Interviews and Focus Groups

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Interviews

- Definition: method of data collection that involves two or more people exchanging information through a series of questions

- Useful for getting very detailed information

- Allows for follow-up questions

- Enables explaining complex topics or questions to respondents

- Gives insight into how people make decisions

Interview techniques

- Interview guides allow you to keep track of topics you want to discuss
  - Just a guide, not a script
- Field notes are written recordings of data collected
  - Do not have to be word-for-word
  - Can be taken during or after interview
- Journaling is keeping track of decisions you made in the process of interviewing

Issues to consider

- Power

- Location

- Relationship with respondent

Power

- Agenda is often set and led by the researcher/interviewer, unless explicitly mentioned.
- Control over topics to be researched discussed can be shared to an extent with participants, but that decision too, hinges primarily on the researcher.
- Usually, participants end up revealing more about themselves in contrast to the researchers.

Addressing Power Imbalance

- The researcher should make the intent of the research as clear as possible. Example: Sharing the rationale for the research and clearly elucidating the method in which the research will be conducted.
- Revealing aspects of the researcher's identity as part of the process.
- Allowing participants to view, edit and analyze transcripts before publishing.
- Acknowledging that a power imbalance exists and potentially brainstorming with the participants on solutions to address them.

Location of the interview

- A crucial aspect to address the power imbalance.
- Location can deeply influence the course of direction of an interview.
- Choice of location is also a balancing act.
- Primary control of choice for location should be the participant's
- Things to consider from the researcher's perspective : Distraction, safety and accessibility.
- Non-Negotiable: Safety (of everyone involved)

Relationship with respondent

- Primarily depends on social interaction.
- Built on respect.
- Successful interviews hinge on sharing. Respecting the participants creates an ideal atmosphere to share.
- Honor the participant's time and humanity.
- How? : One example would be to know about the participant, their cultural/social background before hand.
- Get trained on their culture/norms (if necessary)

Relationship with respondent cont.

- Rapport: Has connotations of a "clinical" approach. But, essential for an effective interview. Rapport involves active listening.
- Active listening: Sincerely absorbing the information given by the interlocutor and being genuinely responsive in the conversation.
- Probe: A conversational tool to request more information and keep the continuity of the conversation going.
- Practice in advance: Practicing beforehand before the actual interview can also be very helpful in the making of a successful interview.

Focus Groups

- Def: planned discussions designed to elicit group interaction
- Allows respondents to discuss topic with each other
- Gives insight into group dynamics and social proceedings
- Used in both academics and marketing
- May require interviews to select respondents beforehand
- May also need a moderator
- Much less controlled than other forms of data gathering

Analysis of Data

- Transcripts allow for analysis of interviews afterwards
  - Can be written, audio, or video
- <u>Coding</u> is a way of analyzing themes across transcripts
  - <u>Open Coding</u> is initial stage of identifying themes
  - <u>Focused Coding</u> is further refining themes and ideas present in transcripts
- These methods allow one to gather useful conclusions and findings from qualitative interviews and focus groups