

Lecture 20: Self-Reports

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Utility

- **Gate for interviews, questionnaires and self-reports**
 - ↳ Participants have the language and experience to describe their own actions and reactions
- **Individual advantages**
 - ↳ **Interviews ask questions directly of subjects**
 - Opportunity to establish rapport
 - Can stimulate trust and cooperation needed to probe sensitive areas
 - Allows flexibility in wording and ordering
 - Allows greater control over the situation
 - ↳ **Questionnaire**
 - Has subjects read and answer questions themselves
 - Convenient when large numbers of participants
 - ↳ **Self-report**
 - Has subject keep a record at the time of the event
 - Should give more reliable data than other two
- **Sometimes useful to mix interviews and questionnaires**

Open-ended vs Structured

→ Basic consideration

→ Open-ended

↳ Offers opportunity for subjects to expand on their answers

↳ Critical incident technique:

➤ Eg, "Tell me how you behaved the day you graduated from college"

➤ Purpose clear

➤ consequences sufficiently definite

↳ Allows a range of answers not specifically limited by a range of responses

↳ Produces fuller and deeper replies

↳ Often relies on tape recordings

➤ Need permission

➤ Stress confidentiality

➤ Drawbacks: break, intrude, interrupt

Open-ended vs Structured

→ Structured (closed)

- ↪ Clear cut response and response options
- ↪ Produce more relevant and comparable responses
- ↪ Less costly
 - can use less experienced interviewers
 - Have to watch out for bias here

→ For non-threatening topics, no difference between the two approaches

→ For threatening, open-ended tend to elicit higher levels of reporting

→ Interview is an oral exchange, a two way exchange

- ↪ Human complexities can facilitate or interfere
- ↪ Guarded communication on sensitive issues
- ↪ Interviewers must listen analytically
- ↪ Question: should the interviewers be non-directive
 - Neutral or motivational
 - Can produce good respondent behavior via positive or negative feedback

Question Guidelines

- Piloting helps to determine whether items are worded properly
 - ↳ Eg, watch out for terms such as *like* and *approve*
- Poorly worded questions may lead to unrealistically narrow answers
 - ↳ Eg, handling duties - may approve some, not others
- Avoid a leading question that produces biased answer
 - ↳ Eg, do you agree the mayor has an annoying style
- Open ended or structured?
 - ↳ Open: flexible, but can be perceived as too wide ranging
 - ↳ Have structured with one or two open ended
- Funnel sequence: general to specific
 - ↳ Open ended at start, structured at end

Question Guidelines

- People often give superficial answers to things they don't feel strongly about
 - ↳ Have a question to measure how strongly they feel about X
- Subjects may want to look good, rather than give more revealing answers
- Subjects will share only information they are willing to share

Interview Stages

→ 4 basic steps:

- ↪ State the objective
- ↪ Outline the plan of attack
- ↪ Structure the interview schedule
- ↪ Test it and make appropriate revisions

→ Objectives

- ↪ Research hypotheses?
- ↪ What kind of data is required to test Hypotheses?
- ↪ What kinds of respondents are needed?

→ Plan

- ↪ General strategy to get relevant information for testing hypotheses
- ↪ Locate potential interviewees
- ↪ Define categories of relevant questions
- ↪ Specify how replies would be analyzed
- ↪ Plan to pretest the interview schedule
- ↪ Recruit and train interviewers

Interview Stages

→ Structure interview schedule

↪ Check each item to insure relevance

- Often requires Occam's razor
- 90 minutes outermost limit for length

↪ Determine ranges of responses

- Vary the format and make it interesting
- Enable interviewee to make a more relevant reply
- Make it easy to code and analyze results
- Problem areas:

✓ Excessive demands on cognitive skills, memory

↪ Establish best sequence of questions

- Research literature does not provide any clear cut or consistent answers here
- Logical error: sometimes subjects give similar answers to related questions when they are contiguous
- Separate by neutral questions, but still should have similar answers
- Specific questions less affected by what is near them than general questions

Interview Stages

- Sensitive questions at the end of the interview
- Questions seen as invasion of privacy can interfere with trust

↪ Establish best wording for each question

- Need wording to be understood in equivalent ways by all subjects
- Jargon expressions may be inhibitors or facilitators
- Especially important: phrasing of opening questions
 - ✓ Can affect how they respond to later questions
- Opening question:
 - ✓ Should be clearly connected to explanation of the interview

↪ Time issues

- Tend to get more refusals if say 30 minutes instead of a few minutes

→ Test - modify

Controls

→ Social desirability and its control

- ↳ Problem: subjects tend to present themselves in a favorable light
- ↳ Randomized response technique (Warner65)
 - Eliminate evasive answers by guaranteeing confidentiality
 - Respondents flips a coin on sensitive questions
 - ✓ Don't know how respondent answered: truthfully or not
 - ✓ But 50% are expected to get heads and say yes
- ↳ However, sometimes guaranteeing confidentiality raises suspicion
- ↳ Use of lie-scales or fake key to detect truthfulness
- ↳ MMPI has a set of 15 items as their lie scale

