Using a Multimedia Mobile App for Participant Communications in a Qualitative Longitudinal Study

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Session outline

- Introduction to Indeemo (video)

- Our project and how we're using Indeemo (spoiler: not how it looks on the video!)

- Ethical and methodological issues

- Participant feedback

- Technical issues

- Optimising use

- https://indeemo.com/

What is Indeemo?

- App-based user experience research platform

- Text, video, photos

- Based around 'tasks'

- Adaptable to qualitative diary research

- Use for sensitive research topics is a learning journey (for Indeemo and research community)

- Participants need a smartphone

- Researcher dashboard accessed via desktop

Work, welfare and mental health: Transitions over time

- Understanding the complex interplay of factors influencing transitions between work and welfare over time, for people with experience of mental health problems

- Qualitative longitudinal research
  - 3 waves of interviews over approx. 18 months
  - 23 participants (16 F, 7 M)
  - working age adults, opportunity sample, North Yorkshire

- Using Indeemo to keep in touch between interviews

- Seeking real-time updates on changes in work, benefits and mental health

- Responsive interviews where relevant

Ethical issues (1)

## Challenges encountered

- Disclosures of harm

- Expressions of distress

- Open channel 24/7

- Researcher wellbeing
  - Responsibilities
  - Boundaries

Actions taken

- Useful contacts attached to tasks

- Clarity of what we are asking for

- Clarity about when dashboard will be checked and responses given

- Disclosure and distress protocol

- Clarity on role boundaries

Ethical issues (2)

- Real time event capture
  - Good things are fine!
  - Bad things are more common…

- Lack of ability to help or intervene
  - Responses can feel platitudinous

- Ethics of 'mining distress'
  - Added value of real-time capture?
  - Academic intrusion into lived experience
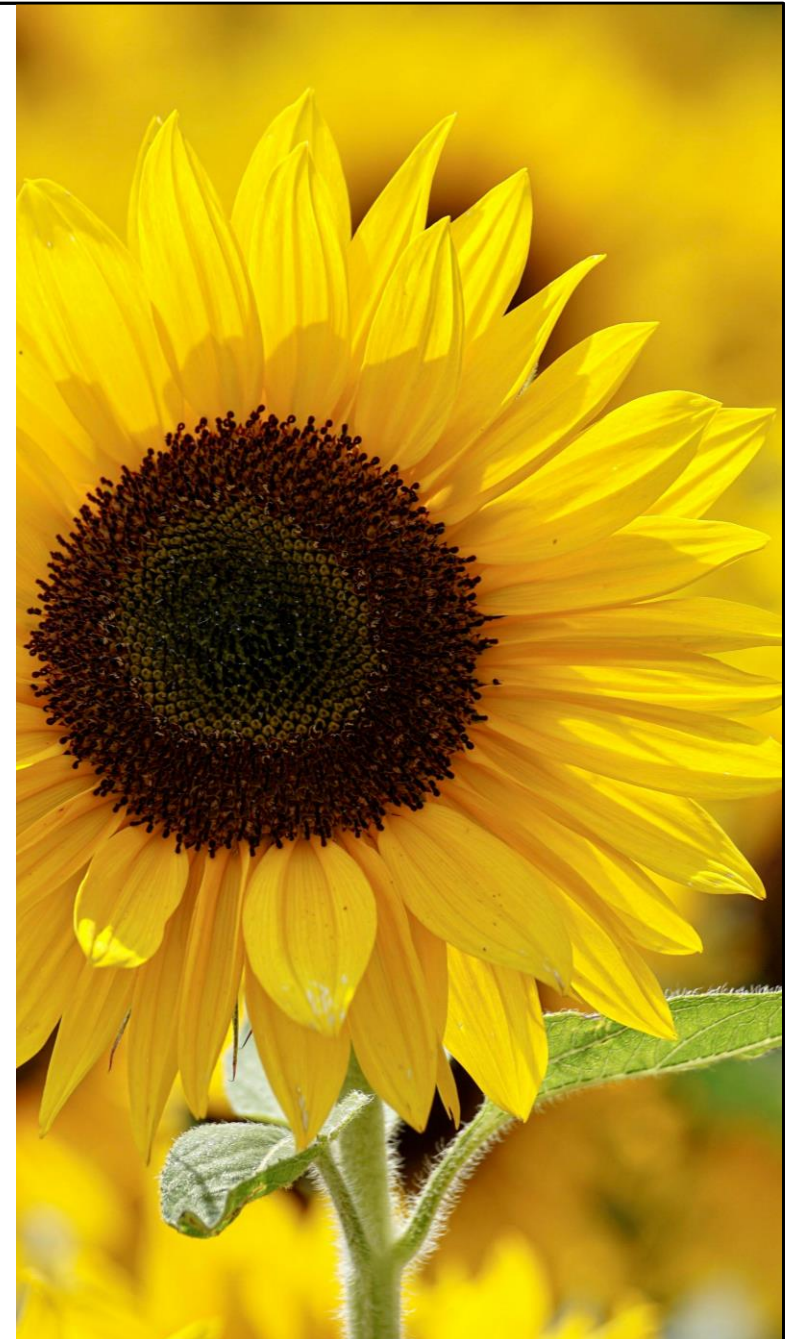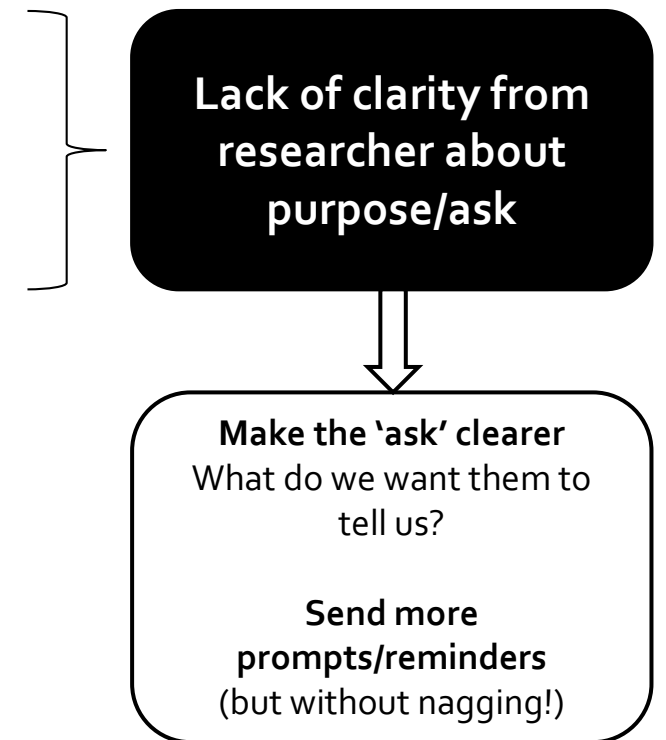
Methodological Issues

