Conducting Interviews

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Conducting Interviews

Interview Types
Preparation
Questions & Schedules
Interviews

- Qualitative research method
- Typically one-on-one conversations with users, not-yet users, community representatives, or stakeholders
  - face-to-face
  - phone
  - video conference
- Time intensive (45–60 minutes for sessions, plus preparation, processing, analysis)
- Subject to interviewer bias (e.g., interviewee wanting to please or not offend interviewer, interviewer “leading” the interviewee)
- Subject to interviewee inaccuracies in retelling experiences/behavior (e.g., remembering processes or engagement differently than they occurred)
- Typically involve small numbers of subjects
- Opportunity for follow up questions and clarification than many methods, leads to deeper possibilities for understanding
- Opportunity to gather anecdotal data and human stories; powerful for storytelling.
- One-on-one format allows interviewers to avoid group dynamics issues that may arise with focus groups and customize interviews to individuals as needed

Conducting Interviews

Types of Interviews
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Types of Interviews

- Structured
- Semi-structured
- Unstructured
- Standardized
- Narrative
- Panel

Structured Interviews

- Follows a **pre-set interview script** (typically including pre-set follow up questions), read aloud by interviewer, who records responses

- Attempt to **keep conditions the same between interviews** and among multiple interviewers

- **Set questions**

- **Scripted prompts**

- Interviewer typically attempts objective approach to avoid influencing responses

Semi-Structured Interviews

- Interviewer has broader prompts, may rephrase questions or explain what a question means
- Questions may be omitted or added in for clarification
- Clear structure is followed, but allows for flexibility
- Interviewer must note what questions were asked in each interview and any deviations to the script

Unstructured Interviews

- More like a conversation
- Questions may not be planned in advance, but depend on what interviewee says
- Usually requires increased skill (to react and respond in the moment)
- Notetakers must work harder and faster
- Piloting with feedback from a third party is recommended

Other Types of Interviews

Standardized Interviews
• Questions do not ask for an open response, but offer a list of options
• Verbal equivalent of a checklist

Narrative Interviews
• Interviewee story-tells experience
• Interviewer’s role as prompter, keep narrative relevant
• Analysis can be challenging

Panel Interviews
• Interview the same people over lengths of time to find out how views may change
• Need to establish willingness from beginning
• Options for opting out at any point; mechanism for replacing opt-outs
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Interviewers

• Interviewers should be properly trained in interview techniques
  – Pleasant, receptive manner
  – Inspire confidence
  – Good listener
  – Helps participants feel comfortable
• Asks non-leading questions, refrain from body language that may influence responses
• Follows up with additional questions as the format allows
• Avoids and counteracts any interviewer bias
• Ideally, does not “represent” the entity being explored in the interview
• May be accompanied by a recorder or notetaker

Recording

• Modes: audio, video, notes
• Requires consent (signed)
• Note taking can be augmented by pre-filled in materials, checklist, forms, with ample space to note departures.

• Purposes:
  – allowing interviewer to focus on interviewee
  – capturing verbal or non-verbal cues
  – transcribing discussion verbatim
  – validating notes
  – enabling multiple listeners to check reliability
  – decreasing likelihood of interviewer bias
General Preparation

- Prepare recruiting and consent forms in accordance with IRB requirements and informing participants about any risks they may encounter.

- Ensure comfortable, accessible, safe spaces (check for barriers in digital and/or physical environments, e.g., time of day, technology required, cost of transportation/parking/wayfinding, security considerations)

- Instruct interviewees about any materials they should bring (e.g., screenshots of examples, writing utensils) or use (e.g., whiteboards) during the session.

- Ask interviewees in advance and provide accommodations that enable or facilitate their participation.

- Ensure prepared scripts, questions, consent forms, props, note taking materials/checklists, recording devices, etc. are ready in advance.

- Pilot questions and protocols extensively before the first “real” interview; select pilot participants who are similar to the intended interview. Check to be sure questions are clearly stated, jargon free, not leading, etc.

- If possible, use both an interviewer and a notetaker/observer. Notetakers/observers should not attempt to participate actively in the session but should be introduced to interviewees.

- Consider role and cost of transcription services or coding software.
Cultural Competence in Interviews

Reflect on your process, start to finish.

• Have you met with your target audience to ensure your work is connected to issues relevant to them?
• Have you included diverse members in your research team including those that might identify with your interviewees?
• Have you considered the representativeness of your interviewee sample?
• Have you reflected on your planned interview communication style?
• Are you mindful of the role of identify and power differences in your interview plan?
• Have you engaged in full disclosure and transparency with your interviewees (including but not limited to IRB consent)?
• Have you fully considered risks to interviewees (including but not limited to privacy concerns)?
• Have you incorporated plans for reciprocation for the time and effort given by interviewees? For empowerment? How will involvement in the project benefit interviewees and those they represent?
• Have you engaged in sufficient cultural competence training and reflection to conduct the interviews in a culturally competent manner and be aware of and avoid inclusion of researcher bias?
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Interview Questions

• Start with “easy” questions to build participant confidence and comfort level
• Questions should be concise and focused
• Avoid jargon
• Ask one question at a time
• Avoid hypothetical questions
• Questions should flow logically
General Schedule

• Begin with confirmation of consent to participate and record.
• Explain the purpose of the interview.
• Share clear instructions and timeline for the interview.
• Engage in interview questions.
• Close with a review of the conversation, options for interviewee follow ups, and an expression of gratitude.
• Afterwards, check the recording, write summaries, and begin analysis.
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