

Qualitative Human Sampling

Or:

How to Talk to Folks and
Make 'Em Spill Their Guts

Working with people

- First, you must get approval – IRB
 - Institutional Review Board
 - Reviews your methods for working with people – makes sure you are not breaking any ethical guidelines
 - May be exempt from approval (a lot of educational work is) BUT you have to ask for exemption

Clearance to work with people

- Work through a set of guidelines to understand what rights people have when using themselves as research
 - Either medically or just to get their responses
- Belmont report – sets out the guidelines
- Basically started with the Nuremburg Report (1949)

Background of Human Subjects Protections – historical perspective

- Nuremburg Code (1949) – first code of conduct
 - Humane treatment of subjects
 - Voluntary consent
 - Stemmed from work of Nazi doctors
- Declaration of Helsinki (1964)
 - Interests of subjects are more important than benefits to society
 - Tied to doctor ethics
 - Refined Nuremburg Code

Background of Human Subjects Protections

- Tuskegee Study (1974) – results led to Belmont Report and the development of the use of the IRB in US
 - US government policies strengthened
 - Effect cannot be over-stated
 - Men with syphilis studied over a period of 40 years, even after a safe and effective treatment was known

Basic Ethical Principles

- RESPECT FOR PERSONS
 - Individual autonomy
 - Protect individuals with lowered autonomy
- BENEFICENCE
 - Do no harm
 - Maximum possible benefit
 - Minimum possible cost
- JUSTICE
 - Equitable distribution of research costs and benefits

RESPECT FOR PERSONS

- Informed consent process
- Surrogate consent
- Assent (by child)
- Protect subjects (vulnerable populations)
 - Prisoners

Informed Consent Process

- Process
- An informational exchange between subjects and researchers before, during and after the study
- Walk the subject through the procedure
- Show the subject a video of what is involved
- Elicit questions from subject about their concerns

Informed Consent Process

- Aim for an 8th grade (lower) educational level
- Use concrete words that can be easily visualized (e.g., talk about your life)
- Avoid scientific terms (e.g., forms vs questionnaire)
- Use personal pronouns (e.g., you, I, we)
- Use present tense (e.g., "now I will explain what you will do")
- Use short sentences
- Use small words (e.g., "lets talk about" vs "we'll discuss")

Subject Rights

- To ask questions at any time
- To refuse to answer/participate at any time
- To not be coerced in any manner
- To have a copy of the consent form
- To have a clear translation of the consent
- To change their mind about participating at any time

What requires IRB review/ approval?

- Research: a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. (e.g., theses, dissertations, any publishable work)

IRB Certification

- <http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>
- Work through certification – PRINT out certificate and bring to class on Monday

The screenshot shows the 'Protecting Human Research Participants' website. At the top, it says 'NIH Office of Extramural Research' and 'User Login / Registration'. A 'Please Note' section states that certificates from the previous NCI course are no longer available and this is a new course with new content, opened on March 1, 2008. There are two main sections: 'New to PHRP Course' and 'Returning Users'. The 'New to PHRP Course' section includes a 'Register' button and a note that registration is free. The 'Returning Users' section includes fields for 'Email' and 'Password', a 'Log In' button, and a link for 'Having trouble logging in?'. At the bottom, there is a link to 'Frequently Asked Questions page'.

Once you have approval

- Use attitudes and opinions of the general public to acquire data
 - Can be qualitative or quantitative
 - Qualitative – tends to be subjective
- Types of methods used include:
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Questionnaires

John Fraser Hart's Five General Principles for Field Interviewing

- Sell Yourself
- Develop Rapport
 - Let informants know why they are important to you
 - Don't be self-conscious but also not pompous
- Ask Intelligent Questions
 - Do your homework!!! KNOW your subject area!
- Listen Attentively
- Exercise Common Sense and Common Decency
 - Leave feeling like you've made friends and would be welcomed back

Semi-Structured Interviewing

- Subjects are usually *not* chosen randomly
 - we choose them because they know something that we want to know.
- However, if your subject group is, for example, researchers who study Glacier National Park, Montana (imagine!), you still may need to choose a sample from amongst the legion of us out there.

