

Qualitative Interviewing Methods

“Cultivating the qualitative mindset”

KIN 250
Research Methods

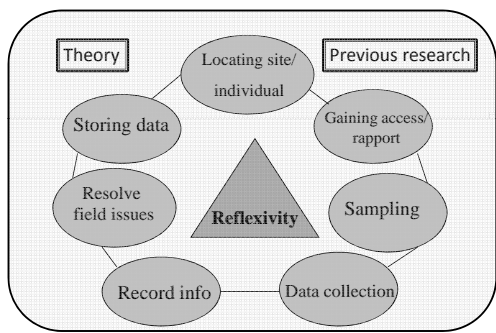
* Information from Berg, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 1999; McCracken, 1998)

Qualitative research design: 101

- Where to find a question?
 - Real-world experiences
 - Second hand interest
 - **Previous research!**
 - You can rarely go wrong here
- Theory before research (Deductive)
- Research before theory (Inductive)
- “Spiraling research approach” (Berg, 2004)
 - Never **ONLY** theory or data driven...reflexivity is key
 - Reflexivity: process of spiraling back to your data, theory, research, and own biases and asking “why...?”

Data collection

(adapted from Creswell, 2007)



What is a suitable research question for a qualitative project? (Review)

- Open and not closed
 - So, hypotheses *not generally necessary* in chpt. 1
- Focus on meaning and understanding
 - not necessarily explanation
- Purposive representative sample
 - Phase 1 of larger quantitative project
- Grounded in a theoretical position
 - So, both inductive and deductive are legit
- Exploratory
- Practical considerations
 - Time, money, skill of committee/chair

What is a suitable data collection method?

- Method must allow for collection of complex, rich data
- Semi-structured interview/ unstructured interview
- Life history/biographical narrative
- Semi-fictionalized narrative
- Focus groups
- Participant observation/ethnography
- Media sources/content analysis

Regardless...

- The problem must:
 1. Have a rationale
 2. Be connected to previous research
 3. Be clearly defined, spelled out, and articulated

OK, so how do you choose participants in a qualitative study?

Next up: Sampling strategies...

Participant sampling-I

- Convenience sampling (“availability”)
 - Limited by who you have access to!
 - So, perhaps convenience within larger sample of those who fit research criteria
 - Liabilities here as well...who do you interact with?
 - Generally seen as weaker type of sampling
- Purposive sampling
 - More directed because of knowledge about:
 - Group
 - Research that says group x or y needs to be further examined

Participant sampling-II

- Snowball sampling
 - Similar to convenience, but more organic
 - Perhaps less bias as Ps help with sampling
 - Perhaps limited by cliques, etc.
 - May involve “gatekeepers” as well
 - Quota samples
 - Create matrix with different groups, and choose sample accordingly
- Research Study:*
- How might we study perceptions of fan attitudes towards Barry Bonds?

**Attitudes towards Barry Bonds:
Example *quota sample* method**

Race	African American	White	Hispanic	Asian			
Gender							
Season tix/non season tix							
Under/over 30?							

**The Qualitative Mindset:
Issues to consider before we start interviews:**

- OK, now we have our participants
- Multiple realities that are constructed by people (the world exists at the interpretive level)
- You are asking, potentially, more than you think!
- *Instrument* must be finely tuned

Introduction to the Qualitative Interview

- The “interview” is a powerful and potentially revealing tool of the qualitative researcher, regardless of the type of qualitative work being conducted (e.g. ethnography, case study, etc.).
- Without listening to people “tell their stories” in their own words, we only have a surface-level account of any given phenomenon.
- If we knew all there was to know why would we interview!

