

Creative Data Collection Methods

For the

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and

Workshop Students

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First let us deal with the concept of interview.

This is a data collection method where the respondent interprets his or her version of reality for the researcher.

It can, as you will see by this presentation, contain many activities within the name “Interview”.

For this session we will deal with the concept of semi-structured interviews.

We are particularly interested in the semi- part of interviews.

Before we go on, a reminder that in grounded theory itself, the notion of emergence precludes structure by the researcher.

Therefore when using creative data collection methods where issues are presented by the researcher, you are doing qualitative research.

**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND GROUNDED
THEORY
IS THAT GROUNDED THEORY REQUIRES EMERGENCE AND NO
‘FORCING OF THE DATA BY THE RESEARCHER’.**

This goes for questions to ask as well as theories with which to match the data.

creative data collection methods
NB This is grounded research

Semi structured interview - conversation first + questions
Allow emergent questions from answers to Q's not asked

Complete this sentence – Around here, if I take a risk....

Scenarios – **What would happen officially (WHO)**
 What would really happen (WRH)

Dilemmas - **About choosing on action over another**

Advice – **What advice would you give to ...?**

Critical incidents – **What is the worst example in the change?**
 What is the best example in the change?

Choice of interview type

There are three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured.

Think of structured interview as a manual way of applying questionnaire.

Questions are posed by the researcher and sometimes closed (yes/no or scale).

We typically do not use this method in qualitative research and grounded theory.

Semi structured is where the researcher wants to let the respondent tell his or her own story but also where the researcher wants answers or interpretations of questions s/he wants answered.

Method

1. Develop rapport through friendly conversation (usually about 5 minutes)

2. Ask the respondent to tell his or her story about the research issue. Within this, prompts and linking words can be used to keep the conversation going.

3. Then introduce the researcher questions BUT also follow the respondent if he or she wants to elaborate or introduce something else.

4. If the respondents give answers to questions you have not asked, these must be converted into questions and named EQ (emergent question).

Complete this sentence

This method is used to complement conversations.

It aims to allow the respondents to let the researcher in to details on 'how life is around here'.

It works by the researcher supplying the first part of a sentence connected to the research topic.

Sentence beginnings need to be carefully crafted and this is where the familiarisation study is very useful as it can help to select items.

Let us say the topic is about creativity and innovation in an organization.

Around here, when one of us has a new idea...

My manager, when I go to him with a suggestion...

Sometimes my work suffers when I am solving a problem and my manager...

The credit for new ideas and suggestions, in my team ...

Rewarding new ideas and creative solutions...

When I need help to brainstorm...

The downside of suggesting new things is ...

The great thing in this place concerning new ideas is ...

Sometimes I can teach my manager and the response is...

My team mates and I, when approaching something in a new way...

Complete this sentence Analysis

The responses will be content analysed according to the comments. They will not necessarily be coded in terms of the sentence beginning although if the researcher wants to do this as a discussion point it is possible.

The idea is to build up a set of core constructs of meaning that survive being talked about in different ways.

Usually, the outcome of complete this sentence is either themes or categories of meaning. This is the same as in content analysis.

The complete this sentence data will be analysed separately.

Categories may be combined with data from the semi-structured interviews but it will usually be presented as itself first before the data are joined with other categories.

Scenarios are used for different purposes.

In the examples here, which were part of my unwritten rules study, I wanted to know about the validity of rules as predictors of behaviour. Put another way, can managers assume that by setting rules, they become part of the inner life of the organisation, accepted and practiced by employees?

Consequently, I designed the scenario questions as
WHO (What would happen officially ? and WRH (What would really happen)?

I could have been interested in other things such as perhaps

What would a good supervisor do (GSD)? or What would a poor supervisor do (WSD)?
Or

What would the patient do (WPD)? or What would the doctor do (WDD)?

In the case below, I gathered numbers and remember, this took me away from grounded theory and I would have called this a qualitative study or grounded research .

Whiteley, A.M. 2004. "Grounded Research: A modified Grounded Theory for the Business Setting,." Qualitative Research Journal 4(1):27:48.

Handling Customer Complaints

A customer has come into your premises and is obviously angry. He waits in a queue, which seems to make him even angrier. By the time it is his turn to be served, the customer begins complaining in a voice that gets louder and louder.

The customer has apparently been trying to resolve a problem over the telephone, but has been 'handballed' from staff to staff, without the problem being resolved.

Almost without taking a breath, the customer relates his experience and he begins to use language that could be considered offensive.

The staff member tries to maintain a quiet and calm approach, but this does not seem to have much effect.

Other customers are beginning to come into the premises, and they can obviously see and hear what is going on

Table 1 Handling Customer Complaints

What happens officially (WHO)?

What really happens (WRH)?

