

Research Methods (1) Interviews – Summary for Download

- Interviews consist of conversations between researchers and research participants that are aimed at getting data from participants and giving participants an opportunity to relate their experiences in their own words.
- Interviews are used in urban research to learn more about people's everyday experience of the city and to chart sets of power relations across the city.
- Different types of interviews that give you access to different kinds of information. These include:
 - Unstructured interviews: an open-ended way to explore meaning.
 - Structured interviews: very focused and specific, involves closed questions.
 - In-depth semi-structured interviews: give insight into the lived experience of participants and the ways that they understand their experience, often focused on issues.
 - Oral/Life history interviews: gives insight into a participant's entire life story.
 - Focus group interview: gain information from a group of people.
 - Walking interviews: a way of understanding social relations in relation to place.

Think about the kinds of interviews that are most useful for answering your research questions.

A range of factors need to be taken into consideration in designing a research interview. These factors include:

- The purpose of the interview, or what kind of data you are looking for.
- The interview participants, or who you will be interviewing.
- The length of the interview and how many interviews you will need to conduct.
- Preparing a schedule of questions or interview guide.
- The way your data will be analysed.

Creating an interview sample will require recruiting participants for your interview using strategies such as snowball sampling and purposive sampling. Ethical issues to be considered include the use of gatekeepers to gain access to participants.

Basic elements of being a good interviewer:

1. Be prepared – in terms of knowledge and practical issues.
2. Be aware of yourself and your role.
3. Maintain a focus in asking questions.
4. Be clear, sensitive, open, and balanced.
5. Remember to listen and pay attention to verbal and non-verbal cues.

Key ethical issues that arise in research interviews include:

- Issues of power between in relationships between researchers and participants.



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- The role of researchers as participants in the research process.
- The impact of positionality for ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ researchers.

Post-interview practice, such as sharing transcripts or findings with participants is an important element of maintaining ethical relationships with interview participants.