Interviewer Attributes: (Glesne, 1998, pp.82-89)

- Anticipatory (be prepared)
- Alert to establish rapport (build trust)
- Naïve (set aside assumptions)
- Analytic (listen *for* data)
- Nondirective and therapeutic
- Aware of status differences
- Patiently probing

Note on phone interviewing

- In general, data is more rich in in-person work
 - Body language, Eye contact, No distractions, Rapport *
- Phone interviews are viable if:
 - Convenient to do more widespread sample
 - MMA Study
 - Sometimes ok for follow-ups
 - Additional thoughts
 - Feedback after member check responses
 - Some research shows less difference in terms of actual interview data than once thought
 - There are still, as stated above, numerous liabilities

Interviewing: II

- Setting up the interview: Practical considerations
 - Where
 - Access/convenience
 - Their turf or yours? (Field or lab?)
 - Appropriateness
 - Privacy
 - How is space decorated/aesthetics
 - Noise
 - How (tape record, hand notes, videotape)
 - How often (see below)
 - Keep track! Identification data for each interviewee
 - Consent forms – a must (IRB Protocols)

Interviewing-III

- Interview Guide/Schedule
 - Is very important
 - Highly structured or one question?
 - Interview often begins with ‘grand tour question’ or informational questions
 - Adds order and consistency
 - Helps keep you on task (remember, the research question is the main focus)

The Interview Guide

- Can use in conjunction with basic questionnaire for demographic data
- Helps to place things in larger context
- **Probes:** anticipate responses, be prepared if participant is not open at first. Learn to dig deeper. Review transcripts!!! Change guide if need be
 - Think of it as “mining” for information.
 - Continue until you exhaust that “vein” and move on to the next.

Interview Guide: 3 types

- **1) Standardized:** Ps get exactly same questions/order
- Succinctly worded and “no explanation” needed...very directed
 - Perhaps even very short phrase answers elicited
 - Lists of things (see Berg, p. 79)
- Limitations:
 - Language
 - No probing?
 - BUT: more efficient in terms of time & #s of Ps

Interview Guide: 3 types

2) Semistructured (Semistandardized)

- Some pre-determined ?s & answer-contingent probes
- General order, but flexible
 - Flexibility in order *and* content
- Always room for elaboration by both I & P

3) Unstructured

- No assumptions regarding questions (?)
- Informal field research (MMA Ethnography)
- Existential-Phenomenological research (1 question focusing on experience and all else is organic)

Implications for chapters 1 & 3?

- Huge...you must justify, using previous academic work; why you chose to use interviews; but also what type of interview guide you used.

The Art of Interviewing and Analyzing

- Interview Guide: For extended interviews, a good interview guide is of vital importance
 - Rule number 1: If there is something specific you want to examine, ask it!
 - **a)** directed questions, **b)** wording and phrasing, in general, **c)** vocabulary, and **d)** letting participants define terms
 - “Grand tour” questions
 - Get participants to describe specific examples
 - Possible use of a brief demographic questionnaire

Interviewing: IV

- Establish Rapport
 - Pay attention to appearance and demeanor
 - How am I dressed?
 - How do I act?
 - What kind and tone of language do I use?
 - Disclosure
 - What do you tell participants about yourself?
 - Careful NOT to make the interview about you!

Interviewing: V

- Manufacture Distance: *Must build rapport yet remain a researcher!*
 - If familiar with participants, this is particularly important...
 - If a familiar topic, be careful not to take participant’s word for granted
 - “Make the familiar strange”
 - Bracketing interview – helps learn your *biases*

Researcher as instrument

- *Researcher* considered the most important instrument of inquiry
 - involved, rather than removed and “objective”
- Bracketing interview (Dale, 1996)
 - lay out your own biases and perceptions of your topic,
 - how well the interview guide flows
 - if anything seems to be missing
 - put yourself in the position of the participants, and experience what it will be like to be asked the questions
 - Brief (optional) autobiographical statement

Classroom Activity – Biases

(from C. George Boree ©2004)

- First, make a list of your characteristics:
 1. your gender;
 2. your age;
 3. your ethnic, racial or national identification;
 4. your religion or philosophy of life;
 5. your political party or orientation;
 6. your favorite academic subjects and/or theories.

