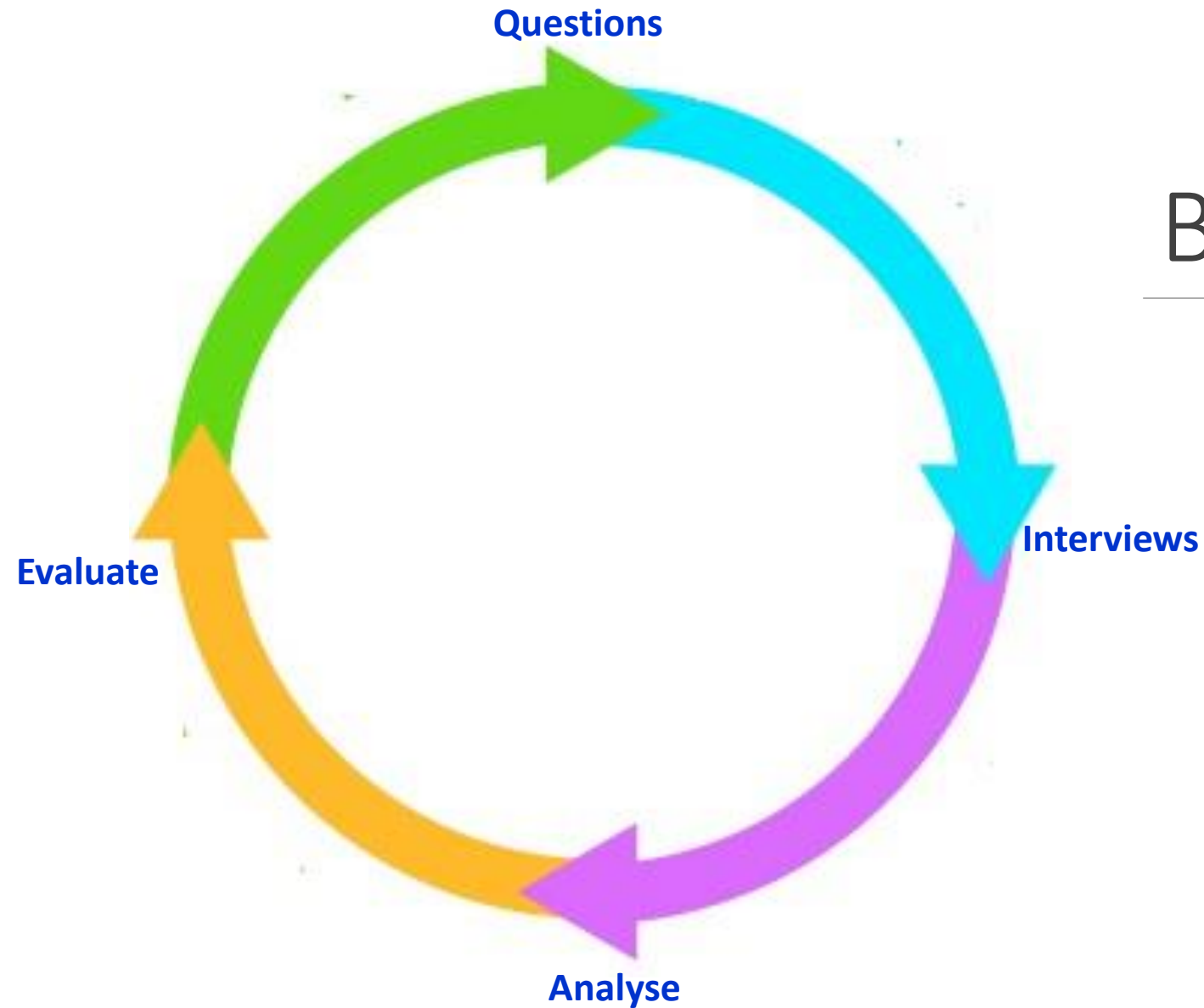


Interviews: Aims, Design and Practicalities

Dr. Frances Clynes



Before You Start

Justify your choice of methodology

- Why is interviewing the most appropriate method of research for your topic
- What type of interviews are the most appropriate for your topic?
 - Structured
 - Unstructured
 - Semi-Structured
 - Not discrete categories



Structured Interviews

Aims at capturing precise data

Preestablished questions with a limited set of response categories

Little room for variation

All respondents get the same questions in the same order

Leaves no room to explore an unexpected answer which can lead to uncovering new information

