

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION COHERENCE: HOW TO SELECT THE APPROPRIATE DATA COLLECTION TECHNNIQUE

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HOSPICE CASA SPERANȚEI
MAKING EVERY MOMENT COUNT

- **Overall objective:** To reflect on key aspects to different data collection methods
- **Specific objectives:**
 - To understand peculiarities of different qualitative data collection methods
 - To reflect on the importance of coherence between research question and data collection
 - To understand the fit between qualitative approaches and data collection techniques

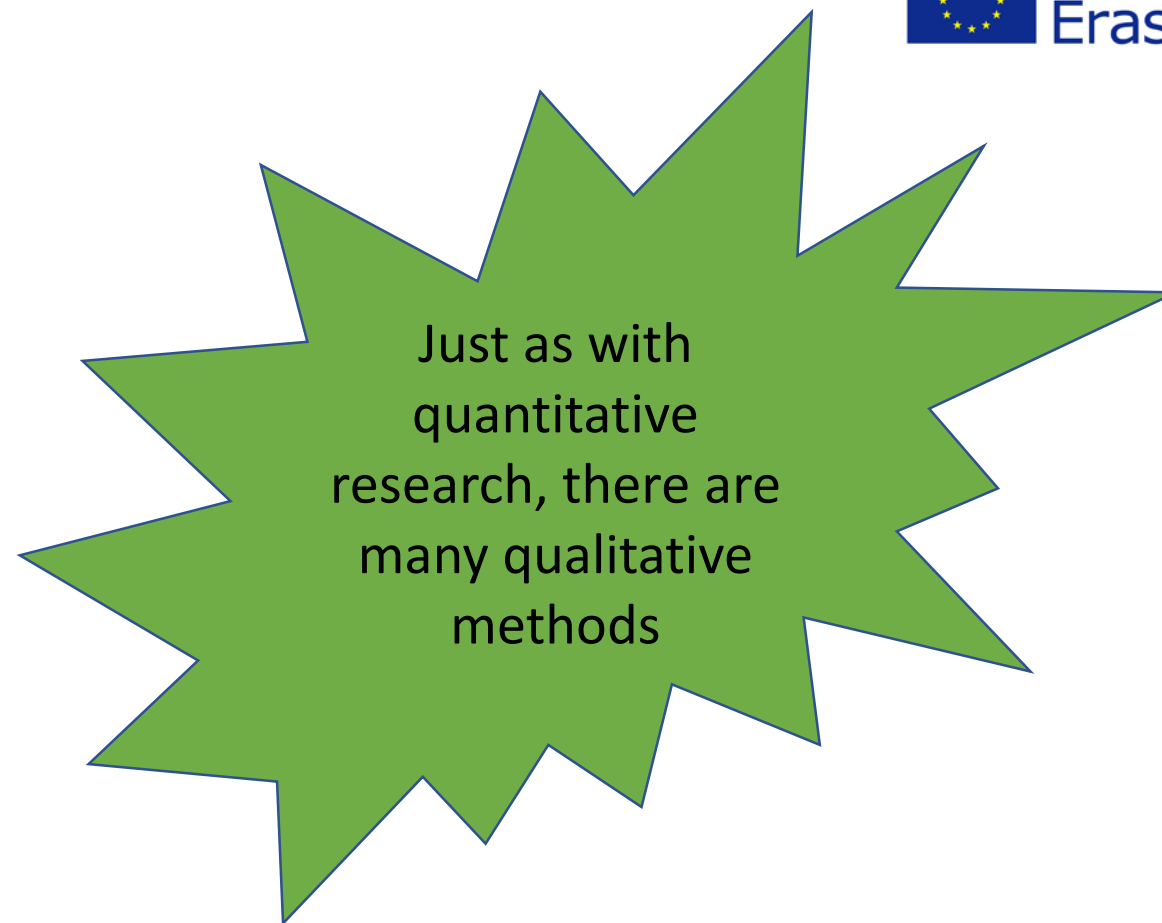
Research process



Methodologies

- Grounded theory
- Ethnography
- Phenomenology
- Narrative
-

(Creswell 2012)



Data collection

- It refers to the methods or procedures used to collect data (information)
- It is important to choose the most appropriate data collection method
- There are many different data collection methods

Hallmarks of data collection in qualitative research

- Data usually collected via **direct interaction** with people, **experts** in the topic
- The **researcher** is the '**instrument**' for data collection
- **Flexible**
- **Sample size**



Can you think of data collection methods in qualitative research?