And four more characteristics: Your Choice!

(words or phrases that are descriptive of you as an individual.)

- It is likely that these ten characteristics will be at the root of your more obvious biases; that they will underlie the ethnocentric and egocentric tendencies that we all have...

Classroom Activity – Biases (continued)

- And that is the second part of this exercise:
 1. List ways in which your characteristics might bias you in your efforts at research interviewing.
 2. Then write how you might counteract these biases.
 3. And then write how these efforts to counteract your biases might themselves lead to other biases!
- Push yourself! Some of the biases may surprise you. Share them with the rest of the class. Remember, though, that bracketing is much more than just being aware of your biases.

Interviewing: VI

- Probing:
 - Non-directive Familiar phraseology can be tremendously important. “sucked” “depressed” “got over it” Dig deeper
 - OK to actively listen a little!
 - “Well, you know...” Always follow up on this!
 - People experience their reality with all 5 sense, try to allow space for this interpretation in your probes
 - Ah, the old “over-probe” Fine line between useful and too much or off target (my interview)

Interviewing: VII

- ★ Problems/Obstacles
 - Confidentiality (more on this later)
 - Sensitive issues or touchy topics. What do you do?
 - Leave tape running, and let them make the first move
 - Participant isn’t answering your questions!
 - Attrition
- ★ Can you re-establish contact afterwards by e-mail, for instance?
 - May be helpful to keep lines of communication open...but not too open?

Interviewing: VIII

- How do you know when “enough is enough”?
Principle of Redundancy – “Information Saturation”
 - When you start to hear *no* new relevant information!
 - *Never* undershoot!
 - Emergent design – Very loosely structured
 - Context Generalizability
 - *May be able to generalize to particular population only*
- Can you do more than one interview?
 - Yes, in fact for longer interviews (e.g. life histories) it is preferable

Guidelines and Suggestions:

- Some BASIC Guidelines and Suggestions:
(©Dei Siegle PhD University of Connecticut)
 - Listen more, talk less
 - Follow up on what a participant says
 - Ask when you don’t understand
 - Ask to hear more about a subject (Clint Allison!)
 - Avoid leading questions
 - Ask open-ended questions

Guidelines and Suggestions (cont):

- Some Guidelines and Suggestions (cont):
 - Follow up, don't interrupt
 - Ask participants to tell a story
 - Explore laughter
 - Follow your hunches
 - Use an interview guide carefully
 - Tolerate silence (this may be tough skill, but learnable!)

Interviewer Attributes: (Glesne pp.82-89)

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- Naïve (set aside assumptions)
- Analytic (listen *for* data)
- Nondirective and therapeutic
- Aware of status differences (Member-checks)
 - Follow up interview
 - Present transcript
 - Present initial findings
- Patiently probing

Focus group interviews

- Instead of individual, in-depth interviews, sometimes groups are interviewed
- Videotape useful in addition to audiotape
- Allows for a greater sense of interconnectedness among participants
- Difficult to use for some issues
 - Confidentiality?

Benefits and liabilities of focus groups

- Sample from large populations at low cost
- Can assess transient populations
- Participant on a more even footing
 - With each other
 - With the investigator
- Not the same depth of information as long personal interview
- Not the same depth as field observational data over several weeks

Uggg: Interview Transcription!!

- * Recommend doing it yourself!
- * Do you transcribe verbatim?
- * Use of code names and changing identity-revealing markers
- * Increase in voice recognition software
 - E.g. Dragon, etc.
 - MAJOR drawbacks!

In Class Project:

- "What is the meaning of a career ending injury for a college scholarship athlete"
 - Create an interview guide for this research question.
 - Grand tour question
 - Probe questions
 - Anticipated responses
 - Explore biases
 - How would you manufacture distance?
 - Establish rapport?