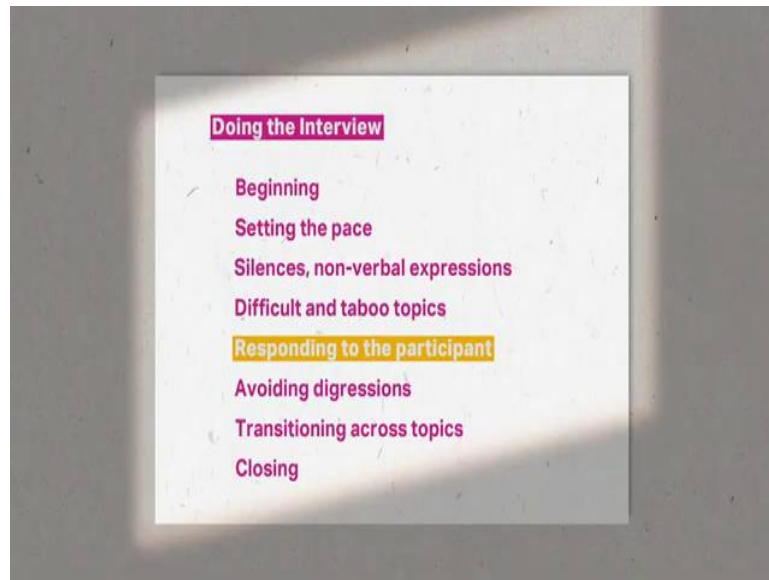


Understanding Ethnography
Module 6 Section 10
Lecture No. 50
Doing the Interview 2

Let us continue our discussion on various aspects of interviewing.

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As participants speak to us, it is important to make them feel heard. By doing this, we acknowledge the importance of what is being shared with us through spoken or silent silence expressions.

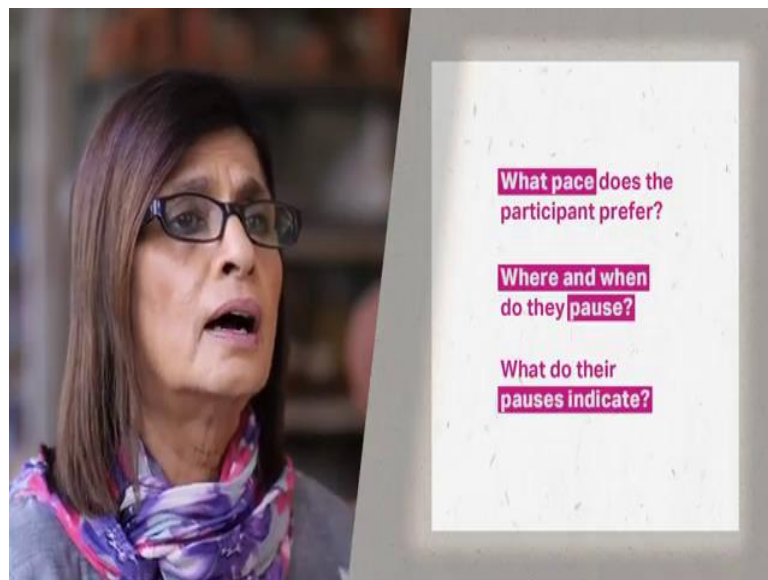
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We may nod, or make affirmative sounds, such as humm, or 'yes'es. Occasionally, we can try paraphrasing and repeating back to them what they have told us. This may assure the participant that they are not being misinterpreted. And it helps us to be clearer about our interpretations. Every now and then we may respond by sharing with them our own experiences and ideas.

As we have discussed previously sharing and responding helps build a more equal and interesting conversation. At the same time, it is important that we don't do not take over the conversation. We need to find an optimal balance between listening and speaking. How do we do this? In order to create a balanced discussion, we have to pay attention to the pace of the conversation.

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How fast or slow the participant prefers to speak? At what points and how often do they pause?

