

## **Criminology 321 / Week 6**

### **Qualitative Interactive Methods**



## **Interactive Methods**

- No method is more central to qualitative research
- Interviews in particular
  - are integral to phenomenological approaches
  - are used to gather information to test/challenge widely held beliefs and/or shed light on aspects of society about which little is known
  - “give voice” to groups who otherwise would not be heard

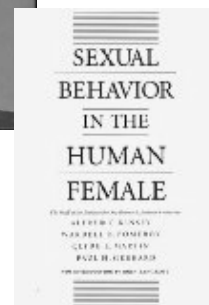
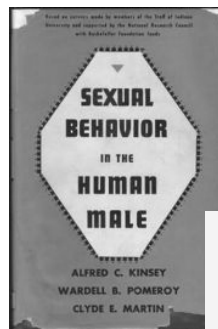
## Interactive Methods

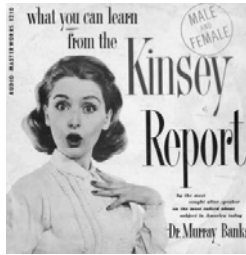
- A classic example is the sex research begun in the 1940s by Alfred Kinsey and his colleagues
- Driven by the ignorance of the time
- He and colleagues gathered sexual histories across the USA



## Interactive Methods

- Objective was simply to describe human sexual behaviour
- Highly controversial
- Books greeted with everything from appreciation to derision





**Ten Most Harmful Books of the 19th and 20th Centuries**

**Human Events**

**1. The Communist Manifesto**  
**Author:** Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels  
**Publication date:** 1848  
 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, born in Germany in 1818 and 1819, respectively, were the authors of the Communist Manifesto, a political treatise that laid out the principles of Communism. It is one of the most influential political documents of the 19th century.

**2. Mein Kampf**  
**Author:** Adolf Hitler  
**Publication date:** 1925  
 Adolf Hitler's Mein Kampf (My Struggle) was a political manifesto that outlined his ideology of Nazism. It was a key text for the Nazi Party and played a major role in the rise of Hitler to power in Germany.

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**Kinsey, the media and public reaction**

By Susan Williams

Say what you will about the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction. From amusement to outrage to admiration, the institute has inspired all sorts of public reaction since Alfred Kinsey founded it on Indiana University's Bloomington campus in 1947.



Photo by William Dallenback, courtesy of The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction

It became a target of federal and state governments during the early 1950s. The late Herman B. Wells, then president of IU, defended Kinsey's right to conduct objective scientific research even if it was unpopular with particular individuals and groups.

**Alfred Kinsey (far left) founded the institute that still bears his name on the IU campus in 1947. In this photo, taken in the early 1950s, he is pictured with his research colleagues and co-authors of the book on female sexuality published in 1953. They are Clyde Martin (standing), Paul Gebhard and Wardell Pomeroy.**

In 1953, Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* was released. Even by today's standards, the release became a huge media event. The book was of particular note because, as current Kinsey director John Bancroft said, "The lid was taken off, so to speak. Women were more sexual than conventional wisdom and morality would want us to believe."

## **Interactive Methods**

- Kinsey's research was very much in the qualitative tradition of "giving voice"
  - To the marginalized
  - To important and controversial topics on which ignorance prevailed
- One thing his and other studies show is how much people appreciate a non-judgmental, empathetic, independent person to talk to

## **Interactive Methods**

- A range of interactive techniques are used in qualitative research including:
  - Person-to-person interviews
  - Focus group interviews
  - Oral history interviews
  - Various forms of computer-assisted interviewing

# Interactive Methods

- Some generic issues permeate all these techniques:

Sampling To whom do we talk?	Content What/how do we ask?
Validity How do we know this reflects what they see, do, feel, think?	Analysis How do we manage and analyze all this information?

