

Creative Interviewing

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A training workshop organised by
the **Real Life Methods Node**
of the National Centre for Research Methods

www.reallifemethods.ac.uk



What is creative interviewing?

- **Interactional communicative exchange** (rather than a heavily interrogative, question and answer style)
- **Informal, conversational** (no clip boards and tick boxes)
- **Thematic** (not fully scripted, not a numbered sequence of questions)
- **Knowledge as situated and contextual** (rather than abstract and universal)
- **Potentially involving exploration of verbal, textual, visual, material, spatial, sentient and sensory dimensions – and their intersection**

Planning and Preparing: Some Big Decisions

- Epistemological and Ontological
- Connecting with your research questions
- Structure, Direction and Creativity

Ontological and Epistemological understandings

- What are you interested in? What's it like?
 - Where is it? (Levels and layers. Excavated, constructed, created?)
 - What shapes or forms might it take?
 - How does it get manifest/expressed?
 - How can it be apprehended or comprehended or perceived?
 - How can it be recorded and represented?
 - How can knowledge of it be judged, tested or validated?
- This should shape your choices - what can creative interviewing contribute (and what can't it)?

Connecting with your research questions

- Your big question(s) – what you really want to know
- Your mini questions, or components of the big question
- Topics, themes, areas, dimensions to cover
- Ways of covering them, eg realistic/useful questions, practical creative activities
- Openness to things you hadn't thought of, ways of seeing and interpreting that you hadn't predicted
- Match all of these with your epistemological and ontological assumptions (the 'why cover this?' 'why do it in this way?' questions)
- Importance of piloting to assess whether interviews are producing data/knowledge that addresses research questions

Structure, Direction and Creativity

- How much structure, how directive? (in overall schedule, in questions, in creative activities)
- How abstract, how situated? (and situated in what exactly?) How general, how specific?
- What blend of questions and other (creative) activity?
- Whose creativity are we talking about?
- Importance of focus and relevance. Beware the allure of glitzy and novel techniques
- How will you handle the data? How much will there be, of what kind? What logic of comparison will you apply?

Planning and Preparing: skills you will need to develop

- Making yourself understood, articulating clearly
- Listening, interpreting, understanding
- Observing, seeing, hearing, sensing
- Balancing talking, listening, silence
- Managing social interactions
- Thinking and acting strategically and situationally
- Remembering, recording
- Handling equipment
- Auto critique, and make sure you practice

Planning and preparing: ethics and keeping safe

- BSA guidelines on ethical conduct
www.britsoc.co.uk
- Ethical research practice – your responsibility!
- SRA guidelines on risk and safety
www.the-sra.org.uk

