

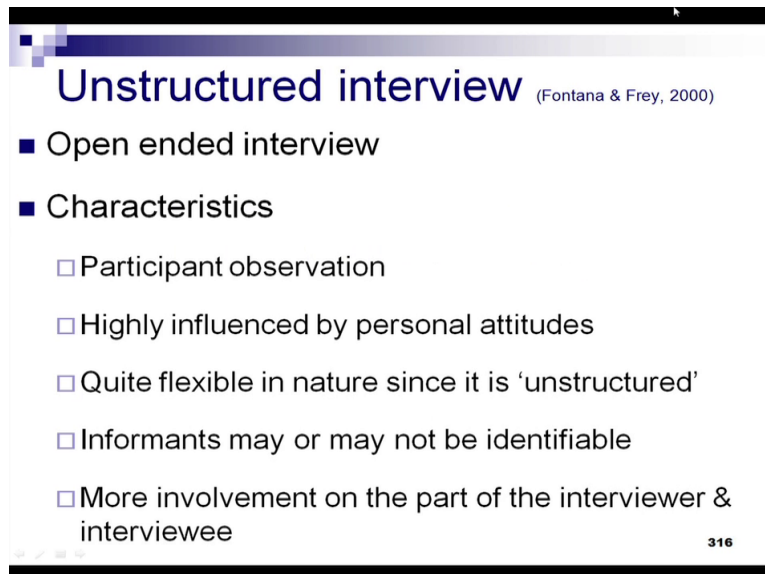
Qualitative Research Methods
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Lecture 31
Interviewing (Contd.)

Welcome back to the NOC course title qualitative research methods, my name is Aradhna Malik and I am helping you with this course and we have been talking about various things, we started with the discussion on interviews and you know how interviewing takes place. So we will move on with that discussion and we will wind up the discussion on interviews in this lecture okay.

In the last lecture we talked about structured interviews, interviews that are pre- decided. In this lecture we will cover two more types of interviews, that is the unstructured interviews and the group interviews.

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The slide is titled "Unstructured interview" in a large, bold, blue font. To the right of the title, in a smaller font, is the citation "(Fontana & Frey, 2000)". Below the title, there are two main bullet points, each preceded by a blue square icon. The first bullet point is "Open ended interview". The second bullet point is "Characteristics", which is followed by a list of five sub-points, each preceded by a blue square icon. The sub-points are: "Participant observation", "Highly influenced by personal attitudes", "Quite flexible in nature since it is 'unstructured'", "Informants may or may not be identifiable", and "More involvement on the part of the interviewer & interviewee". At the bottom right of the slide, the number "316" is displayed.

- Open ended interview
- Characteristics
 - Participant observation
 - Highly influenced by personal attitudes
 - Quite flexible in nature since it is 'unstructured'
 - Informants may or may not be identifiable
 - More involvement on the part of the interviewer & interviewee

The unstructured interview: the unstructured interview is also known as an open-ended interview. It's also known as an interview without a predetermined categories or responses; we don't know what we can expect. The characteristics of this interview are participant observation. The interviewer goes into the situation and observes the situation as a participant of the situation. The interviewer participates to the extent that the information can be garnered from the situations.

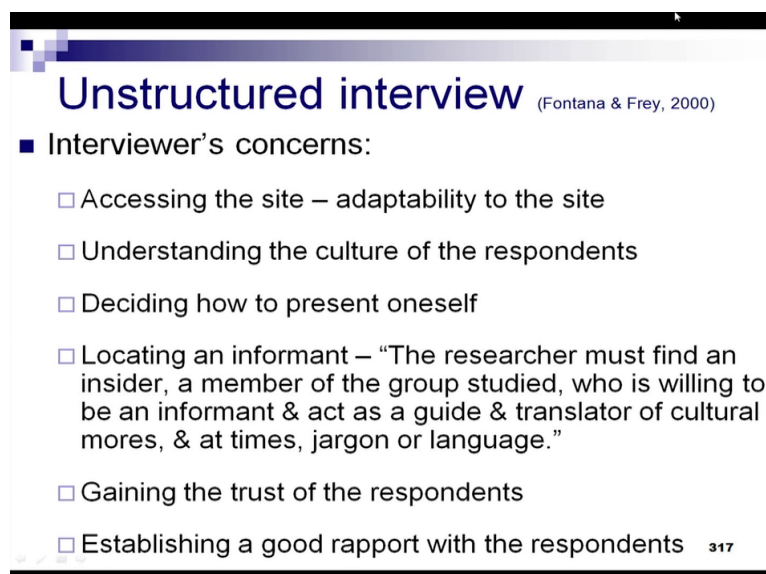
Then the other characteristic is that the responses are highly influenced by the personal attitudes of both the interviewer and the interviewed. The characteristics of the interviewed will affect how the interviewer response and the characteristics of the interviewer will affect how the interviewed also responds to the interviewer. Then it is quite flexible in nature because it's unstructured.