<i>Isolate the customer (24)</i>	<i>Let the customer have a good yell / get angry (14)</i>
<i>Get the manager/superior (22)</i>	<i>Get the manager (12)</i>
<i>Solve the problem (18)</i>	<i>Isolate the customer (7)</i>
<i>Calm the customer (17)</i>	<i>Manager / supervisor not available and customer becomes more angry at the futile attempts by the staff member to resolve the problem in the public area (5)</i>
<i>Listen empathetically (16)</i>	<i>Ask a colleague for help → situation gets worse (3)</i>
<i>Assess the problem (3)</i>	<i>Customer refuses to be isolated (2)</i>

Scenario 2

Staff Behaviors in front of Customers

In one of your customer contact areas, two staff are oblivious to a customer who is waiting to be served.

While the customer waits patiently, the staff are talking about what they did over the weekend, and about what they will be doing over the following weekend.

Unbeknown to the staff, a supervisor enters the counter area, glances at the two staff who are in deep discussion, and moves to serve the customer.

The customer is obviously unhappy about the lack of urgency displayed by the other staff, and begins to complain: 'I can't believe those two staff. I've been standing here for minutes while they've been prattling on about their weekend jaunts.

If this is the kind of service that is displayed in front of the customer, what goes on behind closed doors? What ever happened to good old fashioned service?'

Table 2 Staff Behaviors in front of Customers

What happens officially (WHO)? What really happens (WRH)?

<i>Apologize to the customer (management or staff) (31)</i>	<i>Reprimand the staff members (27)</i>
<i>Apologize to the manager (staff) (2)</i>	<i>Apologize to the customer (25)</i>
<i>Reprimand the staff members (20)</i>	<i>Staff members will not spoken to (6)</i>
<i>Counseling to the staff members (4)</i>	<i>Customer walks away in disgust / anger (4)</i>
<i>Check if the staff members can see the customers (2)</i>	<i>Staff members treated severely, told off (2)</i>
<i>Provide guidance to the staff members (3)</i>	<i>Staff members spoken to if these incidents are repeated (1)</i>

Dilemmas are useful when you are trying to research something ethical or where the respondent needs to make a difficult decision.

You work at a very successful mining organisation which does not pay too much attention to the effect of mining on the environment.

You are based in the office but at least once a week you have to go on site.

You see the ground disturbed heaps of waste (slag) and the lovely countryside made very ugly, with plants and wildlife sacrificed to your organisation's need for profit.

You yourself love the countryside and you have two small children who you take to the park and beach and try to teach them about plant life, trees, and saving the environment.

The past few weeks you have felt more and more uncomfortable when you come back to the office.

You feel a personal conflict.

Questions

1. How could you reconcile your inner conflict with your organisation's actions?
2. What advice would you give your organisation about sustainable practices?
3. What would be your ethical ideal in this situation?

What would be your advice?

A very easy data collection method is the advice method. This is very well accepted by respondents and acknowledges their ability to contribute to the organisation.

You have your research topic and in a business situation this is usually some sort of human problem – (If it is material or concrete you would not use qualitative research).

You outline what is happening and simply ask

What advice would you give a manager who was faced with this situation?

How could s/he improve things?

What do you think would get in the way of a solution?

This is a very useful method either in itself or as an addition to the structured questions in a semi-structured interview.

Critical Incidents

Critical Incidents in data collection are excellent to end an interview. Experience has shown that people seem to remember extremes in organisational life.

They remember the best and the worst examples of whatever it is you are conversing about.

I use them even when administering questionnaires as open ended questions at the end of the instrument.

This is so simple to use.

After you have elicited as much as you can in your interview and hopefully a variety of data collection methods within the interview, you then ask, in this order ,

What was the best example of (for example ,positive responses or positive action) concerning the (change program or whatever the topic addresses).

What was the best example of (for example, negative responses concerning the (change program or whatever the topic addresses).

Which costume do you choose?

This is a very creative data collection method and it is especially useful when you want your respondents to use their imagination and avoid perhaps making negative or what could be construed as disrespectful comments.

You select let us say five costumes for example

A suit of armour

A shroud for a ghost

A monster's mask

A dragon costume

A holy person's costume

You ask which one represents - could be a manager, a situation, a constraint, a behaviour – what ever it is you want data on.

Then, importantly, you ask why and what costume would the person or the situation be better off adopting.

Then you might ask why that person or that situation could not do this – what is getting in the way?

This is one of the most effective data collection methods to gather sensitivej

To Conclude

A lot can be achieved in an hour-long interview.

The ideal situation is where the respondent does almost all of the talking. Sometimes though, respondents do not have a large vocabulary and are not comfortable with complex conversations.

If you judge this to be the case, then you can inject creative data collection methods into the interview.

These are usually part of the interview itself.

A word of caution

Every issue, question, scenario or dilemma that is raised by the researcher is once removed from respondents' choices.

In all cases in qualitative research a conversation, where the respondent is allowed to choose the pace and the issues is essential. This is the best, emergent data. However, when you have emergent data you can focus in on issues and methods to enhance it.

In grounded theory emergence is the core concept so do not be too creative