

Research Methods II

Qualitative Methods Assessment

Qualitative Assessment: 40% of module grade

Thematic Analysis Report: 2,000 words

Title: 'The effects of stress on healthy eating'

Submission deadline: 20.10.2020 by 23.59 hours



QUALITATIVE METHODS: INTERVIEWING

Why interview?

Interviews can be used to:

Determine what a person knows (knowledge/information)

Discover what a person likes/dislikes (values/preferences)

Discover what a person thinks (attitudes/beliefs)

How a person feels/felt (emotions)

Is interviewing appropriate?

Ask and answer:

Why do I want to interview?

Where to interview?

Face-to-face, online interviews, walk and talk, group.

Different settings: home, school, workplace, street, park etc.

Whom do I interview? (elite, opportunity, snowball etc.)

When to interview? (justify if time affects data collection – e.g. school term time)

There must be **clarity of purpose and a strong design fit for the purpose**

Seven stages to interviewing:

Thematising

How will your interview schedule elicit the data you need?

Designing

How will your interview be designed to collect the data you need?

Interviewing

How will your interview take place?
Is it the most appropriate interview?

Transcribing

How will you transcribe?
How will the transcriptions be stored?

Analysing

Which type of analysis will you use?
How can you best show the method used?

Verifying

How might your recordings and transcriptions be made available to others?

Reporting

How will your interpretations/findings best be demonstrated in the report?

Planning for your study

You will need to know:

- How many interviews do I need/are practical?
- Recorded or notes taken?
- Transcribed? (*Students must transcribe*)
- How will they be analysed?
- Will the participant see the transcriptions and researcher's interpretations?

Reflexivity:

Make notes and be transparent:

- Own knowledge and expertise
- Appropriate ways forward
- Methodological decisions/issues
- Potential impact on the participant/s
- Extent to which you are prepared to remain on topic – rigidity of the interview

Example study: Demise of coal industry

What did I want to know about?

- What really changed, as understood by the participants?
- What wider issues do they believe they were linked to?
- How might they feel they've been affected by the changes?
- Who might they blame/thank?

- How might the changes impact upon identity issues?
- How might past and present circumstances within a community underpin possibly different senses of identity?
- How might interviewees be protecting/maintaining the past and thus a continuation of their identities?

Research Aim:

‘To investigate the ways in which people draw upon past experience to maintain their sense of identity in times of dramatic social change’

Need to identify:

What they present as their identity – how do they want us to see/remember them?

What past experiences/events are important to them

What accepted ideas do they seem to be picking up from their community?

- Stereotypes, roles, behaviours, statuses etc.

How do they ‘use’ these experiences/events/ideas in their talk in order to tell us about themselves – to explain and justify behaviours and choices made?

So...

Thematising

What are you going to be exploring?

What are the conceptual and theoretical foundations of your study?

Why are you doing it?

Content

Contextualise the study

Familiarised with topic - insight into the theories

Might not yet have a theoretical standpoint

Often researcher has a theoretical perspective in mind

Topic areas and interview questions must be rooted in the appropriate literature - the foundation of your study – to answer your research questions

If you wanted to investigate bullying in secondary schools - what would you investigate?

What is bullying?

What conceptualisations of bullying are circulating in that environment?

How might they differ between environments?

Who thinks bullying is one thing and *who* thinks it's another?

Why might this be?

Who does it?

Why?

Who gets bullied?

Why?

What are the effects of bullying on the bullied?

Why might this be?

What are the effects on the bully?

Why?

What could be done about bullying?

How?

Purpose

Exploratory:

Are they a trawling tool to find out what people think about an issue?

