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## Transcript

### Slide 1 & 2:

Hey, everyone! So, today me and Jiyea will be talking about Interviewing women.

### Slide 3:

First off, What is interviewing women? And why do you think a researcher interviews women? Feminist researchers emphasized that research on women should be to give them a voice, providing opportunities for reciprocal learning, and empowering women to change their living conditions. Women's stories are valuable and important, and therefore, feminist researchers should concern their stories and let their (the women's) voices heard.

### Slide 4:

Then comes the question of why the gender of the interviewer matters? So, for a long time feminist scholars have analysed male bias in social sciences (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1983). Social sciences have long represented those that are in positions of power and hence women are largely absent from this study. Hence a sociology for women, that furthers liberation and political movements for the woman results in emancipatory possibilities for not only the researched but the researchers (as well). For as women researchers have also long been absent from the dialogue and have been unheard within the main sociological circle.

### Slide 5:

However, more studies have been conducted to see how much gender actually influences the results of a study. Padfield and Procter (1996) conducted interviews with 39 women to study how exactly gender affects when a male vs. a female interviewer is conducting the same study. Both of the interviewers had a common detailed understanding of the objectives of the interview, 20 of them (interviewees) were studied by the male interviewer and 19 by the female (interviewer). Interestingly enough, the results showed little difference in answers regardless of who was conducting the interview. However, this was only possible because the interviewers acknowledged the role gender plays and actively worked to eliminate any factors that might influence how the participants would respond. Which is a very important point highlighted by this study. The study did notice one major difference however amongst the two interviews and that was the voluntary information offered by the women in response to sensitive topics. In this case, women were asked about their view on abortion and whereas both interviews got the same results, 6 women voluntarily talked about their own experience with an abortion, all of them interestingly were being interviewed by the female interviewer. Later, re-interviewing these women after two years revealed that at least two of the original women that were being interviewed by the male interviewer actually had abortions before the interview but did not bring it up. So that certainly shows how gender plays some part in what information is openly offered. The study lastly focuses on how interviewers can get similar knowledge through acknowledging the differences, active listening and putting aside the inappropriate features of masculinity like arrogance or not listening in order to achieve the best results.

**Slide 6:**

However, gender is not the only factor that influences how the interview can go. There are many other factors that can give you an insider or outsider status depending on your participants. This includes Age, class, gender, race etc. Many scholars actually talk about how these factors caused awkward moments of silence in their discussions. An example of this is Johnson-Bailey's study where she talks about some of these factors. She is an African-American woman that's interviewing other African-American women.

So first off, when talking about race, she notices that whereas when talking about gender, the participants might not mention it exclusively as it felt like a matter-of-fact statement but race was something they would particularly talk about as an issue faced by many of these women. This was brought up even when there was no question asked of race and allowed the women to bond.

Then came the question of color, so whereas race acted as a bond, color within that race seemed like a divide that resulted in some of the most uncomfortable moments during the interview. The interviewer was lighter toned and 3 of the 8 interviewees brought up the issue of colorism in their society. 2 of these participants were actually the darker-skinned participants in the study. The researcher talks about how color has inadvertently been linked to class due to Reconstruction and in the first half of the twentieth century and hence a "legacy of poverty continues in darker-skinned families" (Johnson-Bailey, 1999).

Then there was the issue of Class. So similarly, class also created a distance between her and some of her interviewees (that did not belong to the same class as her) whereas the interviewees that had a similar or stronger background than hers took charge of the interview. Johnson-Bailey finally concludes how class and color actually resulted in many long awkward silences, averted glances, raised and lowered voices, tears shed, and harsh confrontational statements so one should not assume automatic insider status based on a couple of similarities.

Then there's the question of status where Tang (2002) experienced class and status can affect the interviewer and interviewee relationship while she conducted interviews with academic mothers in China and the UK. Chinese peers often regarded Tang as superior because she was pursuing a PhD in the UK and PhD holders were very limited in her school in China at that time. However, Tang was often of relatively inferior status to her interviewees in the UK who are full-time academic staff, while Tang was a PhD student.

