

Role-Play Exercise - 1

- Groups of three: one interviewer, one respondent, one observer
- Practice asking questions about some topic:
E.g. Plans after graduating, Hobbies/recreation, Ideas of a dream vacation, Opinions about a current political issue
- Each group member prepares a different main question and follow ups

Role-play Exercise - 2

- **Interviewer role:** Practice controlling non-verbal behavior, responses, etc.
- **Respondent role:** answer questions candidly
- **Observer role:** Keep time (interviews should last about 3 minutes). Observe behavior of interviewer. Facilitate discussion afterward.

Role-Play Exercise - 3

- Discussion questions:
 1. How did the interviewer feel about how it went? (Easy? Difficult? Mistakes?) Would you do anything differently?
 2. How did the respondent feel about how it went?
 3. What were the observer's impressions of the interview?

Survey Instrumentation

Soc 357
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Instrumentation

- The kinds of questions you ask
- The overall structure of the questionnaire

*** Different kinds of questions will lead to different kinds of answers

Open-ended & Closed-ended Questions...

- **Open-ended:** no limits on answers
- **Closed-ended:** a finite set of answers to choose from
 - E.g. "What did you like most about the University of Wisconsin-Madison?" **VS.** "Which of the following things did you like most about UW-Madison: the social life, the academic program, the athletics program, the location, the political orientation?"

...Yield Different Answers

- Schuman et al. compared answers to open ended and closed-ended questions about important national problems. Each question got a very different distribution of answers. The researchers concluded that open-ended questions were a more reliable gauge of the "pulse of the nation."

Direct & Indirect Questions

- **Direct questions:** ask information that is directly connected to what the researcher is interested in finding out
 - E.g. What is your major? How many times a week do you exercise?
- **Indirect Questions:** the link between the researcher's objectives & the question is less clear
 - Used to address sensitive topics

Different Response Formats

- **Yes/No/Don't know**
- **Likert response scale**
- **7-11 point numbered scales**
 - More reliable & valid than smaller number of categories
- **Adjectives for each possible answer**
 - E.g. Poor to Excellent
- **Categorical answers**
 - E.g. "Strong Democrat, Weak Democrat, Strong Republican, Weak Republican, Other"

Multiple-Choice (Likert) Format

Strongly Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

Composite measures

- Used for concepts that are complex & hard to measure
- Ask multiple questions for each concept
- Use answers to construct an **Index**: a sum or average of the scores for each question related to one concept
- Or to construct a **Scale**: sum of answers to a series of questions that vary along an underlying continuum

Example of an Index: Trust in government

Please state the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly agree			Strongly Disagree	
Political officials don't care about people like me	1	2	3	4	5
In general I believe political officials are honest	1	2	3	4	5
In general I trust political officials to do the right thing	1	2	3	4	5
Overall I think that political officials are working for the benefit of all	1	2	3	4	5

Index Score would be a sum or average of all the answers

*** Note that first question score would have to be reversed to be consistent

Example of a Guttman scale: Political Action

Please state whether you have ever participated in any of the following activities?

	Response Pattern				
Signed a petition	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Participated in a boycott	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Attended a lawful demonstration	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Joined an unofficial strike or demonstration	Y	Y	N	N	N
Occupied a building or factory	Y	N	N	N	N
Scale Score	4	3	2	1	0

Structuring Questionnaires

1. Opening questions
2. Sensitive & Routine Questions
3. Transitions from topic to topic
4. Providing a frame of reference
5. Question sequences

1. Opening Questions

- The goal: get your informant “warmed up” & comfortable with the role
- Open-ended questions allow expression of views
- Easy-to-answer questions generate feelings of success, comfort with role
- But must be consistent with what has been said about the purpose of the interview

2. Sensitive & Routine Questions

- Avoid placing either type at the beginning – need to build trust
- Boring questions often at the end
- Sensitive questions often in the middle
- Keep flow of questions logical

3. Topic Transitions

- Transitions are a part of normal social interaction
 - “Now I’d like to ask you a few questions about X...”
- Early topics should be easy to answer
- Later topics should flow logically from the earlier ones
- Be careful of **question-order effects**: the possibility that earlier questions affect answers to later questions
 - E.g. Asking about a belief in smoking & lung cancer; then asking about costs & benefits of smoking

4. Providing a Frame of Reference

- Important to understand what is the respondent’s frame of reference
- Find this out through
 - question sequencing
 - providing context
 - providing time frame
 - providing facts
 - providing vocabulary

4. Frame of reference - Examples

"There are cases in which a man and a woman live together, set up housekeeping, have children, take care of them but do not get a marriage license. Do you think children of these *common law marriages* should have inheritance rights?"

"As you may have heard if you were at the last school board meeting, local schools are in a financial difficulty mostly due to inflation. If they cannot get a \$ 5 million tax levy next May, they will have to lay off about 20% of the teachers in September. Given this situation, do you think people should vote for the tax levy?"

Question Sequences

- Moving from general to specific questions (**funnel sequence**) or vice-versa (**reverse funnel sequence**)
 - E.g. "What do you think about social life at UW Madison?" to "Do you believe there is a problem with binge-drinking among undergraduates?"
- Using **reason analysis** – breaking down a decision process to ask about different stages – many "whys" instead of one "why"
 - E.g. Why UCLA → When did you start thinking about going to college, what colleges did you consider, what were some of the things you liked especially about UCLA?

Response Biases

- Social desirability of some answers
 - Solutions: question placement, wording, use of indirect questions
- Tendency to be agreeable
 - Solution: include both positive & negative phrasings
- Don't remember/false memory
 - Solutions: Shorten reference period, more time to answer, provide context

Steps in Writing a Questionnaire

- 1. Identify the objective** of your study
 - Possibly do focus-groups, literature review
- 2. Sketch/Outline** the topics you want to cover in your questionnaire
 - Think about placement, overall flow
- 3. Fill in the items**
 - Think about different types of questions, wording
- 4. Pretest & Revise**
