

INTERVIEWS

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AGENDA

- Interviews in Theory
- Interviews in Practice
- Take Home Message
- Bibliography

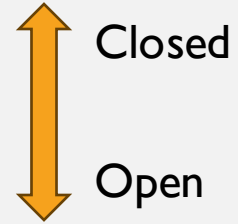
INTERVIEWS IN THEORY

WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

- Data collecting method
- Direct engagement with individuals or groups
- Capturing personal viewpoints in a targeted way

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- Structured interviews
- Semi-structured interviews
- Unstructured interviews



EXAMPLES: STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

- World Values Survey (Haerpfer et al., 2022)

WVS 2017-2021: WAVE 7

4 of 27

CORE QUESTIONNAIRE SOCIAL VALUES, ATTITUDES & STEREOTYPES

(SHOW CARD 1)

For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is *(read out and code one answer for each)*:

		Very important	Rather important	Not very important	Not at all important
Q1	Family	1	2	3	4
Q2	Friends	1	2	3	4
Q3	Leisure time	1	2	3	4
Q4	Politics	1	2	3	4
Q5	Work	1	2	3	4
Q6	Religion	1	2	3	4

E. Respondent's interest *(Code how interested the respondent was during the interview):*

- 1 Respondent was very interested.
- 2 Respondent was somewhat interested.
- 3 Respondent was not interested.

E1. Respondent's literacy

- 1 Literate
- 2 Illiterate

F. Interview privacy *(Code whether the interview took place in privacy or not):*

- 1 There were no other people around who could follow the interview.
- 2 There were other people around who could follow the interview.

EXAMPLES: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Why is it so difficult to tax the rich? Evidence from German policy-makers (Fastenrath et al., 2022)

observe in numerous European countries (Appendix F).

Our analysis is based on 25 semi-structured interviews (Appendix G). Following an open-ended approach, we first asked respondents about perceived problem pressure regarding tax progressivity and, second, about obstacles to increase taxes on the rich.

We conducted almost half (9) of our interviews with functionaries of the

EXAMPLES: UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Information seeking and use by newspaper journalists (Attfield & Dowell, 2003)

METHOD

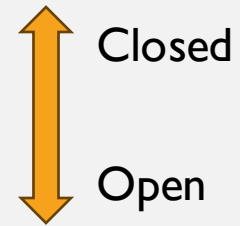
The data in this study were predominantly gathered through unstructured interviews with 25 journalists at *The Times* in London, comprising 19 home news writers, four feature writers, one obituary writer and one systems editor. Levels of experience ranged from one to 36 years. Data were additionally gathered through e-mail correspondence.

Interviews were conducted at the workplace and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. Typically, these began with the researcher prompting the journalist to describe the work assignment process, and then steering the discussion towards issues of information seeking and use during that process. In an attempt to identify prototypical information activities along with their motivation, circumstances and means, an emphasis was placed on understanding why, when and how each activity would be done.

Interview transcripts were then analysed using a Strauss and Corbin's (1998)

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

- Structured interviews
- Semi-structured interviews
- Unstructured interviews



Epistemology?



PREPARING INTERVIEWS

1. Define Research Objectives and Questions
2. Choose the Type of Interview
3. Develop the Interview Guide
4. Select and Recruit Participants
5. Pilot the Interview

DOING INTERVIEWS - PARTS OF AN INTERVIEW (I)

1. **Pre talk:** Let the interviewee arrive in the situation by doing small talk and giving information if needed, without giving too much away about your research
2. **Narrative stimulus** or **narrative-generating question:** Briefly and without giving too much away open the interview by explaining what the interview is about and asking a clear question limited to a certain process that the interviewee can answer
3. **Negotiation** and **confirmation** of the stimulus: If the interviewee is insecure about the stimulus repeat it; switch between who's talking
4. **Main narration:** Let the interviewee talk, encourage their narration via (non-)verbal signs and further questions; note down unfinished and newly arisen topics

DOING INTERVIEWS - PARTS OF AN INTERVIEW (II)

