

Communication rules of interviews (Haller 2001)

1. Communication rules and conventions apply, the most important one is: The interviewee may refuse the answer.
2. There is a strict assignment of roles between the interviewer and the interviewee. These roles are accepted by both sides.
3. The interviewer leads the dialogue. The dialogue is directed towards a certain informational goal.

Types of questions

Content-based typologies

Function-based typologies

Expected response

Subject matter of question

Opinions

Facts

Hypothetical situations

Reality

Experiences

Knowledge

Hypothetical behaviour

Simulation of observations

Background/
demographics

Types of questions

Interviewee = Head of Department

~~Why do you think is there so much reorganisation of universities?~~

Expected response

Opinions

Facts

What are advantages and disadvantages of the new budget allocation process for your department?

How has the new budget allocation process changed the income of your department ?

Types of questions

Interview with vocational trainers about deviant behaviour :

If one of your apprentices would take drugs, what would you do?

Hypothetical
situations

Hypothetical
behaviour

```
graph TD; A[Hypothetical situations] --- B[Hypothetical behaviour]
```


Types of questions

Suppose I was a new kid in this group home, and I didn't know anything about what goes on around here. What would you tell me about the rules that I have to be sure to follow?

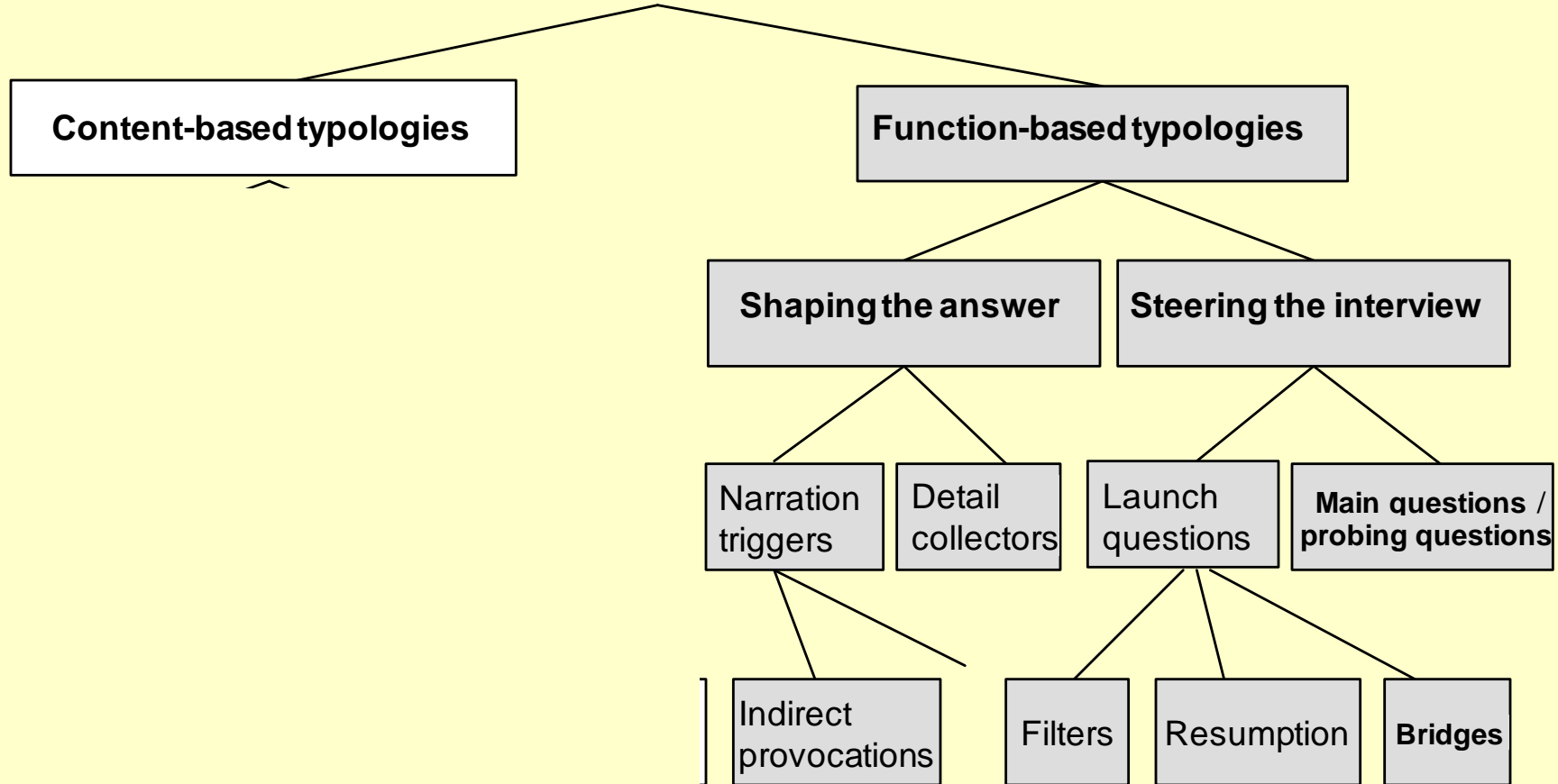
(Patton, p. 368)

