Data collection: Interviews

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Measuring
What Matters

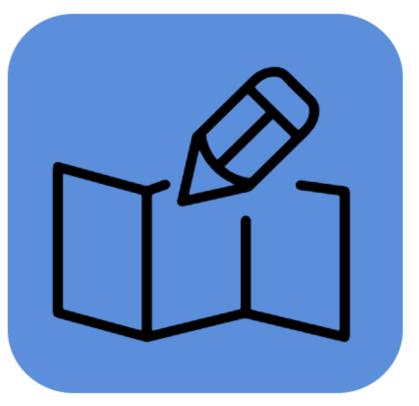Participatory
Evaluation

Embedding
Evaluation

Mission Time

Data Collection

"I'm not used to communicating face-to-face. Can we conduct this interview via text?"

When to conduct interviews?

When you want to understand

- Experiences (e.g., how the uninsured look for health care)
- How people perceive an idea (e.g., a new program)
- Links you haven't thought about (e.g., how technology affects how teachers do their job)

Advantages of interviews

- More in-depth information
- Rapport between interviewer/interviewee yields better and/or more data
- Notes! (impressions about body language, setting)
- You can make sure all questions get answered.
  - You can probe/rephrase
- Uncovering unexpected information

A few words of caution…

- It can be time consuming to transcribe and analyze

- Sometimes it is expensive to analyze qualitative data

- Scheduling and finding the informant can be challenging

- Interviewer bias (interpretation varies, probes differ)

- If too few, themes might not be generalizable

Approaches to interviews

- Unstructured interviews: Two questions that guide the conversation
  - Useful when doing an exploratory evaluation
- Semi-structured interviews: develop multiple questions (I usually do 5-7 questions)
  - Allows for rephrasing, probing
- Structured interviews: often for remote/telephone interviews.
  - It allows for closed-ended questions (the other approaches do not)
  - No rephrasing nor follow ups
  - Useful to avoid interviewer bias

Types of interviews and approaches

Types:

- one-on-one → key informant

- focus groups

Approaches

- In-person

- Teleconferencing

Selecting key informants

- Go back to your evaluation question!

- Who are the experts?
  - Clients
  - Students
  - Staff
  - Members of the community
  - Field experts (technicians, analysts, etc.)

- Other Attributes?
  - Depends on your question! (Single moms, drivers with DUIs)

Recruitment

→Think about qualifying attributes

→Develop a recruitment protocol that:

- Tells people what you need from them (a 30 minute interview)
- Why (to learn about your experience with…)
- Are there incentives (we are giving $$ to those who choose to participate in appreciation for their help)
- Set up the time/date

Develop your protocol (1)

- Go back to your evaluation goals
- Your questions should be:
  - Clear (not ambiguous)
  - Not leading (don't make assumptions)
  - Open ended
- Write probes ahead of time (semi-structured)
  - Questions unanswered/answer is irrelevant
  - Answers are unclear or incomplete
  - You find inconsistencies

Develop your protocol (2)

- The protocol should include introductions, your evaluation goal, and what's going to happen.

- Address confidentiality and any impacts to services

- **Pilot** your protocol (role playing, do a pilot interview with an informant)

Example introduction to interview protocol- Client experience

Thank you for agreeing to talk to us about your experiences at Centro Sávila. We are from the Evaluation Lab at UNM, and we work with organizations to help them figure out how they are doing and where they might improve. Centro Sávila values your perspective and wants to learn how people experience its services and we are here to learn from you.

The interview will take 30 minutes to one hour. Your participation is voluntary and what you choose to share is totally up to you. Sonia will take notes and record the discussion to make sure we understand what you said. We won't share the recording with Centro Sávila. Once we have reviewed the recording to make sure our notes are accurate, we will destroy it. If you would rather we not record the interview, then we won't.

Example of questions and probes

- Could you walk me through your experience at Centro Savila since you first came?
  - **Probes:** Can you tell me a little about your experience at Centro Sávila?, How did you find out about Centro Sávila (CS)?, Once you contacted CS, how was your experience getting service?
- How was your experience working with your clinician?
  - **Probes:** Can you share some examples of your experiences working with your clinician?
- If you look back from your first day at Centro Sávila to now, how have things changed for you?
- If you could change something about your experience here, what would you change?

During your interview…

- Remember to use a friendly demeanor and voice

- Maintain neutrality:
    - do not share information that may bias the interviewee's responses
    - do not give positive or negative feedback, verbal or non-verbal (if face to face/videoconference)
    - do not share personal information.

- Taking notes conveys that what they are saying is important!

- Paraphrase (reflect back). It will help you build rapport and make sure you are getting the idea.

- Take into account power dynamics in your organization when interviewing staff/clients.

- Take into account cultural context and language.

- Keep track of things you might need to change in your protocol for future interviews.

After your interview

- Review your notes

- If you have someone help you, debrief and take notes of your discussion.
  - Consider changes to the protocol if something could be improved

- Transcribe! It can be painful but it is worth it!

- Code it with your team, develop themes, select quotations

- Report!

Activity

- We will split into random pairs in breakout rooms.

- Interview context: You work for the city of (choose one) and are interviewing a resident. The city wants to know personal experiences with and opinions about public transportation.

- Take 5 minutes to, together, develop your questions (no more than 3). You could have a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured format.

- Take turns as interviewer and interviewee (5 minutes each) or speaker and recorder.

- As a recorder, take notes of your impressions about body language, level of comfort, if you had to rephrase etc.

Let's debrief!

- Were you able to maintain neutrality?

- Would you do anything differently on your next interview?

- Would you change your question(s) after this interview?