# Sampling

**To whom do we talk?**

## Sampling

- Sampling is all about using part of something to make inferences about or generalizations to or comment on the larger thing of which it is a part
- Becker suggests there are essentially three different kinds of sampling “problem”
  1. From whole to part
  2. From part to whole
  3. Determining range of variation

### Problem 1: From Whole to Part

- You have the *whole*; you need a part that will allow you to go back to the whole again
- The classic deductive/quantitative problem
  - You have a well-defined population and want to draw a representative sample ( $\pm e$ ) that will allow you to generalize to the population again
  - This is a job for random sampling or one of the other probabilistic procedures; a “marbles in the bag” problem

## **Problem 2: From Part to Whole**

- You have a *part* (a jaw; a clay pot; an oral history) and need to figure out what whole this piece is a part of
- The classic inductive/qualitative problem
- We study a particular case – an intrinsic or instrumental case study – and then try and figure out what category or class this is a case of
- More theoretically- than statistically-driven
- Trying to figure out just what kind of bag these marbles belong in

## **Problem 3: Range of Variation**

- We want to understand the full range of variation of something is (e.g., all music; all research; all violence; all sex)
- But how do we know when to stop counting?
  - The constructive nature of “everything”
- Also ends up being a theoretically-driven process, though at times the theory is implicit, and power relations involved. Often tautological.

**Implication 1: Representative sampling is not the be-all and end-all of research**

- It depends, but generally false
- A classic example of assuming that all sampling problems are Problem 1 problems
- When necessary? e.g., opinion polling; asking questions about what univariate distributions look like. “How do people feel about...?”

**Implication 2: Generalizability more than an empirical/statistical/procedural issue.**

- Sometimes it is – for Problem 1 research -- but qualitative research is more often Problem 2 (one first observes the case, then asks what whole or population it is a part of:
  - e.g., Becker on priests, psychiatrists, and prostitutes; Kidder going from marijuana smokers to hypnosis subjects.
- The Bernie Beck trick

### **Implication 3: Strategic sampling is your most powerful theoretical tool**

- In qualitative research, emphasis is more on depth than amassing numbers
- Emphasis on strategic sampling; purposive strategies
  - “In general, you should choose those interviewees who can give you the greatest possible insight into your topic” (Esterberg, p.93)

### **Implication 3: Strategic sampling is your most powerful theoretical tool**

- Becker argues the most important individual, group, issue, or research site to sample is the one that has the greatest potential for blowing your theories away and/or changing your thinking
  - If you *don't* think the results are generalizable, say to whom you *don't* think it generalizes, and do that study next.

### Some Purposive Sampling Strategies<sup>1</sup>

Strategy	Process
<b>Stakeholder Sampling</b>	Useful in evaluation research/policy analysis; identify who the major stakeholders are who are involved in designing, giving, receiving, administering or will be affected by the program/service.
<b>Extreme or Deviant Case Sampling</b>	These represent the purest/most clear cut instance of a phenomenon of interest, e.g., in a study of management styles, might pick an organization that did exceptionally well and/or poorly; mistakes.
<b>Typical Case Sampling</b>	Sometimes we are interested in cases simply because they are <i>not</i> unusual in any way, e.g., Becker and his colleagues' study of medical students at the University of Kansas Medical School.
<b>Paradigmatic Case Sampling</b>	"Paradigmatic" = the exemplar for a certain class. For example, the paradigmatic case in hockey of a successful sports franchise would be the Montreal Canadiens; for baseball it would be the New York Yankees or, for different reasons, the Oakland A's.
<b>Maximum Variation Sampling</b>	Searching for cases or individuals who cover the spectrum of positions and perspectives in relation to the phenomenon one is studying; would include extreme and typical cases plus any other key positions.
<b>Criterion Sampling</b>	Cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion, e.g., that they have a certain disease or have had a particular life experience. For example, looking for men who have been clients of sex workers.
<b>Theory-guided Sampling</b>	Researchers following a more deductive or theory-testing approach seek individuals/cases that embody theoretical constructs. A particular type of criterion sampling.
<b>Critical case sampling</b>	Looking for a "decisive" case that would help make a decision about which of several different explanations is most plausible, or is one that is identified by experts as being a particularly useful site because of the generalizations it allows, e.g., life at the bottom of the ocean.
<b>Disconfirming or Negative Case Sampling</b>	Researcher is looking to extend his or her analysis by looking for cases that will disconfirm it, both to test theory and simply because it is often from our failures that we learn the most. "If you think your results are not generalizable or the existence of a particular kind of case will undermine all that you 'know' to be true about a phenomenon, then look for that kind of case."
<b>Expert Sampling</b>	Looking for individuals who have particular expertise that is most likely to be able to advance the researcher's interests and potentially open new doors, e.g., as occurs in Commissions of Inquiry.
<b>Random Sampling</b>	Looking for a representative sample of an identified population

<sup>1</sup> From Palys, T.S. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L. Givens (Ed.) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA, Vol.2, pp.697-698.

