

Centre for Qualitative Research

MAIN TRAINING PACKAGE

SESSION THREE

Preparing for speaking-based data collection

Tuesday 16 March 2021

Session Summary

The 'preparing for speaking-based data collection session provided a practical guide from an experienced qualitative researcher, exploring how to ensure your data collection is set up to run smoothly, and with excellent quality data. Session leader Fiona Spotswood started the session with a useful overview of 'where students are' with their research and methodology thinking, at the point when considerations about recruitment and writing research instruments start becoming relevant. She gave a concise overview of what decisions and considerations should have come before this point, including the literature review, theoretical framing, aims and objectives, research philosophy and methods. Dr Spotswood also emphasised that ethical approval will need to have been granted before recruitment starts. Once these planning stages have been carefully considered, and doctoral students are ready to collect data, then recruitment, research instrument preparation and data management planning can commence. These were the main topics of the session.

Dr Spotswood focused most of the session on writing and preparing interactive research instruments, exploring in depth the sequencing, questioning and techniques involved in rigorous interview guides. She drew on her own experiences to explore ways of warming up participants, facilitating deep discussion and using projective and enabling techniques to enable participants to articulate hidden feelings and thoughts. The session discussed key differences between interviews and focus group and considered ways to collect the best quality data from both types of session. Finally, the session touched on data management. Particularly, it is important to plan ahead in terms of safely and legally storing data, destroying data when appropriate, managing anonymisation, open access and consent.

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- Recruitment can be difficult, depending on the subject. You may need to think creatively, build relationships with stakeholders and deploy snowballing.
- Your interview or focus group will need a carefully planned, piloted guide for data to be meaningful for your project. Plan the guide carefully, ensuring your research objectives can be met. Think about the type of language you use, the nature of your questions and how enabling techniques can open up the conversation.
- Practical planning of interviews and focus groups can mean the difference between deep or shallow data. Think about what you will wear, what the ambience of the space is you are meeting, whether or not you have planned sufficiently and know your interview/focus group guide inside out. Think about how online interviews or focus groups will work and what special measures you need to put in place, such as checking the ICT and adapting enabling techniques to be online.
- The role of the interviewer is to bring into focus situated knowledge – not ask a list of questions. Always think about opening up not closing down. Consider carefully how much of your own life and interest in the topic you will share and what impact this has.
- Plan your time carefully, and ensure sufficient time is allowed for recruitment, data collection, transcription and data cleaning. Allow enough time for safe storage of the data.

Reading List

May, T. (2002), Qualitative research in action. SAGE Publications Ltd
<https://www.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209656>.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2013), Successful Qualitative Research, SAGE.

Braun, V., Clarke, V. and Gray, D. (2017), Collecting Qualitative Data. A practical guide to textual, media and virtual techniques, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Animation

<https://biteable.com/watch/main-training-package-workshop-3-2846417/67ea5b48245b59cbd7f931e1f73a23be>