5. Asking **immanent questions**: Ask the questions you have noted down during the main narration to get an in-depth understanding; stay on the narration of the interviewee
 6. Asking **emanant questions**: Bring in your own topics outside of the narration of the interviewee
 7. **Outro**: Ask the interviewee if there are topics that haven't been addressed yet, but they would like to add, thank them for their participation
 8. **(Collect sociodemographic data)**
 9. **Follow up talk and data privacy statement**: Ask how the interview was for the interviewee and why they participated, let them sign the data privacy statement if not done before
- specific for narrative interviews

DOING INTERVIEWS – TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Technical requirement: one needs to be able to record the interview
- Check, if you know how to use the recording technology and if it works
- Check the audio quality
- Check, if you can save the record
- Make sure you have a (or multiple) space(s) to archive the record

DOING INTERVIEWS – METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Methodological state** of the interview: Interview as co-constructed social interaction vs. as a text production
- Interviews differ from other types of conversations
- **Principle of openness:** Openness for the relevancies and structures of the interviewee, critical handling of the prior knowledge and inputs of the interviewer
- **Principle of communication:** Co-construction of the interview situation and the narration
- **Principle of reflectivity:** Reflection of the interviewer's prior knowledge, ideas of normality, expectations, presumptions and worries as well as of the interview itself
- **Principle of foreignness:** Being open for the foreign relevance system and interpretations of the interviewee and making your own foreign
- **Proximity and distance** to the interviewee: Both have advantages and disadvantages for the narration respectively your data

DOING INTERVIEWS – WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR DURING INTERVIEWS

- Non-verbal language
- Actively listening, thinking and keeping the interview going
- Questions and how you ask them: don't limit the narration space of the interviewee, but be flexible with your handling of the questions and the rules surrounding them (in great detail: Kruse (2015): 215-226; Helfferich (2009): 102-114)
- Staying in time and getting through your guide

DOING INTERVIEWS – QUESTIONS (I)

- Ask questions that encourage the narration and openness
- Don't assume that narrating is easy for the interviewee
- Kinds of questions:
 - narrative-generating stimuli or questions
 - “Aufrechterhaltungsfragen”; questions that keep the narration going
 - Steering questions
 - Paraphrasing and offers of interpretations
 - Questions about contradictions
 - Suggestive questions
 - Questions on attitudes and assessments

DOING INTERVIEWS – GENERAL RULES FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

Keep your questions ...

- Definite and answerable
- Open
- Specific, one topic at a time, without alternatives
- Non-judgemental and not aggressive
- In a language that is adequate for the interviewee
- In the context and sense of the interview
- In a way that doesn't cause shame or guilt

- Don't go through your guide in a 'business manner'

DOS AND DON'TS

DOS

- Ask open questions
- Be open for the views and answers of the interviewee
- Follow the flow of the interviewee
- Be flexible with the guide

DON'TS

- Avoid „guideline bureaucracy“
- Avoid asking question that limit the interviewee's narration space
- Avoid asking questions that harm the relationship between the interviewee and you

POSTPROCESSING INTERVIEWS

- Right after the interview: **Interview protocol** including the following the information
 - information about the interviewee
 - information about the interview
 - reflection of the interview (relationship, challenges, irritations, interview atmosphere)
 - Was the data privacy statement signed? Does the interviewee have the contact dates of the interviewer?
 - First impressions and potential connections to your research questions
- **Route sheet:** Where am I in the research process and the interviews?

Kommentiertes Beispiel für einen Interviewprotokollbogen

!!!NACH dem Interview auszufüllen!!!

Interview Code Nr.

(eventuell hier die Regel der Code-Vergabe festhalten)

Hinweis: bitte nach dem Interview ausfüllen

Interviewer: _____
(sofern Interviewermarkierung nicht Teil des Codes ist)

Datum _____ Dauer _____ Min

Date and time in
minutes

Ort/Räumlichkeit _____
(Evtl. Angaben zum Kontaktweg)

Place and how contact
took place

Teilnahmemotivation:
(außerhalb des eigentlichen Interviews oder im Interview erfragt)

Motivation for
participation

Befragte/r: Interviewee

Alter _____ (falls nicht bekannt, in groben Kategorien geschätzt) Age
Ausbildung _____ (falls nicht bekannt: in groben Kategorien ge- Education
schätzt)