The information to the informant may or may not be identifiable, again because we are not going in with the set pattern, people may or may not be identifiable, there's no involvement on the part of the interviewer and interviewee, because a rapport needs to be established, the conversation as close to a real conversation takes place.

Now in the unstructured interview what happens is we go and ask questions we say okay sorry in the structured interview, we go and ask questions and we say okay, this is like, this is what is your response, you know this is the question, can you please choose between these available responses.

So even if the rapport is not established its okay, but then if some amount of rapport has to be established, but then there is no real conversation there. But here a real conversation takes place and that real conversation in then you know then facilitates the giving of responses or the responses sort of coming out and you know they are built into the conversation and the skill of the interviewer lies in picking out the required information from a conversation that takes place between the interviewer and the interviewed or the interviewee, okay.

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Unstructured interview (Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Interviewer's concerns:
 - ☐ Accessing the site – adaptability to the site
 - ☐ Understanding the culture of the respondents
 - ☐ Deciding how to present oneself
 - ☐ Locating an informant – “The researcher must find an insider, a member of the group studied, who is willing to be an informant & act as a guide & translator of cultural mores, & at times, jargon or language.”
 - ☐ Gaining the trust of the respondents
 - ☐ Establishing a good rapport with the respondents

317

The concerns of the interviewer, are accessing the site and adaptability to the site, because the interviewer has to or is required to become a participant in that observation, in the process, in the situation that one is going to be conducting the interview in, the adaptability to that site, to the physical location, to the to the physical context, becomes very, very important, it's also important to understand the culture of the respondents because we need to be on the same page so to say with the respondents, who we are interviewing.

Deciding how to present on self so the comfort zones of the interviews of the interviewed sorry of the people were interviewed of the interviewee are not disturbed. Locating an informant now “the researcher must find an insider who is a member of the group that is studied, who is willing to be an informant and act as a guide and translator of cultural mores and at times, jargon or language.”

Many times we may go into a situation that we do not understand, so it's always helpful to find an informant, a go between a liaison between us, between the interviewer and interviewee, who can you help us understand what the interviewee is getting at, when you ask them questions we can help us. Cipher the responses to the questions we are asking.

Then gaining the trust of the respondents becomes a very, very important concern of the interviewer. Establishing a good rapport with the respondents is absolutely critical to this process.

Where one goes in and one tries to understand you know we start a conversation and within that conversation, we try and understand what the interview is giving us, so we pick out the relevant pieces of information from a regular or as close to a regular conversation as possible.

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Types of unstructured interviewing

(Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Oral history: Most often dependent on memory & the ability to recall, which, in turn, are often influenced by the social processes they relate to
 - Remembering one's life "... in terms of [one's] experience with others." (Schwartz, 1999, in Fontana & Frey, 2000)
- Creative interviewing: Researcher keeps the final goal in mind & structures interviews & questions according to the changing patterns of interaction among the interviewer & interviewee

318

Types of unstructured interviewing, we have in various ways in which unstructured interview in goes; one could be an oral history: where its most important, most often dependent on memory and the ability to recall, which, in turn, are often influenced by the social processes they relates to. So we ask people what happened to you, you know what did you go through, what did you deal with, and the person talks about their own selves and we say this is what I had, this is what I did.

So again I take the example that I dealt with last time, there was an earthquake in Indonesia recently, so we were to ask people but the trauma experienced will say say, what did you go through? How did you deal with it? What was happening to you, when the earth shook so violently? And they say okay I was standing there in my new you know I saw the tree fall, I saw the building fall.