The interviewer plays a neutral role – impersonal

The respondent does not speak freely and will often give the socially acceptable answer

- Fontana and Frey



Unstructured Interviews

Free-flowing conversation

Greenfield sites

An attempt to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any *a priori* categorization that may limit the field of inquiry

- Fontana and Frey

Time-consuming

- A lot of material that may not be useful to your project
- Gently steer the interviewee into your topic
- Judgement call



Semi-Structured Interviews

The interviewer asks a limited number of open-ended questions

5-6 questions ('Ethics Requirements and Check List')

The interviewee answers at their own pace

No rigid order

- Interviewee may jump between questions
- Do not impose a structure on them
- A question can take on a life of its own



Semi-Structured Interviews

‘Freedom to allow the respondents to talk about what is of central significance to them rather than to the interviewer is clearly important, but a flexible structure to ensure all topics considered crucial to the study are covered does eliminate some of the problems of entirely unstructured interviews ... The respondent is allowed a considerable degree of latitude within the framework. Certain questions are asked, but respondents are allowed the freedom to talk about the topic and give their views in their own time. The interviewer needs to have the skill to ask questions and, if necessary, to probe at the right time, but if the interviewee moves freely from one topic to another, the conversation can flow without interruption.’

- Bell and Waters, p. 214



In-Depth Interviews

‘In-depth interviewing involves using a semi-structured interview guide to prompt the data collection; establishing rapport (a trust relationship) between the interviewer and interviewee; asking questions in an open, empathic way; motivating the interviewee to tell their story by probing.’

‘Typically, in-depth interviews are used when seeking information on individual, personal experiences from people about a specific issue or topic.’

‘In-depth interviews are thus primarily used when you seek to capture people’s individual voices and stories.’

- Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, pp. 116-117



In-Depth Interviews

‘For example, when conducting in-depth interviews, you begin to learn more about the key issues of the study after the first interview and use this knowledge to make inductive inferences which lead you to go deeper into the issues in a next interview. After each interview, you make these inferences and therefore go deeper and deeper into the research issues, until a point is reached where new information is no longer coming up (this is called the point of saturation).’

- Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, pp. 38-39



In-Depth Interviews

Advantages:

- Gain in-depth information
- Identify personal experiences
- Useful for sensitive issues
- Identify context of participants' lives

Disadvantage

- No interaction or feedback from others
- Individual perceptions only
- Multiple interviews needed to identify range of issues
 - Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, p. 41

