

Notes on Interviewing

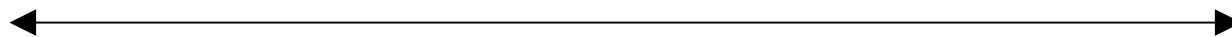
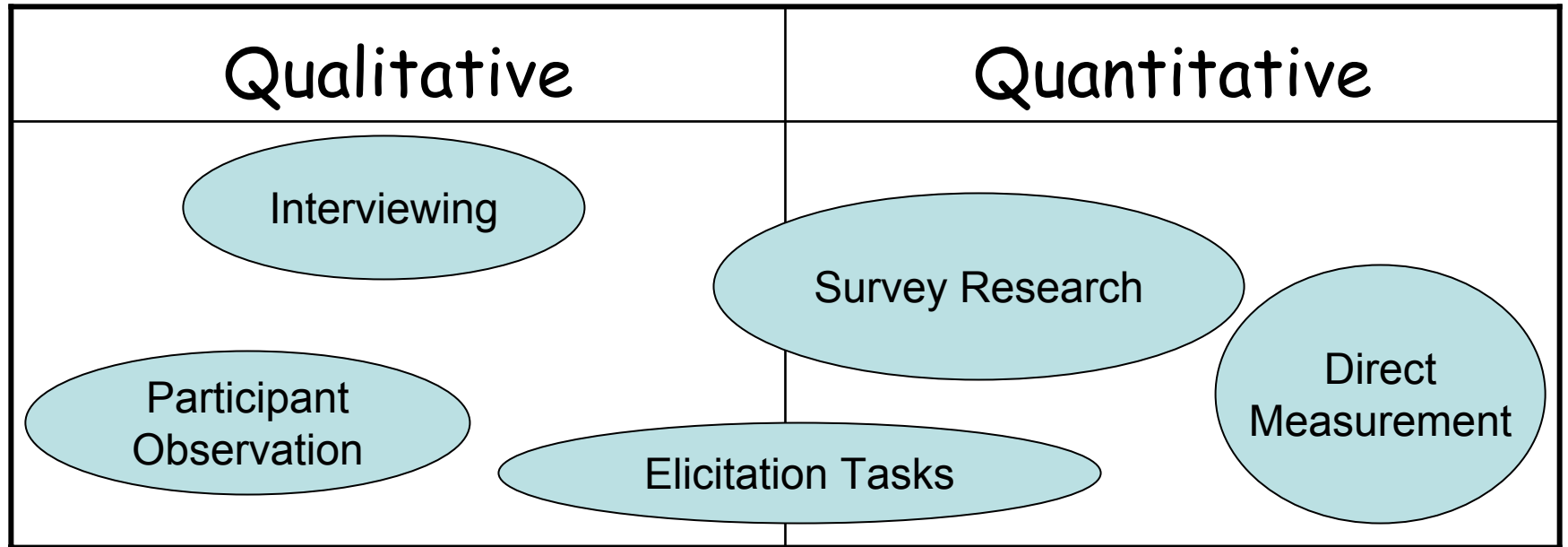
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Where I'm coming from

- Professional interviewer in marketing research
- Ph.D. in cognitive anthropology, UC-Irvine
- Instructor (8 years) and Director (3 years) of the NSF Institute for Ethnographic Research Methods
- Co-founder of journal *Field Methods*
- Author of ANTHROPAC software
 - Analysis of qualitative data

Social science data collection



Structuredness
Replicability
Objectivity

Utilizing interview data

- All interviews tape recorded and transcribed
 - Digital recorder that organizes material in files and folders, connects to PC via USB
 - Transcribing program with pedal
- Input to text analysis program
- Data coded & analyzed

Analyzing interview data

- Qualitative analysis

- Direct intuition
- Tagging and collating
- Grounded theory
- Semantic networks

- Quantitative analysis

- Comparing word counts
- Content analysis
 - formal coding & statistical analysis

Key goals in interviewing

- Generating language & closed-ended responses for future survey
 - How addicts in Hartford talk about drugs
- Developing broad understanding of situation/phenomena in context
 - The case of clerk smiles
- Theory construction
 - What determines price wars?

First steps

- Establish rapport -
 - clinical aloofness is for surveys.
 - Will get you nowhere in interviewing
- Ask permission
- Make clear when you are in interview mode
 - Take out tape recorder & paper/pencil

Posture

- Make clear your ignorance
 - Can't ask stupid questions otherwise
 - This is why you can't interview friends
- Be an apprentice
- Let the informant lead sometimes
 - Make them the teacher and/or colleague in the investigation

Techniques

- Unstructured probes
- Elicitation tasks

Probes

- Silence
 - Sometimes forces informant to produce more
 - Some people are more thoughtful than others
- Echo & verification
 - Repeat in own words what they said
 - Let's informant think, and tests whether you got it right

Probes

- Uh-huh
 - Matarazzo study shows uh-huhs increase interview length by about 1/3rd
- Priming
 - Think about what you had for breakfast today. Now, what are the all the steps involved in making breakfast at your household?

Probes

- Descriptive questions
 - What is jail like?
 - Can you draw me a map of campus?
- Terminological questions
 - Is there a name for when sales people do that?
- Example questions
 - What's an example of an problem customer?
- Story questions
 - I'm sure you've seen a lot strange things go on around here in your time. Tell me about one of them

Probes

- Grand tours
 - Could you describe a typical night at the bar?
 - Tell me what happened last night, starting with the moment you walked in the place
 - Tell me about each room in the building
 - Tell me the whole process of how nickel is made, from beginning to end

Probes

- Structural questions
 - Is "horse" a kind of drug?
 - What are the different kinds of dance taught here?
 - What's the difference between coke and crack?

Probes

- Leading questions
 - Very tricky, but can be useful
 - "so, the field engineer is supposed to write-up an exception report and send it to the Quality department and wait for an answer. But what do they really do?"
- Phased assertion & baiting
 - People will often tell you more if they think you already know about something
 - Particularly illegal or sensitive things

Elicitation tasks

- Free lists
- Triads
 - For eliciting dimensions of thought within a cognitive domain
 - Competitors
 - Problems
- Pile sorts
 - Not only dimensions, but general categories

Ethical & Security Issues

- Truly informed consent
- Confidentiality but not anonymity
- Damning write-ups
- Becoming an accomplice
- Eliciting too much too soon
- Avoiding retribution

Validity Issues

- Which questions you ask limit the kinds of answers you can get
 - Don't say "informants were especially concerned about X" when it was you that kept asking about X
 - Prohibitionist interviewer elicited alcohol probs
- Informants react to social identity of the interviewer
 - Women asked reported less pre-marital sex to in female interviewers than men
 - Responses more anti-Semitic when interviewer non-Jewish

Validity Issues

- Deference effect
 - Telling you what you want to hear
 - Informants telling African American interviewer that they will vote for AA candidate
- Expectancy effect
 - Unconsciously helping informant to behave as expected
- Distortion effect
 - Hearing what you want to hear

Benefits

- Build sufficient understanding to construct survey questionnaire
- Retains full context of responses
- Enlists aid of the informant
- Deep understanding

Problems

- Validation
 - Highly subjective
 - Can't handle large samples
 - Needs verification by more rigorous means
- Lack of precision makes it more suitable for theory generation than theory testing
- More prone to ethical problems