The Corporate Interview

- Three reasons to use, according to Schoenberger (1991):
 - The evidence it yields is the testimony of participants in complex economic processes that produce effects captured in our statistical economic geography data.
 - Has “the merit of recognizing that firms are institutional agents embedded in a complex network of internal and external relationships”.
 - Its use “hearkens back to a largely submerged tradition of inductive reasoning in political economy.” Is this a valid reason, harking back to the past?

Problems with Corporate Interviews

- The corporate interview is susceptible to ego clashes as to who is leading the interview, because the likely respondent is used to being in control and exerting authority – imagine trying to lead an interview with Donald Trump, or Donald Rumsfeld for that matter.
- Ego of respondent may lead to “that’s a stupid question” issues.
- Interviewer is left in the position of needing to interpret respondent’s interpretations, a situation not unique to corporate interviews.
- Ambiguity of response – “confidential info”

Focus Groups

- Basic idea is to attempt to simulate a group of friends who have things in common and feel relaxed talking together.
- Definitely best to record and transcribe the conversations, although note-taking can be done.
- Ensure confidentiality as best as you can, although participant members will know your views.
- The role of the bully, or the “obnoxious dude”?

Oral Histories

- Oral histories deal with reminiscences, hearsay, eyewitness accounts, and memories of facts or events.
 - Although these forms of history may be ambiguous or even incorrect, they provide insight into how that person viewed things, i.e. it provides *their* perspective on the world and events under examination.
- Voice recording an absolute must!
 - Accuracy of material presented preserved
 - Allows focus on the speaker, in case direction or clarification needed
 - Captures subtle nuances of vocal intonations

Participant Observation

- “Just do it!”
- Basically, one immerses him/herself in the place/issue under study.
- Very popular methodology in cultural regional geographies, as well as in sexuality, gender and ethnic geographies.

Questionnaires and Surveys



"Have you a moment sir?...
A: Yes; B: No; or C: Naff off?"

Survey Design

- Questions must be developed
- Determine how the survey will be administered – postal, on-site, phone, internet
- Determine how sampling will take place

Questionnaire Design

- Keep it simple
- Define terms clearly
- Use simple wording
- Avoid:
 - Long, complex questions
 - Two or more questions in one
 - Jargon: Remember, not everyone knows what a GPS is, or what "spatial" means!
 - Biased or emotionally charged terms
 - Negative words, like "not" or "none", that can confuse meaning of the question

Types of Question Responses

- Open-ended questions
 - Allow respondents to craft their own responses, thus respondents "true" viewpoint may be represented
 - But, difficult to quantify
 - More suited to interview-style surveys
- Fixed-response questions
 - Yes/No
 - Likert scale – 1 through 5
 - Factual questions: gender, age, etc.
 - More suited to self-administered questionnaires

How Will Survey Be Administered?

- Face-to-face interviews
 - Most expensive
 - Potential for interviewer-induced bias
 - Power role of the interviewer

- Telephone Interviews (I personally hate!)
 - Cheap to conduct
 - Miss people not at home
 - Miss people who don't have phones
 - Miss people who are hard of hearing

- Postal Surveys
 - Relatively cheap to administer
 - Cheap in terms of time spent administering!
 - Low response rate, typically ca. 30%
 - Respondents may not be representative of the target survey population
 - People with low levels of education or busy lives less likely to respond

- Drop and pick-up questionnaires
 - More costly than phone or postal
 - Cheaper than face-to-face interviews
 - Response rates higher than postal surveys
 - Exposes administrator to potential dangers

- Internet Surveys

- Little known yet about their efficacy
- Easy to administer and to gather data
- Limited to people with internet and/or e-mail

Sampling

- Bias if sample size is too small to accurately represent population or subgroups within it.
- Sampling frame itself may be biased; phone and internet surveys preclude poorer people; postal surveys may induce gender bias, depending on source of address listings
- Time of day may introduce bias in phone sampling
- What to do with non-responses?