Aims

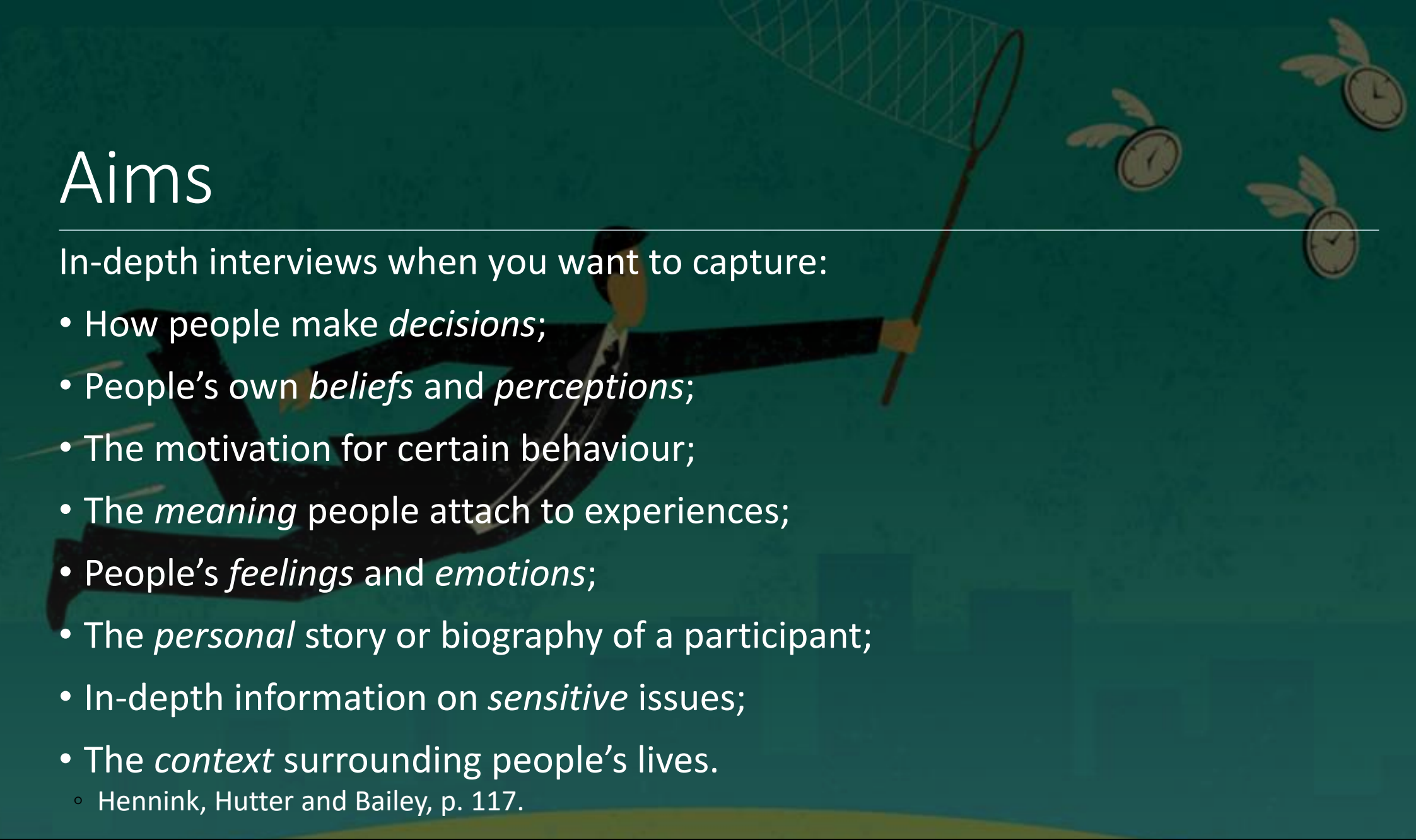
What do you want to capture?

- Facts
 - Biographical information
 - Descriptions of an event or a community
 - Structured questions may suffice
- Beliefs about Facts
- Feelings and Motives
 - Usually too complex to report in a simple phrase
 - Open-ended questions allowing the respondent to choose their own terms
- Respondents' Authentic Experience
 - David Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 88

Aims

In-depth interviews when you want to capture:

- How people make *decisions*;
- People's own *beliefs* and *perceptions*;
- The motivation for certain behaviour;
- The *meaning* people attach to experiences;
- People's *feelings* and *emotions*;
- The *personal* story or biography of a participant;
- In-depth information on *sensitive* issues;
- The *context* surrounding people's lives.
 - Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, p. 117.



DOING YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT

A Guide for First-time Researchers

7TH EDITION



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JUDITH BELL AND STEPHEN WATERS

Design

‘Topics need to be selected, questions devised, methods of analysis considered and a schedule prepared and piloted.’

Bell and Waters, p.210



Questions

Cresswell recommends:

Asking one or two central questions followed by no more than seven related sub-questions

Relating the central question to the specific qualitative strategy of enquiry

Focusing on a single phenomenon or concept

- John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, pp. 129-31.



Questions

Where will you get your questions from

- Are you building on a previous study?
- Are you using the literature review?
- Are they based on the results of your questionnaires?

Pilot test the questions



Pilot Test

Did the interviewees understand the questions immediately?

Were concepts, sentences and words adapted to the context of the interviewee?

Do some questions need to be rephrased?

Was the order of the questions logical for the interviewee?

Can the research question be answered with the information that is gathered?

- Hennink, Monique; Hutter, Inge; Bailey, Ajay. Qualitative Research Methods (p. 125). SAGE Publications. Kindle Edition

2E

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

MONIQUE HENNINK • INGE HUTTER • AJAY BAILEY



Interview Guide

Hennink, Hutter and Bailey recommend developing an Interview Guide, pp. 118-119

Introduction

- Reminder of what to say to the interviewee at the beginning of the interview
 - Introduces themselves
 - Purpose of the interview
 - What will be done with the data
 - Outcomes of the research
 - Reassurance of anonymity
 - Permission to record

