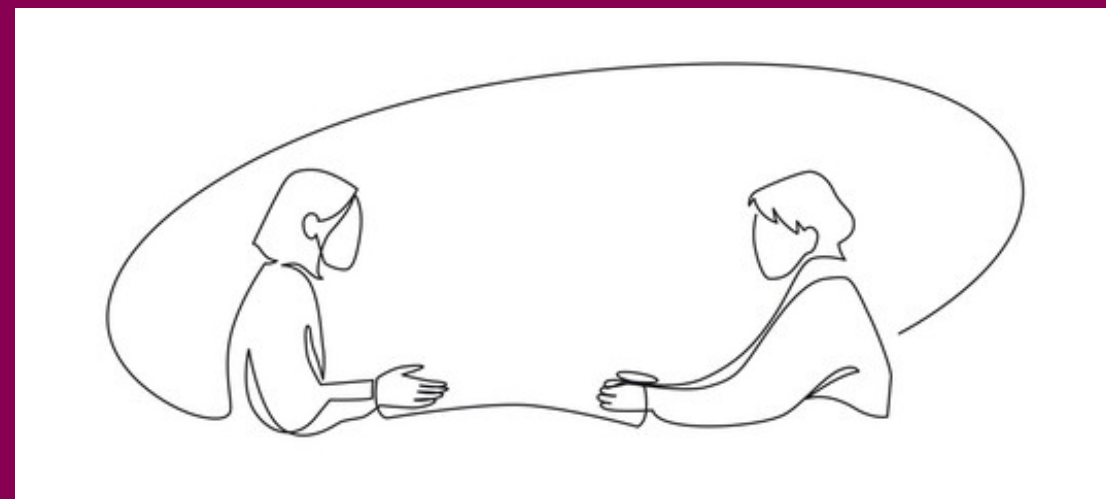# Interviews

Lecture & workshop, 2022-02-24

Member of the research group Leadership in Health Care and Academia:

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About me

- 3 yrs as a consultant in HRM + IT (Capgemini)
- MSc in Work & Organizational psychology, SU
- PhD Industrial economics & management, KTH
- Project researcher, GIH, Implementation and evaluation of activity-based office (ICA). PI Anne Richter.
- Postdoc, KI, Effects of covid 19 pandemic on the working environment in digitally mediated remote work. PI Kristina Palm.

- Pop sci book: Ostörd – Principer för en skärpt arbetsdag. Natur & Kultur 2020

Most used method: interviews
Have supervised many final theses (usually interviews) at KTH

Interviews in research

Common method but often poorly used

Work you can do beforehand that will improve the quality of the interview:

→ read up on your topic and be very aware of <u>what your true research question</u>(s) is (are)

→ A thorough <u>interview guide</u> with questions you think will elicit the kind of data you need to be able to answer your research questions

→ A <u>selection</u> of interviewees who will be able to provide the kind of data you need to be able to answer your research questions

→ Any preparation you may be able to do regarding who your interviewee is, their organization and context

→ Be familiar and comfortable with your technical setup, be it a physical recorder or Zoom

→ Be fully present and listen!

Our setup today

- Preparing an interview guide that will elicit data that can answer your research questions.
    - RQ -> interview questions
    - Validity
    - What kind of answers do you want? Subjective, objective. Abstract, concrete. Attitudes and feelings about things, or behaviors?
    - Formulating questions

