Doing research interviews

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2016
Aims of the session

• To reflect on the nature and purpose of interviews as a form of qualitative data.
• To introduce the practice of preparing for and conducting qualitative interviews.
• To explore the use of interviews as a method for data production.
Research interviews are...

• An interaction between two people, which can be undertaken face-to-face, online, asynchronously, etc.
• A form of qualitative data, but one among various forms of qualitative data
• A controlled interaction
• A dynamic relationship between interviewer and interviewee
• ‘Manufactured data’ versus ‘naturally occurring data’
Purpose of interviews

- A rich and informative research method providing a good insight of participants’ views
- A description (of events, behaviour, etc.)
- A process of meaning making through an exploration of an event, period of time etc.
Preparation

• Do literature review to identify:
  • What is needed to be known
  • How it is to be articulated
• Identify appropriate interviewees
• Decide on the type of interview, define and structure questions
• Choose a method of recording data
• Select location of the interview
• Use knowledge of topic to probe beyond yes/no
Types of research interview and methods

- Un/Structured
- Semi-structured
- Biographical
- Narrative
- Cognitive
- Elite
- Organisational
- Focus group
- Face to face
- Telephone
- Online (i.e. skype, facetime)
- Chat room
- Asynchronous (e.g. by email)
Before the interview

- Ethical approval, consent forms
- Identifying and recruiting interviewees
- Do you have to go through gatekeepers?
- Start negotiations with interviewees
- Define interview type and prepare interview schedule
- Think about the setting, time and place
- Practice!
Developing an interview schedule

Structured  Semi-structured  Unstructured

...think about and plan your analysis
Think about your personality and interview style

- What is appropriate to the topic, context, setting?
- What will make your interviewee comfortable?
- Formal versus informal
Activity

Impact and influence on interviews
Starting the interview

- Build a rapport
- Explain research
- Contracting
- Set out interviewer as learner, interested person
Recording the interview

- Taking notes
- Using a recorder
- Make a reflective account as soon as possible – include any observations
• Power/social position
• Keeping to topic
• Getting interviewee to talk (and to stop)
• Managing silences
• Handling difficult/sensitive topics
• Dealing with misunderstandings
• Keeping to time
Keeping the interview going

- Be flexible and open
- Adapt your style
- Be sympathetic and recognise difficult topics
- Use interviewee’s language
- Acknowledge interviewee’s responses in new questions
- Rephrase your questions
What to do during the interview

- Think about using both closed and open-ended questions
- Avoid leading questions
- Use probing questions
- Let interviewee lead and answer using their own language
- Stimulus material
Probing....

- Pause, silence
- Do not interrupt
- ‘What’ questions
- Rephrase question
- Repeat last response and question
- Encouragement – both verbal and non-verbal
Ending the interview....

• Say thank you and let them know they have helped you
• Be positive
• Leave option to go back to clarify
• Make sure the door is open for the next researcher...
What next?

- If recorded interview, play back and make notes
- To transcribe or summarise?
- Get interviewee to check/verify transcript
- Review and reflect on interview
The role of examples and verbatim quotes

- Too many quotes may make the writing-up more difficult to read
- Blending with own narrative complex
- Quotes can provide evidence, explanation, illustration, deepen understanding
- Gives interviewees a voice
Things to remember...

- Be prepared before interview
- Think about interview setting
- Build rapport
- Remember your body language
- Think about how questions are phrased
- Give interviewee time and space to answer questions – do not interrupt
- Remember to probe interviewee
- End the interview well!
Activities
Developing interviewing skills
Selecting interviewees
Research tools discussed in session

Other software and apps are available – these are just examples!

**Dragon dictation** (free app on IOS devices, maybe available for other devices) – voice recognition application

**Evernote** – Write notes that sync between devices

**Ecamm** – records skype calls
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