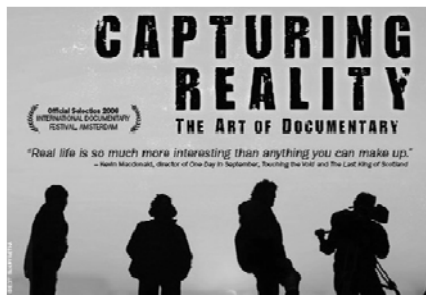


**Criminology 321 / Week 9**  
**Qualitative Interactive Methods**  
**cont'd**



Surveys  
In-Depth Interviews  
Focus Group Discussions

**Managing the Interview**



**Before You Begin**

- Do pilot testing
  - Ideally done with people similar to eventual participants
  - Gives a chance to make sure questions are clear, understandable, order okay, flows from section to section

This page will be posted separately on the course web page to be more readable.

## Before You Begin

- Make sure people are comfortable
- Be friendly, dress appropriately, make eye contact, show interest/appreciation
- If on your turf, get ready ahead of time. If on theirs, chat while you set up
- Make small talk – Helps rapport
- Make sure equipment is working correctly

## Relations Between the Assumptions You can Make and the Form of Interview that is Most Appropriate

if...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you are new to the culture/setting;</li> <li>• are still searching for a primary focus to your research;</li> <li>• cannot assume in advance that you know what all the "right" questions are to ask; and</li> <li>• cannot assume that all questions will be equally meaningful to all respondents...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• you are familiar with the cultural/setting of interest;</li> <li>• you have a clear sense of what you are after...</li> <li>• are confident what you are after gives a good comprehensive base for discussion about the phenomenon of interest; and</li> <li>• can assume the words and concepts you are using to discuss/talk about the topic are equally meaningful to respondents...</li> </ul>
then ...	
you should use a more unstructured/ informal/unintentional approach.	you can use a more structured/ formal/standardized approach.
Why?	
Because this approach will help you build rapport, not foreclose too early on a focus, result in more comprehensive information, and allow you to adapt the interview to the person/setting.	Because this approach will facilitate comparison and aggregation, and best allow you to examine patterns across cases.

## Interview Guide Structure

- Semi-structured interviews more flexible, better for rapport, get broader/new info
- Quantitative emphasizes similar *wording*; qualitative emphasizes similar *meaning*
- Start with list of topics arranged in logical order, but be prepared to go with the flow
  - we want participant's logic, not yours

## Validity

- How do we know our data are "true" representations of how people feel/think?
- Several different ways we establish validity in qualitative research
  - Process
  - Procedures

## Process

- **Time**
  - The longer we are in the field, the more difficult it is for us to be bullshit; the more we build relationships
- **Rapport**
  - If you have the interests of the group at heart that will come out over time
- **Collaboration**
  - Involving participants in a collaborative process – before and/or after the project – to give them a stake

## Process

- **Triangulation**
  - E.g., in MRDS study, surveys gave us distributions; interviews gave us details and allowed us to probe about inconsistencies; observations cross-checked behaviour
- **Being reflexive/self-critical**
  - Consider what you bring to the site
  - Critically evaluate your evidence

This page will be posted separately to ensure you can read it



**Table 9.5**  
Questions or Tests to Pose When Critically Analyzing Perceptual Evidence

1. <b>Directness of the report:</b> Is this account based on direct perception, or does it come second-, third-, or fourth-hand? If the latter, is it therefore to be treated with caution as fact, even if it is accurate as image?
2. <b>Spatial location of the reporter:</b> Even if firsthand, was my (or my reporter's) spatial location such that this perception might be accurate in some respects but still skewed or partial?
3. <b>Social locational skewing of reported opinion:</b> With regard to reports of opinion, what might there be about the relation between me and the reporter that might lead him or her to lie, distort, omit, falsely elaborate, or otherwise be less than accurate?
4. <b>Self-serving error and bias concerning reports:</b> From what I know on other grounds about my own or the reporter's commitments, values, and announced biases, are there reasons to be suspicious of the content of this report? Does it fit all too conveniently with what I want to believe, or what the reporter might want to believe, about people and events? That is, is it self-serving and therefore to be regarded with caution?
5. <b>Previous claim error in reports:</b> From what is known about my or the reporter's previous perceptions, am I an accurate observer/listener? Is the reporter? Have I or the reporter made errors in the past, even though those are not self-serving errors?
6. <b>Internal consistency of the report:</b> Is this report consistent within itself? Are there spatial-temporal factors stated at one point that contradict spatial-temporal assertions at other points? Were the events of this report possible within the time and space constraints given in the report or known about on other grounds? Do the people involved unaccountably contradict themselves within the report?
7. <b>External consistency/agreement among independent reports:</b> Is this account consistent with other accounts of the same events or experiences? Have I assembled enough independent accounts, subjected them to the above questions, and then compared them for degree of agreement? On points of remaining disagreement, have I made sufficient effort to speak with more participants in the event or persons involved in the experience – persons who are otherwise qualified reporters – in order to arrive at a truthful account?

