### Data Collection Methods

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Method Type</th>
<th>Options within Type</th>
<th>Advantages of Type</th>
<th>Limitations of Type</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Observations      | • Observer as participant  
• Participant as observer  
• Observation without participation | • First-hand experience  
• Recording of information as it occurs  
• Rapid learning of unfamiliar social worlds  
• Rich description for analysis | • Researcher may be intrusive  
• Good observation and personal skills required  
• Access to some sites may be problematic  
• Validity issues harder to satisfy |
| Individual Interviews | • Members of a population  
• Informants within the setting  
• Experts in the topic  
• Structured or unstructured  
• Face-to-face, phone or email interviews | • Knowledge of participants’ perspectives and experiences  
• Allows control over topics addressed | • Depends upon knowledge and articulation of respondent  
• Could be misleading in some circumstances  
• Selection bias issues must be addressed |
| Focus Groups      |                                                                                     | • Group interaction is useful for some topics, such as shared experiences  
• Efficient way to interview | • Dominant individuals can influence results  
• Must be careful in selecting issues/participants |
| Documents         | • Public (newspaper articles, advertisements, government reports)  
• Private (letters, email, diaries)  
• Organizational (minutes, client records, budgets) | • Written material is ready for coding  
• Can provide valuable context | • Must interpret carefully as to circumstances of production and intended use/audience  
• Validity issues are trickier |
| Audio-Visual      | • Photographs  
• Videotapes  
• Art objects  
• Film | • Unobtrusive way to collect data  
• Creative and compelling | • May be difficult to interpret  
• Validity issues harder to satisfy |