

# Qualitative Research

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# Collecting Data

Focus Group Discussions and In Depth Interviews

## Some important ideas

- **This is not like a survey**
- We want to 'look inside'
- In touch with the world of the respondent
- Complex and detailed data
- Questions are open ended
- Process flexible, follow-up Qs, probes

# Ethical issues

- **Potential risks to research participants:**
- anxiety and distress
  - we may not be able to anticipate these
  - offer the participant time to recover, offer refreshment, may have to terminate the interview
- exploitation
  - power differentials
- \*Cannot guarantee confidentiality in a focus group\*
- Any risks to researchers?

# Consent

- We have consent forms but .....
- Signing a form could cause concern
- We can ***record*** consent if participants prefer – this is what we have done so far
- Separate consent necessary if photograph to be taken

## **Information necessary for informed consent**

- Clear, accurate, but not overwhelming
- No promises!

## What if...

- **Respondents express concern about the topic (or some aspects of it)**
- They would like to know more, talk to someone, get support
- The interviewer/moderator/researcher is not a qualified counsellor
- Exit advice – local contact: who might this be?

## What if...

- People ask what we are going to do about their situation?
- Don't make any promises
- We are fact-finding, gathering information
- UK government is concerned about the situation of older people and wants this information

# Our participants

- Characteristics
  - Older people of retirement age
  - Male and female
  - Ethnic groups (if more than one)
- Divide into groups (for FGDs)
- The aim is to achieve an *internally homogeneous* group (as far as possible)



# Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

- Comfortable non-threatening environment
- Quiet location – no interruptions
- Familiar venue – will improve attendance and make participants more relaxed
- Ask participants to allow each other chances to speak
- Ask them to respect confidentiality (even though we cannot guarantee this)
- Refreshments
- Gifts

# Interview

- Should be one-to-one. If not, report who else is present
- Prefer to do this at participant's home
- Can observe their environment
- Can include people who cannot leave the house/get to the focus group site

# Moderator/Interviewer

- Adopt the appropriate questioning ‘style’
  - Ask ***open*** questions
  - ***Avoid*** leading questions
  - Ask ‘***probing***’ questions
- Get ***clarification***
- ***Encourage participants*** to explain, evaluate, to recount, remember
- ***Recap***
- ***Introduce new topics as ‘new’***
- Politely ***steer*** discussion back to task

# The Guides

- There is a guide for the FGD and a different one for the interview
- So you will know which questions to ask, topics to discuss
- Try to stick to the order
- Try to cover every topic
- Write comments on the guide and keep this for later

# Practical things

- Recording
- Practice using the recorder
- Make sure you have batteries
- You still write notes
- Keep your notes and the guide – I will need these for later after you have transcribed them

# Being polite

- Be on time
- Introduce yourself
- Thank them for coming (or letting you come)
- Make sure the participant(s) understand why you are there
- Ask for permission to start
- Encourage everyone to say something and to let each other speak
- Thank the participants at the end and give them a gift

## Some problems from other sites

- 22 people of all ages and both sexes arrive, with children, to participate in a FGD (supposed to be for 10 older women)
- Local NGO organiser insists on being present during FGD to monitor what older people are saying
- Woman with disabled adult son on a 'pension' insists he should take part

# Evaluation

- Evaluate and reflect on ‘success’ of interview or FGD – how did it go?
  - Anything to learn from the experience for the interviewer
  - Anything to feed back to others in the research team
  - Don’t be afraid to admit that it was not perfect!