

Managing the interview dynamic

Day 2 11th November 2020

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Qualitative interviewing – key skills

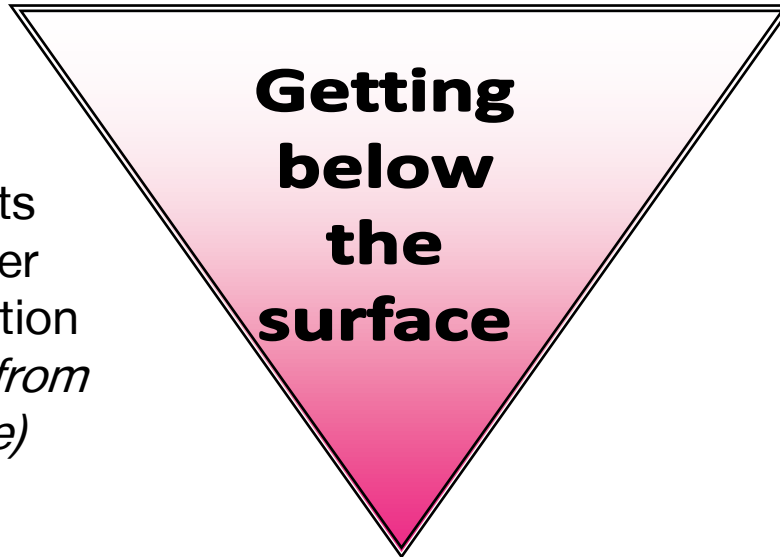
In-depth understanding of your participant's experience through:

- Open questions
 - Onus on participant to supply content of answer
- Probing
 - Achieving depth of understanding
- Active listening
 - Immersion in your participant's story

The qualitative approach

1. **Broad open question**

- Allow participants to provide answer and define direction (*understanding from their perspective*)



2. **Follow up probes / prompts**

- Help to clarify, explore and explain (*unravel and understand complexity*)

A lack of probing usually means the researcher is:

- **Not listening**
- **Making assumptions**
- **Expressing agreement / indifference implicitly or explicitly**

Interviewer attributes

Important to develop personal qualities that assist in fulfilling the role effectively:

Accessibility

Neutrality

Interest/
Curiosity

Confidence

Accessibility

Be yourself

- ...while adapt persona: relate to all types of participants
- Rapport: use tranquillity, humour

Be responsive

- Dress/attire
- Terms of reference: language, acronyms
- Cultural sensitivities + power relationships

Neutrality

Be neutral

- Interview presence is ideally neutral
- Helps to elicit the 'truth' about participant perspective
- Emphasise interest in the participant's views

Avoid

- Commenting on answers
- Reacting to controversial views, e.g. racism
- Sharing personal views/details

Interest / Curiosity

Not essential to be interested in research topic...

- Intrinsic interest in participant
- Empathy without becoming overwhelmed

Curious to build **full 'mental picture'** of participant

- Thinking through what else needs probing to flesh out details, underlying factors, gaps etc.
- Listening for relevancy

Confidence

Be prepared

- Careful planning at all stages of a project
- Be familiar with your guide and practice using it

Appear confident

- Prompts / phrasing for areas that may be more sensitive
- Confident that the individual has agreed to take part

Interview phases

Arrival

Good impression

- Punctual
- Credibility
- Small talk to build rapport

Know when to assume control

- Signal start
- Switch to 'interviewer' mode

Start

Set the agenda

- Clear, logical intro

Assuming roles

- Clarity about conduct of interview/ types of questions & answers
- Setting boundaries
- Control process NOT content