  Exercise: Writing an interview guide

- The actual interview situation
    - The funnel model
    - Being professional

  Maybe exercise: Interviewing & observing
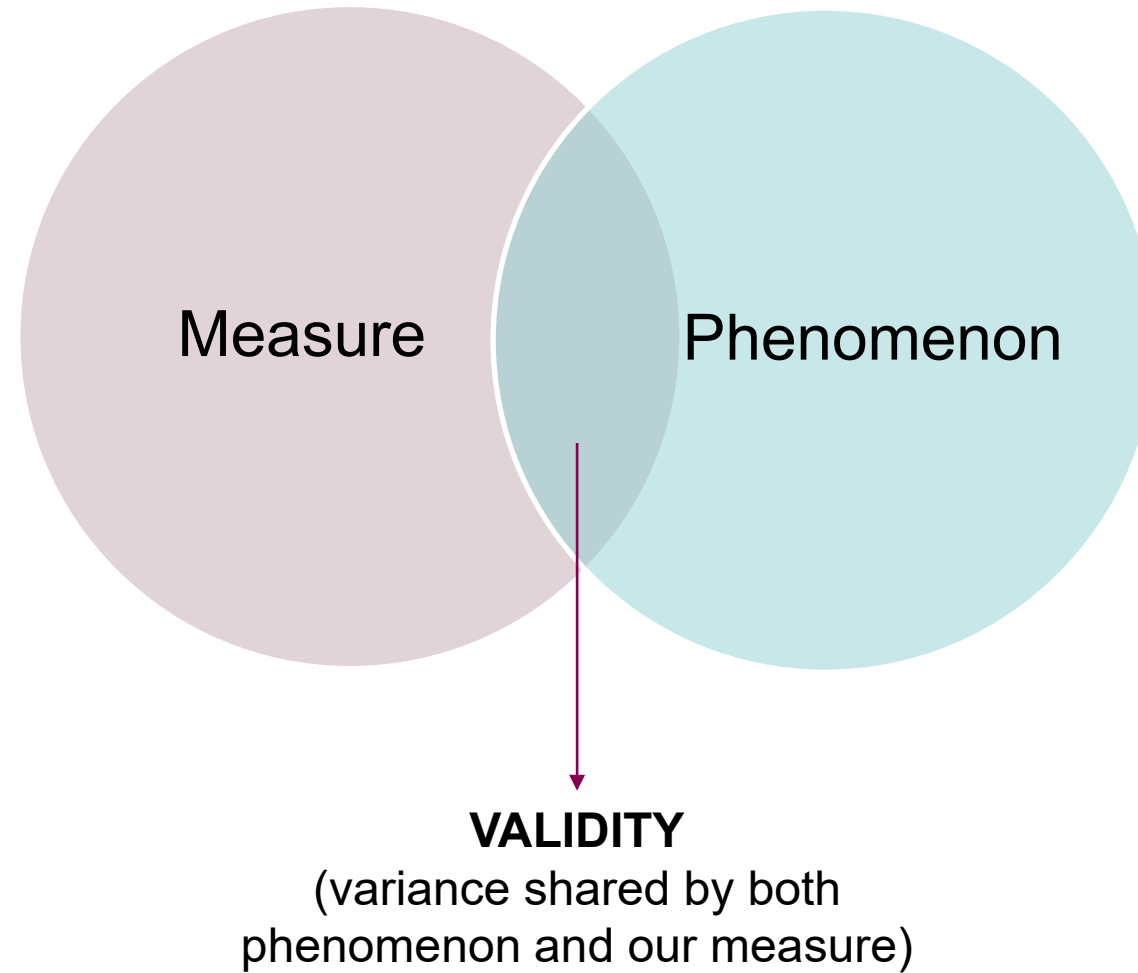
Preparing an interview guide

- Preparing an interview guide that will elicit data that can answer your research questions.
 - RQ -> interview questions

Your research questions is what its all about. Your interview questions will elicit some kind of DATA. And you will analyse that data to answer your research question.

What kind of data will your questions elicit? From what kind of informant? Will your data be useful to answer your RQs? The purpose of the interview questions is to <u>generate useful data</u>, data that can be used, to answer your specific RQs.

