ESSENTIAL

*Evolving Security SciencE
through Networked Technologies,
Information policy And Law*

Which is the right method
for my research?

Noellie Brockdorff
University of Malta

Groningen Winter School, Febrary 2019

Session Plan

i.   Introduction
ii. Brief notes on Interviews & Focus Groups
iii. Discussion of ESSENTIAL ESRs' Research Questions
iv. More detailed look at Interviews
v.   More detailed look at Focus Groups

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ESSENTIAL

SELECTING A
METHOD FOR
YOUR RESEARCH
IS BOTH
A SCIENCE AND
AN ART

Selecting A Research Method

- Quantitative – Qualitative
- Goals of the Research Project
- Research Questions
- Research Context
- Resources
- Time Frame

When do you use Interviews?

- Need for an in-depth understanding of an aspect of human behaviour and the reasons for that behaviour.
- Ned to establish the *why* and *how* of decision making, and not just the what, where, when.

Types of Interviews

- Generally three types of interviews, which are used depending on the specific objectives of the study:

  - Informal Conversational Interviews

  - General Interview Guide Approach

  - Standardised Open-Ended Interviews

Informal Conversational Interviews

- No predetermined questions; interview resembles a chat, with respondents often forgetting that they are being interviewed.

- Interviewer assumes the role of a conversational partner and literally 'goes with the flow'. This allows them to remain as open and adaptable as possible to the respondent's nature and priorities.

- Usually exploratory in nature, and are typical during ongoing observational exercises.

General Interview Guide Approach

- Though a list of themes is prepared to ensure that all relevant topics are covered, the interviewer remains at liberty to explore, probe and ask questions deemed interesting for the project.

- This method provides more focus than conversational interviews, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in obtaining the required information.

Standardised Open-Ended Interviews.

- An interview guide - a set of carefully worded and arranged open-ended questions - is prepared for use during the interviews

- BUT interviewers are still expected to probe as necessary in order to satisfy the information requirements.

Standardised Open-Ended Interviews.

- Interview is extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions but the use of open-ended questions means that participants can fully express their viewpoints and experiences.

- This approach facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analysed and compared.

How do Interviews work?

- The dynamic nature of the in-depth interview engages respondents more actively than is possible in quantitative interviews

- The opportunity to probe enables researchers to reach well beyond the initial responses and rationales

- The opportunity to observe and interpret non-verbal communication as part of the respondent's feedback may be particularly valuable.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups

- Carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest.

- Essentially group interviews, relying on in-group interaction.

- Group interaction is utilized to generate data and gather insights into a research topic that would be less available without the communication found in the group.

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- Breadth of information – find out as much as possible about participants' experiences and feelings.

- Rich stories for analysis.

- Concentrated amounts of data on precisely the topic of interest.

- Reliance on interaction of the group to produce rich data.

- Comfort of the group.

ESSENTIAL

Agnes | Ainara | Karen | Lauren | Merve

Research Questions

Agnes's Research Questions

1. What technological methods are there of identifying persons in crowded spaces?

2. What are the different situations in which such technological methods are deployed (e.g., known suspect vs. unknown suspect)?

3. What are the most effective methods of identifying persons in crowded spaces from an intelligence / law enforcement perspective for the various situations and how can these methods be improved?

Ainara's Research Questions

1. How are big data analytic tools used to produce OSINT?

2. How is OSINT sometimes used together with other -INTs to come up with an all-source intelligence product?

3. What do LEAs, SISs, NGOs, EC, CoE, think about:

   A. the use of OSINT &personal information to create the OSINT product?

   B. The need for further regulation?

   C. Do they see any grey areas in terms of human rights?

   D. the need for guidance in the exploitation of OSINT and data protection regulations

Karen's Research Questions

1. Do current legal frameworks permit intelligence agencies to carry out their activities and deal with current & future national security threats?

2. What safeguards are in place within current legal frameworks to protect citizens from disproportionate violations of human rights?

   to understand the extent of which current legislation provides oversight, control and accountability guidelines for intelligence agencies, in order to ascertain to what extent human rights' violations can be attributed to current gaps in legal frameworks or a failure to adhere to and implement legal obligations on the part of intelligence agencies.

Karen's Research Questions

3. Will increased protection for fundamental human rights lead to a decrease in the ability of the State to protect its national security?

4. Are current legal frameworks sufficient to cover all the actors currently involved in intelligence work?

5. Is there alignment between the legal frameworks of the European states examined as part of this study?

   - Does this affect their ability to cooperate when facing common threats?

Lauren's Research Questions

1. Who are the relevant actors in the Border Security Ecosystem and in what ways do their obligations and expectations differ?

2. What emerging technologies are being used at the border, and for what purpose?

3. What does the concept of proportionality require, and how does it apply in the case of preventing terrorism, particularly in the digital age?

