

Interviewing strategies to understand people's perceptions of wildlife

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Why?

Humans represent today the main threat to **biodiversity** [1,2,3,4], it is therefore vital to address the **social** and **cultural** aspects of conservation issues in this biology dominated field [5,6]. Social-sciences offer robust tools to understand the **human-wildlife interface** [7,8].

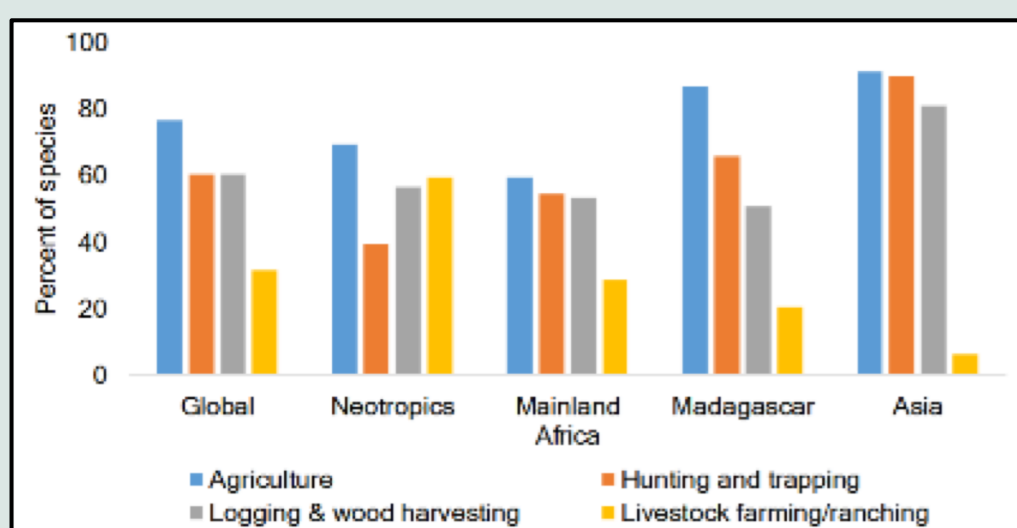


Figure 1. Percent of primate species listed under each proximate threat, according to IUCN. (Taken from Estrada et al., 2017)



Figure 2. Disposal of poacher's bushmeat on the border of Salonga National Park, DRC.

Interviews types



Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between efficiency and receptivity.

Semi-structured interview (SSI)

SSI's are based on a list (**guide**) of specific points, open-ended questions, or general topics. The order and phrasing of the questions are not fixed.

Advantages [14]:

- + allow to study sensitive subjects
- + informants can express their view in their word
- + allow and consider the researcher's **subjectivity**

Guidance [13]:

- Decide the level formality and structure at the start
- Remain **neutral**
- Phrase questions to **invite details**
- Avoid being too technical or formal

Approach

Natural and **social** sciences have different philosophical bases and approaches [9,10,11]. As a result, conservationists perceive barriers to **interdisciplinary** research integrating methods from both fields [12]. A deep understanding of those approaches is thus necessary for a successful combination/collaboration [13].

	Quantitative	Qualitative
How	Hypothesis → design data collection to test	Data used to generate a theory
Data Analysis	Large samples / numerical Statistical analysis	Usually words & pictures Critical analysis
Why	To search for patterns, causality, correlations	To build an in-depth understanding of a complex situation
When	To build on existing research	To start broad (little known about a specific topic)

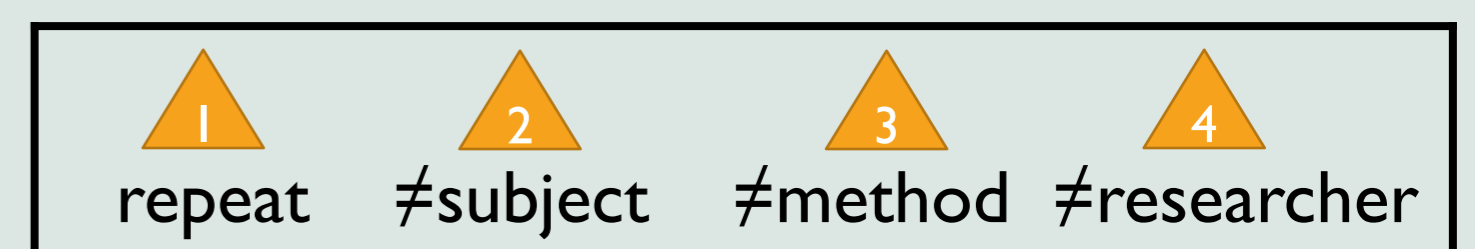
Figure 3. Comparison of the qualitative and quantitative approaches while studying people's perceptions.

Bias

Response bias and strategies [adapted from Newing, 2011: pg. 111]

- **Yes effect** : avoid "yes/no" questions or ask 2x
- **Order effect** : start broad and narrow down
- **Self esteem/deference effect** : "there are no right answers", avoid judgement

Triangulation



Timeline



Ethics

Researchers must anticipate and avoid their work to have harmful impacts on participants, host community, etc. Ideally, the research should be mutually beneficial [13,15].

- Consult professional **guidelines**
- Acknowledge different interest-groups
- Consider the impacts of field behaviour
- Rights of **anonymity** and **confidentiality**

Conclusion

Social-science research can lead conservationists to acknowledge they form an **interest-group** of their own, with **values** and **perceptions** [16,17]. Furthermore, it may help us understand conservation issues beyond the scope of our preconceptions and inform practitioners on adequate initiatives [18]. Finally, this approach is essential to analyse situations in a **cross-cultural** context.