Data collection commonalities



Choosing a data collection technique

- Interviews? Observations? Focus groups??
- Alone or combined with another technique/strategy?
- Form?

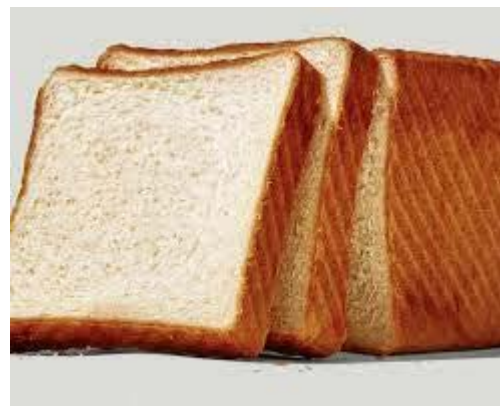
*Anticipate what you are going to do
with your data to ensure you get
what you need*

Same ingredients...

- Bread
- Egg
- Bacon

Same ingredients...

- Bread
- Egg
- Bacon



... different results



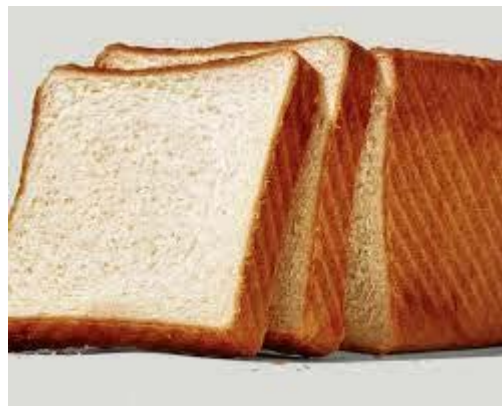
Bacon sandwich with fried egg



Egg salad with bacon

Same ingredients...

- Bread
- Egg
- Bacon



Observations

- **Observing the real world**
- It's the selection, observation and **systematic recording** of events, patterns of behaviour and environments significant for the problem under investigation.
- Observation is a systematic data collection approach:
 - Answering a research objective
 - Planned carefully
 - Done with rigor



(Green & Thorogood 2005)

When to use observation...

- When the nature of the research question to be answered is focused on answering a **how-** or **what-type question**
- When the topic is **relatively unexplored** and little is known to explain the behaviour of people in a setting
- When understanding the **meaning of a setting** in a detailed way is valuable
- When it is important to study a phenomenon in its natural setting
- When self-report data (asking people what they do) is likely to be different from **actual behaviour** (what people actually do)

Advantages & Disadvantages

- Access to the "**backstage culture**"
- It allows for richly **detailed description** of "**behaviours, intentions, situations**, and events as understood by the informants"
- It allows collecting the **mundane aspects of daily life** in the **context** in which they occur
- It helps to understand "**how things work**", what you are seeing
- It takes time: until the **observer's presence** goes unnoticed (reactivity)



Observation types: degree of structure

- **Non-structured observation**

Helpful having general guidelines such as:

- Physical environment: characteristics of the physical environment
- Participants: how many are they? Their characteristics, role
- Activities and interactions: what happens? What do the participants do?
- Frequency and duration: when did the activity start?...

(Spradley 1980)

- **Structured observation**

Observation types: researcher role

- **Non-participant** - no active interaction



- **Participant Observation** – watching, seeing, joining



(Gold 1958)

Tips for observations

- Carefully plan the entry into the field and fieldwork
- Identify the unit of observation(eg: behaviours, situations...)
- Be as **unobtrusive** as possible
- The observer has to have a '**naïve**' approach
- Data recording: **fieldnotes** and **reflexive diary**
- It consists in **objective descriptions** (no judgement)
- **Insider-outsider balance**
- **Informal conversations**



(LeCompte & Preissle 1993; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995)

Interviews

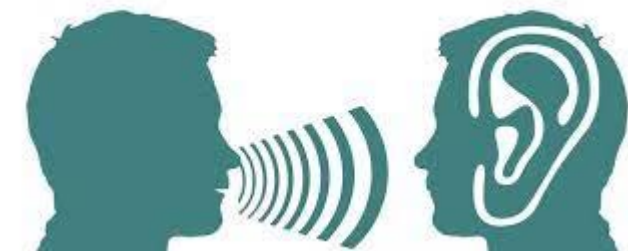
- **Understanding people's experiences**
- Qualitative interviews are conversations in which a researcher gently **guides a conversational partner** in an extended discussion.
- The researcher elicits **depth** and **detail** about the research topic by following up on answers given
- They are used to explore the views, beliefs, experiences, and motivations of individuals
 - Structured; semi-structured; unstructured
 - Individual/group
 - Face-to-face or at a distance



“An interview is a window on a time and a social world that is experienced one person at a time, one incident at a time”
 (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 19).