General questions

- Background of the interviewee in relation to the topic
- Building rapport

2E

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

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Interview Guide

Opening questions

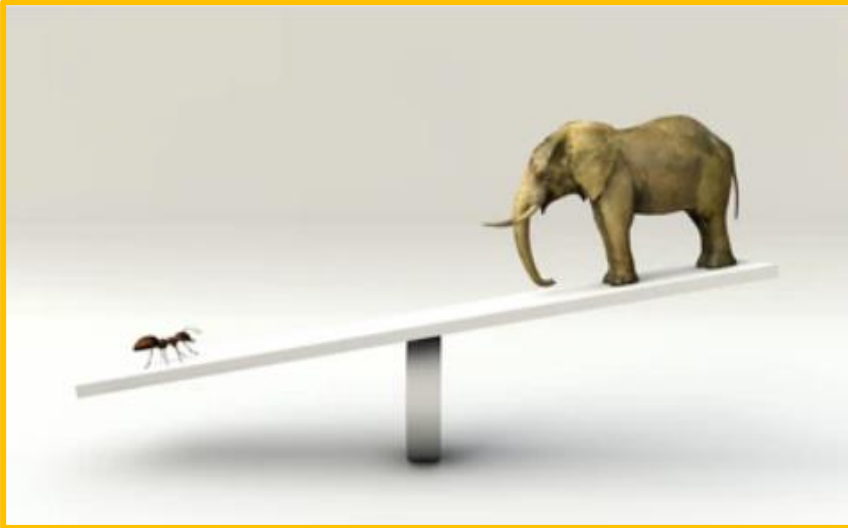
- Putting the interviewee at ease
- Broadly related to the topic

Key questions

- 'These are the essential questions on the research topic which are designed to collect the core information to answer the research questions. These questions are deliberately placed in the central part of the interview guide to allow time for rapport to be established between the interviewer and interviewee. Rapport is extremely important as it enables the interviewee to feel free and safe to share their stories and experiences on the research topics.'
- Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, p. 120.
- Can probe at this stage

Closing questions

- Wind down
- Close down the rapport
- The more sensitive the issue, the more important this is



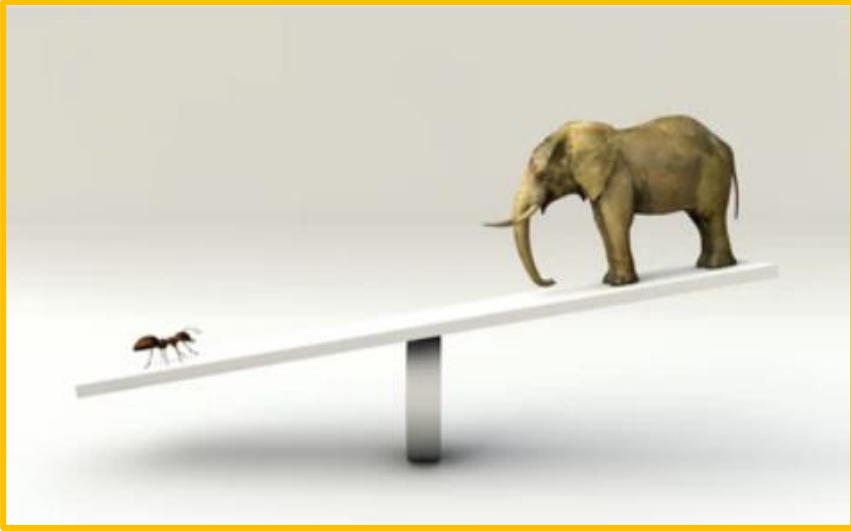
Bias

‘It is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always the danger of *bias*.’

- Bell and Waters, p. 210

‘Many factors can result in bias and there are always dangers in research carried out by individual researchers, ***particularly those who have strong views about the topic they are researching.***’ (My emphasis)

- Bell and Waters, p. 218



Bias

Strong and unconscious

Takes many forms

- Selective literature review
- Choice of interviewees
- Questions asked
- How questions are phrased
- How data is analysed

Check your personal reaction

- Positive or negative

Practicalities

Re-read the 'Ethics' Section of the Moodle Page

- Ethics Requirements and Check List
- E1 with Covid Amendments
- Interview Release Form
- University's Data Management Policy

Re-visit Carole's PowerPoint on Ethics from Week 2



Ethics

- Ethics Requirements and Check List 2021
- Ethics in MA Research
- University's Data Management Policy

You need to read this document on data management.

- Ethics Approval Form - E1

This is the E1 ethics form which also includes your written proposal for your research project. We will go through this form in detail in the seminars.