Controls

→ Yea-saying and its control

- ↪ Vary the direction of the response alternatives when using structure items
- ↪ Suppress yea-saying - a predisposition to say yes
- ↪ Work on authoritarian personalities
 - Most influential work
 - Later recognized some problems concerning the wording of the F scale
 - The F scale was measuring two things:
 - ✓ Authoritarianism
 - ✓ The agreeing response set
- ↪ Positively and negatively randomly interspersed
- ↪ Problems of expected class and status - predispose answers

Controls

→ Back translations

↳ Problems in different cultures

- Tries to look beyond constraints of the source language
- Find a middle ground where congruent in both source and target

↳ Twice translated

- In each direction to find middle ground
- "I shall return" -> "I'll be right back"

Meaning

- Semantic differentials for measurement of meaning
- Meaning of stimuli is best described in terms of (the dominant dimensions):
 - ↳ Evaluation - half of variance in meaning
 - ↳ Potency - $\frac{1}{4}$
 - ↳ Activity - $\frac{1}{4}$
- Semantic differential rating scale resembles segmented graph scale
 - ↳ 7 point scale
 - ↳ Anchored at each end by a pair of adjectives
 - ↳ Evaluative: bi-polar adjustment such as good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, etc
 - ↳ Potency: weak-strong, light-heavy, etc
 - ↳ Activity: slow-fast, passive-active, etc

Meaning

→ Often assign numbers

↳ Say -3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3 for scaling

→ Can use graphs to get a picture of the average ratings on a set of characterizing scales

↳ Use for ideal versus actual

↳ Use for comparisons between groups

Model for Self-Reports

→ Stephenson 53

- ↳ Developed to study a single or a few persons at a time
- ↳ Takes name from Q-methodology in factor analysis
- ↳ Useful in personality assessment

→ Calls for preparation of a set of stimuli covering some aspect of personality or behavior

- ↳ Differ from one study to the next
- ↳ Sort into a bell shaped curve

Likert Model

- Likert scaling: method of summated ratings
- Among the most misused terms in behavioral studies
- Likert 32
 - ↪ Method results in a self rating questionnaire
 - ↪ Appears as a type of numerical rating scale
 - ↪ Numbers are associated with different response alternatives
 - ↪ Statements are easily classifiable as favorable or unfavorable
- Process:
 - ↪ Measures peoples attitudes via a large number of statements on a topic
 - ↪ Given to a sample who evaluate or rate on a 5 point scale
 - ↪ Sort through to select best statements for the final scale
 - ↪ Statements which correlate to the overall score are chosen for the final scale
- Mahler 53
 - ↪ Attitudes towards socialized medicine
 - ↪ SA, A, U, D, SD

Thurstone Scales

- **Method of equal appearing intervals -**
 - ↳ Subject agrees or disagrees
- **Assumption:**
 - ↳ Judges sorting statements into different piles will keep the piles psychological equidistant
- **Begins with a large number of statements**
 - ↳ Sort into 11 piles
 - ↳ Most unfavorable (1) to most favorable (11)
- **Scale is the average (median) of responses of all the judges**
- **Choose those rated most consistently and spread them evenly**

Uni/Multi-dimensional

→ Attitude scales

→ Uni-dimensional scales have attracted attention of late

↳ As a result of Rasch 60 & 66

→ Caution: attitudes do not necessarily predict or show positive correlation with behavior

→ Many attitude researchers feel it is necessary to use a multi-dimensional scale

↳ Eg, belief, emotional, action components

Memory and Diaries

- Answering autobiographical questions can run into memory problems
- Often inaccuracies in recall of past activities
- **Alternative: self-recorded diaries**
 - ↪ Record event at the time it happened
 - ↪ Used in organizational settings as well as participant observer
 - ↪ Assumption: more reliable data
- **Perry London 70**
 - ↪ Interviews of rescuers and rescued
 - ↪ Model interview study
 - ↪ Three traits of heroic helpers
 - Spirit of adventure
 - Strong sense of identification with parental model of moral conduct
 - Feeling of being a socially marginal individual
 - ↪ Data limited because depended on recall of past

Memory and Diaries

→ Is a self recorded diary itself a reliable record?

↪ Conrath, Higgins & McClean 83

↪ Data collected from three diverse companies

↪ Participants to keep record of 100 consecutive interactions

➤ The other party

➤ Initiator

➤ Mode of interaction

➤ Lapse time

➤ And process involved

↪ Easy to do diary - 408 checkmarks

↪ Later to answer a questionnaire covering similar estimates

↪ Compared diary and questionnaire

➤ Cross checked interactions

➤ Could measure reliability of the diary and questionnaire

➤ Questionnaire data less reliable than diary

→ Can play a useful role as a supplement in almost any research study

↪ Need adequate preparation