# Content

## What/how to ask?

## Common Mistake I: Asking Silly Questions

#1. Asking silly questions that will not get us any closer to our objective. But what if our objective is to ask silly questions? Will people answer them?



## Ask a Silly Question...

- As this video clip illustrates, some people (30-40%) will answer questions even when they have no basis in fact
- Conclusion is *not* that *they* must be silly for doing so, but that *we* must bear the responsibility for ensuring what we ask people is meaningful, and not trite.

## **Common Mistake II: No connection with research question**

- A related problem arises because we have no connection between what we ask and what we seek



## **How to ask Meaningful Questions**

- Theory (both inductively and deductively generated) can direct us to key variables to include in the interview/survey
- Our objectives also can help identify issues, particularly with evaluation research that comes with clear requirements
- The literature also is often useful, both:
  - The professional/academic literature
  - The professional/lay literature/media

## How to ask Meaningful Questions

- Especially helpful are sources where factions/stakeholders debate (e.g., HST, Afghanistan, globalization, prostitution)
- Questions also arise from exploratory research
  - A prime example of how *qualitative* approaches can also help make better *quantitative* research
  - Incorporating “local knowledge” makes for more connected results and understandings, better policy

## How to ask Meaningful Questions

- Biggest trick: To ensure your questions arise from your objectives and speak to the issues you want to address
- Introduction and conclusion must/will “speak” to each other
- Like peeling away layers of an onion, with successive embellishments that ensure you get somewhere.
  - An example: VPD/MRDS

<b>Evaluate MRDS</b>	<b>Engineering Study</b>		
	<b>Cost/Benefit Study</b>		
	<b>Social/ Behavioural Study</b>	<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>Methods:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Self-Administered Survey</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 207 Officers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Structured observation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ 88 ridealongs x 4 hours</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Semi-structured Interview Schedule</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Administered on ridealongs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Archival data supplied/generated by VPD</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Memos from implementation</li> <li>◦ System use data</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Exploratory interviews</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ VPD Admin</li> <li>◦ VPD Patrol</li> <li>◦ VPD Dispatchers</li> <li>◦ VPD Technical</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Other archival/professional literature</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <i>The Police Chief</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Sheriff's Star</i></li> <li>◦ <i>Law and Order</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		<b>Use/Behaviour</b>	
<b>Implications</b>			

<b>Attitudes</b>	Job Satisfaction	MRDS has had a positive effect on my job satisfaction.
	Effectiveness	I think MRDS helps me be a more effective officer. MRDS produces so much information it makes me a less effective officer.
	Safety	I think MRDS makes policing a lot safer. MRDS can create a false sense of security with suspects.
	(In)dependence	I find that with MRDS I end up relying on the system more and more.
	Relations with Community	I find I check out a lot more people on CPIC now than I did before MRDS.
	Overall	Overall I like MRDS.
<b>Use/ Behaviour</b>	Ease of data access	With MRDS I get information much more quickly than with radio only. I feel tied to my car with MRDS.
	Frequency of Access	With MRDS I probably investigate cars or people I otherwise wouldn't have bothered with.
	1-person vs 2-person patrol	MRDS is of less use when I'm on patrol by myself than when I have a partner.
	(Non)Stressful Situations	MRDS is of less use in highly stressful situations.
	MRDS vs Radio	I would rather work in a radio-only car. <i>[Situational scenarios also addressed this element]</i>
<b>Implications</b>	Implications for officers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Professionalism</li> <li>◦ Man/Machine</li> <li>◦ Autonomy/Self-Def'n</li> </ul>	<i>[See "attitudes" section; also arose in more depth in interviews; big differences among officers in how they saw themselves and how they related to the machine; some viewed it as a duller of instincts and human connectedness, while others saw it as something that gave them autonomy, control, professionalism]</i>
	Relations within VPD	MRDS makes me more independent of the dispatcher.
	Relations between police and community	Ultimately I think MRDS dehumanizes policing. I feel more independent of the community with MRDS.