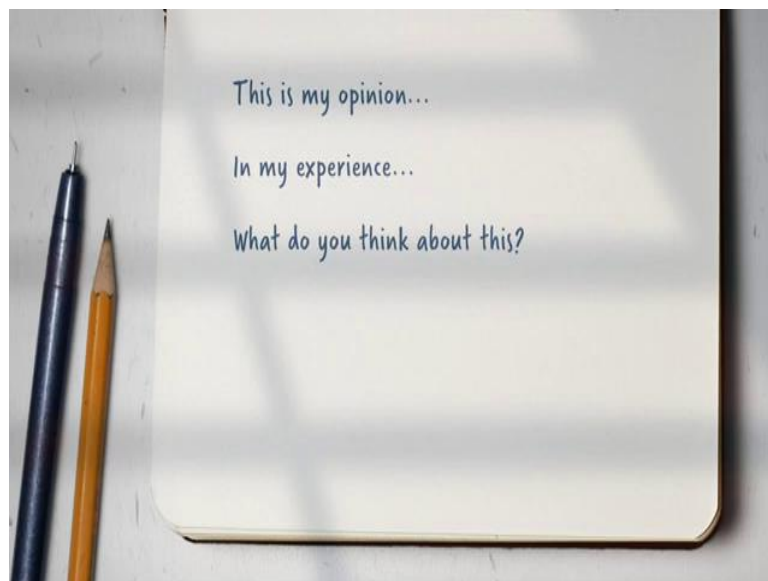
What do their pauses indicate? If he attends closely to the speaking and their silences, we can sense the pace at which the participant is comfortable. They often indicate when they want us to respond to something that they have said. Or when they want us to ask the next question.

Some participants do this by pausing. A lull or short gap in the conversation indicates that they want us to speak or maybe they wanted to add something, other may be more forthright, and ask us what we think or if we have had experiences similar to theirs. As we converse, we

learn to read these settle patterns. And it is these that guide us on when to listen, when to speak and when to express what we have understood.

And how can we ensure that we are not 'leading' the participant's opinions when we share our own? As we speak, we need to be careful of not imposing our opinions over this. Instead of being assertive and presenting our ideas, we can assume the position of someone who is looking for the other's critique and comment. Like saying, "this is my opinion or "In my experience, and what do you think about this?"

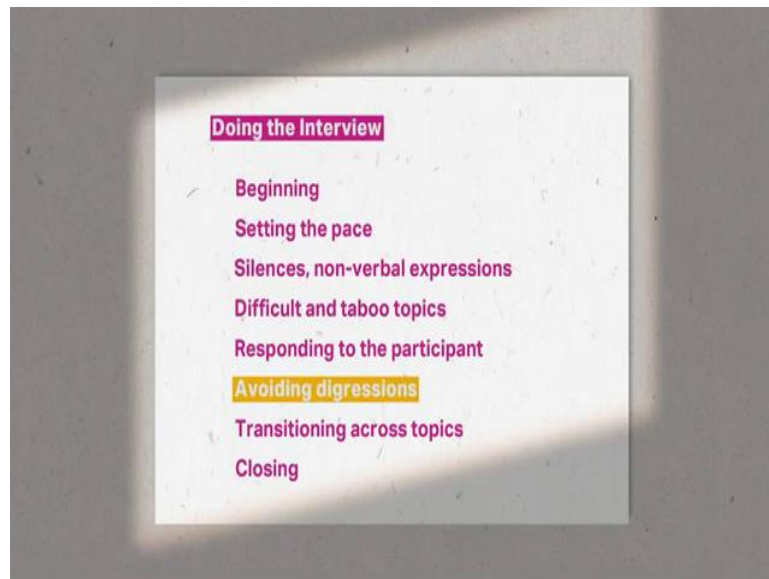
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Like same this is my opinion or in my experience and what do you think about this?