Validity

- Are we measuring what we think and claim to be measuring?
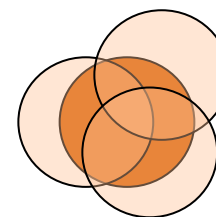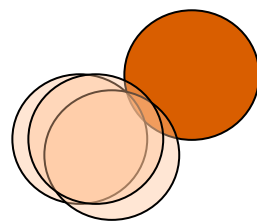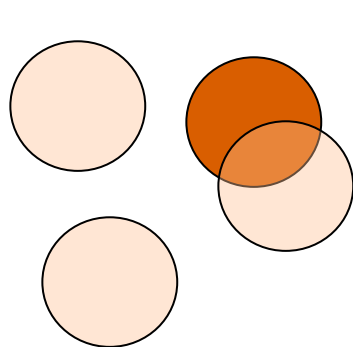
Preparing an interview guide

- What kind of answers do you want?
  - Subjective, objective?
  - Abstract, concrete?
  - Hypothetical or actual? General, specific?
  - Attitudes and feelings about things, or behaviors?
  - Thoughts and understandings of things?

Preparing an interview guide: Writing questions

- Present yourself.
- Warm-up questions
- Preferably one question is about one thing (not double-barrelled)
- Usually, we want more open questions, not yes/no
  - Tell me about a time when…
  - What did you think when…
  - Why…
  - How…
- Do you cover all the topics you want and need for your RQs?
- You should be able to link each interview question to a topic, that in turn relates to RQ (except perhaps intro/warmup/general questions)
- Sometimes you need more specific follow up questions
  - When you do X procedure, what is it that you do? Walk me through it.
- Sometimes very general!
  - Could you tell me more about that?
- Use language your informants will understand.
- Revision of interview guide once it has met reality

Review questions:

- Structure – usually good to group questions on same theme/topic

- Do questions cover all topics; do topics connect to RQs?

- Avoid yes/no questions. You want full, meaty answers!

- Avoid too general questions. Usually better to ask how respondent does X than how its done generally. (man vs du på svenska)

- Don't make questions overly complicated.

- Don't ask too much in a single question. Split them up.

- Ask informants to give examples – often a good idea!

- Ask questions your informant *can* answer. They probably *will* answer either way but what are they really answering?

- Avoid words and concepts the informant is unlikely to know, or understand in the same way you do.

- It is *you*, not the interviewee, who is analysing the interview. Don't build analysis into the questions. Questions like "Are you working according to self-determination theory here?" is not a good question. "When do you feel extra motivated in your job?" could be better or "How do you notice someone on your team is unmotivated? What do you do if that is the case?" Then you can analyse those answers based on your RQ and theoretical frame.

EXERCISE 25 minutes

- Bring out your Research Question

- Write a research question if you don't have one yet.

- Connect RQ → topics → interview questions

- **Formulate & review your own questions (5-20 questions)** (15 minutes)

- Trade questions with the person next to you and review (5 minutes each = 10 minutes)

Follow up questions

Good to think up some follow up questions BUT:

Listen to your informant! Don't miss good follow-up questions in the moment. Also saves you the embarassment of asking about something they just told you.

The actual interview situation

- Be friendly and professional. Respect your informants' time.

- If you at all can, record the interview! And take notes. After interview: take note of reflections and ideas.

- If you are two people, let one take lead in asking questions and the other one take more notes, but may interject tactful follow up questions.

Informing about your interview

Send your informant information before the interview:

- Who you are, that this is part of a course/thesis/other purpose

- What is the main purpose/topic of the interview?

- How long is the interview? (maximum 1 hr is usually what ppl can afford to give)

- How will the material be handled (for example, recorded)

- How will the material be analysed?

- How will you report on your analysis?

- How will the report be spread/made available?

- Name and contact info to your supervisor, if applicable

If you are visiting an organization

- Read up on that organization.

- Can you get a little tour, to better understand the organizational context?

- Ask for an organizational chart or see what you can find in regards to that online to get a feel for the context around your informant

If you are visiting an organization

- Dress code?

- Be a good representative of KI

- Use the alotted time well so that when you leave, you feel that you got what you needed to know.

- Repeat how long the interview will take and don't exceed that time.

