Needfinding: Advanced interviewing

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THANKS TO DEV PATNAIK AND JOHN TANG AND HELENA ROEBER
Interviewing
What you know already

- Take a representative sample of your target group
- Move from closed-ended questions to open-ended questions
- Look for errors and workarounds
Example
Six advanced interviewing techniques
Beware satisficing

[Simon 1957, Krosnick 1991]

- Your model of interviewee: they hear the question, they think about the most accurate response, then respond

- Actual interviewee: they hear the question, quickly figure out a reasonable or readily available response, then respond
Beware satisficing

[Simon 1957, Krosnick 1991]

- Optimizing: giving the best response
- Satisficing: satisfactory + optimizing — “good enough”
  - Be less thorough in comprehension, retrieval, judgment, response
  - Skip the retrieval and judgment steps, just find a reasonable response

- What do you do? Make the easiest path to answer the same as the path you want them to follow.
Social desirability bias

- Participants have no incentive to lie in an interview.
- But...people want to be viewed favorably by others.

- Social desirability bias is the effect of biasing our responses toward what society or the interviewer might expect.
Critical incident technique
[Flanagan 1954]

• Don’t ask: “How often do you ask your Facebook friends for help answering a question?”
  • (Why is this bad?)

• Critical incident version: “How long ago was the last time that you asked your Facebook friends for help answering a question?”
  • Grounds the interviewee in a specific incident of critical importance
  • Gives you a better sense of how often the event occurs
Don’t pitch

- Your goal is to listen to frank feedback, not to convince them that your idea is right
- This is a surprisingly common problem

- **Demand characteristics:** subtle cues that make participants aware of what you expect to find or how you hope they’ll behave
- This ruins your data

http://www.gv.com/lib/get-better-data-from-user-studies-16interviewing-tips
Silence is golden

• Don’t just move on between questions.

• A simple follow-up question can prompt people to unpack something.

• Or just look interested and don’t say anything...see how they respond.

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Status differences

- Interviews go well when the participant feels comfortable and confident
- Check for signs of low status: avoiding eye contact, angling away from you, asking permission or apologizing
- Lower your own status
  - “You’re the expert on this topic: I’m here to learn from you.”
  - Lower the status of the interface: “It’s just a prototype.”

https://library.gv.com/how-to-hack-your-body-language-for-better-interviews-2b28b99e6e6d#.wipkwmkw1
Practice interview

Find a partner
One of you interviews the other about challenges balancing coursework
4min interview + 2min critique
Interviewing: Six techniques

- Beware satisficing
- Social desirability bias
- Critical incident technique
- Don’t pitch (demand characteristics)
- Silence is golden
- Status differences