Writing Questions for Interviews
COMM 420 – Fall 2021
5 Points

INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1: Research questions are general questions that your research strives to answer. Think about the **Influencer marketing** project that we are conducting as a class. The *Interview Analysis Assignment* has listed four general research questions (see below). Here you will write down **4 interview questions** that you can ask your participants in order to address the four research questions respectively. (*Note*: **0.5 point for each** interview question)

Research Questions:

1. How do interviewees describe and characterize their experiences with influencer marketing? Is there a wide range of opinion, or is it uniform?
2. Under what conditions do people buy products promoted by social media influencers?
3. What actions and interactions are associated with the influencer marketing phenomenon?
4. What do interviewees see as the consequences of this phenomenon?

Interview Questions:

1.
2.
3.
4.

Step 2: In addition to the four general research questions, think about one specific area or aspect of influencer marketing that is of interest to you. Write one additional research question that you want to answer through the interview. (**1 point**)

Based on your own research question, write 2 examples of non-directive, and 2 examples of directive questions that can answer your research question. **You will write a total of 4 questions here**. You can follow instructions and <u>examples on the next page</u> to draft your non-directive and directive questions. (**0.5 point for each** interview question)

Your Research Question:

Interview questions:

- non-directive question:
- non-directive question:
- directive question:
- directive question:

Writing Questions for Interviews and Focus Groups

The kinds of questions that make sense in qualitative research are completely different than the ones we use in quantitative research, like surveys. Or the kinds we use when we want direct answers, like in journalism. In interviews and focus groups we want to start with very GENERAL questions, allowing participants to instruct us on a topic, from their perspective. (If a question can be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No," it's probably not a good question for qualitative research.)

Below you'll find types of interview questions and concrete examples. The examples below are based on a study about different types of communications students used to make decisions about which college they would attend.

Non-directive questions: Questions that allow participants to act as "teachers," drawing on their widest possible experiences. There are eight basic types:

1. **Grand Tour question**: A question that asks your participant to play "tour guide," explaining an activity, event, relationship or role. (Ex. "So what's it like to go through the college decision-making process in the 21st century?")
2. **Memorable-tour question**: A question that asks your participant to focus on one "standout" experience, or a turning point in their life. (Ex. "Can you tell me about the moment you realized you were going to Penn State?")
3. **Timeline question**: A question that asks your participant to talk about the "steps" between two events in the participant's life. (Ex. "From the time you decided to go to PSU until the day you arrived on campus, how did you make sure you were ready to succeed in the PSU environment?")
4. **Baiting probe**: A follow-up question designed to have the participants further explore their emotional state. (Ex. "I'll bet you were pretty excited when you got that acceptance letter. Tell me about that.")
5. **Example question**: A question that asks a participant to name a specific case in point for a general phenomenon. (Ex. "Can you give me an example of a conversation you had with your parents that let you know they supported your decision to come to PSU?")
6. **Why question**: Sort of self-explanatory – a question that asks a participant to explain the rationale for some event even further, sometimes providing a supposition when the real reason is unknown. (Ex. "Why do you think so many people find the college decision making process stressful?")
7. **Posing the ideal question**: A question that asks a participant to imagine a "perfect" version of some phenomenon, interaction or object. (Ex. "What would the perfect college interview be like?")
8. **Projective question**: A question that asks a participant to explain relationships between objects, people, places and ideas that are ambiguous, in order to discover the emotions and motivations associated with those things. (Ex. "If Penn state was an animal, what animal would it be? Finish this sentence: I know I picked the right college when I…")

Directive Questions: A question that clarifies information given in previous answers. There are six basic types:

1. **Structural question**: A question that asks a participant to categorize a phenomenon. (Ex. "What are the different types of colleges students in your hometown think about attending?")
2. **Compare-contrast question**: A question that asks a participant to draw distinctions between aspects of a phenomenon or topic. (Ex. "What is the difference between attending a large, state affiliated college and attending a small, private college?")
3. **Emergent idea question**: A question that allows a participant to formulate or refine an idea that has come up in the course of an interview. (Ex. "So I think what I'm hearing is that economics is really the least important reason for choosing a college. Is that right?")
4. **Devil's advocate question**: A question in which the interviewer poses an alternative or hypothetical example to the participant, forcing them to think outside of their lived experience. (Ex. "Let's say, for the sake of argument, that you could have gotten into any undergraduate program you wanted – you're the President's daughter, you have perfect SATs, you've already won scholarships to study in the field you want. Do you think you would wind up at the same school?")
5. **Photo elicitation**: A question in which a visual prompt is used. (Ex. (student is handed a picture of the Nittany Lion with a bunch of grads in regalia next to it) "How does this picture make you feel?")
6. **Vignette**: A short story that allows the participant to imagine a role they could play. (Ex. "Imagine you meet a student from your high school struggling with the decision of where to go to college. What advice do you give them?")