

Kinds of Interviews in Qualitative Research

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The University of Texas at Tyler
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Series offered by The Office of Research, Scholarship, and Sponsored Programs (ORSSP)

This workshop will explore...

....*kinds* of interviews available
to the **qualitative** researcher

- 1) Please enter your name, position and department in the chat.
- 1) This presentation will take about 30-40 minutes which will allow for plenty of time for discussion and questions.
- 1) Please hold your questions until the end and/or put them in the chat.

QUICK REVIEW....



QUICK REVIEW!

Qualitative Research is Focused....On meaning; lived experiences of the participants

Examine **perceptions, motivations, and experiences that are significant (meaningful) to people**

Analyze **texts** (written word, images), **talk** (spoken word, conversations), and **interactions** (encounters, events) -- rather than numbers and statistics,

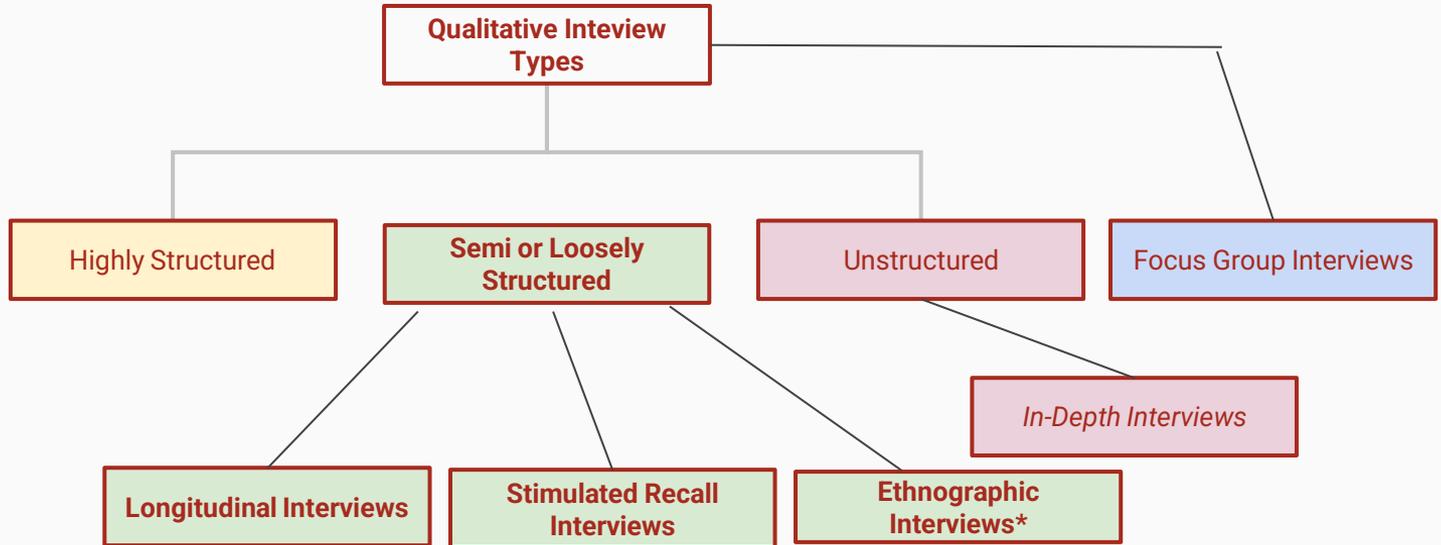
Examines **social processes**, not probabilities or predictions

Qualitative research is an iterative and you could say, creative craft; no single “recipe” for qualitative research.

More information?

Visit the [resources bank of the ORSS](#). See especially several excellent recorded webinars on Qualitative Research.

Great foundational text: Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. A. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Kinds of qualitative interviews – we will discuss each, in turn.

(Highly) Structured Interviews

This type of interview is **a controlled way** to obtain information from interviewees. In other words, it is a pre-planned interview where the researcher writes down the interview questions before conducting the interview. Such a format is an effective way to keep the **interview tightly focused on the target topic** (Bryman, 2008). It also makes the interview comparable among interviewees.

However, this type of interview **lacks richness and limits the availability of in-depth data**. The variation among responses is limited due to the strict interview format that is used. Therefore, the flexibility of the interviewer in terms of being able to interrupt, and the interviewee to elaborate, is restricted.

It has been highlighted in the literature that this type of interview **is suitable for researchers who know exactly what kind of information they are seeking** (Dörnyei, 2007). (Alsaawi, 2014, pp. 150-151)

Examples of highly structured interview questions

How often do you use our product?