I saw the car been thrown up, you or maybe there's this is been a cyclone in Chennai recently and so you know all of these things are oral histories, personal experiences of people narrated in the form of stories, complete with their emotions and biases and selective picking of information, so that is one type of and unstructured interview that we could conduct, we ask people about what they went through.

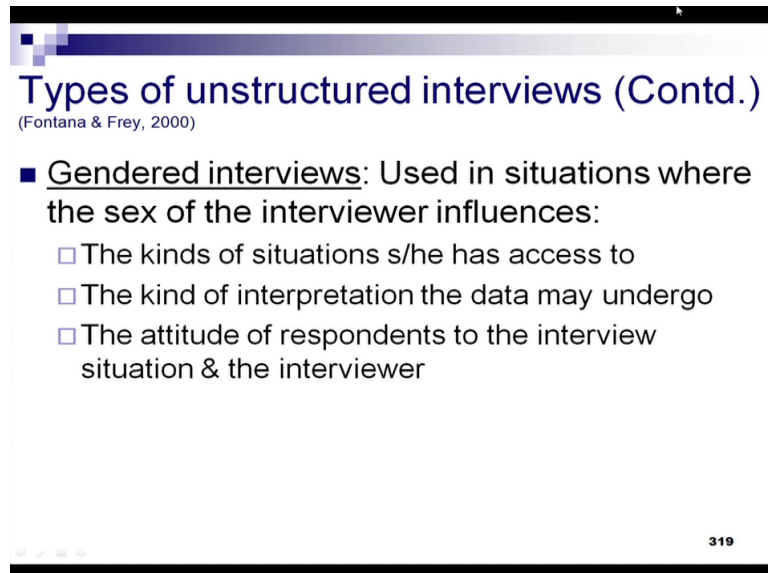
The other type here of course, creative interviewing so the researcher keeps the final goal in mind and structures the interviews and questions according to the changing patterns of interaction among the interviewer and the interviewee. So we start a rapport, we start a

conversation and we ask some questions and the questions keep leading us to more and more information.

So we keep the final goal in mind, we keep the focus but we left the conversation in as Natural a manner as possible and this is the most common type of unstructured interview, that is conducted to collect information especially in exploratory research, where we do not know what we are getting at, we do not know what we are in for, we don't know what is out there. So in order to get this we keep our eyes and ears open, we try and get as much information from the situation as possible without disturbing the status quo that is absolutely critical.

The primary purpose of an unstructured interview is to maintain the status quo as far as possible is to ensure that the comfort zones of respondents are not disturbed, as far as possible and conversation flows and the comfort levels of the respondents are maintained and a rapport is built between the interviewer and interviewee and in an through conversation we get the information we want from them, without making them even more vulnerable or without disturbing them at all, so that is one more way of interviewing.

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Types of unstructured interviews (Contd.)
(Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- **Gendered interviews:** Used in situations where the sex of the interviewer influences:
 - The kinds of situations s/he has access to
 - The kind of interpretation the data may undergo
 - The attitude of respondents to the interview situation & the interviewer

319

Now the gendered interviews are another types of interviews, in which the gender or the sex of the interviewer influences the interview situation, there are it will influence the kind of situations that a person has access to be discussed the case of a lady female interviewer going into a school to or a preschool to see how children behave a normal situations, how do let's say, we want to study the patterns of friendships in preschool, how do children make friends in preschool.

They have just come out of their homes, they have just started going to a social situation on a regular basis, how do they interact? How do they connect with other people? something very, very interesting, something of you know something that that helps us understand, how the child will socialize in later life now.

Women are likely to have a more access to such situations and the gender of the person, male or female will affect how children respond to the presence of a person sitting there and talking to their parents or the gender of the personal also effect of parents respond to the person sitting in front of them.

