

Needfinding: Advanced interviewing

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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

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.

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.”
 - Look interested and lean in. Ask permission. Reassure + encourage.
 - Lower the status of the interface: “It’s just a prototype.”

Practice interview

Find a partner

One of you interviews the other about challenges balancing courseload

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