Weekly/Bi-monthly/Yearly

Do you enjoy using our product?

Yes/No

How likely are you to recommend our services?

Very likely/Somewhat likely/Highly Unlikely

Your turn > Compose

Highly Structured Interview Questions

Using any aspect of higher
education....

Compose

A yes/no question

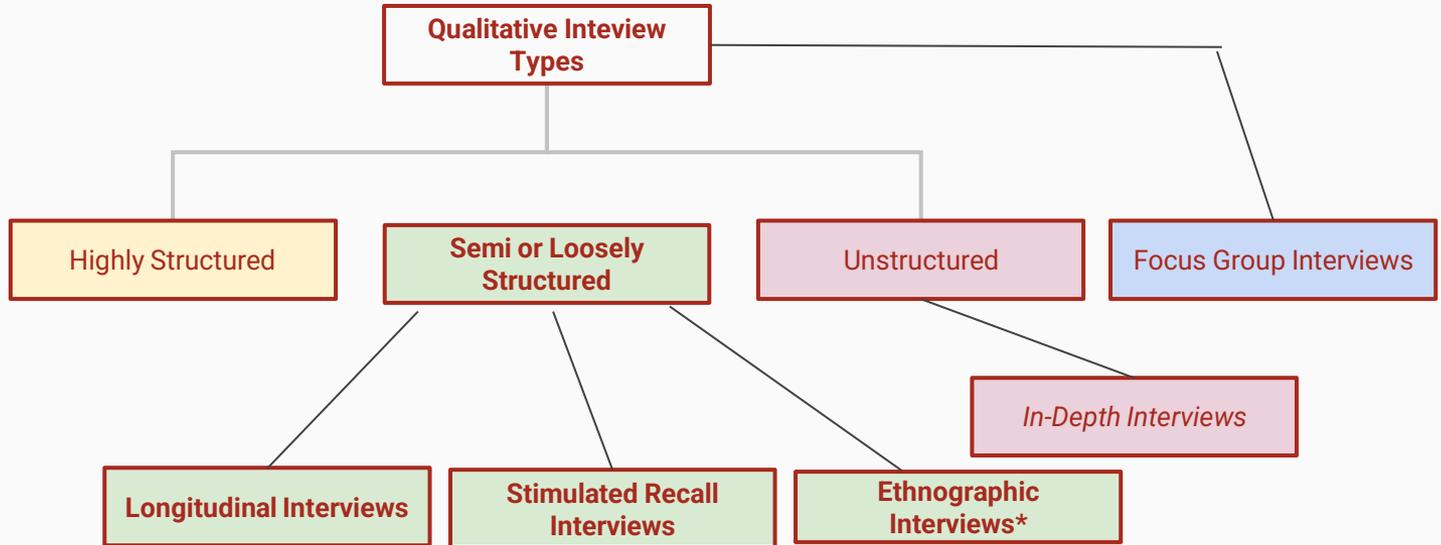
*A how-often or how-much question
(with 3 answer options)*

*A “likely to” question with words
instead of numbers (Likert scale)*

Drop into the chat.

Let’s try to answer one or two of the
questions.

What is the “feel” of these
questions?



Kinds of qualitative interviews – we will discuss each, in turn.

Semi-structured or “loosely structured” interviews

It is very common for social science researchers to conduct this type of interview. This type [uses]... questions [that] are pre-planned prior to the interview but the interviewer gives the interviewee the chance to elaborate and explain particular issues through the use of **open-ended questions**.

This type is appropriate to researchers who have an overview of their topic so that they can ask questions.

However, they do not prefer to use a structured format which may hinder the depth and richness of the responses (Bryman, 2008). (Alsaawi, 2014, p. 151)

Example of loosely structured interview Qs

Start with your research question: “What are students’ study habits in the first year of the Life Sciences program?”

Develop a number of topics or areas to explore. Establish your interview “protocol” – in other words, pre-write your main questions and be ready with follow up questions. LET’S COMPOSE FOLLOW UP Qs TOGETHER NOW

- What study activities do you do on your own?
- Do you know how much independent study your professors expect of you?
- How do you decide what to study when?
- What motivates you to study independently?

