Research Methodologies Comparison Sheet
Choosing the methodology that helps you get the info most effectively

What kinds of methods are there?

Survey: uses a questionnaire with intentionally worded and arranged questions. It can be open to random or selected people, either in person, by mail, or on the Internet.

Interview: consists of one person asking questions to another to obtain personal responses through conversation.

Focus Group: can be also called “group interview.” In a smaller group of people from the whole target population, the conversation focuses on a topic.

Observation: is conducted by taking detailed notes of things that stand out to you—what you hear, smell, touch, see, taste, and feel. It is done over a period of time at a particular location(s).

Photo Voice: uses cameras to take snapshots of issues that you are facing. Each photo is then captioned to tell a story.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>😊 Pros 😊</th>
<th>😊 Cons 😊</th>
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| Survey| - Can help you understand the who, how many, and how much of the experience  
- Can get the solid numbers to prove your claim  
- Results speak to logic  
- Relatively cheap  
- Easy and quick for people to take  
- Can describe large populations  
- Can reach out to many people and build membership  
- Relatively easy and quick to analyze the data  
- Can be used for many purposes: opinion polls, community needs assessments, program evaluations, etc.  
- More generalizable than other methods  
- Can test hypotheses  
- Can be translated in advance  
- Can be built upon previously conducted research  
- Easier to maintain confidentiality  
- Can be done online (surveyMonkey.com) | - May require a lot of time and people power  
- Doesn’t provide details and stories  
- May miss the nuanced feelings and attitudes  
- Relies on the respondents’ honesty and accuracy in reporting  
- Needs specific research question(s) ahead of time  
- May require literature review  
- Less likely to create deep human connection  
- Results don’t speak to emotions  
- Doesn’t lead directly to empowerment  
- Limits elaborative discussion  
- Respondents may feel pressured  
- Respondents may tell you what you want to hear, not what they feel  
- Hard to understand for some people  
- Reminds youth of school and exams  
- A free account has a limit for the number of questions |
### Interview

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| • Can help you understand the *how* and *why* of the experience  
• Can foster connections and relationships  
• Can capture personal stories and experiences  
• Can go deeper with probes  
• Questions can be tweaked  
• Can be done without much existing literature  
• Can get more background info/demographics  
• Allows for more comfort  
• Can catch subtle gestures and facial expressions  
• Can get serious responses, which are more reliable | • Time-consuming  
• Can reach out to a limited number of people  
• Requires “people skill” to establish trust  
• Participants may get defensive  
• May require some recording devices  
• Questions can be loaded or leading  
• Requires time and/or people for transcription  
• Less generalizable  
• Difficult for the data to be representative of a group  
• May need to compensate the participants  
• May require on-site translation  
• Harder to maintain confidentiality |

### Focus Group

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| *In addition to the pros of interview...*  
• Participate can relate to each other  
• Allows for elaborate discussions  
• Can build momentum by connecting energy  
• Can get varied perspectives at once  
• Can lead to action  
• One researcher vs. many participants may reduce pressure  
• Safe/welcoming environment  
• May help you get more info than you expected | *In addition to the cons of interview...*  
• Can’t reach as many people as surveys  
• Requires strong facilitation skill  
• May require a particular set-up: interactions, group activities, etc.  
• Difficult to coordinate and meet everyone’s needs: time, place, safe environment, accessibility, etc.  
• Even harder than interviews to maintain confidentiality  
• Participants may not be honest or remain silent about things that are usually considered unacceptable |
### Observation

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<td>• Can document what’s going on at the moment</td>
<td>• Can be biased—you may see what you want to see and miss something</td>
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<td>• Can pick up body language and vibe</td>
<td>• May require access to the space/community</td>
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<td>• Comes from the observer’s own perspective (can also be a con)</td>
<td>• May need connection to the gatekeeper</td>
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<td>• Can get “facts”—what you see, what exists</td>
<td>• Needs to strategize on who would be the right person to ask (imagine how and by whom you will be introduced to the community—leader, boss, mom, gov’t official, etc.?)*</td>
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<td>• Can include some numbers and stories (mini-survey/interview)</td>
<td>• You may not know what to look for as an outsider</td>
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<td>• More effective when you are an insider of the community or you have access to the community</td>
<td>• Require extensive note-taking</td>
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<td>• More effective when you have a lot of previous knowledge about the issue/situation/community and know what to look for</td>
<td>• A lot of room for interpretation</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Can help you have more profound understanding of own surroundings</td>
<td>• We see what we wanna see</td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>• Can’t judge book by its color/can give to stereotypes</td>
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<tr>
<td>•</td>
<td>• I can be biased in how I perceive things</td>
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<td>•</td>
<td>• How do I know if I’m not LGBTQ?</td>
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### Photo Voice

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<td>• Great tool for participatory research</td>
<td>• Easy to make assumptions without all info</td>
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<td>• Creates symbolic value</td>
<td>• People might say what you want to hear</td>
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<td>• A picture can paint 1,000 words</td>
<td>• Pictures can be demoralizing—may need to pick inspiring pictures as well</td>
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<td>• Effective photos have comparison photos</td>
<td>• Photos can be staged (can also be a pro depending on the strategy)</td>
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<td>• Can send powerful messages</td>
<td>• Room for bias—you may only take photos of what you want to see</td>
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<td>• Makes you notice things you wouldn’t have before</td>
<td>• Better to use as step 2, to prove more after survey, etc.</td>
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<td>• Good way to start conversations</td>
<td>• People might not be interested in photos</td>
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<td>• Can go deep with one photo</td>
<td>• Requires cameras and technological skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Insinuating something that might not be true</td>
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