Qualitative Data Collection

Interviews: a qualitative tool
Issues in Interviewing

- Conversation with a purpose
- Purpose of finding out what is going on in someone else's mind
- Verbal interactions with inquirer and respondent
- Quality of data will depend greatly on the interviewer
Purpose of Interviewing

- Can not observe directly, no access
- Need information to check out themes from other data sources
- Need to check out feelings, thoughts when influence from observations would be too high
- Develop comprehensive holistic understanding
- More cost effective than observations
Types of Interviews

- Unstructured
- Non-directive
- Structured
- Directive

Highly Standardized interviews
Types of Interviews

- **Standardized interview**
  - Requires carefully and fully wording of each question
  - Questions, probes, are asked same way, same order, same transitions
  - To minimize variations, compare responses, use multiple interviewers
  - Example: interview for participants in an Employment training program
Types of Interviews

- **Structured interview**
  - Planned in advance, interview guide, interviewee is aware

- **Unstructured**
  - Informal, spontaneous not scheduled, no interview guide
  - Ethical issues
Types of Interviews

- **Directive interview**
  - Interviewer has an agenda, ask what they wish to know, may want to compare answers

- **Non directive**
  - Empathy and understanding without judgment
  - Not non-directive is not to be robot-like
Interview Guide

- Planned in advance
- May have 2-3 alternative ways to ask the same question
- Think ahead about particular incidents, significant events related to the themes of the inquiry
- May need to change questions as study progresses
Interview Guide

- Log
- Introduction
  - State purpose, ask for permission to tape, ask for any questions
  - ICE BREAKER- “what rotation are you on now?”
- Interview questions
  - Question: “what was something the teacher did that made you feel you were learning?”
  - Follow up- “what did he do after?”
  - Probing- “can you tell me why you think that was such meaningful event?”
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Interview Guide

- Member checking
  - “If I heard correctly……”
- Closing remarks
- Summary
- Analytical and methodological memos
What to Ask About?

- Experiences
- What you are trying to find out
- Ask for descriptions
- Then ask about beliefs, values, ideology
  - May work better than asking why
  - Ask about feelings
- May want to structure what if questions
  - Can illustrate priorities
  - Asking for ideals, visions, dreams
What to Ask About?

- Factual Information (knowledge)
- Sensory questions;
  - asking what people see, hear, taste, touch
- Feeling questions
  - To elicit emotions
- Background and demographics
- Past, present and future
Wording Questions

- Think through whether you are truly asking open ended questions
  - How . .
  - What is your opinion . .
  - Tell me about . .
  - What was it like for you . .

- Presupposition questions

- Singular questions

- Clarity
Wording Questions

- Illustrative examples –
  - Some people have told us ...
- Role playing or simulation questions
- Include transition statements in the interview
- Probing and clarifying
Conducting the Interview

- Preparation
  - Content, contacting people

- Note taking
  - Tape recorder may not work

- Note non-verbals

- Move from descriptive to values and beliefs

- Off the record

- What were you thinking when you told me about that?
Conducting the Interview

- **Debriefing**
  - Immediately after the interview, alone in group
  
  - *Descriptive memo/methodological memo*
  
  - *Reflective memo/ analytical memo*
Data Quality

- Member checks
  - What I heard you say just then . . .

- Summary of understanding
  - In the last 15 minutes, we have talked about . . .

- Share comments and transcripts
  - Here is my understanding of what you said in the interview, what do you think? . . .
Data Quality

- Triangulation: is the process of corroborating evidence from different sources to enhance accuracy:
  - Individuals (teacher, student, patient)
  - Types of data (field notes, written evaluations, exams)
  - Methods of data collection (interview, observation, document review)
Limitations of Interviews

- Language can be misinterpreted on both sides
- Respondents may be unable or unwilling to discuss certain things
- Respondents may distort information (intentionally or unintentionally)
- Context may distort interview
  - Setting important, neutral or on respondents own turf
Cross Cultural Interviewing

- Language
- Norms
- Values
- Studies distorted by having been centered in the perspective and experiences of the dominant group (Andersen, 1993)
  - Self reflective analysis of views, can we do this to research other groups.
THANKS!!
Focus Groups

- Small group interview on specific topic with 6-8 people

- **Strengths**
  - Highly efficient
  - Checks and balances in the group
  - Group dynamics generate quality data

- **Weaknesses**
  - Limited number of questions to be asked
  - Note taking difficult
  - Conflicts in group may arise
Assumptions Underlying Focus Groups

- Individuals are real important sources of information
- People are able to report feelings and opinions
- Group dynamics can generate authentic information
- Group interviews may be preferable to individual interviews
- The group leader can facilitate discussion of multiple topics
Group Interviewing Skills

- Keep one person from dominating
- Encourage all to participate
- Balance direct interview role with role of moderator