Lauren's Research Questions

4. How has cross-border terrorism affected the resilience of the border security ecosystem?

5. How can the principle of proportionality be applied to the case of border security, in particular considering fears that the ongoing migration crisis in Europe can be exploited for terrorist goals?

6. Do the specific characteristics of the border security ecosystem warrant moving away from the requirement of reasonable suspicion, or permit a greater reliance on digital technologies when determining who to stop at the border?

Merve's Research Questions

1. How to conduct Privacy Impact Assessment in big data digital forensics?

2. What are the privacy risks associated with processing large amount of data in digital forensics?
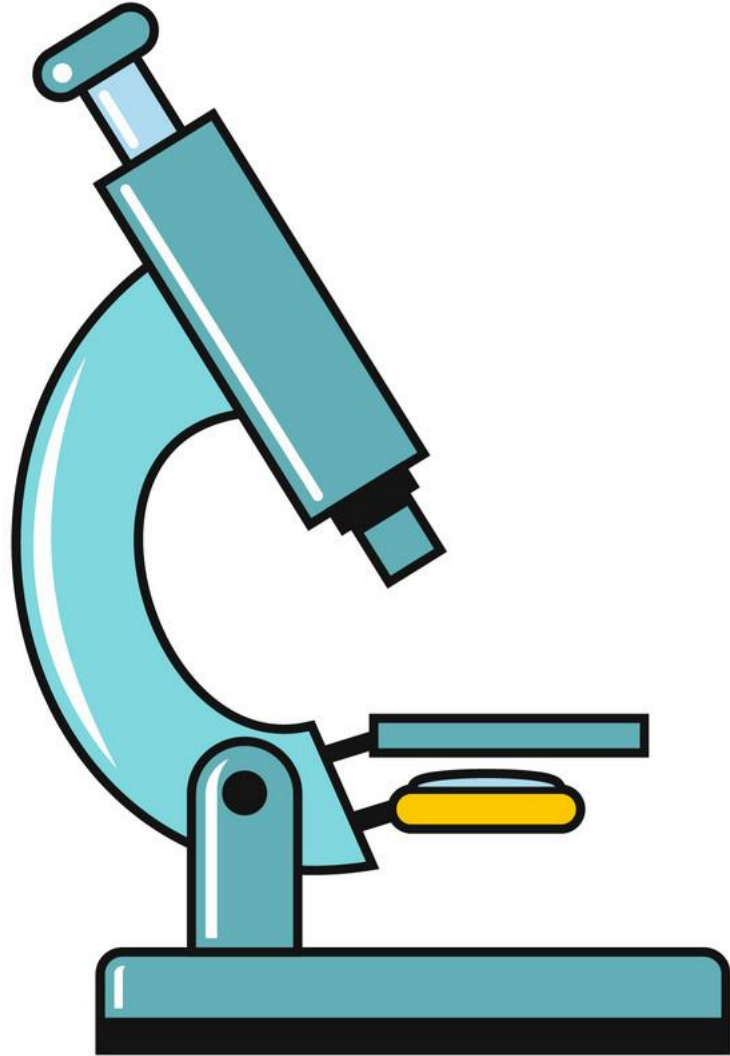
OPTION B

A CLOSER LOOK AT PARTICULAR METHODS

ADI

- In multidisciplinary research, where one discipline is based on scientific method (forensics) and the other discipline is based on qualitative methods (law), often we have to evaluate the science for its quality and its role for decision-making in another process (law).

- Are there specific methods developed for such questions?

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IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

A MORE DETAILED LOOK

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Interview Guide Structure

- An introductory phase
- A set of themes or questions
- Closing comments

Interview Guide | Introductory Phase

- Thank interviewee for taking the time to meet
- Introduce yourself
- Introduce subject & purpose of the research
- Indicate time the interview is likely to take
- Explain how the interview will be conducted
    - including rationale for note-taking and any recording
- Assure respondent of confidentiality (and any other data-protection issues, as appropriate)
- Allowing the respondent to ask any questions relating to the interview or the research project
- Obtain informed consent

Interview Guide | Themes or Questions

- Interview guide will either include:
  - a number of themes/ points for investigation

    [General Interview Guide]; or
  - specific questions, possibly also including a number of defined probes [Standardised Open-Ended Questions].

- Always absolutely essential for interviewer to be certain of the set objectives and be clear about what information needs to be elicited.

Interview Guide | Themes or Questions

- Funneling – broad questions progressing to more specific issues.

- Questions/Themes in a logical order.

- Story-telling – Asking questions so as to elicit a story from the respondent.

Interview Guide | Closing Comments

- Allow for any additional comments from interviewee
- Briefly outline the next steps (if any).
- Hand out any incentive (sometimes also referred to as a 'reimbursement'), where applicable
- Thank the respondent once again for their time and valuable input.