- Capacity to conduct responsive interviews

- Non-reporting of project-salient events

- Clarity of task requests

App use and participant feedback

- 14/23 downloaded the app

- 8/23 have posted on the app

- No particular pattern by age

- All users are female

- Regular, occasional, one-off

- Some have kept in touch via email or text

- Sought feedback at Wave 2 interviews

Summary of obstacles

- **Slipped mind** to even download

- Downloaded but was **not significant** enough to remember

- **Lack of benefit** to participant (apparent irrelevance)

- **Lack of differentiation** from interview conversation

- **Uncertainty** on what is relevant to report

- **Preference** not to report personal/sensitive issues on the app

- Lack of **engagement/habit** with app-based technology

- Does not use a **smartphone**

Lack of clarity from researcher about purpose/ask

Make the 'ask' clearer
What do we want them to tell us?

Send more prompts/reminders
(but without nagging!)

Technical aspects

Positives

- Visually attractive
- User-friendly
- Multimedia functionality
- Excellent tech support
- Indeemo team open to feedback and learning

Issues

- Responses to reminders – confidentiality risk if not downloaded app
- Occasional glitches
- Multiple live 'tasks' can mess with chronology
- Expensive!

Optimising use

- **Works well for groups/collectives**
  - generic tasks, clearly defined and expressed

- **Fiddly for 1-1 correspondence**

- **But dashboard is useful to collect all data**

- **Make download a requirement?**
  - Minority may not have smartphones/internet
  - Require download though not *use* (re: reminders issue)

- **Consider researcher capacity to deal with what comes in**
  - *Practically*: set parameters for responsivity
  - *Emotionally*: debriefs, disclosure protocol, role boundaries, signposting

Summary

- Technically and visually very good

- Could be really good for diary studies (ours wasn't really this)

- Many features we haven't explored

- Some people won't use it

- Think about methodology and how to optimise

- Think about ethical issues that will arise with sensitive topics and try to plan ahead for these