Source: J. Tedlow and L. M. Tedlow (1984), *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, 2nd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth), p. 51. © 1984. Reprinted with permission of Wadsworth, an imprint of the Cengage Group, a Division of Thomson Learning. See 900v/30-2215.

## Procedures

- **Recall from the Kinsey clip:**
  - The importance of making clear what you are doing to ensure confidentiality; more important the more sensitive the topic
  - Maintain proximity; make eye contact; be comfortable yourself; make *them* comfortable
  - Non-judgmental attitude: goal is understanding; be curious ... how does this person think?

An annotated version of Berg's 10 Commandments can be seen on the course web page

## Procedures

Take heed of Berg's

"Ten Commandments of Interviewing"

1. *Never begin an interview cold*
2. *Remember your purpose*
3. *Present a natural front*
4. *Demonstrate aware hearing*
5. *Think about appearance*



## Procedures

6. *Interview in a comfortable place*
7. *Don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers*
8. *Be respectful*
9. *Practice, practice, and practice some more*
10. *Be cordial and appreciative*

This interview can be seen online at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t-\\_hYjAKww](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t-_hYjAKww)

## The Research Interview

Two contrasting examples of unstructured (in-depth) interviews

Commentary by Graham R Gibbs  
University of Huddersfield

## Interview Guide Structure

- The general structure/process of a semi-structured interview looks like this:
  1. Idle chat to make people feel comfortable
  2. Transition to the interview; make sure participant understands purpose, role, process; okay to record? [But take notes as well!]
  3. Gather basic *background information*: creates a question-response structure; begins rapport

## Interview Guide Structure

4. Some *general opening questions* that are directly related to the topic of the interview. A shift from brief descriptive information to longer more explanatory answers.
5. *Key questions* are core questions that address the research question; use of *probes* to encourage lengthier responding
6. *Closing questions*; emotional release
7. Answer any questions and say thanks.

## Online Interviews

- email painful, but ends up with transcript
- with Zoom or similar, confidentiality concerns exist, but a great alternative for less sensitive topics
- advantage that no travel is required, but never as good as in-person



“A *focus* on specific issues with a predetermined *group* of people, conducting an interactive *discussion*”

## Focus group: What It Is & How to Conduct It + Examples



## 1. Determine topic, goals

- Can be used for exploratory, explanatory or evaluative research
- Less suitable for personal information
- Can identify community or group norms
- Not the topic *per se* that makes the method suitable (or not), but emphasis, participants
- Can supplement opinion polls by articulating reasons behind the opinions

## 2. Identify potential participants

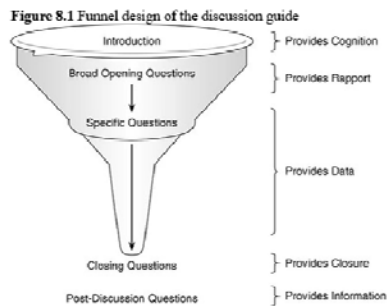
- Target sampling; similar logic to individual sampling: who can help the most? who is missing from the discussion
- Existing groups can work if sensitive topic, but most focus groups bring together strangers



## 3. Prepare a question guide

- List of topics or actual questions helps keep group on track.
- Defined deductively, refined inductively
- Different types of questions and order within the focus group; refined inductively
- Questioning often follows a funnel structure
- Start with introduction to create focus

### 3. Prepare a question guide

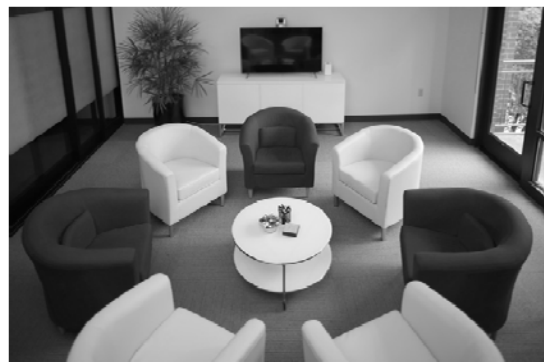


### 3. Prepare a question guide

- Broad opening questions help develop rapport and put participants at ease
  - Ethics; get everyone talking; no hierarchies
- Key questions then become more specific, focusing on issues of concern to the researcher plus those arising in discussion
- Closing questions help summarize, provide closure, e.g., rank issues in importance

### 4. Choose a location

- Can be on site or online or in dedicated labs
- Usual criteria: neutral, quiet, comfortable, no distractions; easy to locate
- Be careful outside because of sound quality
- Recording can be a challenge depending on number of participants and room





#### **4. Choose a location**

- Many of us were pushed online during the pandemic and ended up doing focus groups on Zoom
- Equal visuals and can record interaction
- More clear who is speaking at any given time; transcription easier re speakers
- Extends geographical reach, but requires good tech



#### **5. Recruit 6-12 participants**

- Two issues: homogeneity and familiarity
- Goldilocks groups – some diversity helps discussion; too divergent dampens it. Same with expertise, hierarchy. Depends on issue.
- Usually strangers: more anonymity; more detail; but takes longer to develop rapport
- Ideal size varies, but often no more than 12
- Sometimes over-recruit for no-shows.

Next class will continue with  
6. Moderator conducts session