## Iterative Processes

- Once again ... that spiral process where we take one glimpse, and then shed a bit more light, and a bit more light, and a bit more light, is known as an iterative process
- You will see it again and again as we discuss other methods

## Validity

How do we know what we have  
reflects what our participants see, do,  
feel, think?

## Validity

- How do we know our data are “true” representations of how people feel/think?
- Several different ways we establish validity in qualitative research
  - Process
  - Procedures
  - Triangulation

## Process

- **Time**
  - The longer we are in the field, the more difficult it is for us to be bullshat; the more we build relationships
- **Rapport**
  - If you have the interests of the group at heart that will come out over time
- **Collaboration**
  - Involving participants in a collaborative process – before and/or after the project – to give them a stake

# Process

- Triangulation
  - E.g., in MRDS study, surveys gave us distributions; interviews gave us details and allowed us to probe about inconsistencies; observations cross-checked behaviour
- Be reflexive/self-critical about the strengths and limitations of what you hear and have
  - Evaluate your evidence

**Table 9.5**

Questions or Tests to Pose When Critically Analyzing Perceptual Evidence

1. Directness of the report:  
Is this account based on direct perception, or does it come second-, third-, or fourth-hand? If the latter, is it therefore to be treated with caution as fact, even if it is accurate as image?
2. Spatial location of the reporter:  
Even if firsthand, was my (or my reporter's) spatial location such that this perception might be accurate in some respects but still skewed or partial?
3. Social locational skewing of reported opinion:  
With regard to reports of opinion, what might there be about the relation between me and the reporter that might lead him or her to lie, distort, omit, falsely elaborate, or otherwise be less than accurate?
4. Self-serving error and bias concerning reports:  
From what I know on other grounds about my own or the reporter's commitments, values, and announced biases, are there reasons to be suspicious of the content of this report? Does it fit all too conveniently with what I want to believe, or what the reporter might want to believe, about people and events? That is, is it self-serving and therefore to be regarded with caution?
5. Previous plain error in reports:  
From what is known about my or the reporter's previous perceptions, am I an accurate observer/listener? Is the reporter? Have I or the reporter made errors in the past, even though these are not self-serving errors?
6. Internal consistency of the report:  
Is this report consistent within itself? Are there spatial-temporal factors stated at one point that contradict spatial-temporal assertions at other points? Were the events of this report possible within the time and space constraints given in the report or known about on other grounds? Do the people involved unaccountably contradict themselves within this report?
7. External consistency; agreement among independent reports:  
Is this account consistent with other accounts of the same events or experiences? Have I assembled enough independent accounts, subjected them to the above questions, and then compared them for degree of agreement? On points of remaining disagreement, have I made sufficient effort to speak with more participants in the event or persons involved in the experience – persons who are otherwise qualified reporters – in order to arrive at a truthful account?

SOURCE: J. Lofland and L.H. Lofland (1984), *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*, 2nd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth), p. 51. © 1984. Reprinted with permission of Wadsworth, an imprint of the Wadsworth Group, a division of Thomson Learning. Fax 800-730-2215.

## Procedures

- Recall from the Kinsey clip:
  - The importance of making clear what you are doing to ensure confidentiality; more important the more sensitive the topic
  - Maintain proximity; make eye contact; be comfortable yourself; make *them* comfortable
  - Non-judgmental attitude: goal is understanding

## Procedures

Take heed of Berg's

“Ten Commandments of Interviewing”

1. *Never begin an interview cold*
2. *Remember your purpose*
3. *Present a natural front*
4. *Demonstrate aware hearing*
5. *Think about appearance*

## Procedures

6. *Interview in a comfortable place*
7. *Don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers*
8. *Be respectful*
9. *Practice, practice, and practice some more*
10. *Be cordial and appreciative*

## Analysis

- We'll be doing exercises in tutorials after the midterm that will give you practice at identifying themes, creating categories, coding
- Qualitative software is advancing considerably, e.g., NVivo, ATLAS-ti
- More on this to come