MORE EXAMPLES

Questions:

- What do you see as your most important responsibilities and tasks?
- Can you tell me the things you like most about your work?
- Do you find some things difficult about your work? Can you tell me about them?
- What important achievements have you accomplished since beginning work here?
- Do you feel that you receive encouragement from your supervisors and co-workers?
- How satisfied are you with the supervision you receive?
- How well do you and your supervisor communicate?
- How well do you and your co-workers communicate?
- How well do you think people in the project cooperate with one another?
- Do you feel safe working in this environment? If not, can you tell me why?
- How involved are you in planning the work you actually do?
- Do you feel your comments and suggestions about the project are understood and appreciated?
- How much influence do you think street children have over what happens in the project?
- Have any obstacles prevented you from accomplishing your work tasks? Can you tell me about them?
- Do you feel you need additional training to do this work? If so, in what areas?
- Do you feel you have an opportunity to use fully your knowledge and skills in the project? If not, can you tell me about this?
- How well do you think this project meets the needs of street children?

Your turn > Compose

Loosely Structured Interview Questions

(suggested topic – student
study habits...)

Compose

One loosely structured question

*And two follow up questions to
“nudge” someone along*

Drop into the chat.

Let’s try to answer one or two of the
questions.

What is the “feel” of these
questions?

Sub-types of loosely structured interviews – not a complete list

Longitudinal Interviews

Investigation of a phenomena over time with same individuals.

Repetition of interviews to get at change, stasis, perception and how the respondent's experiences shift or not.

[More information here.](#)

Stimulated Recall Interviews

DiPardo (1994) explained that since her interest was in “inviting informants to construct a narrative of their semester-long relationships, retrospective impressions proved more valuable than immediate ones” (p. 170) she found that using the stimulated recall interviews at the *end* of her data collection period yielded rich insights on their relationships.

Show people their own words, images, descriptions of events AT A LATER TIME and get their impressions of the phenomenon.

Ethnographic Interviews*

Ethnographic interviews

ERIC article ED423721 - Teacher/Ethnographer in the Workplace: Approaches to Staff Development– authors: Mary Kay Gee and Charlotte Ullman

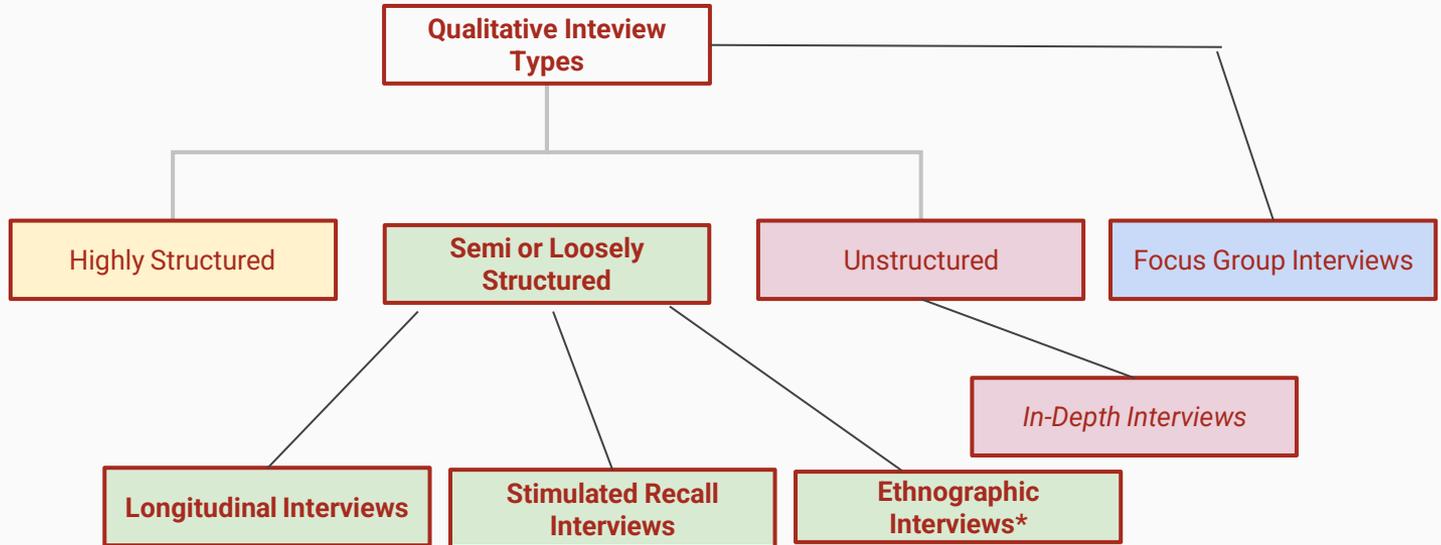
Grand Tour Questions

The goal of the grand tour question is to find out the names of places and objects, to meet and/or hear about people, to observe and/or hear about events or activities, and to begin to understand how all of these elements interrelate. There are four types of grand tour questions: the general overview, the specific tour, the guided tour, and the task-related grand tour.