Introduction	Briefing
ALL RESPONDENTS **Introduction** [about 5 min] - Thank you - Your name - Purpose - Confidentiality - Duration - How interview will be conducted - Signature of consent on consent form	I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet me today. My name is---------------------------and I would like to talk to you about the internet, what you like about it, what you dislike, and how you use it. As was mentioned when we set up this appointment, this interview is being carried out as part of the CONSENT project which is co-funded by the European Commission. The CONSENT aims to gather views of internet users from all countries of the EU. If you wish I will give you more information about the CONSENT project at the end of the interview. Your opinion is very valuable for our study and will be taken into consideration when drawing up the final report. The interview should take less than one hour. I will be taping the session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I can't possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we're on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we don't miss your comments. All responses will be kept confidential. This means your interview responses will only be shared with research team members and will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Your name will not be connected with the answers in any way. Please read and sign this consent form. Do you have any questions on that? Remember, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want and you may end the interview at any time. Is that OK?

Discussion of surveillance and technologies

- To explore interviewees' experiences and perception of surveillance

- To explore the interviewees' awareness and knowledge of the different surveillance technologies

Question aims:

1. Exploring the participants' knowledge of the existence of surveillance

2. Exploring the participants' awareness and knowledge of the

"I would like you to think about everyday-life situations in which you feel that your or other people's actions are being observed, as well as situations in which your or other people's personal information is being collected. I will give you several everyday-life scenarios to help you think about surveillance and technology. I will then ask you to tell me your thoughts about people's actions being observed"

Scenario 1: Somebody's watching me

"To start off, please think of any everyday situation in which you feel or are aware that you or your actions are being observed using CCTV cameras. Can you share your thoughts on this?"

Probe, if necessary:

1. **Where** and/or **when** do they feel that their or other people's actions are being observed?
2. **How** is this done, i.e., what kinds of surveillance technologies are used for these purposes?
3. **What** type of personal information is being collected?
4. **Who** is responsible for collecting, accessing and processing the personal information?
5. **Why** is this information being collected?

Scenario 2: Navigating, positioning, tracking

"You are walking around, driving, traveling, going to work, using public transport, shopping. Describe any situations in which you feel or believe that your or others' locations are being tracked?"

In-depth Interviews
PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Practical considerations

- Preparing for an interview
- Conducting the interview

Starting Point

- The broad research question/s
- The operationalised research question/s
- Who should be interviewed
- How many interviews
- How interviewees are selected

Who should be interviewed?

- The characteristics of persons that will be interviewed

- The sampling strategy (i.e., the method of selecting such persons)

How are interviews set up?

- Recruitment questionnaire

- More informal methods

Setting up interviews | Note

- Usually, no specific details regarding the subject or line of questioning are revealed at the recruitment stage.

- Otherwise, respondents may formulate ideas beforehand, possibly also do background research to become more knowledgeable about the subject.

Location

- A location where interviewee feels at ease.

- Convenient, comfortable and sufficiently private (to allow interview to proceed without any undue distractions and/ or interruptions).

- Depends on type of interviewees – but can include interviewee's workplace, or a public place (like a quiet coffee shop, bar or restaurant) or other central venue (e.g., university office, research facility).

- Always preferable to let the respondent choose the place of interview where they feel they could talk freely.

Practical Preparations

- Become familiar with the interview guide.
- Carry out practice-interviews with friends, colleagues or formal pilot interview (if possible).
- Revise interview guide as necessary before conducting actual interview.
- Be both mentally and psychologically prepared to conduct the interview.
- Always arrive on time equipped with the necessary materials (interview guide, laptop, recording equipment, etc.)

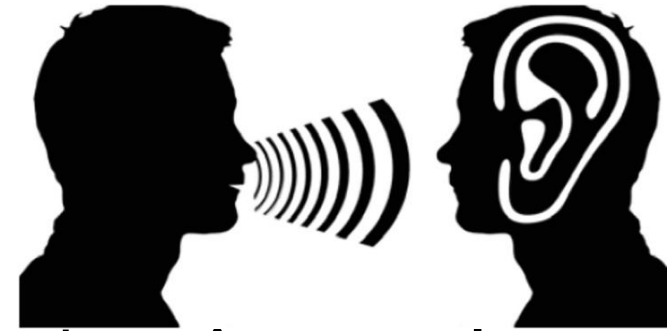# Improving the quality of the interview
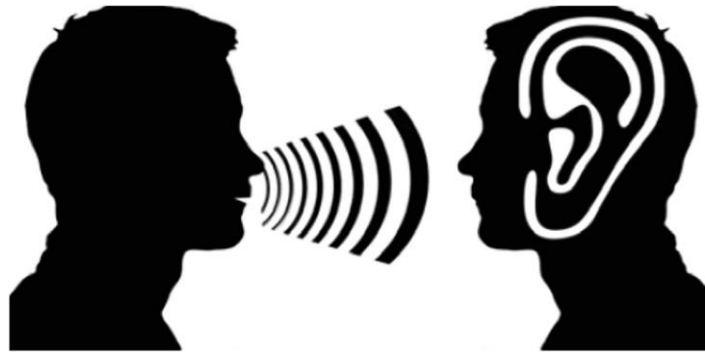

Active Listening

Flexibility

Active Listening

- Pay particular attention to the interviewee's choice of words. It may be necessary to rephrase an answer (though using the interviewee's 'own language' as far as possible).