Beruf/Berufsstatus _____ Current job and
occupational status

Kinder _____ Children
Partnersch./Familienstand _____ Marital status

– Für die folgenden Informationen ist mehr Platz einzuräumen, aus Darstellungsgründen wurden hier die Leerzeilen weggelassen –

Zusätzliche Informationen, besondere Vorkommnisse bei Kontaktierung oder im Interview: Further information, relevant/special incidents during the interview or contact

Interviewatmosphäre, Stichworte zur personalen Beziehung Atmosphere of the interview and personal relationship between interviewer and interviewee

Interaktion im Interview, schwierige Passagen Interaction and difficulties in the interview

Check: Einverständniserklärung unterschrieben?

Karte mit Adresse und Telefonnummer des Projektes dagelassen, falls Interesse an Ergebnissen und Wunsch, Cassette oder Abschrift zu bekommen?

Cassette abgegeben am an

Interviewee's Signature on data privacy statement and contact possibilities

(Source: Helfferich (2011): 201)

POSTPROCESSING INTERVIEWS – EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

CHANCES AND LIMITS OF INTERVIEWS

CHANCES

- Capture the reference frame, relevance structures and experience backgrounds of the interviewee
- Allows for an iterative research process by adapting the interview guide
- Comparability of non-standardized data by using an interview guide
- Focus on a specific topic without limiting the interviewee's perspective
- Spontaneous follow-up questions and flexibility
- More openness due to personal interview setting
- Consideration of nonverbal signals (tone of voice, gestures, etc.)

LIMITS

- High prerequisites and requirements in the interview situation
- A lot of responsibility is put on the interviewee
- Time intensive
- Operationalization during the interview
- Reactivity
- Doing vs. talking about what one is doing/cognition
- Reduction of the interviewee to a certain role
- Interview is not a natural situation
- Quality of the data varies with the competence of the interviewer
- Important decisions regarding the interview must be made in the interview situation itself

INTERVIEWS IN PRACTICE

TASK

1. Find a person you have not worked with before
2. Assign the role of interviewer and interviewee
3. Interviewer: Turn the interview guide around, read it silently grab a pen and a recording device, prepare yourself
4. Interview your partner on the topic political transformation; time: 15 to 20 minutes each, record the interview
5. Switch roles and repeat the steps two to five
6. Transcribe the interviews

REFLECTION

- How did you feel in the role of the interviewer respectively the role of the interviewee?
- What happened inside of you as an interviewee between the short pause between hearing the question and the beginning of your answer?
- Did you tell 'the truth' as the interviewee?
- What was easy for you? What was challenging?

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

- Interviews are a method to collect verbal data with the goal to capture the interviewee's viewpoints on a specific topic.
- There is a variety of interview forms on a spectrum between open and closed.
- Interviews are an appropriate method for research questions regarding subjective sense structures, to capture the (later limited) multitude of expressions of a phenomenon and (typical) patterns.
- Reflection, openness and communication are key aspects.

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APPENDIX

EXERCISE

How would you approach these questions? Think about choosing interviewees, structuredness, possible questions asked and challenges.

- Why are fossil fuel subsidies so hard to abolish (despite effort from G20-leaders)?
- Why are the super-rich for or against wealth taxation?
- How do undocumented or precariously employed migrants in urban areas narrate their experiences of economic marginalization and informal survival strategies?

Table 1 | **Types of interview questions (developed from Kvale and Brinkmann⁸⁰)**

Type of question	Example
Introductory	Can you tell me about ... (something specific)?
Follow-up	Non-verbal cues: mmm..., nod Verbal cues: repeat back keywords to participants, ask for reflection or unpacking of point just made
Probing	Can you say a little more about X? Why do you think X...? (for example, Why do you think X is that way? Why do you think X is important?)
Specifying	Can you give me an example of X?
Abstract	How did you feel when X happened?
Indirect	How do you think other people view X?
Structuring	Thank you for that. I'd like to move to another topic...
Direct (later stages)	When you mention X, are you thinking like Y or Z?
Interpreting	So, what I have gathered is that...
Ending	I have asked all the questions I had, but I wanted to check whether there is something else about your experience/understanding we haven't covered? Do you have any questions for me?
Listening	(non-verbal) We note that waiting and listening can also leave space for participants to open up or discuss more without verbal prompting
Silence	(non-verbal)

Adapted with permission from REF.⁸⁰, Sage Publications.