Then there's also age. Cotterill (1992) talks about how "it is not always possible to establish rapport on the basis of sisterhood" because there can be real problems for the younger women interviewing older women. She also said the age, class and status of informants on the research may impact on the balance of the power between interviewer and interviewee. So these are some of the many factors that we discuss through the research and then of course there's sexuality, ethnicity, cultural differences etc.

**Slide 7:**

Now, In order to accomplish successful interviews with women, we would like to introduce several ideas and tips.

So first off is the Interview Location: to find the best interview location for interviewing women. According to Finch, she did an informal way of interviewing by conducting an interview

at the interviewee's home to easily create rapport. Tang also experienced that her respondents in the UK treated her differently compared with the time when they interviewed at their offices. However, being the post-pandemic era, interviewers should find the safest interview location.

Then there's balancing power. So, balancing power is important when interviewing women. Researchers might face the challenges of age, status, class, and race of respondents on the research, and Tang realized that both interviewer and interviewees' perceptions of social, cultural, and personal differences have influence on the power relationship in the interview. What if the interviewer and interviewee know each other very well? Interviewer should distinguish between "friends" and "friendliness."

Then there's sharing experiences & giving advice: Many researchers said that women interviewees (tend to) welcome opportunities to talk to a sympathetic listener, because they have lack of chances to share their private or sensitive stories to others, even their families, so they might feel isolation and loneliness. So actively listening to these stories and sharing your own helps build a form of trust between researcher and participant.

Then stating your research goals. When Tang conducted interviews with women respondents, she gave a brief introduction of the purpose of the study and research questions to interviewees before the interview. 95% of her interviewees expressed interests in her study and over 90% of participants asked Tang to give them feedback when the findings are available.

And then there's providing the opportunity for long term contact: Many feminist researchers are of the opinion that after talking about sensitive topics, a level of comfort is established between the researcher and the participant. So, to leave the participant after the research is over, it leaves them feeling used and that is one of the many things that women have already dealt with and faced so feminist researchers want to avoid this. So many researchers will suggest allowing opportunities for long term contact so the participant does not feel used. Lastly, are some of the challenges.

#### **Slide 8:**

Lyons & Chipperfield (2000) talk about how some of the many techniques used to establish rapport and how they came across issues when trying to try out these strategies. E.g when interjecting with their own stories/advice, this may confuse the interviewee as they have particular expectations of what an interview should be like and when the line is blurred between an "interview" and a "conversation", it tends to cause puzzlement, impatience or sometimes even mild anger.

Another issue they saw was when sharing their research goals how many of the participants were in fact disinterested in what they had to say. Because of this, they question how rapport-building might be less for the participant and more for the interviewer to "feel good about themselves." And one of the major issues that was raised in this study was how the participatory model assumes that the "conversational" mode of interviewing is more successful and that actually takes its roots from essentialist notions. It assumes that rapport building and conversation can help women slip into a more "gossip" or "women's talk" narrative and hence assumes that women share one common narrative pattern and leaves no room for diversity.

Lastly, the researchers acknowledge how the interviews construct a knowledge of the interviewee's self but it should be kept in mind that this self is created keeping in mind the public nature of the interview. So one should also keep in mind the subjectivity of the interviewees, and

thinking of interviewees as passive instead of active agents in an interview is just another form of “othering” them.

**Slide 9:**

So, to conclude it all, Women studying women just reveals to us the complex way in which women as objects of knowledge reflect back upon women as subjects of knowledge (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1983). So, it is both the interviewer and interviewee creating knowledge based on what they understand of the interview. And while women interviewing women (feminist research) still has a lot of work to be done on it and is not without its own issues, one can try and work on it enough through acknowledging the differences and finding the best way for both the interviewer and interviewee.

**Slide 10:**

And lastly, this is our reference list. We highly recommended all the readings on the list because they are amazing and very helpful to understand interviewing women.

**Slide 11:**

Thank you so much for watching our project and feel free to email us or contact us if you have any questions.