

Learning about your users



Learning about your users

- This is empirical work.
 - “Empirical” = based on data.
 - So you have to collect data about your users.
- 2 kinds of empirical work:
 - Formative: to inFORM design (this is what we’re talking about right now.)
 - Summative: to evaluate your design later. (We’ll talk more about this later.)
 - But it’s really a continuum...

Thought exercise: The Big Picture

- How does formative empirical work with users fit into P R I C P E ?

Check off all the PRICPE steps that apply.

- a. Predispositions
- b. Research
- c. Insights
- d. Concepts
- e. Prototype
- f. Evaluate

The Big Picture

- Formative empirical work:
 - is the main part of “R” (Research)
- One kind of formative empirical work:
 - interviews.

Interview types for this course

- Open-ended/unstructured, structured, semi-structured.
- General guidelines:
 - Have goals set.
 - Avoid long/complex questions.
 - Avoid jargon.
 - Avoid leading questions, be alert to unconscious bias.
 - Be precise in recording/noting, don't "fix".

Four key issues (!!!)

- 1. You need goals (Research questions)!
 - Where do these come from in PRICPS?
- 2. Consider relationship w participants.
 - Comfort, trust, IRB, are you a participant...
 - Examples?
- 3. Triangulate!!
 - Independent data point to same conclusion.
 - Examples?
- 4. Pilot!
 - ...your PROCEDURE and everything in it.

Methods you can use to do formative empirical work

- In this course we'll do only these two:
 - Interviews one-on-one
 - Observations in the field
- There are other methods for doing formative empirical work too...
 - Example

Interview Sequence

- 1. Introduce yourself.
 - who are you exactly, and why are you here?
 - reassurances about confidentiality, IRB procs,
 - IMPORTANT: ask their permission,
 - set up data collection (quickly/efficiently).
- 2. Warm-up:
 - Ask non-threatening, easy questions, eg: background things.

Interview sequence (cont.)

- 3. Main interview:
 - In logical sequence, save hardest for the end.
- 4. Cool down
 - Easy questions, to defuse tension if arose.
- 5. Closing
 - Thank them!!
 - Put stuff away, signaling that the interview is over, any further conversation is not part of it.

General guidelines for interview questions

- THEY are the point, not you.
 - Use vocab THEY know (avoid jargon).
 - LISTEN. Write down what they say + body language, pauses, signs of emotion, etc.
 - After an answer, stay silent a bit to see if THEY want to add something.
- Avoid long/complex questions.
- Avoid leading questions/be alert to unconscious biases.
- Be precise in recording. Don' t “fix”.

Unstructured interviews

- No list of questions.
 - But you still need an agenda, checklist, to ensure everything covered.
- Both you and interviewee can steer a conversation.
- Advantage: lots of rich data, unanticipated, affords emergence of surprises.
- Disadvantage: hard to analyze, can't replicate.

Structured interviews

- Opposite of unstructured.
- Fixed list of questions.
- Only you can steer the conversation.
- Disadvantage: no rich data, all anticipated.
- Advantage: easy to analyze, easy to replicate.

Semi-Structured interviews

- Combines aspects of each.
- Fixed list of questions, each of which is followed by conversation and follow-ups as appropriate.
- Advantages: some rich data, some unanticipated, surprises possible, yet some of the data is easy to analyze to replicate.

Semi-structured interview example

- What websites do you visit frequently?
 - A:
 - Why?
 - A: ...mentions several but says she likes <w> best.
 - And why do you like <w>?
 - A: <x>
 - Tell me more about <x>?
 - A:
 - Anything else about <x>?
 - A:
 - Thanks. Any other reasons you like <w>?

Example

- Break: view 1-2 minutes of [Steve Krug's demo interview](#).
 - Position to “Getting the user talking” (segment #2, minutes 3:13-5:00).
 - Thought exercise.

Thought exercise from that segment of the demo interview

- What kind of interview is this segment?
- What part of the interview sequence was this?
- Did you notice anything he did that violated the guidelines?

Answers to the thought exercise

- What kind of interview is this segment?
 - Semi-structured:
 - Fixed list, with follow-ups based on what she said.
- What part of the interview sequence was this?
 - The warm-up.
- Violated the guidelines?
 - Mostly did great, but there were some violations:
 - Interrupted, talked over her.
 - Leading questions: “and that’s fun?” “like-half-and-half?”
 - Never stayed silent to let her add to her responses.

In-Class Interviewing Activity

- Now you get a chance to practice.
 - Via the interviewing activity on the class web site.