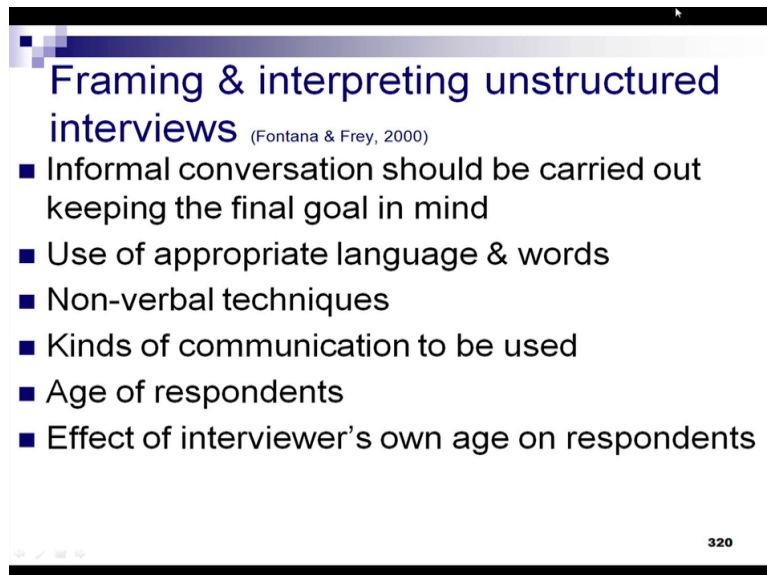
The personal characteristics, the gender will you know effect what people have access to, the kinds of interpretation the data may undergo, because the mother in most cases is the primary caregiver, so people me feel more comfortable talking to women in such situation. So the gender does influence the way the interview shapes up. The attitude of respondents to the interview situation and the interviewer again, you know what I've been able to relates to, what I've not been able to relate to.

So you know you go to a situation in which there is civil strike, there are lots of armed forces personnel and they are expecting to see a rugged man in that situation or a male dominated profession, maybe even in the manufacturing sector in the factory, you know in the shop floor, if they go and they see a woman coming to interview them and they say what is she going to do with it, you know I try as hard as we might, these are those that are played by specific genders even till now.

So it may become difficult for the respondents to relate to the person who is interviewing them and their responses are likely to change, okay so in such situation, since we know that something like this is going to happen, we pick a person with the right gender, to go into that situation and interview people, so if we know that say a female interviewer will be more accepted in a preschool, then if we have that flexibility, we will find a female interviewer to go into that situation because the nature of the responses is going to be much richer, because that the respondents will feel much more comfortable in the presence of a woman.

And I am, pleased all due respect to our male researchers who are studying child development, nothing against you, but this is something that is very commonly known. If you have experienced this, if you really gone out into the field that it becomes easier for children and their parents to relate to a woman interviewer sitting in a preschool and talking to you for whatever reason, okay.

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Framing & interpreting unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Informal conversation should be carried out keeping the final goal in mind
- Use of appropriate language & words
- Non-verbal techniques
- Kinds of communication to be used
- Age of respondents
- Effect of interviewer's own age on respondents

320

Then framing and interpreting unstructured interviews, an unstructured interview is an informal conversation that should be carried out keeping the final goal in mind. We need to use appropriate language and words. The Non-verbal techniques that we use are absolutely critical, your eye contact, what you wear, how you conduct yourself, the physical distance between you and interviewer, you know where do you sit and talk, both of you need to be comfortable so all of those things.

You know your eye contact with the interviewer, the facial expressions you have when you are talking to an interviewer. Interviewer maybe telling your traumatic story and you have a smile in your face, yeah, right, that can very, very badly affect the kind of response you will get from the interviewer, because the interview from the interviewee, because the interviewee is observing everything, that the interviewer is doing when they are asking them personal questions.

Consciously or subconsciously they are able to see what or how the information they are giving to the interviewer, is being processed and so our you know, if they telling us about a traumatic event in their lives, we need to be empathetic to them and they say something

