

Varieties of Methods: interviews, focus groups and participation observation



"Do you have five minutes to talk about taking from the rich to give to the poor?"

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Today

- Presentation
 - Focus groups (quickly)
 - Why use interviews and research rigour
 - Interview design
 - Conducting interviews
 - Analysing and writing up interview data
 - Interview techniques
 - Coding interview data

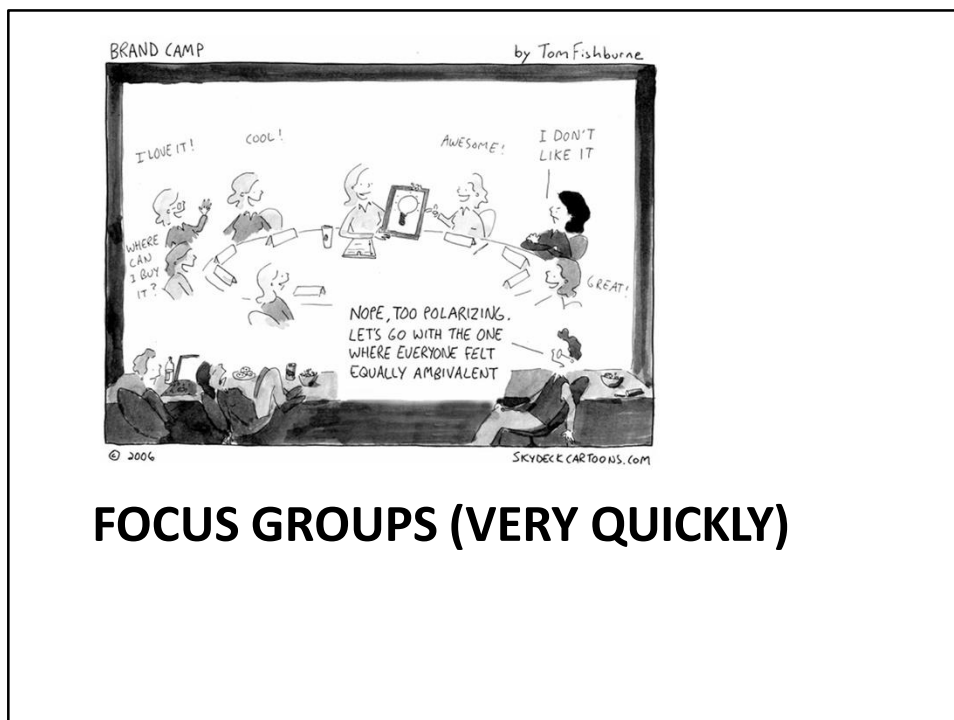


About me...

- Jones, Tod, Roy Jones, and Michael Hughes. 2016. "Heritage Designation and Scale: A **World Heritage Case Study of the Ningaloo Coast.**" *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22 (3): 242-260.
- Jones, Tod, and Greg Grabasch. 2016. "Four Ways Western Australia Can Improve **Aboriginal Heritage Management.**" *The Conversation*, 22 February.
- Jones, Tod, Jessica Booth, and Tim Acker. 2016. "The Changing Business of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art:** Markets, Audiences, Artists and the Large Art Fairs." *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society* 46 (3): 107-21.
- Jones, Tod. 2013. *Culture, Power, and Authoritarianism in the Indonesian State. Cultural Policy across the Twentieth Century to the Reform Era.* Leiden: Brill.



About you...



Focus Groups

- Involves a small group of people discussing a topic or issue defined by a researcher. A group of between 6 and 10 people sit facing each other around a table, the researcher introduces the topic for discussion and then invites and moderates discussion from group members. A session normally lasts between one and two hours.

Group interviews—Focus groups—In-depth groups

Great Reference for Focus Groups

- Cameron, Jenny. 2010. "Focusing on the focus group." In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, edited by Iain Hay, 152-72. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Planning and conducting Focus Groups

- Selecting participants
- Same or different?
- People who know each other?
- Dealing with sensitive information
- Size and number of groups
- Questions and topics



Conducting focus groups

- Setting
- Facilitator/moderator characteristics
- Recording focus groups
- How to start
- Role of facilitator
- At the end



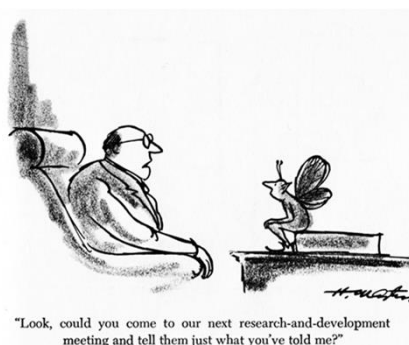
INTERVIEWS

Why use interviews?

- Investigate complex behaviour
- Gains access to information about events, opinions and experiences.
- Own opinions and tentative conclusions can be checked, verified and scrutinised

Interviewing and research rigour

- Sample size: $n=1$
- Importance of rigour
 - Coherence of approach-topic-interview
 - Sampling
 - Preparation
 - Subjectivity and inter-subjectivity
 - Critical reflexivity



Theoretical Frameworks

- Ethnographic methods
 - Interview, fieldnotes, participant observation
 - Thick description
- Phenomenological method
 - Study of phenomenon from the perspective of the informant
 - Lived experiences
- Feminist methodology
 - Aims to capture women's lived experiences in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as the sources of knowledge.
 - Critique of positivist science—claims of objectivity hide power structures that marginalise the experiences of the less powerful.