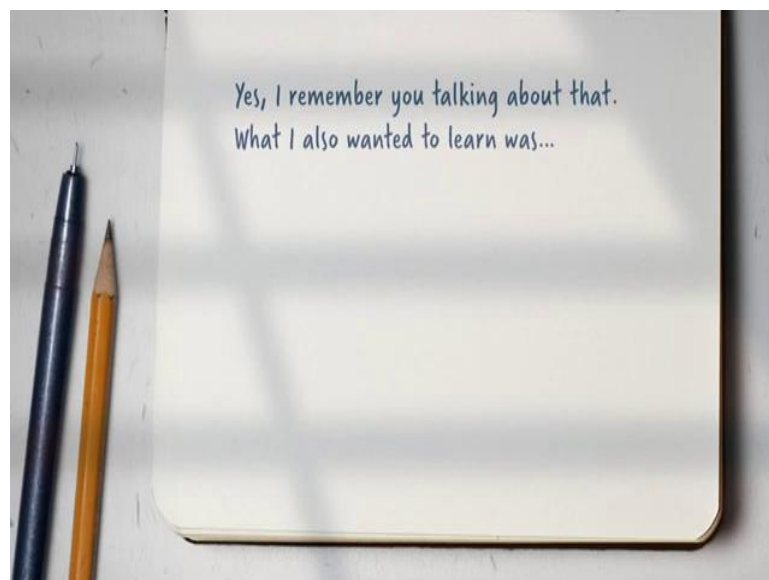
We must remember that in speaking our objective is to share and to build upon each other's knowledge and experiences. In an interview, speaking is a way of working with our participants to make sense of their experiences. We have spoken about the meandering and fluid nature of Ethnographic interviews. Sometimes though, the participant may digress way off our topic.

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When this happens, we have to try and bring the conversation back to the original topic. Or leave it on to the next one. And we have to do this without awkwardly cutting off, or offending or embarrassing the participant. A simple way is to wait for a gap or a pause and use that window to divert or redirect the conversation. For example, we could say something like this.

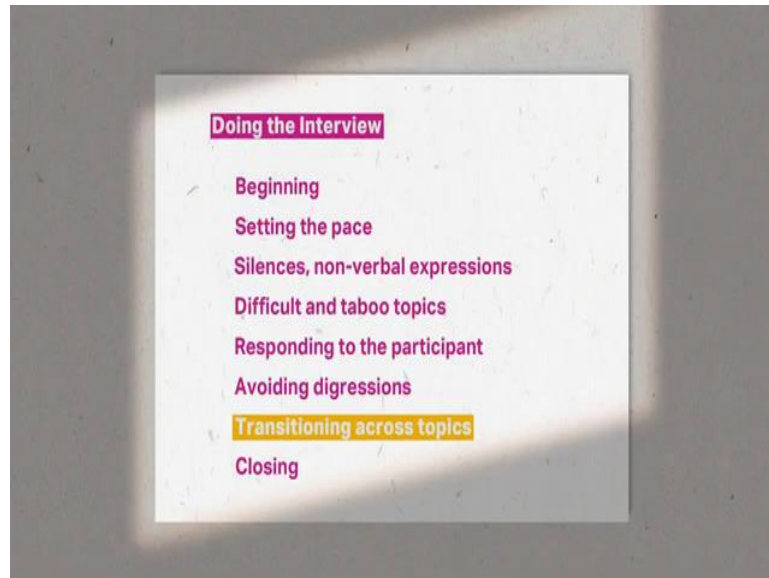
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Yes, I remember you talking about that. What I also wanted to learn was, and so we can read reintroduce the topic we would like to discuss. There are some interviews where we need to be particularly efficient with time. Like when we interview someone at their workplace. Or when we interview someone for a less reflexive and more fact-based understanding of a

phenomenon. In such cases, it is best to move the conversation at a brisk pace, shortening the gaps between the discussions and moving to the next topic.