- Listening to the language interviewees use is also important – particularly since different groups (be it cultural, professional, etc.) tend to have 'code' or 'shorthand' words and expressions that represent larger ideas and phenomena.

- *Never ever rush an interviewee.* Inconsiderate and rude, but also impacts negatively on the depth and value of the information provided.

- If the discussion wanders off track, the interviewer should *gently* refocus the conversation in a graceful manner.
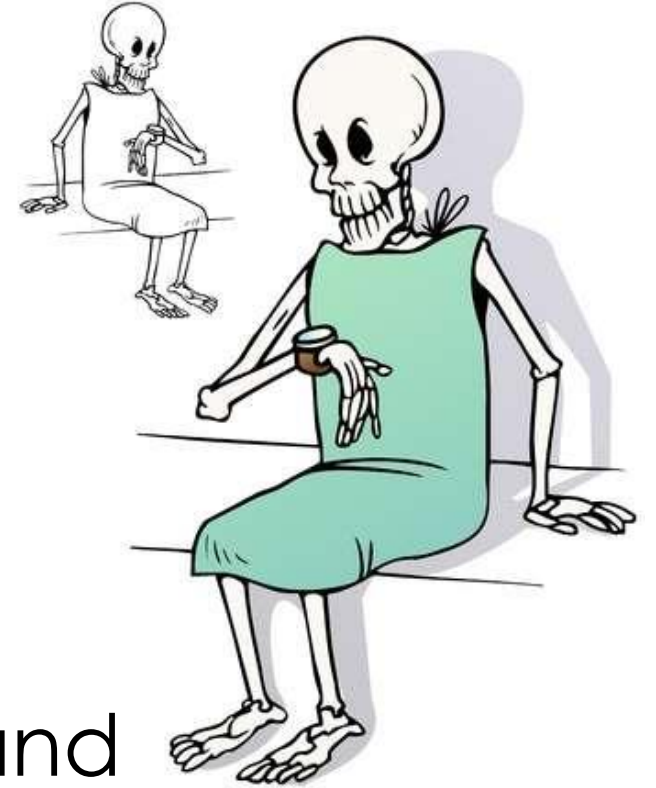
Flexibility

- Be open to slight deviations and novel ideas which may require:
  - Adaptation of the questions
  - Reordering of the questions
  - Coming up with new questions.

FOCUS GROUPS
A CLOSER LOOK

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Advantages of Focus Groups

- Time Efficient
  - Interviewer Time, Transcription Time
- Larger Sample Size
- Comparison of the Groups
- Group Dynamics
- Concentrated Amounts of Data
- Breadth of Data
- Cost Efficient
- Comfort of Participants

Disadvantages of Focus Groups

- Management of Group Dynamics
- Sensitivity of the Topic – Group Discussion Not Always Appropriate
- Full and Honest Disclosure?
- Discomfort with the Group Setting
- Issues of Depth
- Issues of Generalizability
- Logistical Issues
- Focus Group Environment

Myths About Focus Groups

- Focus Groups Are Cheap and Quick.
  - Reality – Focus Groups require planning, effort, and resources.
- Focus Groups Require Moderators with Highly Developed Skills.
  - Reality – The researcher will have detailed familiarity with the research project and participant selection.
  - BUT certain skills are indeed necessary.

Myths About Focus Groups

- Focus Groups Must Consist of Strangers.
  - Reality – Some social settings require acquaintances participate in a group setting.
- People Will Not Talk About Sensitive Topics in Focus Groups.
  - Reality – Researchers must plan to encourage appropriate self-disclosures, and discourage disclosures that go beyond the aim of the research.

Myths About Focus Groups

- Focus Groups Tend to Produce Conformity.
  - Reality – Focus groups do not push groups to make decisions or to reach consensus.
- Focus Groups Must Be Validated by Other Methods.
  - Reality – Focus groups are appropriate when the goal is specification over generalization.
  - Reality – Focus groups are appropriate when the goal is to generate theories or explanations.

Focus Groups

- Focus groups are under-utilized in the social sciences.

- Focus groups are practical and effective.

- Focus groups are a unique and valuable tool that can provide insights into social situations and group dynamics.

ESSENTIAL

Thanks for your attention

Hope that was useful