Longitudinal qualitative interviews

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Different styles

- In-depth interviews repeated at roughly fixed time intervals with the same people by the same research team
- Retracing respondents from an earlier study originally undertaken by a different research team
- One off long term follow-up of a particular group of people
Design

- Length of study
- Total number of interviews
- Frequency
Advantages: qualitative

- Understanding participant’s perspective
- Depth and detail
- Answer how and why questions
- Identify processes
- Attention to context
- Boundaries not predefined
Advantages: longitudinal

• Not a ‘snap shot’
• Identify changes over time
  • How people change and respond to change*
• Prospective design
• Follow up themes
• Tailor follow up interviews

Advantages: longitudinal

- Researcher-participant relationship develops
  - Access private accounts
  - Sensitive issues
- Establish mechanisms/processes through which an intervention did or did not work
- Link micro to macro
Data collection issues

- Participant attrition
- Researcher retention
- Follow up costs
- Question fatigue
- Burden on the participant
- Participants’ changing circumstances
  - Be ready for all possibilities
Data analysis

- Added complexity
  - Seven different ways*
- Data overload
- Analyse each data set as it is collected
- Interpretations of data may change
- Results may take years to arise
- Findings may no longer be relevant

Conclusions

- LQI particularly suited to:
  - Exploring evolving or complex processes
  - Assessing change and the factors that contribute to it
  - Developing a relationship with participants
- Time and resource intensive
- Rewards or outputs may not be immediate
Key references


*Themed section on longitudinal research for social policy in Social Policy and Society 2007; 6)