

**May 31, 2000**

**Interviewing I**

- About qualitative and quantitative methods
- Unstructured and semistructured interviewing
- Focus groups

**Purposes of Today's Class**

- Understand necessity of both qualitative and quantitative methods
- Define and distinguish major types of interviewing
- Demonstrate skills of unstructured and semi-structured interviewing
- Assess validity of unstructured and semi-structured interviewing

**Words and Numbers**

- Interviewing produces qualitative and quantitative data
- Complementary methods
- More useful distinction based on *structure*

**Types of Interviewing**

- Continuum of interview control
- Different types of data, different aims

**Informal Interviewing**

- Complete lack of structure
- Everyday conversation
- Jotting and fieldnotes

- Key technique in participant observation
- Exploratory aims:
  - Uncover new topics of interest
  - Build rapport

### **Unstructured Interviewing**

- Formal interview based on clear plan
- Minimal structure
- Encourage respondents to express themselves in their terms, at their pace
  - Lived experience
  - Build rapport
  - Questionnaire construction
  - Long-term fieldwork

### **Semistructured Interviewing**

- Open-ended interview based on *interview guide*
- Appropriate under time constraints
  - One interview per informant
  - Informants expect efficient use of time
- Interview guide helps produce reliable, comparable data

## Sampling

- Nonprobability sampling strategies
  - Focus on process and content, not estimation of population parameters
- Purposive sampling
  - Seek knowledgeable informants
  - Maximize heterogeneity
- Saturation point

## Getting Started

- Assure informants of anonymity and confidentiality — *and mean it!*
- Explain your interest in learning from them — *and mean it!*
- Explain how you selected each informant
- Ask for permission to record and take notes
- Establish topic and get out of the way

## Probing

- Stimulate further response with minimal control
- Types of probes
  - Silent probe
  - Echo probe

- Uh-huh probe
  
- Tell-me-more probe
  
- Long-question probe
  
- Probing by leading
  
- Phased-assertion probe
  
- Ethical dilemmas

### **Recording Data**

- The rule: don't trust your memory
- Use tape recorder whenever possible
  - Permanent archive
  - Transcription
- Take notes whenever possible
  - Observe context, behavior
  - Alternate record of interview
- Always ask permission

### **Focus Groups**

- Group discussion moderated by researcher

- Immensely popular
  - Complement survey research
  
  - Produce lots and lots of inexpensive data
  
- Useful for:
  - Getting oriented in a new study
  - Generating hypotheses
  - Developing questions
  - Getting participants' interpretation of results

### **Forming Focus Groups**

- Group size
- Composition
  - Generally, homogeneous on independent variables
  - Participants should not know one another
- Number of groups
  - Factorial design
  - One group per category of independent variable

### **Factorial Design and Focus Groups**

## Threats to Measurement Validity

- Response effects
  - Deference effect
  - Threatening questions
  - Expectancy effect
  
- Accuracy
  - Limits of human memory
  - Dishonesty
  - Social desirability effect