

Interviewing, Structured and Unstructured

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- 1 Questionnaire Design
 - Evaluative Questions
 - Recall-type Questions

- 2 Sensitive Topics

- 3 Elite Interviewing

- 4 Problem Set 5

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Problem Set 4

- PS 4 was the first time we tried to obtain data from raw materials
- How did that go? What was challenging about it?

Problem Set 4

- PS 4 was the first time we tried to obtain data from raw materials
- How did that go? What was challenging about it?
- Interviewing may seem easier than text analysis, but it poses unique challenges

Concept definition and Operationalization

- Questionnaires start with concept definition
- Multiple ways to operationalize any concept
- Important concepts may require multiple measures

Construct Validity, Accuracy, and Precision

- Question should measure concept of interest
- Questionnaires can generate data at any level of measurement
 - Binary/logical
 - Categorical
 - Ordinal
 - Interval

How do we know if a survey response is “true”?

Validation studies

- 1 Some survey responses can be *validated*
- 2 Easy for some behavioural constructs
- 3 Direct observation, administrative data, etc.

Topics of questions

- Evaluations (opinions, attitudes, etc.)
- Recall (behaviour, events, knowledge, etc.)
 - Demographics (age, sex, ethnicity, etc.)

Structure of a question

- Survey mode
- Survey context
- Vignette or introductory text
- Question itself
- Response format and options
- Follow-ups, branches, checks, validation, clarification

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Evaluative questions

- Name an object of evaluation
- Possibly describe that object
- Ask for a transformation of the evaluation onto a set of responses

Question templates

- Ratings
 - Several varieties of rating scales
- Scales/Thermometers
- Agree-disagree
- Forced choices
- Open-ended
- Rankings (note: need alternatives to rank against)

Extended Example

- Public opinion survey in Great Britain
- Construct: Opinion toward UK involvement in air strikes on Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria
- Think about strengths and weaknesses of each question

Example: Rating (bipolar)

Do you support or oppose Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

- Strongly support
- Somewhat support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Somewhat oppose
- Strongly oppose

Example: Rating (branching)

Do you support or oppose Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

- Support
- Neither support nor oppose
- Oppose

Would you say that you strongly [support|oppose] or somewhat [support|oppose] Great Britain's participation?

- Strongly
- Somewhat

Example: Rating (bipolar)

Are you favourable or unfavourable toward Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

- Very favourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Neither favourable nor unfavourable
- Somewhat unfavourable
- Strongly unfavourable

Example: Rating (unipolar)

To what extent do you support Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

- Strongly
- Moderately
- Somewhat
- Not at all

Example: Rating (unipolar)

How favourable are you toward Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

- Extremely favourable
- Very favourable
- Moderately favourable
- Somewhat favourable
- Not at all favourable

Example: Numbered Scale

On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “strongly oppose” and 5 being “strongly support,” to what extent do you support Great Britain’s participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

1 Strongly oppose

2

3

4

5 Strongly support

Example: Thermometer

We would like to get your feelings toward some of political policies. Please rate your support for the policy using something we call the feeling thermometer. Ratings between 50 degrees and 100 degrees mean that you feel favourable and warm toward the policy. Ratings between 0 degrees and 50 degrees mean that you don't feel favourable toward the policy. You would rate the policy at the 50 degree mark if you don't feel particularly favourable or unfavourable toward.

Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria.

- 0–100 slider

Example: Agree/Disagree (bipolar)

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I support Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Example: Agree/Disagree (unipolar)

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I support Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria.

- Agree completely
- Agree to a large extent
- Agree to a moderate extent
- Agree a little bit
- Agree not at all

Example: Forced choice

When thinking about Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria, which of the following comes closer to your opinion:

- Great Britain should participate in air strikes
- Great Britain should not participate in air strikes

Example: Open-ended

In your own words, how would you describe your opinion on Great Britain's participation in U.S.-led air strikes on Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria?

Additional Considerations

- How many response categories?
- Middle category (presence and label)
- “no opinion” and/or “don’t know” options
- Probe if “no opinion” or “don’t know”?
 - Encourage guessing?
 - Clarify/describe object of evaluation?
- Branching format?