Source: Knott et al.
(2022): 4

Appendix G

The semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Webex or Zoom between August and November, 2020. Each interview lasted roughly between 60 and 90 minutes (see below). Some statements are reported anonymously, so citations cannot be linked to the respondent. Translations of German quotations are our own.

Interview (as cited)	Name	Function	Date	Length (in hours)	Online via	Interviewers
Left-wing_ party_ Anonymous	anonymised	anonymised	20/08/2020	01:11:45	anonymised	Fastenrath Marx
SPD_ Anonymous	anonymised	anonymised	anonymised	anonymised	anonymised	Fastenrath Marx
SPD_ Binding	Binding, Lothar	MoP (1998-), Member of Finance Committee (1998-), Spokesperson of the financial policy working group of the SPD parliamentary group (2012-)	26/08/2020	01:32:55	Zoom	Fastenrath Marx Truger
SPD_ Kiziltepe	Kiziltepe, Cancel	MoP (2013-), Member of Finance Committee (2013-), Deputy Spokesperson of the financial policy working group of the SPD parliamentary group (2015-)	27/08/2020	01:05:13	Zoom	Fastenrath Marx Truger
SPD_Kühl	Kühl, Carsten	Minister of Finance in Rhine-land-Palatine (2009 – 2014)	27/08/2020	01:21:30	Zoom	Vitt Truger
SPD	Zimmer-	MoP (2013-) Member of Fi-	21/07/2020	00:41:50	Zoom	Fastenrath

Source: Fastenrath et al. (2022).

SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

- What types of persons?
 - Race, gender, profession etc.
- Sampling
 - Stratified, purposive, snowball, quota
- How many?
 - Goal? Comparisons? Resources? Saturation?

WHAT IS AN INTERVIEW?

- Data collecting method
- Direct engagement with individuals or groups
- Capturing personal viewpoints in a targeted way

“a conversation, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the [life-world] of the interviewee.” (Kvale 1996: 174)

DOING INTERVIEWS – CHALLENGES AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM (I)

- **Emotional reactions** of the interviewee: The interviewee has an emotional reaction to the questions or topic, f. e. getting angry, crying, anxiety.
→ Handling: offer to pause the interview and the recording, skip the burdensome topic and switch to another topic, offer the contact to counselling centres
- The interviewee **pulls back**: The interviewee's answers are short and closed.
→ Handling: Keep asking open questions, don't let the pressure stress you out, try to motivate the interviewee to give deeper insights (f. e. "Tell me something", "Take your time", "I'd like to imagine that" or "We're interested in that"), switch the topic
- **Power play** between interviewee and interviewer: The interviewee tries to take over the power at the beginning of the interview.
→ Handling: stay in the interview situation, be patient, offer to answer questions outside of the interview situation later

DOING INTERVIEWS – CHALLENGES AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM (II)

- **Interruptions, violation** of the communication rules and **requests** of the interviewee
→ Handling: be flexible with the interview guide, decide in the situation
- **Ambivalence** of the interviewee: The interviewee taps into a topic and then avoids talking about it.
→ Handling: convey that the topic was heard and will have no negative consequences, let the interviewee decide if they want to continue, if not, drop the topic, offer to stop recording and contact to counselling centres
- The interviewee **doesn't talk**: For a variety of reasons the interviewee won't or can't talk about themselves
→ Handling: emphasize the interest in ordinary happenings, ask the questions in a more generalized and less personal or more concrete way
- **Postprocess**: Try to figure out why the challenge happened and if and how it affected the answers of the interviewee/your data

SELECTION OF TRANSCRIPTION SOFTWARE

- Open source software noScribe: <https://github.com/kaixxx/noScribe>
- Word
- MAXQDA
- Otter.ai
- oTranscribe
- Vibe
- Express Scribe
- InScribe
- descript