

RMM Workshops: DCO Session 3

Collecting primary data using semi-structured,
in-depth and group interviews

Research interviews

Definition

‘An interview is a purposeful discussion
between two or more people’

Kahn and Cannell (1957)

Types of interview used in research

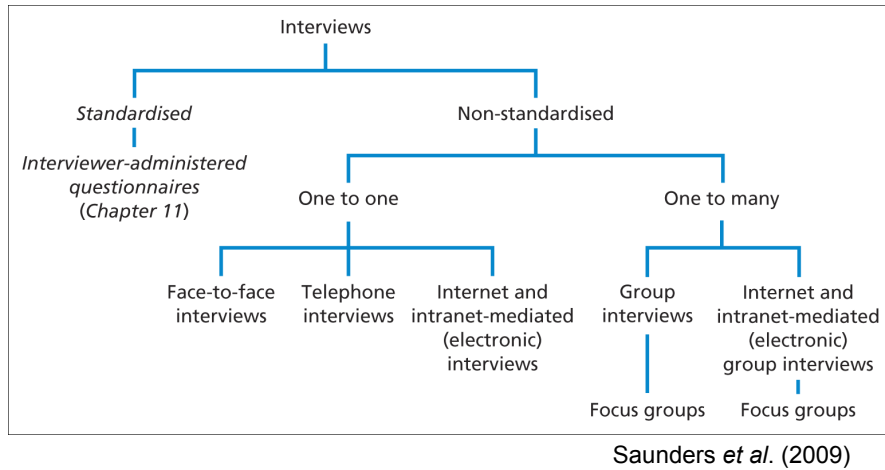
Semi-structured
In-depth

Structured
Group

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Research purpose and strategy (1)

Forms of interview



Research purpose and strategy (2)

Uses of different types of interview in each of the main research categories

	Exploratory	Descriptive	Explanatory
Structured		✓✓	✓
Semi-structured	✓		✓✓
Unstructured	✓✓		

✓✓ = more frequent, ✓ = less frequent.

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Non-standardised (qualitative) interviews

Four key aspects

- Purpose of the research
- Significance of establishing personal contact
- Nature of the data collection questions
- Time required and completeness of process

Data quality (1)

Issues to consider

- Reliability
- Forms of bias
- Validity and generalisability

Interview preparation (1)

Associated issues

- Interviewer's level of knowledge
- Level of information supplied to interviewees
- Creating an interview guide
- Appropriateness of location

Interview preparation (2)

Associated issues

- Researcher's appearance – dress code
- Shaping the interview - opening comments
- Approach to questioning – clarity and reducing bias
- Use of critical incident technique

Interview preparation (3)

Associated issues

- Appropriate interviewer behaviour- verbal and non-verbal
- Attentive listening skills and testing understanding
- Approaches to data recording - notes and tape-recording
- Cultural differences and bias

Interviewing competence (1)

Approaches to questioning

Open questions

Probing questions

Specific and closed questions

Interviewing competence (2)

Advantages and disadvantages of audio-recording interviews

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Allows interviewer to concentrate on questioning and listening • Allows questions formulated at an interview to be accurately recorded for use in later interviews where appropriate • Can re-listen to the interview • Accurate and unbiased record provided • Allows direct quotes to be used • Permanent record for others to use	• May adversely affect the relationship between interviewee and interviewer (possibility of 'focusing' on the audio-recorder) • May inhibit some interviewee responses and reduce reliability • Possibility of a technical problem • Time required to transcribe the audio-recording (Section 13.3)

Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Interviewing competence (3)

Other issues to consider

- Dealing with difficult participants
- Managing resources – logistics and time
- Obtaining participants' permission for interview records (written and taped)

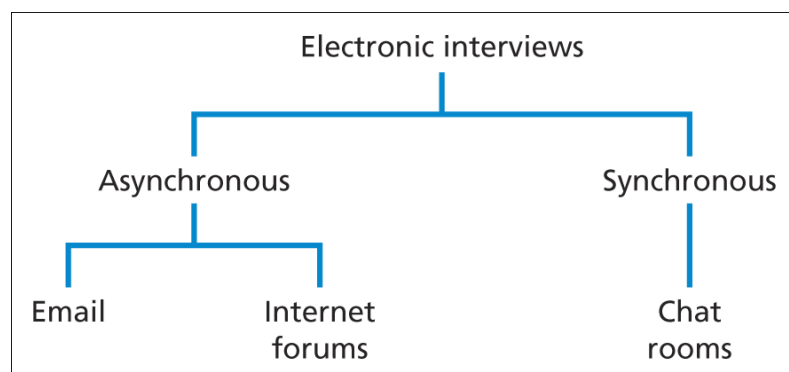
Interviewing competence (4)

Additional forms of interviews:

- Group interviews
- Focus groups
- Telephone interviews
- Internet and intra-net mediated interviews

Interviewing competence (5)

Forms of electronic interviews



Saunders *et al.* (2009)

Summary

- Use of non-standard (qualitative) interviews should generate rich and detailed data
- Different types of interview are useful for different research purposes
- Qualitative interviews are generally categorised as in-depth (structured) and semi-structured
- Research design may incorporate more than one type of interview

Summary 2:

- Using qualitative interviews is related to the research strategy and data collection questions
- Establishing personal contact with subjects and the length of time required are significant factors
- Data quality issues, interviewer competence and resource management are important considerations
- Face-to-face (individual, group and focus group) and electronic interviews can all be advantageous