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Whether we have been discussing a complex and difficult subject or a simple straight forward one, transitioning across topics requires a fine balance. Often the cues for a new topic to be discussed are to be found in what the participant is telling us.

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Careful listening and short gaps between topics make it easier to recognise such clues.

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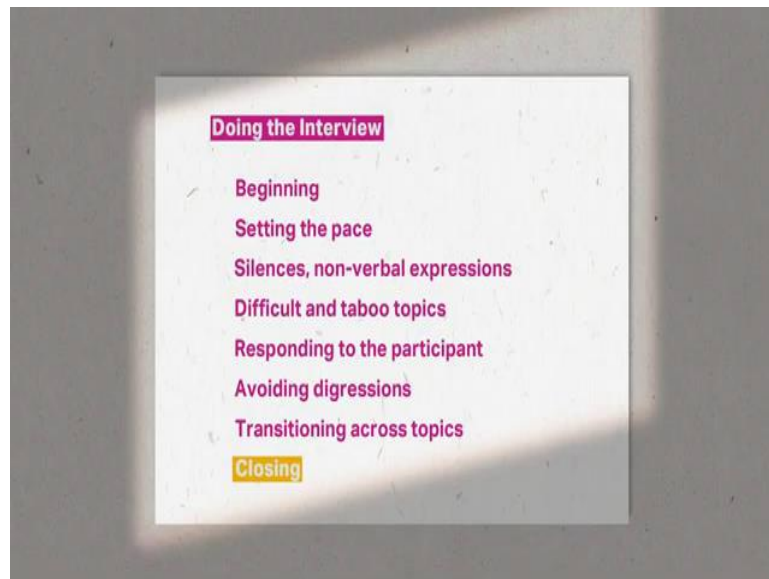
In introducing a new topic that is unrelated to our present discussion, we should avoid abrupt switches. We can also ask the participant if they want to add something else to the topic being discussed. This ensures that we are not cutting them short.

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A pause here may be a good idea. We can take a moment to quickly scan through our notes to check for any follow-up questions. Or see if there are any loose strands we may want to tie up or maybe in the participant wants to add something here. When we are certain that it is okay to close this topic we can start on the next one.

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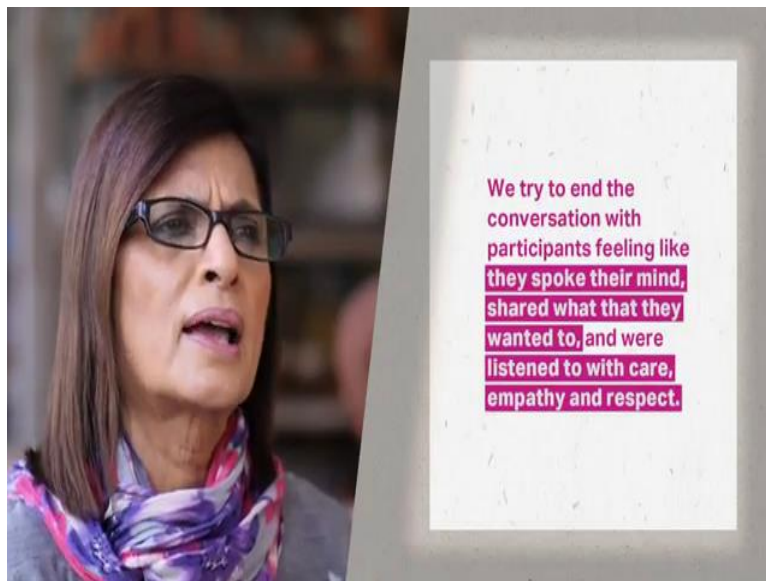
As we near the end of the interview, we move away from our complex subjects towards simpler ones once. This is where the intensity of the interview peters off gradually.