Hypothetical
situations

Simulation of
observations



Types of questions



Types of questions

[Interviewee states before: you can get promoted on higher ranks if they are good at teaching and administration]

Inter You studied here at [this Dutch University] and you have now
univ taken on a permanent position here. So, it appears as if this is ore
diffic a good place in order to conduct [ancient] history. And yet you ofessor
for e decided to go for your PhD to the US. Why? rch
reco ked
more the higher you come up to promotion

There is no doubt that that is still the case even here. But this University
tried to adopt an attitude where people can get promoted on a very, very
strong teaching and administrative role. the new budget allocation process
changed the income of your department ?

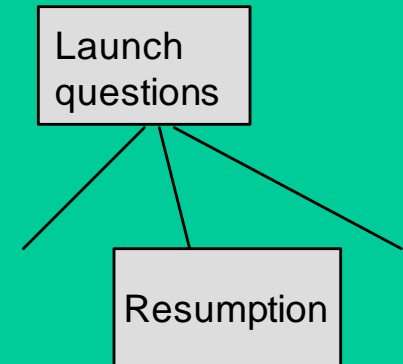
Indirect
provocations

Types of questions

Interviewer: You mentioned in the beginning that apart from the R[..] scheme, there is a special fund for early career researchers.

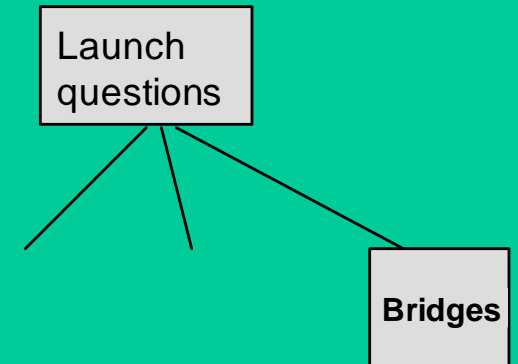
Yes.

Interviewer: Who can apply? Who counts as an early career researcher?



Types of questions

We have talked about your research. Now I would like to come to your teaching. What is your teaching load at the moment?



Rules for phrasing interview questions:

1. Openness

(avoid **dichotomous** questions)

Q: And obviously in theoretical physics with regard to the applications, at least some Australian physicists are here as well to work?

A: Yes.

Q: It's not only international collaborations?

A: No, no.

2. Neutrality

(avoid **suggestive** questions)

Example: How much dope did you use while you were in the group home? I know that some kids have told me they were doped up the whole time they were in the home, they smoked or dropped stuff every day and every night, while other kids have said that they decided to stay completely straight while they were in the home. How about you?

3. Clarity

(use **platform** questions)

Example for an overloaded question:

What can you tell us about research at Lucent, a large company, which used to be part of AT&T, an even bigger company?

4. Simplicity

(avoid **multiple** questions)

Example for a multiple question:

Q: If you compare your two projects, which one is the more important one or takes up most of the time?

A: the [first] Project.

Rules for phrasing interview questions

Questions must be clear, easy to understand, and use **everyday language**; make use of platform questions, avoid multiple questions.

Phrase your questions as open questions; avoid dichotomous questions if possible.

The **clarity** of a question is more important than its openness.

Check all questions in terms of their **premises and answer tendencies**; avoid suggestive questions.

If you use information from other interviewees, ensure that your source stays **anonymous**.

Rules for using specific questions

Opinion questions are only useful if the opinions are needed

- to assess the information given by the interviewee, or
- to understand the reasons for the interviewee's actions.

Use **questions about hypothetical behaviour** only if you need to know the subjective theories of the interviewee.

Simulation questions are useful as questions about facts that are difficult to communicate (e.g. informal rules) or as strong narration incentives.

Questions about facts should be asked as narration triggers, i.e. as open questions

Narration triggers are more important than questions about details; they should be asked first (in the hope that the questions about details are not needed anymore)

Provocations are for special purposes useful, but should also be used economically because of their inherent risks

Checking the interview guide

Why is the question included? (theoretical relevance or technical function)

What is the question aiming at? What is it about? (content, spectrum of possible answers)

Why is the question formulated this way?

Why is the question placed here? (structure of interview guide)