

Literature Review of *Interview/Re-interview Designs*

Given the previous literature review's extensive information regarding interview research methods, this literature review begins to focus on creating a specific and useable design for an interview survey. In order to do this, it first examines common threats to interview or survey designs; offers specific design considerations, especially in consideration with the survey design considerations presented in the *Survey Methods* literature review; examines steps to help make interview/re-interview designs as fruitful as possible, especially in consideration of interviewer effect; and explores inter-rater reliability rates. Overall, practical methodological considerations are offered in order to enhance survey interview/re-interview designs.

Common threats to interview or survey designs

Perhaps one of the most aggravating instances in collecting interview data is the inability or the refusal for an interview subject to answer a given question (Baxter & Babbie, 2004; Singleton & Straits, 2002). While the ethics of data collecting must be considered, it is also fair to consider in the design process reasons why people refuse to answer questions: they are scared of repercussions, they feel inadequate or ashamed by their answer; they feel as though it violates privacy boundaries; or they are unsure of what the questions means and do not want to admit they are confused by the question (Aquileno, 1994; Ryen, 2002; Silverman, 1997). With certain surveys, it is also possible personal logistical reasons (language barriers, illness, learning disabilities) will cause the interview process to falter (Finkel, Guterbock, & Borg, 1991; Gubriem & Holstein, 2002; Kane & Macaulay, 1993; Ryen, 2002).

Researchers can help to make the interview situation as successful as possible by making the conditions under which the interview is conducted as simple and convenient as possible for each individual in the sample (Briggs, 1986; Foddy, 1993; Fontana & Frey, 2000). This means allowing them to take the survey, if possible, at the time they choose in the location they choose (as long as the location is safe for the interviewer) (Fowler, 1991; Friedman, et al, 2003; Kvale, 1996). Additionally, if asking a series of information that may not be committed to memory (or could be falsely committed to memory), it is sometimes helpful to offer a warning of what kind of information will be collected during the interview (Kvale, 1996; Warren, 2002). This could include financial statements, objects or artifacts relevant to the interview topic, or collecting information from others that may be asked of the interviewee (e.g., family history). Of course, perhaps the most beneficial preparation is a proper training procedure as outlined in the previous literature review.

Preparing successful interview designs

Many considerations can allow the interviewer maximum comfort and minimum confusion during the interview process. For instance, it is helpful to adopt a convention that differentiates between the words that interviewers are to read to respondents and words that are instructions (Fontana & Frey, 2000). A common convention is to use uppercase letters for instructions and lowercase for questions to be read aloud. Also, if an interview uses a paper-and-pencil form, and is not computer assisted, it is helpful to establish a clear convention for handling instructions to skip questions that do not apply to a particular respondent. The instructions should be keyed to a particular response and indicate to the interviewer where to go to ask the next questions. Of course, computer-

assisted can be programmed to make skips automatically (Fowler, 1991). It can also be helpful to come up with optional ways of asking questions (that do not change the intent behind the question) and to put this optional wording in parentheses next to the preferred wording on the interview schedule (Foddy, 1993; Fowler, 1991). Conventions such as (his/her) or (husband/wife) are easy for interviewers to handle smoothly if they are alerted by the parentheses (Gubriem & Holstein, 2002; Kvale, 1996). A similar convention uses all caps (e.g., SPOUSE) when the interviewer must supply a word that is not provided in the question itself (Foddy, 1993). Computer assistance often enables optional wording to be filled in, rather than have the interviewer adapt the wording to the situation (Singleton & Straits, 2002). It is also important to check to make sure that all words that the interviewer has to say are, in fact, are written somewhere on the interview schedule (Fowler, 1991). This includes not only the phrasing of the questions but also possible definitions to be read to participants (as well as possible explanations as to why certain questions are being asked) (Fowler, 1991; Kvale, 1996). Having this information on the interviewer schedule and training interviewers to use these techniques will help to ensure consistent interview administration (Singleton & Straits, 2002).

Of course, in many ways survey interviews are surveys that are read aloud. For this reason, it can be quite helpful to explore the *Survey Methods* literature review and to consider how this information plays into the construction of interview schedules.