- E1 - Covid19 amendments
- Interview Release Form

You need to get any interviewees to sign this form and then you need to keep it filed. However if you are doing online interviews through Skype etc, then what you can do is recreate this form in Google Doc and send the person the link. They then fill in the Interview Release form ticking the boxes they agree with and including their name and email address. Their submission of this form, via their personal email, is sufficient proof of their consent. When you design the form in Google Docs select the option to collect the person's email address.

- Annotated PG E1 Ethics form

This is the E1 Ethics form with comments from the Ethic committee on how the different sections need to be filled out. Please look at this document carefully and follow its instructions.

- Guidance on how to submit the E1 form

You will be submitting you E1 form to your tutor, but this guide can be helpful in how to fill out some of the different sections.

A screenshot of a PowerPoint slide titled "Filling Out the E1 Ethics Form Feb 2019". The slide contains text about the purpose of the E1 form, which is to ensure that research projects are conducted ethically and that participants are protected. It mentions that the form is used to assess the risks and benefits of a project and to ensure that the research is conducted in a way that is fair and just. The slide also includes a video player with a play button icon.

A small thumbnail image of a PowerPoint presentation featuring a portrait of Carole, the same woman from the top image, in the top right corner. The text "Watch later" and "Share" is visible over the image.

Practicalities

Interviews are time-consuming

- Finding your participants
- Choosing a time
- Arranging the media
- The interview
- Transcribing it
- Analysis

Allow time for the unexpected





Practicalities

Where will you find your participants?

- A group you have access to
- Online forums
- Facebook groups
 - Approach the Admin and get permission

Agree a length of time for the interview

- End at agreed time

Have a Plan B

- Interviewee is unable to attend
- Is late
- Changes their mind
- Has technical issues



Environment

Find an appropriate environment:

- No interruptions
- No distractions
- No background noise
- Security
- Confidentiality

Relaxed interviewer and interviewee

Online Interviews

Security

- Password protected

Stability of your connection

Familiar with the app

- Experiment before you start your interviews
 - Observe your own expressions and mannerisms
- Where does the MP4 go?
- Is your interviewee comfortable with it?
- Do they know how to control their audio and video?

Concentration





Before the Interview

Reassure them about confidentiality and security

Reassure them that it is their experience in the area you are interested in

Let them know they are in control

Inform them of the purpose of the interview

- 'However, whatever the size of the project, you will still have a responsibility to explain to respondents as fully as possible what the research is about, why you wish to interview them, what will be involved and what you will do with the information you obtain. I personally believe that this should not be presented verbally at the start of an interview, but sent beforehand so that respondents have an opportunity to query the meaning and implications of any statements – and even to withdraw at that stage. Better for participants to withdraw at the start rather than halfway through or after their interview.'

- Bell and Waters, p. 211



The Interview

The order of the questions

- ‘Consider the issues you wish to cover and the order of your questions. The order may be important in establishing an easy relationship with the interviewee. The manner in which you ask questions certainly will be.’
 - Bell and Waters, p. 211

‘Try to be a tabula rasa, a blank slate on which the interviewees’ words can imprint themselves’

- Nick’s Notes on Interviewing, Moodle

They will say things you had not anticipated

They will say the opposite of what you want to hear

- Do not be tempted to not hear it



The Interview

Establish rapport

- General questions

Listen without interrupting

- Not a dialogue

Respond to their answers

- Let them know you have heard them
- Follow-up questions
- According to Silverman, interviewees can become inhibited by a lack of participation or response by an interviewer, and this passive approach by the interviewer becomes a powerful constraint on the interview
 - Silverman, p. 92.



Trust

Gaining Trust

Essential but can be hard to win and is fragile

- Particularly for etic researchers
- People are cautious when asked questions about their beliefs, as they are concerned about having their spiritual and religious beliefs portrayed as credible
 - David J. Hufford, *The Scholarly Voice*, p. 300.
- When faced with a strange interviewer, people are cautious about what beliefs they will admit to, and will often give a negative response to a question about their beliefs, regardless of what they actually believe.
 - G. Jahoda, *The Psychology of Superstition*, pp. 25-26.