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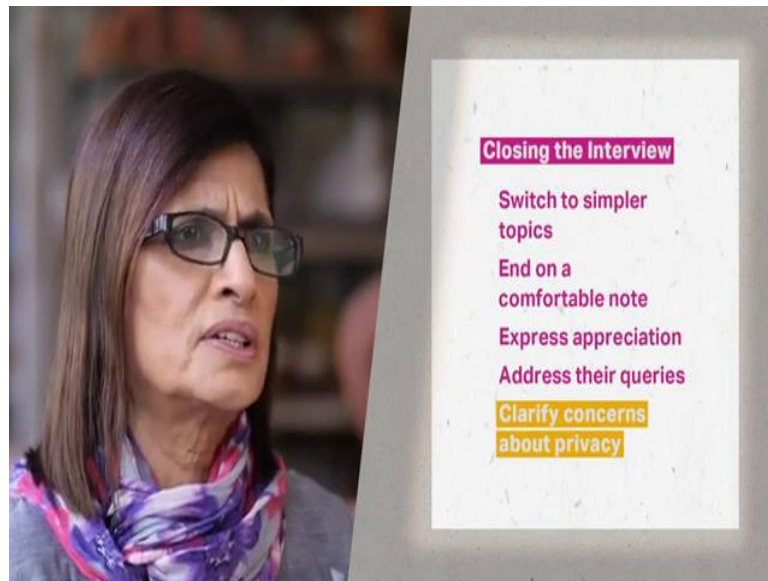
At the end, they should feel empowered, happy to have shared aspects of their lives with someone who was keen to listen and learn.

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They should not feel like they had a lot more to say but were not able to say it or were not asked about it. Nor should they feel like something has been taken away from them.

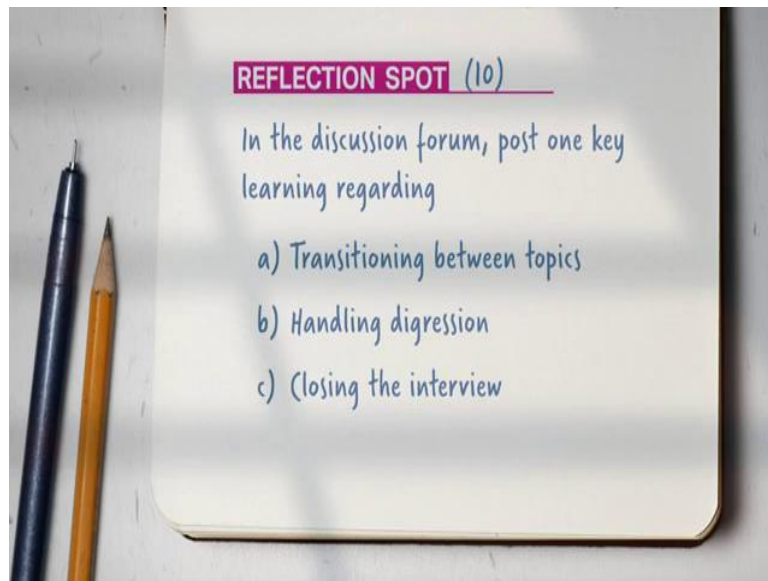
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As we end the interview, we need to acknowledge and express our appreciation for what they have shared with us. And for the time and energy, they invested in the conversation. It is the good idea to ask them if they have any questions for us. Often participants want to know how the things they shared will contribute to the research.

And before we leave them, we can ask again if there are parts of the interview that they want to keep private or anonymous. Even though we have taken permissions beforehand, interviews tend to go in unexpected directions and we should be doubly sure of respecting their comfort and safety. Let us pause for the moment here and revise some of our learnings.

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On the screen, you see different aspects of interviewing. Transitioning between topics, handling digression, closing the interview. For each of this aspect list one key learning. Do post your answer in the discussion forum. We will discuss your answers there. And, in our next section, we will conclude our discussion on ethnographic interviews.