Establishing relationships
- ▷ Plan introductory remarks
- ▷ Rapport
- ▷ Trust
- ▷ Fitting in
- ▷ Limit your input/sharing
- ▷ Pay attention to your responses (verbal & non-verbal)
- ▷ Length of interview
- ▷ Location for interview
- ▷ Frequency of interviews
- ▷ Audio or video-recording
- ▷ Labor intensive
- ▷ Practice, Practice, Practice

I'll start with a few basic questions, leading you to my own preconceived responses. Then I'll interrupt you and go into a long unrelated personal anecdote. Finally, when the interview is over, I'll attribute the lack of substantive feedback on you being quiet and uncooperative.



Participant Considerations

Recruitment

- ▷ Identification
- ▷ Access
- ▷ Sample size
- ▷ Recruiting
- ▷ Incentives
- ▷ Benefits vs. Drawbacks

*Individual
interviews or
focus group?*

- ▷ Consider your topic
- ▷ Consider your research question(s)
- ▷ Consider your research design
- ▷ Consider your sample size
- ▷ Consider your access to participants
- ▷ Consider the benefits of participant voice

*Participant
Example
Individual
Interview*

Mikayla: You can't call it talking. My chit chat with future teachers...[I see our meetings as] a time for me to tell you how teaching is going and the transition is going....before you were definitely my past instructor. Now you're someone I can share my experiences with (Transcript, September 25, 2008).

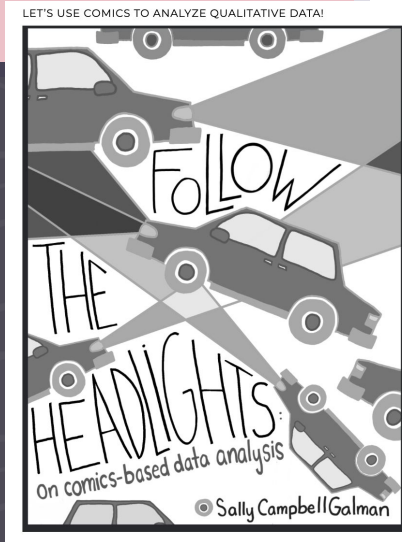
*Participant
Example
Focus Group*

Katy: We feed off of each other. I was telling my sister, she's in regular classes and raising her hand and wanting to talk, and in education everyone is like that. It's like a family talking. It's natural; we're all friends. It's a great way to learn and keep in touch. I have always liked school and I like to talk. I like other points of view. I think if it were just me, I would talk more at you I wouldn't get to reflect as much....I'm comfortable around you, I value your opinion, and I think having you around helps [when thinking about identity] (Transcript, October 3, 2008).

*Participant
Example
Focus Group*

Ava: I tell people that you are doing your dissertation and...we're helping you do it, kind of. You're studying us. Then my mom or (my cooperating teacher) asks me what kinds of questions you ask, and I say, "We just talk. She doesn't need to ask any questions. We just talk about our experiences and stuff." Or to my physical therapist, she's near my age, [asks and I say], "I'm just going out with friends to talk about school." For us it's nice to talk about it with each other to see what Natasha and Katy are doing and also to get your, like I was talking about last night, your prompting questions (Transcript, October 3, 2008).

*After the
interview or
focus group*



Immediately after....

- ▷ Field notes
- ▷ Audio notes
 - ▶ Initial thoughts
 - ▶ Lingering questions
 - ▶ Follow-up participant questions

A bit later....

- ▷ Listen to the recording
- ▷ Memos
- ▷ Transcription
- ▷ Questions

Then....

- ▷ Analysis
 - ▶ Emerging themes
 - ▶ Categories

Transcript Example

2--AIC, OCTOBER 3, 2008 PAGES 6-

a—(with CT) discussing student, is it better than it feels it is/me—I don't know, I don't know/a—did she get to teach/me—yeah, she read from charlotte's web and sentence strips to add to bulletin board/a—that's good though/me—are you worried/a—she just seems so upset each time I talk with her, last time we talked it sounded like she wasn't teaching/me—she is doing some teaching-reading, do you talk to her often/a—every once and a while we had a our seminar and rode together, I talk to Kelli more often about dumb stuff-portfolio, video/me—is that why video recorder is in here for/a—taped kids storytelling, I haven't videoed yet (to CT) that's what we meant to do, we talk every once and a while everyone is so busy, in the beginning she was so freaked out/me—me too, she seems to be trying to think more positively, small victories-strange-like we talked about last night the opposite of what you have described feeling supported-she feels undermined-it's more how she feels not what I can see/a—you're right about that it's how she feels/me—she starts head teaching soon/a—really/me—yeah, she asked me if it was okay, October/a—they go until December/me—november p-t conferences, so starting two weeks in October/a—that's interesting/me—I thought so too, going through their calendar it works/a—I don't have any observations/me—right, thank you I'm out/a—goes through schedule/me—do you have time to observe others/a—a few are scheduled for a half hour here and there/me—it's nice to get a feel as to how others do things-similar different, are you sitting in on p-t conferences/a—yeah, I missed k ones so I'm glad, I wanted to be there/me—let's talk about your lesson, what did you think about it/a—I thought it was okay/me—that sounds enthusiastic/a—just the content (CT)-you'd never know its so natural/a—we have standards-

Participant(s)/type: all participants (NAKM)/ic & sgc

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Transcript Example

0:00	B	Im like does your table need that many penicils? Yes Yes we do!
	AT	(laughing)
	B	Your whole table needs that many pencils? Yes we do!
	AT	(laughing)
	B	And how many are you going to put in your desk? None... uhuh yeah whatever
	AT	Did you change your hair
	B	Yeah
	AT	That's what I thought
	B	Yes I did I dyed it brown
	AT	Yeah all one color too
	B	Yeah (laughing)
	AT	This is this is unusual (laughing)
	B	(inaudable) did you do something to your hair? No
	AT	(laughing)
	B	Your hallucinating, no
	AT	So hows it going?
	B	good, good. I feel, I feel math is giving me trouble. I feel like Im doing a terrible job
	AT	really?
	B	Yeah (laughing)
	AT	Why?

*Transcription
Practice*

Semi-structured interview example

Final Thoughts

- ▷ Questions?
- ▷ Comments?
- ▷ Discussion?
- ▷ Next steps?

Thank you for participating!

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