



IAEA

60 Years

Atoms for Peace and Development

Interviews

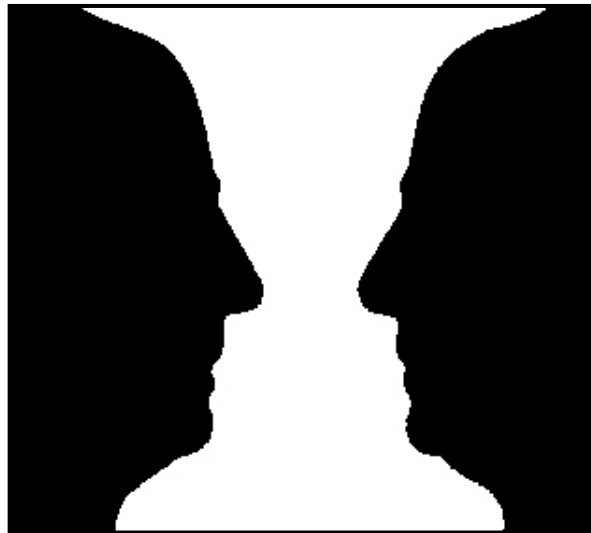


Agenda

- What & why?
- Trust and ethics
- Designing and planning the study:
 - Selecting interviewers
 - Planning the interviews
 - Selecting respondents
- Interview technique
- Recording and transcription
- Analysis

What?

Inter/view



Why?

- Interviews provide in-depth knowledge on specific topics and areas of interest
- They make it possible for employees to make their voice heard in a form not constricted by the rigidity of e.g. a questionnaire
- Interviews are a powerful tool, but they require trust, confidence and interviewer skills

Trust and ethics

- Anonymity of the respondent
 - No information in the report can be traced back
 - Interview material is made anonymous as soon as possible
 - No one outside the SA team sees the whole interview
- The respondent must feel confident that her/his answers will be represented correctly
- The respondent must feel sure that what is said will not lead to reports on misconduct

Trust and ethics

- How to handle personal information obtained in the interview?
- Make sure that the respondent feels confident that measures will be taken to ensure anonymity and integrity:
 - Who will have access to interview data?
 - Who will transcribe (if the interview is recorded)?
 - How will analysis be undertaken?
 - How will the results be reported?
 - How will the anonymity of the respondent be maintained?

Designing the study

- Who will do the interviews?
 - Training?
 - External expertise
- Problems with insiders (power issues):
 - Interviewing 'up'
 - Interviewing 'down'
 - Personal relations
- Strength of insiders:
 - Insight in the organization and its context
 - Know the language and history of the organization

Designing the study

We can talk about two main types of interviews:

The expert interview



- Selection based on knowledge or closeness to information
- Can be important in the beginning, to obtain information

The explorative interview



- Selection based on organizational criteria (next slide!)
- To obtain the respondent point of view regardless of knowledge or position

Designing the study

Selecting respondents for the explorative interview:

- *Closeness* - if a specific topic is under investigation
- *Functional representation* - make sure all relevant functions are represented
- *Hierarchical representation* - make sure all levels are represented
- *Key informants* – return to good informants for follow-up interview or in future assessments
- *Contractors and administrative staff* – include non-technical staff and other workers

➤ ***Inclusion more important than representativeness!***

Designing the study

Practicalities:

- Preparing facilities for interviewing
 - Respondents' office?
 - Meeting room?
- Timing the interviews
 - More specific purpose = shorter
 - 'Normal' interview: 1–2 hours
- Preparing questions/themes

Interview technique

An explorative interview tries to capture the respondents' point of view. This means:

- Questions should not be too many
- Open themes may be better than actual questions
- Questions should be of an open-ended character
- Listening is one of the most important skills in interviewing!
- Encourage the respondent's story-telling
- Follow the respondent's story, you may discover things you did not know!

Interview technique

When asking questions:

- Use follow-up questions to
 - Get more in-depth answers
 - Make sure questions are understood
 - Opening up for related topics
 - Asking for examples when the respondent is vague
- Use open-ended questions
- Consider degree of structuration:



Structured Semi-structured Non-structured

Interview technique: types of questions

- *Introducing questions* (e.g. 'could you tell me about your work at...')
- *Follow-up questions* (e.g. 'could you tell me more about that situation?', encouraging elaboration)
- *Specifying questions* (e.g. 'how did you feel at that point?')
- *Direct questions* (e.g. 'do you feel you have enough knowledge of the plant's safety policy?'; these questions can affect the direction of the conversation to some degree and should be kept until the end of the interview)
- *Indirect questions* (e.g. 'how do people in the organization relate to management in general?')
- *Interpreting questions* (e.g. 'when you say this, do you mean that the managers really do not understand your work conditions?'; this can help in the interpretation of ambiguous statements)

Interview technique: other considerations



- *Structuring statements* (e.g. 'I'd now like to ask you something about the safety policy...')
- *Silences* (in order to leave space for reflection, and to indirectly encourage the respondent to develop an answer further)

Interview technique

An interview should be a conversation, not:

- A *test* where the respondent's knowledge is put to scrutiny
- An *interrogation* where the respondent is held accountable for something
- *Identity work/moral storytelling*, where the respondent feels s/he has to present a certain image to the interviewer
- A *rehearsal*, where ready-made stories and corporate policies are re-told

Interview technique

Acknowledging the importance of narratives:

- Organizational stories
- The structure of accounts, e.g. how events are interpreted
 - Cause and effect?
 - Blaming?
 - How are tensions managed in the story?
 - Everyone's story is as important – in cultural analysis we are not interested in what happened, but the meaning it has in the organization

Recording and transcription

Effects of recording interviews:

- + Nothing gets lost
- + Capture exact phrases, words, metaphors, lines of reasoning
- + The interviewer can focus on respondent
- The respondent may feel uncomfortable
- The respondent may not feel free to speak up

**A choice between scientific
precision and what is politically
possible**

The difficulty with transcription

A WOMAN WITHOUT HER
MAN IS NOTHING

The difficulty with transcription

A WOMAN. WITHOUT HER,
MAN IS NOTHING.

Analysing interviews

- Identifying themes in the material:
 - Occurs repeatedly
 - A problem to the employees
 - Differing views between different groups
 - Emotionally charged
 - Avoided by respondents
 - Most things that catch your interest are potentially interesting!
- Use the SCSA team, test themes and ideas on each other; have you identified similar themes?
- Write up – and do not be afraid of contradictions and paradoxes; no need to tell a homogeneous story!

Summary

- SCSA interviews are explorative
- The role of the interviewer is to encourage conversation and storytelling by the respondent
- The emphasis is on hearing what has meaning in the organization
- Information should be captured in the words of the respondent as much as possible

Exercise

Purpose: Experience interviewing and being interviewed

Task:

In pairs, interview each other and take notes. Try to use an explorative approach! Topic: *An event that made you scared.*

Swap notes and reflect on what was captured, how it was captured and what was lost. How did it feel to be interviewed? Did it feel like a natural conversation? What types of questions were used?

Time:

Interviews 20 minutes each, reflection approx. 20 minutes, group debrief



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Thank you!