‘The interviewer must be able to put themselves in the role of the respondent and attempt to see the world from their perspective, rather than impose the world of academia and preconceptions upon them’

- Fontana and Frey, p. 60

Transcribing the Interviews

Options

Work from the MP4

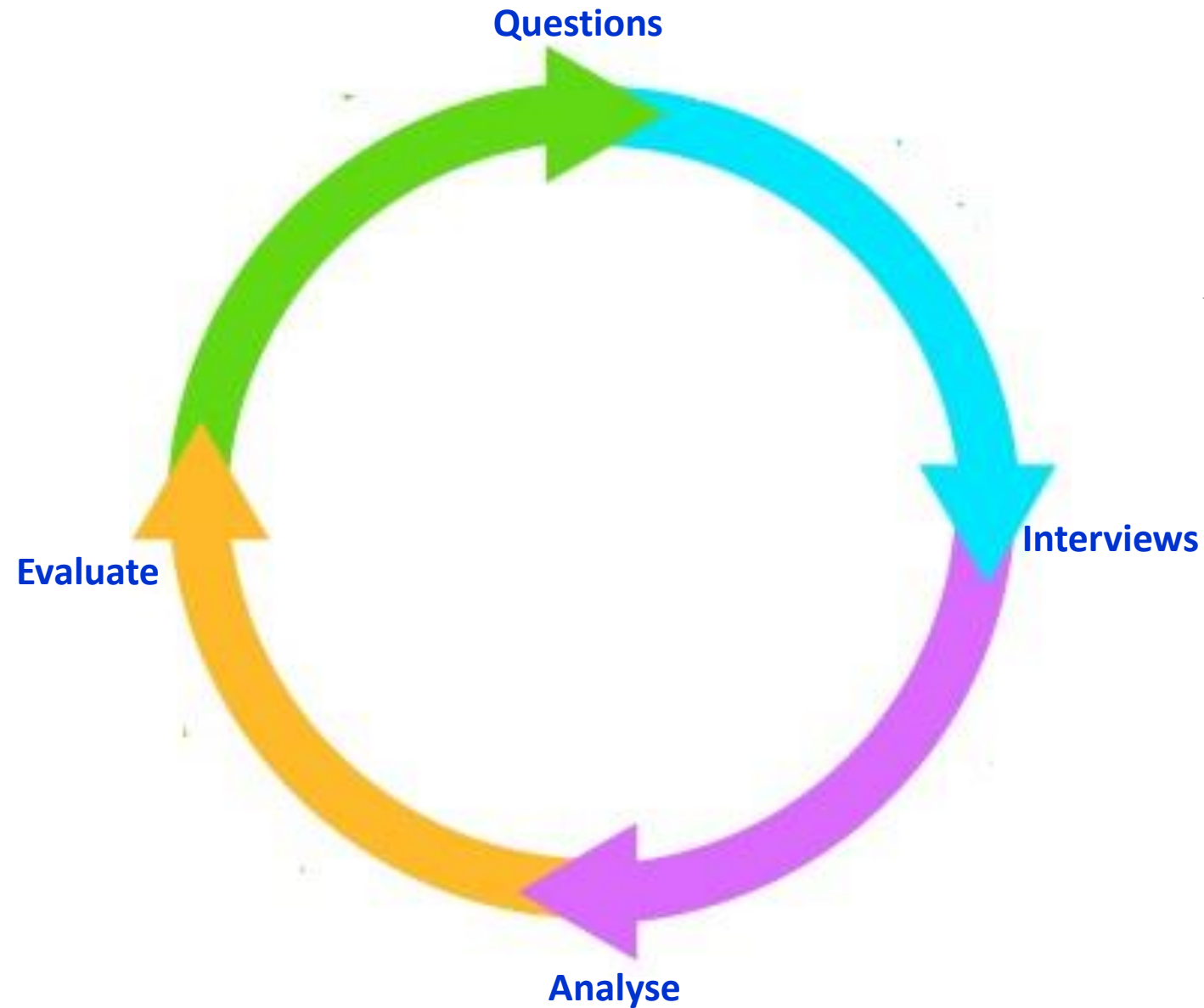
- Inefficient

◦ Transcribe yourself

- Time consuming but has advantages
- Deeper understanding of content
- Confidential

◦ Pay someone to do it

- Huge advantages if it's possible
- Transcribe each interview before undertaking the next one



Analysing the Data

‘Within the analytic cycle, all the data collected is analysed in greater detail; here codes emerge from the transcripts of the interviews, and concepts and theories are induced from the information provided by the research participants. The analytic cycle could therefore also be called the inductive conceptual cycle.’

◦ Hennink, Hutter and Bailey, p. 39

References

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