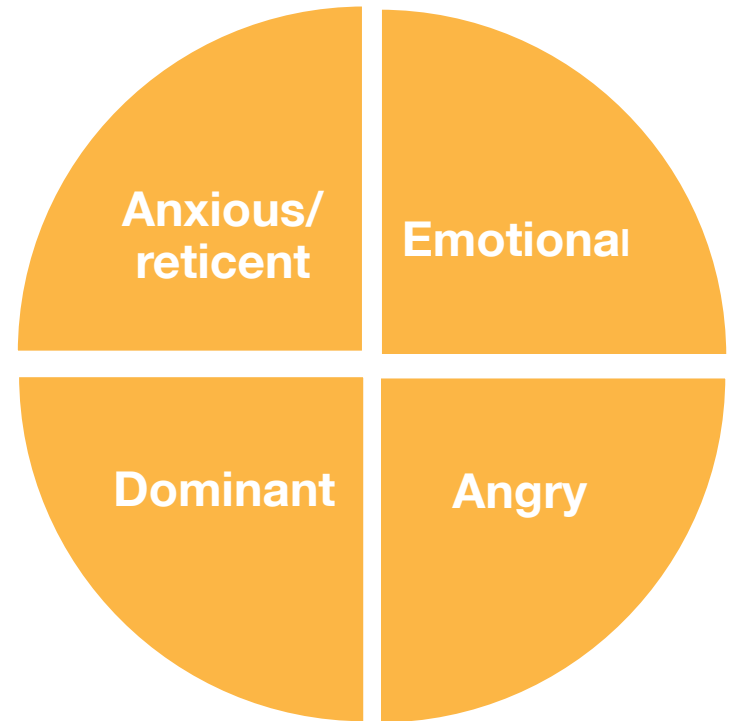
End

Signal end of time – can re-energise

- Seek permission to - extend
- Move into positive territory
- Leave participants on a finished note
- Explain next steps
- Reassure about anonymity
- Invite them to raise any issues

Strategies for dealing with reactions

- Right to discuss topic
- Acknowledge participant reaction
- Be guided by participant
- Stay in role
- Be prepared
- Acknowledge own reactions



Emotional participants

Acknowledge upsetting / difficult subject

Check willingness to continue, offer break,
pause recording

Remember this is a natural response - stay
calm and confident

Reiterate importance of research and what you
are aiming to achieve (if appropriate - don't
pressure)

Consider moving in and out of sensitive areas

Reticent / anxious participants

Slow, gentle introduction + consent

Clear questioning

Try to find subject they're comfortable talking about

- Even if it does not hit your research objectives

Use of prompts

Encouragement

Acknowledge difficulty of subject matter

Consider use of projective / enabling tools

Enabling tools

Visual cues and images

- Photos
- Cue cards

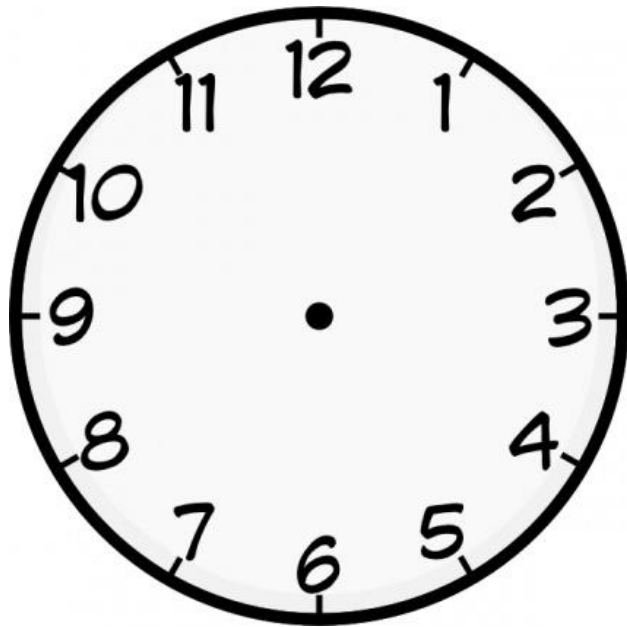
Offer a fidget toy / allow participant to doodle

Non-verbal means of communicating

- Answer / option grids
- Symbol cards

Any other examples?

Enabling tools example



**Car accident – sick pay
1999**

Returned to work - 2001

Maternity leave 2002

**Start of benefit
claim 1995**

Today

Dominant participants

Reiterate aims of research

Use of closed questions

Use of non-verbal cues e.g. withdraw eye contact

Subtle (or not so subtle!) interruption and reiteration of topic

Mention time pressure - range of topics still to get through

Angry / frustrated participants

Acknowledge participant reaction

Explore reasons for strong feeling

Reiterate aims of research and reason for asking these questions

Give examples from other interviews to allow participant time to calm down / gain perspective

Safety first - if you feel unsafe, leave

Children and young people

Be patient, give more time for response

- May have difficulty expressing themselves
- Use of projective / enabling techniques

Non-verbal cues

Awareness of attention spans

- Change topic / pace by introducing activities

Awareness of trying to please

- Ask questions in different ways
- Reassure no right or wrong answer

Projective technique example

JACK: 'I want to start eating school meals because...'



JOE 'I want to stop eating school meals because...'



In conclusion...

Aim to have the required *skills* and *attributes* as well as a *range of techniques* to allow you to respond flexibly to the wide range of circumstances you might encounter

Interview practice

Chance to:

- practice managing different situations / dynamics in an interview
- observe others managing an interview
- provide constructive feedback

Delivering interviews

- 10 - 15 mins to deliver
- 10 - 15 mins for reflection

Constructive feedback on:

- Experiences of delivering interview and managing interaction
- Being an interviewee / 'in role'
- Quality of information from the interview