Structured-----Unstructured

Interview Design

- Interview schedules and Interview guides
- Start with a literature review and archival research
- Formulating good interview questions
- Use easily understood language that is appropriate to your informant.
 - Use non-offensive language.
 - Use words with commonly and uniformly accepted meanings.
 - Avoid ambiguity
 - Phrase each question carefully
 - Avoid leading questions as much as possible
 - Try to use open-ended questions
- Starts with easiest to answer questions—get people talking.
 - eg duties, responsibilities, involvement in an issue.
- Then move to abstract questions, then sensitive issues.
- TEST YOUR QUESTIONS ON SOMEONE.
- Begin with demographic information (age, where living, job, family, etc).

Interview Design—Types of Questions

Primary Questions

- Descriptive—Details on events, places, people and experiences.
- Storytelling—Identifies a series of players, an ordering of events, or causative links.
- Opinion—Impressions, feelings, assertions, and guesses.
- Structural—Taps into people ideology and assumptions.
- Contrast—Comparison of experience by place, time, gender, and so forth.
- Devil's advocate—controversial/sensitive issues broached without associating the researcher with people who are not prepared to make their opinions public.

Secondary Questions

- Clarification—used when an answer is vague or incomplete.
- Nudging—Used to continue a line of conversation.
- Summary—Outlines in-progress findings for verification.
- Receptive cues—can be verbal or non-verbal, encourages an informant to continue speaking.

Structured Interview

- Everybody asked the same questions in the same order.
- Uses an interview schedule that typically comprises a list of carefully worded and ordered questions

Semi-structured interviews

- Still employs interview schedule or guide
- Researcher does not have to strictly adhere to the schedule.
- Role of the researcher more intervening than unstructured.

Unstructured interviews—oral histories

- Oral history, life history, some types of group interviewing and in-depth interviewing.
- Focusses on personal perceptions and histories
- Informant focussed
- Preliminary meeting—is it going to work?
- Multiple interviews
- Importance of open questions
- Interviews are structured—orientation, common, specific questions
- Technical issues
- Preservation of data

Problem questions

- When do you get to the bus stop and what do you do while you wait?
- Double barrel

Problem questions

- How do you think verticalisation has affected your food supply?
- Jargon.

Exercise—let's look at some of your questions.

- Thank you to Larry and Dunsin.

Ethics and Interviewing

- Confidentiality
 - Protecting privacy
 - Anonymity
- Informed consent
 - What do you intend to do with the research?
 - What is in the interview?
- Risk of harm
 - Physical or social
 - Economic
- Reciprocity
 - How are you giving back your research?



Steps to getting a good interview

The goal: rapport

Steps to getting a good interview

1. Contact

- Choose your informants well
- Negotiate permission
 - Do you need consent?
- Introduction and establish credentials
- State how you found out about the informant
- Outline why you want to conduct an interview
- Indicate how long the interview will take
- Run through the information sheet

Steps to getting a good interview

2. Interview relationship

- Professional vs creative or empathetic interviewing
- The importance of small talk
- Accept hospitality
- Be an active listener

Steps to getting a good interview

3. Closing the interview

- Don't just leave.
- State what happens next
- Make sure you say thanks for the informants time AND that that you value their insights and experiences
- Good last questions

Recording the interview

- Audio recording vs notetaking
- Audio recording
 - Most complete record
- Transcribing the data
 - Do it that night!
 - How to transcribe
- Return the transcript
- Participant checking
- Fieldnotes
- Personal log and analytical log

Analysing Interview Data

- Coding: a process of identifying and organising themes in qualitative data.
- Descriptive coding—manifest content analysis
- Analytic coding—latent content analysis
- Start with:
 - List of what you think are most important themes
 - Conditions, interactions, strategies and tactics and
 - Descriptive, analytic from literature review.
- Start coding—review after approx. 10%
 - Themes need to be split or are discarded or amalgamated.

Getting started with coding

- Conditions
 - geographical context (social and physical), life situation, circumstances.
- Interactions among actors:
 - encounters, conflicts, accords, other types of interactions.
- Strategies and tactics
 - requires a deeper understand of the things you observe and how they relate to broader phenomena.
 - How strategies link to broader social, economic or political processes.
- Consequences
 - also more complicated.
 - Look for words (due to, as a result of).
 - Results of actions over time. Can be large, or subtle and personal.

Reference for coding

- Cope, Meghan 2010. "Coding Qualitative Data" In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, edited by Iain Hay, 281-94. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

The Breathing Spaces Project

- Background
- Idea and funding
- Approaching people
- Developing coding ideas
 - Exercise: You will be given an interview on the Dawesville Foreshore with an informant responding to questions about why she values the space.
 - Write down a list of themes that you think will be relevant to your coding. Make sure that you number them.
 - Check your list against the list of the person next to you.

Exercise: Dawesville Foreshore



Exercise: Dawesville Foreshore



Exercise: Dawesville Foreshore



Software for qualitative analysis

NVIVO DEMONSTRATION