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Recall-type Questions

- Knowledge
- Behaviour
- Events

Recalling Knowledge

- Factual items with “true” responses
- Examples
 - Political knowledge
 - Knowledge about products/services
 - General knowledge
- Knowledge varies widely across individuals

Recalling Knowledge

- How do we deal with “don’t know” responses?
 - Genuine expression of lack of knowledge?
 - Insufficient time to think?
 - Question was unclear/ambiguous?

Recalling Knowledge

- How do we deal with “don’t know” responses?
 - Genuine expression of lack of knowledge?
 - Insufficient time to think?
 - Question was unclear/ambiguous?
- Huge debate about this

Recalling Behaviours

- Things respondent did in the past
- Examples
 - Media use
 - Eating/dietary habits
 - Past voting
- Challenging to measure accurately
- Can be easily validated

Measuring Behaviours

- Provide counts for a given *reference period*
- Provide a rate within a reference period
- List specific behavioural events
 - Allows follow-up questioning

Recalling Events

- Things that happened as specific points in time
- Examples
 - Events in the news
 - Crime victimization
 - Time when you felt angry
- Same problems as with other types of recall

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- Question misunderstanding
 - Vague concepts
 - Confusing or long wording

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- Question misunderstanding
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 - Confusing or long wording
- Forgetting
- Recency/primacy biases among responses
- Motivated misreporting
- Reference period ambiguity
- Rare events
- True “don’t know” responses

Motivated misreporting

- Intentionally giving an incorrect response
 - Applies to recall and evaluative questions

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Motivated misreporting

- Intentionally giving an incorrect response
 - Applies to recall and evaluative questions
- Examples?
- Several common biases
 - Social desirability bias
 - Positivity bias
 - Acquiescence bias
 - Demand characteristics

Questions about recall questions?

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Sensitive Questions

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- Factors affecting topic sensitivity
 - Individual differences
 - Mode
 - Interviewer
 - Survey context
 - Survey sponsorship
 - Perceived privacy

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- Factors affecting topic sensitivity
 - Individual differences
 - Mode
 - Interviewer
 - Survey context
 - Survey sponsorship
 - Perceived privacy
- Why do we care?

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Sensitive Questions Activity

- 1 To the nearest £1,000, what is your parents' total household income?
- 2 Have you ever stolen anything from a current or former employer?
- 3 When was the last time you had unprotected sex?
- 4 During today's class session, how much time have you spent on your computer on things unrelated to class?

Eliciting Answers to Sensitive Questions

- Ensure privacy, anonymity, or confidentiality
- Change modes
- Indirect measures
 - “List experiment”
- Provide population rates
- Placement in survey instrument

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Elite Interviewing

- Rules of questionnaire design style apply
- Unique challenges/opportunities:
 - Time constraints
 - Guarantees of anonymity?
 - Public information may be available
 - Often exempt from research ethics review

Structured versus Unstructured

- We've focused on “structured” interviews
 - Strict order of questions
 - Questions are precisely worded
 - Often, closed set of response categories

Structured versus Unstructured

- We've focused on "structured" interviews
 - Strict order of questions
 - Questions are precisely worded
 - Often, closed set of response categories
- Elite interviews are often "semi-structured"
 - Greater use of open-ended questions
 - More flexible ordering of questions
 - More respondent-driven

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Problem Set 5

- Work in pairs to conduct a “pilot” study
- Use a Eurobarometer survey of your choice
- Evaluate the process of collecting interview data

Evaluating a questionnaire

- Is the question easy for respondents to understand?
- Are the number and types of response options appropriate?
- Are the categories sufficiently distinct from one another?
- Is a “no opinion,” “don’t know,” or “neither support nor oppose” response option available?
- Is one survey item (i.e., one question) sufficient to measure this construct?
- How long does it take to read and answer this question?

Cognitive interviewing methods

- Retrospective think-alouds (in which respondents describe how they arrive at their answers either just after they provide them or at the end of the interview)
- Paraphrasing (in which respondents restate the question in their own words)
- Definitions (in which respondents provide definitions for the key terms in the question)
- Probes (in which respondents answer follow-up questions designed to reveal their response strategies)