Interview situation

- Do the interview in a quiet room (so make sure beforehand that they can book a room for you if you visit them, not a busy space)

- Have a "script" for yourself so you remember to introduce yourself, give the information about recordings, how results will be reported and so on. And how to end it.

- Start with your warm up questions (e.g. let them talk about their job/tasks, if relevant)

- Most people really like the opportunity to talk about their jobs, and about themselves. So you are not subjecting them to something horrible. ☺

Interview situation

- Difficult to describe how to but:
  - → Try to create an allowing and friendly atmosphere where you are genuinely curious about this person and their thinking, their experiences
  - → In my experience this is easiest to do in person (vs digital)
  - → …and when cultural differences are not too big (possible challenge, but no reason not to try)
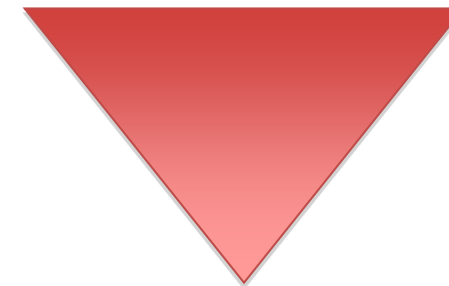
Funnel model

- Phase I   Warm up
- Phase II   Free narrative
- Phase III   Precision
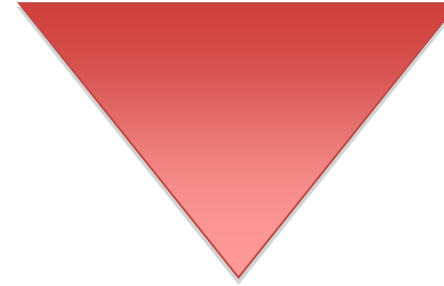- Phase IV   Checking
- Phase V   Finish

Funnel model

Phase I   Warm up
- Get aquainted
- Tell purpose and background
- Who are you and why are you doing this
- How material is used
- Anonymity? Confidentiality?

Phase II   Free narrative
- Open questions (tell me what happened…)
- Stimulating questions (interesting, tell me more…)
- Strategic silence

Trattmodellen

Phase III   Precision
- Ask for examples
- Factual questions, more information about facts

Phase IV   Checking
- Try to get more precise answers
- Check conflicting information (before, you said that…)
- Verify/check your understanding by stating back your understanding (I understand you to mean… is that correct?)

Phase V   Finish
- Thank them for letting you have this time for the interview
- Remind them what happens now. Will they hear from you again?

Some informal advice

- Have a detailed guide to fall back on, but also have a **few clear topics** that you see at a glance or remember, so you know at all times whether you are on topic or off, and can steer back

- If you have already covered the topic of a question, you may not have to ask it (but use your judgement)

- You don't need to get the exact same types of information from everyone (unless you are comparing them directly as part of your RQ). Some questions may be very relevant for some informants and less so for some.

- It is often helpful to be somewhat familiar with the lingo of the groups of people you are interviewing (for me for example agile coaches, *agile* is its own world with a lot of special concepts and it is helpful to know them)

- Especially management types of people can get caught up in lingo and even theories and models that they use – this is often too abstract and general to be very informative about what is going on. Try to bring it back to specifics. You are the analyst.

- Don't take it personally if you have "bad chemistry" in an interview and it just doesn't turn out that well. It sometimes happens. (but do also think back on if there is something you can do differently next time to improve the situation?)

If time
EXERCISE 30-45 minutes

- Form **groups of 3**

- On the topic of "Your role as a student of bioentrepreneurship", write five interview questions **each**. (5 minutes)

- Roles: interviewer, respondent, and observer

- **Interviewer**: Do an interview for 10 minutes (not necessary to get through all questions) to the best of your ability considering what you learned.

- Respondent: Answer questions naturally, as yourself

- Observer: Observe and take notes to give the interviewer some constructive feedback on their questions, their presentation, their style of interview and so on.

- Feedback (5 min)

- If still time, trade roles

Questions? !

Thank you for your attention

Good luck with your projects