Mixed-methods: Extending data and utility

Given the situations many of the states in the ConQIR Consortium face in terms of interviewer administration—where recruiters facilitate an initial qualifying interview and specially hired interviewers facilitate follow-up interviews—it is important that an

interview/re-interview design be considered. If administered properly, this design can help to clarify and ease the interview process; and the results can be checked for eligibility and in terms of reliability with ease. Additionally, should questions of fraud or rogue administration ever come into question, the interview/re-interview design could also act as a good measure for determining how these situations are being enacted (Kvale, 1996).

The mixed-methods approach to survey construction is highly effective, especially interviews (Cresswell, 2003; Friedman, et al, 2003). The mixed-method approach retains the rigidity and certainty of quantitative data while enhancing it with potentially in-depth qualitative data (Cresswell, 2003). For an interview/re-interview design employing a mixed-method approach, a specific question with a closed-end answer would be followed by an open-ended answer elaborating upon the same question (Friedman, et al, 2003). If a respondent were asked to rate from 1 to 5 how satisfied they were with a specific element of a program, not only could the number score be recorded; but with the follow up question of why other data could be collected that could be helpful to the sponsoring organization of the survey (Cresswell, 2003). While this particular approach has the disadvantage of taking more time to conduct the full interview, it has the advantages already listed in this section of the literature review as well as the advantage of data flexibility—that is later on there is more potential for the data collected with a mixed-method approach to be mined for other aspects of the program (Cresswell, 2003; Gubriem & Holstein, 2002; Kavale, 1996; Singleton & Straits, 2002; Warren, 2002).

Same versus different interviewer

A definite consideration relevant to interview/re-interview designs is whether the same interviewer should be used in both data collections. This depends largely upon the mission of the organization conducting the research and what they hope to do with the data. First, as long as both interviewers are properly trained the interview schedule should generally achieve the same results (Singleton & Straits, 2002; Silverman, 1997). That is, if a proper instrument is developed and administered consistently, it should produce an acceptable inter-rater reliability rate (Keyton, et al, 2004). The only exception can be with sensitive information in intercultural contexts (Ryen, 2002). This is mostly likely to be seen in intercultural situations created by ethnic/racial or perceived sexual orientation differences where data may be considered evasive or threatening (Aquileno, 1994; Finkel, Guterbock, & Borg, 1991; Kane & Macaulay, 1993; Ryen, 2002).

Design factors typically producing low and high inter-rater reliability

Many times a poorly considered design factor could cause poor inter-rater reliability (Briggs, 1986; Fowler, 1991). For instance, if a project is seeking opinion-oriented information (as opposed to fact-based information), it is possible (and, perhaps, even likely) opinions changed between the time the first and second data collections were administered (Fowler, 1991). For instance, if someone administered an interview survey asking about satisfaction with a particular product, the person could reply that he or she is highly satisfied with the product. When the second survey interview is administered three weeks later, however, that same person might give an answer indicating extreme dissatisfaction because of some negative experience with the product. For an interview/re-interview process to be effective when seeking this kind of information,

then, it is necessary to administer the second interview almost immediately (Gubriem & Holstein, 2002).

From this example alone it almost becomes contrastively apparent what type of survey/interview designs create good interview/re-interview designs for a satisfactory inter-rater reliability. First, the survey should collect factual information (Foddy, 1993). Second, the information should be located in a particular space and time (Foddy, 1993). This kind of information will often only be reported consistently; and if it is not, then it is likely because of respondent error (Fowler, 1991). Questions involving factual information may include, “Were you a resident of Kansas before August 31, 2001?” “What is your race?” “How many children lived in your household in May 2006?” A third consideration is options available for the respondents to choose as an answer (Creswell, 2003). Likert scale choices reflecting levels of understanding are often unreliable because opinions are hard to locate in a particular space and time (CITE). So if a person were to ask, “What was your satisfaction with your children’s education in August 2005,” the respondent may answer “5” during the first interview; but, in the second, after a negative occurrence with the school, the respondent may be biased and only report a “4” for total satisfaction, thus diminishing inter-rater reliability. Designing surveys that avoid these pitfalls is an important step toward acceptable inter-rater reliability levels.

(For more information on designing surveys and interviews, see the Survey Methods, Interview/Re-Interview Methods; and to see how to determine inter-rater reliability and whether the inter-reliability rate should be accepted or rejected, see the Inter-Rater Reliability literature review).

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