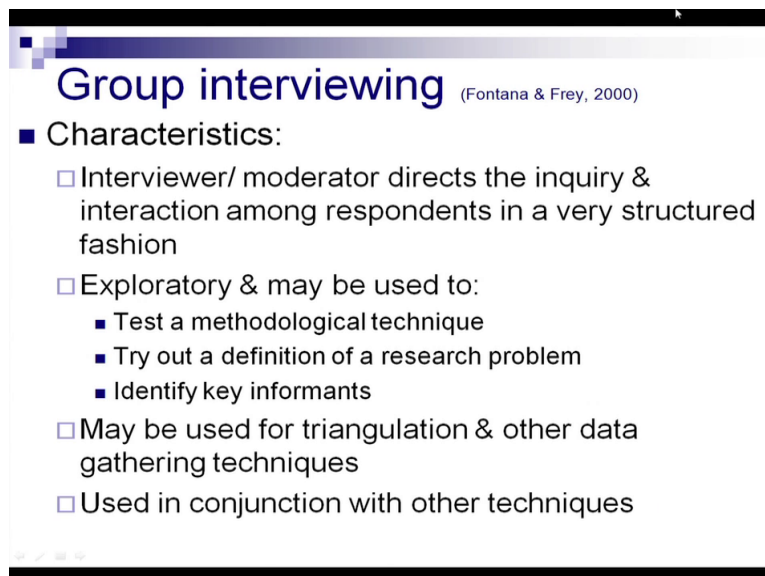
happened to me and you say oh! really and you have to be genuinely interested, unless the interviewer is in the moment.

And is genuinely trying to understand, empathetically what happened at that point, it is going to become a, it's going to become very difficult for the interviewee to give them the right kind of information, okay. The age of respondents is also critical here, the age of respondents will affect, how the you know the interview shapes up, so the kinds of questions we ask needs to be according to the age of the respondents.

The kinds of responses we expect will depend on the vocabulary of the respondents of what, when exposed to, we can't ask children very complicated questions, at the we needs to be, at the same or as close to the mental, social, contextual level of the respondents as possible, so that they open up the critical path here is the respondents need to open up to the interviewer, okay.

The effect of the interviews on own age on the respondents, that is also going to affect how respondents respond to you, so the kind of role they see you in as and that will affect how the questions are framed.

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Group interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Characteristics:
 - Interviewer/ moderator directs the inquiry & interaction among respondents in a very structured fashion
 - Exploratory & may be used to:
 - Test a methodological technique
 - Try out a definition of a research problem
 - Identify key informants
 - May be used for triangulation & other data gathering techniques
 - Used in conjunction with other techniques

The next type of interview that we will this here is group interviewing, it's also known as focused group interviews, so group interviewing happens when interviewer or moderator a directory inquiry and interaction among respondents in a very structured fashion. So we get a group of people together, we select the people who we want to talk about or we want to sorry,

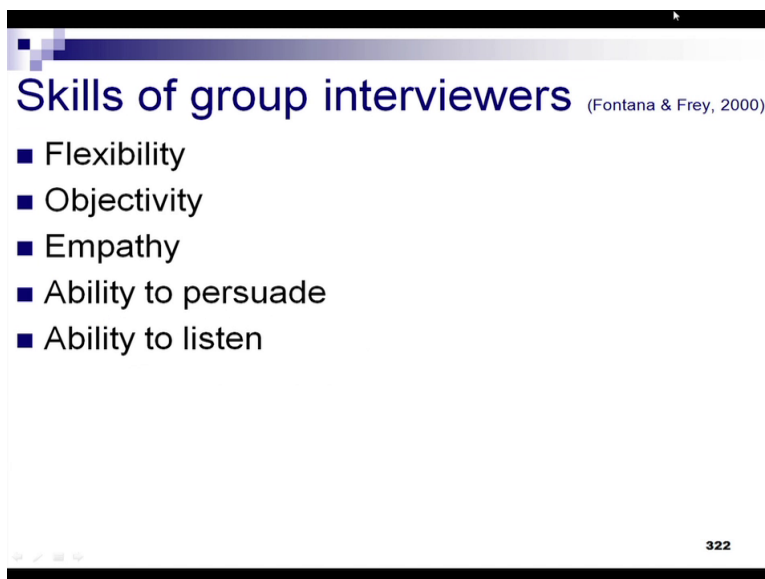
or who we want to talk to together and we get them together and we start a conversation and we direct conversation in a very, very structured manner.

So we are asked questions, people discuss it amongst themselves, we record the responses and then we go through the conversation that has taken place and make a notes alongside and even afterwards after going through, what has been recorded. So usually these days with all the techniques sorry with the technology available, we use video camera maybe you know if possible and if the respondents agree, it will help to use a video camera to record there the entire interview and then pick relevant pieces of information.

Then it is exploratory and it may be used to test a methodological technique or try out a definition of a research problem or to identify the informants. So it's just tools to get more into the research it may be used for triangulation and other data gathering techniques, it may be used to supplement what we have understood from another data gathering techniques, to validate the findings from another technique.