Information gained can be followed up for new ways of looking at the issue

Hypothesis testing

Comparison

e.g. perhaps some forms of prejudice might be explored by looking for specific ways of talking about it – perhaps Welsh and English participants would talk about immigration differently

Designing

Time

Design your interview to get the maximum amount of data within an acceptable time period

Forms of interview

Unstructured or narrative interviews - richest data

Semi-structured or semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews - keep topic in focus

Fully structured interviews - stick to a rigid order of questioning –questions are mainly open-ended, allowing for open responses

Group interviews - high number of participants – but depth and quality suffer

Participant numbers

Affects both time and form

Interview as many people as you need to, to find out what you need to know

So - depends on purpose of study

Resources available

Time and money considerations

Have to design your interviews accordingly
(e.g. in order to gather as much information as you can in as few visits as possible)

Quality vs. Quantity

Depth/richness of data will depend on your decision here

Also - must accept when interviews aren't the better option – perhaps a survey?
(quick and effective or a precursor to a more focused interview)

Expertise and interview skill

The more expertise you have in the relevant field the better, but may still have poor interview skills

Often people are hired as researchers or research assistants because they can interview really well

Researcher training - 'how to interview' (situations, sample groups, topics, etc.)

Developing an interview schedule

1. Think about what information you want to get from your participants
2. Develop an **interview schedule** to guide your questions to ensure you cover all important areas

What to include:

- Introduction (who you are)
- Permission to record the interview / insurance of anonymity
- Questions
- Prompts and hints for follow-up questions
- Wrap-up at the end (thanks and summary of the research aim)

Skills for semi-structured interviews

Use neutral, open-ended questions that aim to elicit in-depth responses from participants

Do not use loaded/leading questions

Do not use closed questions

Questions form a prompt to the interviewer but are not necessarily adhered to in order

The interview should enable participants to express their beliefs, opinions and feelings freely

Categories of questions

Opening: get acquainted with the participant, feel connected and build rapport

Introductory: begins the discussion of the topic

Transition: moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions

Key: obtains insight on areas of central concern in the study

Ending: helps researchers determine where to place emphasis and brings closed to the discussion

Basic principles for developing questions

Ask questions in a conversational manner

Keep questions clear, brief, reasonable, uni-dimensional and avoid jargon

- If a question is complicated, break it down into more than one

Obtain feedback from others

Allow enough time to make revisions

Interview skills:

Dynamics of the interview situation

Researcher effects (impact/image management etc.)

Characteristics of the researcher/interviewer (self-presentation - looks, speech, power relations)

Characteristics of the respondent/informant/interviewee (status differences)

Nature of the researcher – respondent relationship (status, gender, rapport)

The interview as a speech event (rules and rituals – turn-taking, active listening)

Interviews have a context – not neutral, but active interactions, leading to negotiated, contractually-based results

Ethical issues include...

Power relations

Perceived pressure to answer questions/continue with the interview

Dealing with distress in your participant

Well constructed consent information

Well explained and sensitive debrief

Focus Group interviews

Questions, but also statements, images and other discussion stimuli

Need to manage the discussions sensitively

- Allow freedom to introduce views, perspectives etc
- Be ready to rein in discussions if:
 - participants begin to go too far off topic,
 - argument/bullying begins
 - One or two people dominate the discussion

Emphasise respect and confidentiality (ethics)

Look for distress within the group

Co-construction of a narrative

Interviewer and interviewee/s co-construct the resulting interview

Each reading 'messages' from the other and responding to these
e.g. interest, shock, judgement, impatience,

The interviewer can unintentionally guide the interviewee – encourage or discourage specific answers

Take care to remain as neutral as possible in your verbal and non-verbal reactions and responses to avoid biasing your data

Unavoidable features of interviews

Differing factors e.g. mutual trust, social distance, interviewer control.....participant as expert

Unease for interviewee e.g. adept avoidance – tactics if questions go too deep

Both interviewer and informant are bound to hold back some of what is in their power to state

Meanings differ (confirm that you're talking about the same thing) - or emphasise participant's definitions/meanings

Impossible to bring all aspects of the encounter within rational control

Non-verbal communication

Proxemics - use of space e.g. where/how seated?

- Walk and Talk interviews

Kinesics - e.g. body movement, positions, gestures etc.

Chronemics - e.g. turn-taking (or not), silences (meaningful)

Paralinguistics - e.g. tone, volume, pitch, pace

Useful reading

Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2013.) Successful Qualitative Research: A Practical Guide for Beginners. Los Angeles, California : SAGE