



# ‘How and why?’ research

@PEG\_Exeter

# Interviewing is a core police skill

- ▶ 'The interview is one of the primary methods used by police to obtain information from witnesses, victims and suspects of crime and plays a significant role in the majority of police investigations' (Roberts, 2012)
- ▶ *What about using this skill to conduct research?*



# Observation is also already in the skill set

- ▶ Again, observing is a key aspect of policing investigation and procedure, from observing suspects over time to observing in custody for risk/safety
- ▶ *What about using this skill to conduct research?*



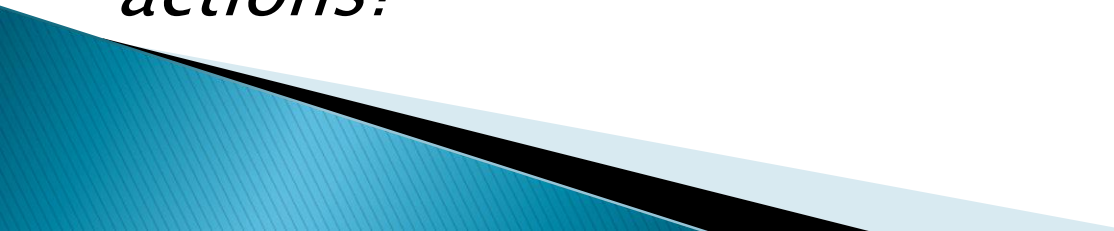
# What is qualitative research?

- ▶ Qualitative research aims to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions such as:

*‘Why did our new initiative not work as we expected?’*

*‘Why do sexual violence victims not report?’*

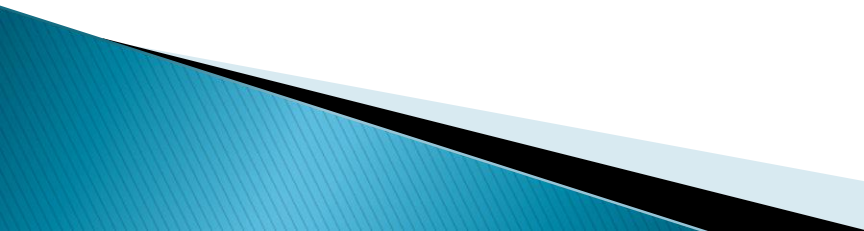
*‘How could we improve public confidence in our actions?’*



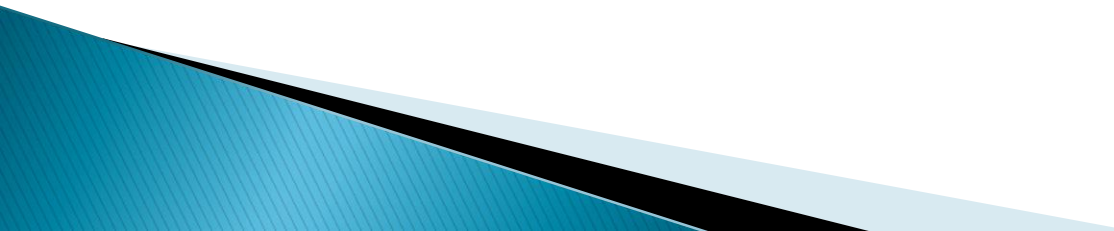
# Types of method

- ▶ Qualitative research is a broad umbrella term for multiple methods that don't usually involve statistics/numerical analysis:
  - ▶ Interviews
  - ▶ Focus groups
  - ▶ Observation (e.g. of police interviews)
  - ▶ Analysis of existing data (e.g. social media, newspapers)
  - ▶ Ethnography or Participant Observation (which may involve more than one method)


# Qualitative research is good for answering these types of questions

- ▶ Exploratory research where little knowledge currently exists (so difficult to design survey or experiment)
  - ▶ To understand people's views, attitudes, values and behaviours– WHY they do things rather than whether they do them
  - ▶ To be 'theoretically generative' (i.e. fill gaps in theory, provide insight that can then be tested)
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# It cannot answer other questions

- ▶ Qualitative research is usually not the right method to:
  - ▶ Test causal relationships between variables (e.g. does wearing body cameras lower risk of complaints?)
  - ▶ To know if your findings are representative of a larger sample (generalizability)
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# Sampling

- ▶ Who you choose to interview/observe critical
  - ▶ Not 'random samples' in general (i.e. people don't have an equal chance of participating)
  - ▶ Usually purposive i.e. included for a reason,
  - ▶ Often 'stratified' by age, gender, job title, experiences
  
  - ▶ Trade off between 'breadth' and 'depth' (e.g. instead of briefly surveying 300, you could interview 30 in-depth)
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# Examples: Bourgois and homeless encampment

- ▶ Ethnographic research with homeless communities in US with high rates of Hep C and HIV
- ▶ Showed their local economic and hierarchical practices (e.g. sharing heroin in very specific way) undermined public health initiatives
- ▶ Harm reduction needed



# Examples: What makes a good leader to promote ethical policing?

- ▶ Funded by College of Policing
- ▶ Interviews with 41 police staff, 3 chief officers and 5 frontline in each of five forces in England and Wales
- ▶ Transformational and participatory leadership style esp. encouraged ethical behaviour
- ▶ First-line supervisors more important than further up hierarchy



# Involvement of practitioners

- ▶ **Traditional qualitative research:** answer research questions
  - ▶ **Action research:** answer research questions and effect change
  - ▶ **Participant action research (PAR):** Participants (e.g. police themselves) answer research questions and effect change (with or without external collaborators)
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