

Beyond Open-Ended Questions:



Purposeful Interview Guide Development to Elicit Rich, Trustworthy Data

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Workshop Goals

- Describe rigorous framework for qualitative interview data collection
- Apply core concepts and methods for developing interview questions and guides
- Understand the process of developing and refining interview questions and guides

Poll Question 1

What best describes your primary research role?

1. Investigator
2. Interviewer
3. Qualitative Methodologist
4. Qualitative Analyst
5. Project Coordinator

Poll Question 2

What best describes your experience developing qualitative interview guides?

1. A regular part of my primary work role
2. Have developed one or two as part of past projects
3. Have provided input and feedback on guides, but have not developed one from scratch
4. Have used interview guides in conducting interviews, but have not developed them
5. Have not used or developed interview guides

High-Quality Interview Data

Rich, “Thick”

- Reveals the complexities of what is being studied
- Reflects the depth of the phenomenon and its context in time and space, social environment

Trustworthy

- Is authentic and credible
- Minimally influenced by the researcher

Salient

- Reflects participant’s lived experience
- Is connected to the research objectives

Key Strategies

- Linguistic intentionality
- Purposeful sequencing of questions
- Use of Root Questions
- Use of grounded probes
- Reflexivity throughout interview guide development
- Iterative testing and refinement

Linguistic Intentionality

- The language we choose situates the interview in ways that both OPEN and CONSTRAIN a participant's responses.
- Frame questions in language that situates the participant in the most open manner that accurately reflects the stated research questions and theoretical framework.
- We consider how our interview questions *limit or constrain* participants' responses as much, if not more, than we consider what they might elicit.

Example: Linguistic Intentionality

- Why did you **choose** to have your lungs screened?
- How did you **feel** about having your lungs screened?
- Tell me about your **decision** to have a **lung** screen.
- Tell me about your **decision** to have a **cancer** screen.
- How do you **understand** the **risks and benefits** to lung screens?
- Tell me about **your experience** with lung screens.
- Tell me about **talking to your Doctor** about lung **cancer** screening.
- Please share **your thoughts** about lung screening.

Question Sequencing

- Sequence to maximize openness
- Structure interviews to begin with the most open and least constraining question
- Questions that may be most leading or constraining come at the end of interviews to minimize influencing the overall interview

Sequencing: Example

1. How soon after you wake up do you smoke your first cigarette?
2. Can you describe any potential risks of screening?
3. Tell me about having a lung screening.

VS

1. Tell me about having a lung screening.
2. Can you describe any potential risks of screening?
3. How soon after you wake up do you smoke your first cigarette?

Root Questions

- An opening interview question
- Situates and defines the interview phenomena for the participant
- Allows the participant to situate the interview for the researcher
- Most of the key data for the interview could be obtained from this question
- Interviews may have two or three root questions

Example Root Question

Do you recall talking to someone from the VA about lung cancer screening?

[If Yes] Tell me about that discussion.

- *I was talking with my provider about the Chantix Um I started smoking when I was 25. I am up to like a pack and a ½ a day. I can't seem to quit on my own.*
- *Basically my doctor has been badgering me for years to quit smoking. He heard of your lung screening test and basically thought I could benefit from being screened since I met your criteria. Since I'd like him to stop his badgering of me I did what he said.*
- *Smoking, smoking for an extended period of time 61 years old started when probably 15 smoked close to a pack a day and have for 40-45 years and too stupid to quit.*
- *Curious to know if there were nodules and stuff like that in my lungs even though it is scary you still have to have it check out.*

Zeliadt, S. B., Heffner, J. L., Sayre, G., Klein, D. E., Simons, C., Williams, J., ... & Au, D. H. (2015). Attitudes and perceptions about smoking cessation in the context of lung cancer screening.

Grounded Probes

Examples:

- What do you mean by ____ ?
- Tell me more about ____.
- Can you give me an example of ____ ?
- Can you tell me about a time when ____ ?
- Can you tell me about the last time ____ ?
- Is there anything that made ____ easier?
- Is there anything that made ____ harder?
- (Can you tell me) Who ____?
- (Can you tell me) When ____ ?
- (Can you tell me) Where ____ ?

Probes are completed using only verbatim participant words or phrases.

Reflexivity in Interview Guide Development

- Soliciting multiple perspectives
 - Research teams
 - Qualitative colleagues

- Questioning assumptions
 - Language
 - Population
 - Hypothesis
 - Expectations

Iterative testing and refinement

- Establish as part of qualitative research plan
 - Pre- data collection
 - Testing with sample participants, research audience, etc.
 - Reflection during data collection
 - Is the guide eliciting meaningful data?
 - Is the guide limiting or constraining participants' responses ?
- Track changes and adjustments

Questions?

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