It must be used in conjunction with other techniques, it cannot be used on its own group interviewing cannot stand you know in most cases it is not used on its own. It cannot form the only way of gathering data, it should be supplemented with other techniques to make sure that the data is analyzed properly and the findings are robust and acceptable to reach research community.

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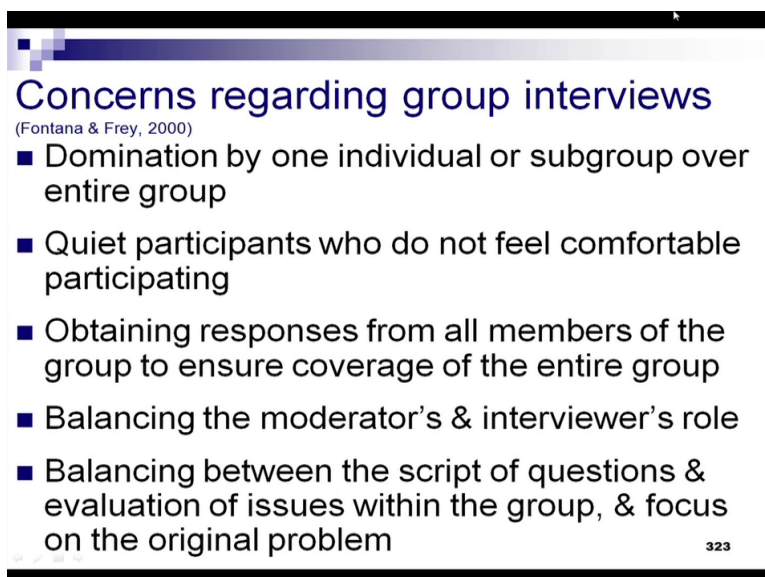
Slide 322: Skills of group interviewers (Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Flexibility
- Objectivity
- Empathy
- Ability to persuade
- Ability to listen

322

The skills of group interviewers are flexibility, objectivity, empathy, flexibility in terms of you know maintaining a focus and still letting the conversation flow. Objectivity is when you take yourself out of the interview situation, your directing the conversation, but you also able to see the conversation from the perspective of somebody, who's not involved in the situation. Empathy the ability to relate to the respondents, ability to persuade the respondents, the ability to listen is also very critical.

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Slide 323: Concerns regarding group interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Domination by one individual or subgroup over entire group
- Quiet participants who do not feel comfortable participating
- Obtaining responses from all members of the group to ensure coverage of the entire group
- Balancing the moderator's & interviewer's role
- Balancing between the script of questions & evaluation of issues within the group, & focus on the original problem

323

Here some concerns regarding group interviews, the you know when people are talking in a group, there could be one individual or subgroups dominate the entire conversation or discussion. The quite participants who don't feel comfortable participating could also become a concern for the interviewer. That there could be some people just don't feel comfortable

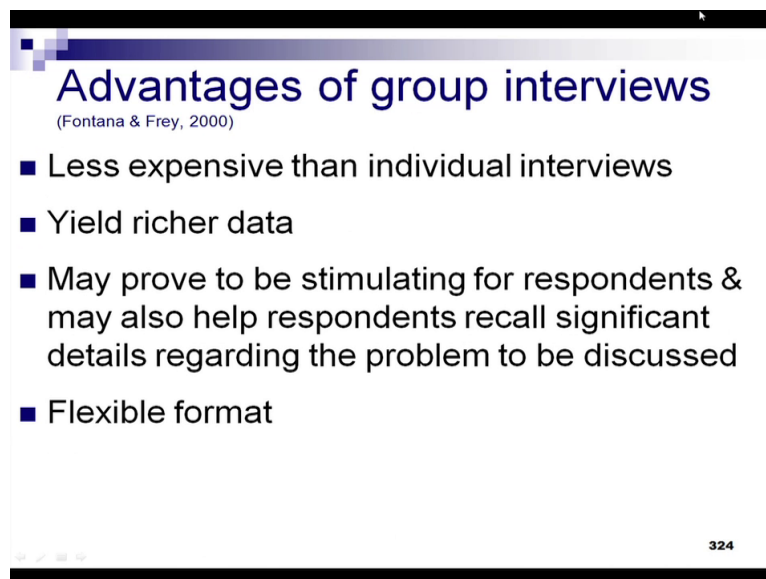
talking, they are part of this group, but then when people start talking about different things, there could be you know some people who are very quiet you just don't participate.

