

Interviewing

Level 2: Introduction/Exposure (Introduction to Sociology, Psychology, or Criminal Justice)

Topic: Design basic questions for interviews and conduct content analysis of interview data.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this module, students will be able to:

- (1) Name the purposes for conducting interview research.
- (2) Describe the advantages and disadvantages of open- and closed-ended interview questions and probe questions.
- (3) Demonstrate ability to conduct basic content analysis.

Reading Suggestions:

Babbie, Earl R. 2016. *The Practice of Social Research*, 14th ed. Wadsworth Publishing.
Chapter 9.

Time (approximate):

Instructor Presentation	20 minutes
Student Exercise/Activity	30-45 minutes

Instructor's Notes and Student Exercise/Activity:

Interviews have been used for at least four research purposes. First, interviewing is a powerful research method to learn about people's life experiences, current attitudes, ideas, values, and beliefs, and future plans and expectations. Second, interviews can serve as an initial, exploratory qualitative phase of a larger project. They can be used to explore concepts, methods, and materials that will be used for a subsequent quantitative study. Third, since interviews typically yield nominal level data, the research can use these data as the basis for the response categories in questionnaires. Fourth, interview information can be used to provide background and richness to the quantitative statistics that otherwise could be unintelligible and sterile.

The steps in a study using interviews typically are as follows:

1. What do you want to know: Research question(s); purpose and objectives of the study
2. Write interview questions and probes
3. Formulate a list of interviewees
4. Schedule interview sessions
5. Conduct interview
6. Transcribe the interview
7. Analyze interview data
8. Write report

Interview questions yield the most information when they are "open-ended," that is, when the respondent must get beyond a YES/NO answer or a simple numeric answer ("I'm 21 years old"). The data for interviews are words, so the more words you can elicit, the more data the researcher has available to analyze. A method researchers use to elicit greater amounts of information is to use "probe" questions. For example, evaluate the exchange below:

Researcher: We are doing a study about how the pollinator habitat on campus is being used. Would you be willing to let me interview you about this facility?

Interviewee: Yes. I have a few minutes.

Researcher: First, have you seen the pollinator habitat on campus that used native plant species? (*Closed-ended question.*)

Interviewee: Yes

After conducting an interview, the researchers will analyze the interview data using “content analysis.” This is done by reading the interview transcript and listing the themes that emerge in response to the question. Sometimes researchers use colored markers to differentiate and code the themes.

Exercise: Read the example interview about the SWC campus' native pollinator habitat.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of closed and open-ended interview questions?
2. How are probe questions useful in an interview?
3. Conduct a content analysis of the interview. List the themes that emerged in this interview regarding the SWC campus' native pollinator habitat.

Assessment/Scoring Rubric:

	Needs Improvement 1	Satisfactory 2	Excellent 3
Objective 1. Name the purposes of interview research	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to name 1 of the 4 purposes	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to name 2 or 3 of the 4 purposes	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to name all 4 of the 4 purposes
Objective 2. Describe advantages and disadvantages of open-ended, closed-ended, and probe questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to define open-ended, closed-ended, and probe questions	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to list 1 advantage and 1 disadvantage of each	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to list multiple advantages and disadvantages of each
Objective 3. Conduct basic content analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to define content analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to list 2 themes	<input type="checkbox"/> Able to list 3+ themes

Model example of Exercise at the “excellent” level:

(Kalley)

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