An interview is a powerful research instrument which can help understand...

- Perceptions
- Feelings
- Understandings
- Values
- Beliefs
- Emotions
- Behaviour
- Formal and informal roles
- Relationships
- Events
- Stories …
Interviews

...purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena.

(Kvale, 1996)
Interviews

The methods of maintaining and generating conversations with people on a specific topic or range of topics and the interpretations …of the resultant data, constitute the fundamentals of interviews and interviewing…..

…Interviews yield rich insights into people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings. (May. T. 2001, p.120)
Types of interviews

Can be placed on a continuum

– Structured interviews

– Semi-structured interviews

– Unstructured interviews
Structured interviews

• … each person is asked the same question in the same way so that any differences between answers are held to be real ones and not the result of the interview situation itself.

– Focus is on:
  – *uniform structure*
  – *standardisation of the process*
  – *comparability across responses*
Semi-structured interviews

The *content* and the *context* of the interview are both important aspects of the process.

Focus is on:

- *Clarification*
- *Elaboration*

- The role of an interview guide:
  - It is a guide, not a “prescription"
Unstructured interviews

• This is mostly used in life-history research
• Interviewees have the freedom to tell their stories in their own way, although the interviewer may prompt in order to keep the narrative going.
• The interviewee is treated as an active subject, and not merely a reporter of facts or experiences.
• Often, the subject matter is personal, intimate and emotional, and the objective is to acquire deep knowledge and authenticity of people's life experiences.
• The interviewee's story and the way that it is interpreted by the interviewer are constructed and shaped by narrative conventions.

Source: http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/support/interviews/unstructured.asp
The sequence of any kind of interview

• Introduction (rapport formation)
• “Warm up”
• Main body of the interview
• “Cool-off”
• Closure
The introduction (rapport formation)

• Explain the purpose of your research
  – what is it?
  – what will you do with the information gathered- stress on confidentiality issues
  – explain what the process will be like
    • how long will you take
  – reassure the respondent that there are no right or wrong answers
  – take permission to record the interview, rather than assuming it to be a given
“Warm-up”

• Help the respondent to relax:
  – Make sure the first questions are easy to answer
  – Don’t include very personal questions
  – Start only in a very general way to address your key concerns
“Cool-off” and Closure

• After you’ve covered your main topics (which may be quite personal or emotional)
  – Move back to a few general questions
  – Lighten the atmosphere
  – Offer a positive note to end on

• Closure
  • Ask respondent if they have anything they’d like to add to what they’ve told you
  • Offer the respondent if they want to ask you anything
  • Give them your sincere thanks!
Recording an interview

• Tape recording?
  • Things to remember

• Writing detailed notes?
  • Things to remember

*Flexibility: be prepared for the unexpected*
References


• http://www.esds.ac.uk/qualidata/support/int