So it becomes very important for the interviewer to obtain responses from all members of the group to ensure coverage of the entire group and so some in some way you know very subtly, very tactfully the interviewer can direct the questions to the people, who are not participating, then balancing the moderators and interviewers role, so the interviewer should on the one hand, the interviewer needs to ask questions, get the information and also make sure that the discussion stays on track.

So you know and all also make sure that the participants are participating properly or they are participating to the best of their ability, so the quiet ones don't stay quiet too much, the talkers don't talk so much, so that balancing act all constitutes the moderators role. Then balancing between the script of the questions and evaluation of issues within the group and focus on the original problem.

After all we are trying to get an answer to a problem we have and the focus needs to be there you also need to make sure that we stick to the script of the questionnaire, the guidelines or the direction that we have taken through our interview. Schedule needs to be maintained and also an opportunity need to be given to the conversation to flow, as unhindered as possible. So these are a few concerns regarding group interviews.

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Advantages of group interviews

(Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Less expensive than individual interviews
- Yield richer data
- May prove to be stimulating for respondents & may also help respondents recall significant details regarding the problem to be discussed
- Flexible format

324

Now some advantages of group interviews, there less expensive, you know we don't needs to make arrangements for getting in individual people, they yield richer data, because a lot of people are constructing information, they are arriving in, responses from other respondents who have gone through the same situation will stimulate the responses from the people who are not talking so much.

So somebody say something that strikes your memory, so that's sparks your memory and that in turn leads to you giving some information, that you may not have thought of if you're the only one or non talking from the perspective of the respondent. if somebody says something that triggers your memory and you come up with something, that you may not have thought of earlier, if you were the only one being interviewed, so yields richer data.

It may prove to be stimulating for respondents and me also help respondents recalls significant details regarding the problem to be discussed. Again somebody says something that stimulates your memory, that jog your memory, that motivates you to speak up and the format is very flexible, so that's very helpful here okay.

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Problems group interviewer could face

(Fontana & Frey, 2000)

- Results cannot be generalized
- Dominance within the group may suppress individual expression
- Single group dynamics are more complex, a more skillful person is needed as an interviewer/ moderator
- Very difficult to research sensitive topics in a group interview

325

Some problems a group interviewer could face, the results cannot be generalized, because every group interviews different, there could be dominance within the group and that may suppress individual expression. Single group dynamics are more complex, a more skillful person is needed as an interviewer or moderator, so the dynamics within the group could be problem. It will be very difficult to reset sensitive topics in a group interview

People are feeling vulnerable gone through situations, they just don't want to open up in front of other people, so when we talking about very traumatic experience where people have felt very vulnerable, they feel there they could lose phase, they could lose their public image by saying that they made a mistake, that kind of interview could be very difficult so we can't broach sensitive topic.

So maybe some talking about trauma helps, sometimes talking about trauma disturb the comfort zone of the interviewed, so that could be a problem, so that may not be a very good settings to get the information regarding vulnerable, regarding sensitive topics out of people.

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So okay, now the last part of this presentation is used with interviewing and technology and I have put dots in here. The various ways in which we can conduct interviews these days are one is of course face to face, which is the most obvious one. Then we also use technology for interviewing, we could conduct interviews on telephones.

We could conduct interviews over Skype, over voice over IP over all kinds of technologies that are available these days in, that's why these dots are there, that you can be as creative you can, you can find out or you can add to this list as much as possible.

So technology is being used extensively these days to conduct interviews and to get information from other people, so interview specifically deal with getting information from our respondents who in social situations and this is a very, very useful technique, very useful method of gathering data in the, even in quantitative research methods, but especially in qualitative research methods.

Unstructured interviews are extremely useful, because they help us find out what is out there without really, you know making preconceived or having preconceived notions about what we could hope to find, so that's a very, very useful tool. This is all we have time for in this class and we will continue with some more strategies of gathering data, some more methods of gathering data and analyzing them in the upcoming classes, so thank you very much for listening.