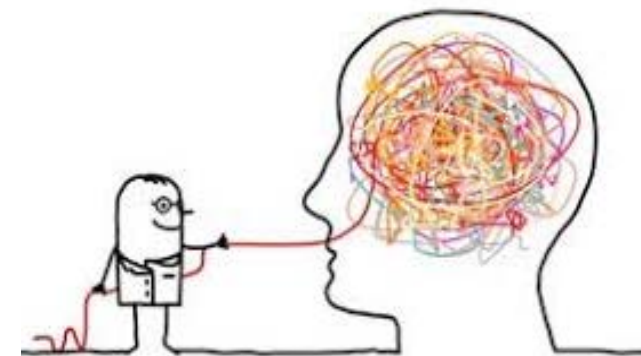
When to use interviews...

- To learn about a topic of interest from the **perspective** of those who have experienced it
- To **listen carefully** to what the participants have to say in order to learn about the topic of interest from their perspective
- To **explore** the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on specific matters
- To explore **sensitive topics**



Advantages & Disadvantages

- It can be flexible
- It allows the pursuit of ideas that the participants say are important but the researchers did not know about
- Misunderstandings and mistakes can be rectified easily
- It's time consuming
- It requires interviewer training (good communication skills)



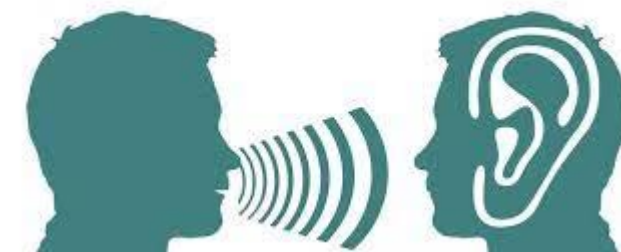
Types of interviews: according to structure

- **Structured:** it includes a series of questions in a fixed order.
- **Semi-structured:** it covers particular themes or aspects.
 - The researcher uses a **topic guide**
- **Unstructured (in-depth): maximum flexibility**
 - The researchers uses open questions to obtain the experience and perspective of the participant
 - Unfolding the conversation



Tips for interviews

- **Previous careful preparation**
- Make decisions:
 - Individual/group
 - **Administration:** Face-to-face or at a distance
 - Set place and timing
- **Prepare** for the interview
 - Interview guide/questions
 - Recording
- Training interviewing and listening skills
- **Trained interviewer** needed to obtain quality data



Focus group

- **Building meaning on social interaction**
(so includes elements of participant observation)
- Its hallmark is the explicit use of the **group interaction** to **generate data and insights** that would be unlikely to emerge otherwise
- It consists of a gathering of participants under the direction of **a moderator in order to discuss**, from the personal experience about a topic.



(Hannes et al 2007)

When to use focus groups...

- Highlight attitudes, priorities and conceptual frameworks
- Participants analyze and explore their experiences for themselves
- Highlight different ways of talking and attitudes
- Identify cultural norms and values (social realities)



(McLafferty 2004)

Advantages & Disadvantages

- It collects a lot of data in less time
- It gives a global description of the knowledge, attitudes and social behaviors of a social group and the way in which each individual is influenced by another in a group situation
- It informs which is the important issue and which is not, which is the real speech and which is the ideal
 - It's less flexible and in-depth than interviews
 - Group dynamics may silence dissenting voices
 - Confidentiality cannot be assured – consider safety issues



Tips for focus groups

- **Careful planning**
 - Group composition
 - Participation
 - Setting place, timing, recording
- **Groups** consist of 4-12 people
- There is a moderating team: the **moderator** and the **assistant**
- **Administration**: face to face
- It is a necessary condition to create an **adequate environment**
- **Trained interviewer**

(Freeman 2006)

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