“Could you describe a typical day on the job?”

Mini-Tour Questions

The purpose of a mini-tour question is the same as that of the grand tour question. The difference is that a mini-tour question deals with a much smaller aspect of experience. For example, if you said to an informant, *"Tell me about a typical day at General Aluminum Products"* and you heard the informant say again and again, *"Then I run the coil through the annealing machine."* You might then decide to ask a mini-tour question such as, *"Describe what goes on when you run the coil through the annealing machine."* The mini-tour question puts a magnifying glass on an activity or area that you think is important.



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Unstructured interviews can help a researcher LEARN MORE about an entire phenomenon set – to THEN go back and refine his/her research.

- An unstructured interview is a **type of interview that does not make use of a set of standardized questions.**
- *Here, the interviewer **does not generate any specific set of standardized questions for research,** rather he or she asks different questions in line with the context and purpose of the systematic investigation.
- Typically, an **unstructured interview relies on spontaneity and follow-up questioning** in order to gather detailed information from the research subject. In many ways, this type of interview can be viewed as an informal, everyday conversation because of its **extremely colloquial style.**

Unstructured Interviews (Depth interviews)

Miller, W.L., & Crabtree, B F. (1999). 'Depth interviewing' in B.F. Crabtree and W.L. Miller (eds.). Doing qualitative research. Sage.

This type of interview ...is wide open. Interviewees can elaborate, leading in **unpredictable** directions.

This type is similar to a **conversation** in which the interviewer might ask a single question and then the interviewee has the choice with regard to the extent to which s/he responds (Bryman, 2008).

Interruptions on the part of the interviewer are kept to a minimum. Consequently, this would provide a more relaxed atmosphere for the interviewees, which has made some entitle it an **“ethnographic interview”** (Dörnyei, 2007).

Although this type of interview may end up with a huge amount of data, **it is appropriate for researchers who want to focus on a specific phenomenon in depth.** (Alsaawi, 2014, p. 151)

Subtle differences....

Ethnographic (ss) interviews—Unstructured Interviews—Depth Interviews

Emic-etic continuum—----- Conversational —----- Really want to get AT x or y

Your turn > Compose

Unstructured Interview topic

Compose

What was the experience of a child who grew up in a commune?

You try it....

Drop into the chat.

What is the “feel” of these topics?

(not the focus today) Focus-group interviews



This type of interview originated in market research in the early 1990s (Robson, 2011)....It **can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured.**

This type involves a **brainstorming focus group of usually six to twelve interviewees** (Dörnyei, 2007:144).

It can **generate “high quality data”** which is fruitful for the interviewer. Interviewees can challenge, argue and debate with each other [e.g. converse], and this technique usually leads to the emergence of in-depth and rich data.

(Alsaawi, 2014, p. 151)

The focus group....



Carey (1994) states that focus groups are the best approach for sensitive topics. It is an enjoyable experience for the interviewees, and applicable for illiterate people (Robson, 2011). However, this type of interview needs to be set up in advance. Moreover, it is difficult to transcribe, especially when overlapping occurs (Dörnyei, 2007). The number of questions tends to be fewer than those in the other types of interview. Also, confidentiality is an issue with this approach (Robson, 2011).

Questions?

Thank you for attending. I am happy to talk with you on an individual basis.

You can schedule a meeting [HERE](#) or email me at aconsalvo@uttyler.edu



Visit the [resources bank of the ORSS](#). See especially several excellent recorded webinars on Qualitative Research.

More resources

DiPardo, A. (1994). Stimulated Recall in Research on Writing An Antidote to "I Don't Know, It Was Fine". In P. Smagorinsky (Ed.), *Speaking About Writing: Reflection on Research Methodology* (pp. 163-184). Sage.

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. A. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Miller, W.L., & Crabtree, B F. (1999). 'Depth interviewing' in B.F. Crabtree and W.L. Miller (eds.). *Doing qualitative research*. Sage.

Patkin, J. G. (2011). An interviewer's reflection of data collection in building an archive of language learner experiences. *The Qualitative Report*, 25(11), 4055-4071. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol25/iss11/14>

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