



Evaluation Methods – Interviewing Techniques

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NLPES Fall Training Conference

September 24, 2008

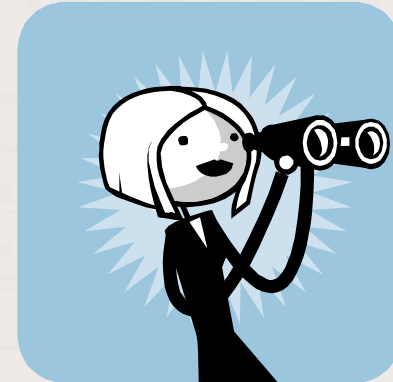
Overview

- Types of Interviews
- Question Sequence
- Question Wording
- Prompts and Probes
- Analyzing and Reporting Results

When do auditors/evaluators use the interview?

- Preliminary survey

- Background
- Issue scoping



- Fieldwork

- Direct evidence
- Criteria

Informal conversational interview

➤ Strengths

- Increases the salience and relevance of questions
- Built on and emerges from observations
- Can be matched to individuals and circumstances

➤ Weaknesses

- Different info, people and questions
- Data organization and analysis can be quite difficult

Interview guide approach

➤ Strengths

- More comprehensive
- More systematic data collection
- Logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed
- Interviews remain fairly conversational and situational

➤ Weaknesses

- Reduced comparability of responses
- Interviewer wording changes can result in bias from responses
- Tendency to ignore differences between perspectives because questions are formed to fit the interviewee

Standardized open-ended interview

➤ Strengths

- Increased comparability of responses
- Complete Data for each person
- Reduces interviewer effects and bias
- Instrument flaws are easier to spot
- Facilitates organization and analysis of the results

➤ Weaknesses

- Less flexible in matching the interview to particular individuals and circumstances
- Standardized wording of questions may constrain and limit naturalness and relevance of questions and answers
- Can't be too long
- Open-ended answers still pose problems for analysis

Closed, fixed response interview

➤ Strengths

- Data analysis is relatively straightforward
- Responses can be directly compared and easily aggregated
- Many questions can be asked in a short time

➤ Weaknesses

- Respondents' responses limited to researcher's categories
- May appear impersonal and mechanistic
- Seems like a "survey" but lacks a survey's methodological strength from sample size

Interviewing

Is:

a conversation with a purpose.

Is not:

a substitute for DIRECT observation.

Types of Questions

- Experience/Behavior
- Opinion/Value
- Knowledge Questions
- Sensory Questions
- Background
- Time Frame

Question Sequence

1. Non-Controversial
2. Present Time
3. Descriptive
4. Opinions
5. Assess Knowledge & Skill
6. Past (use as baseline)
7. Future
8. Keep most demographics to the end

Wording

➤ Avoid

- dichotomies
- presuppositions
- "why" questions
- implied dimensions



➤ Make sure

- questions contain singular ideas
- are clear



Prompts and Probes

Prompt:

- Reassures respondent that s/he is giving you a suitable answer
- Controls the pace
- Keeps respondent “on track”

Probe:

- Obtains additional information
- Ensures completeness of interview evidence
- Is flexible to new information

Examples of Prompts

- Thank you
- I see
- Uh huh
- Nod
- Smile
- Interesting, we can come back to that...

Types of Probes

- **Grand Tour**—Can you start me at the beginning and walk me through the process?
- **Biographical**—Can you give me some background on how the process developed?
- **Clarification**—Can you clarify how a written complaint differs from one phoned in?
- **Elaboration**—Can you elaborate on how exactly the money gets to the bank?
- **Confirmation**—[Describe your understanding of what was just said] Do I understand the process correctly?

Types of Probes

“Is there anything else?”

Listening: the most important interview skill

- The questions are not as important as the answers
- Remind yourself to hear the answers
- Use focusing techniques to help yourself learn to listen
- Develop your own tricks to improve your listening skills
- Don't think, listen

Listening

Remember:

- Stop talking
- Don't cut respondent off
- Manage impressions

Analyzing Results

Best analysis must be:

- Exact—don't guess, know
- Parsimonious—concise, not wordy
- Consistent—internally & externally
- Fertile—details support; new issue areas
- Powerful—"write-able" phrases

Interviews as Evidence

- Weak
- Requires secondary sources
- Triangulation
- Confirmation

Yellow Book evidence levels

Types of evidence

- Direct (BEST)
 - *Physical*: direct observation of people, property or events
- Indirect
 - *Documentary*: created information (letters, invoices, accounting records)
 - *Testimonial*: interviews, questionnaires
 - *Analytical*: comparisons, computations, rational arguments

Interviews as Evidence

- *For background-* no secondary sources needed
- *For finding-* rely on secondary sources to confirm such as measuring outputs at certain process points or direct observation; otherwise attribute

Summary

- Fit interview type to evidence needs
- Order questions for ease of interviewee
- Limit bias in question wording
- Control pace thru prompts
- Probe for clarity and completeness
- Confirm and/or support with other evidence