

Video 3 of 3: Conducting Interviews

Phone Interviews and Interviewers



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Respondent Selection

- Some surveys target one specific respondent such as the head of household or the most senior female
- Other surveys require that the respondent is randomly selected from within a household before starting an interview
 - Random selection occurs among eligible household members (e.g., all adult females)
- Must choose between randomization methods
- Two common methods
 - Roster: create list of all household members; choose one at random
 - Birthday: Ask for person with last or next birthday. *May I speak to the person in the household who is 18 years of age or older and whose birthday was most recent?*

Roster vs. Birthday Method

- Relative Evaluation of Each Approach

	Roster	Birthday
Known probability of selection	Yes ✓	No
Selection can be automated	Yes ✓	No
Fast and easy to administer	No	Yes ✓
Non-intrusive	No	Yes ✓

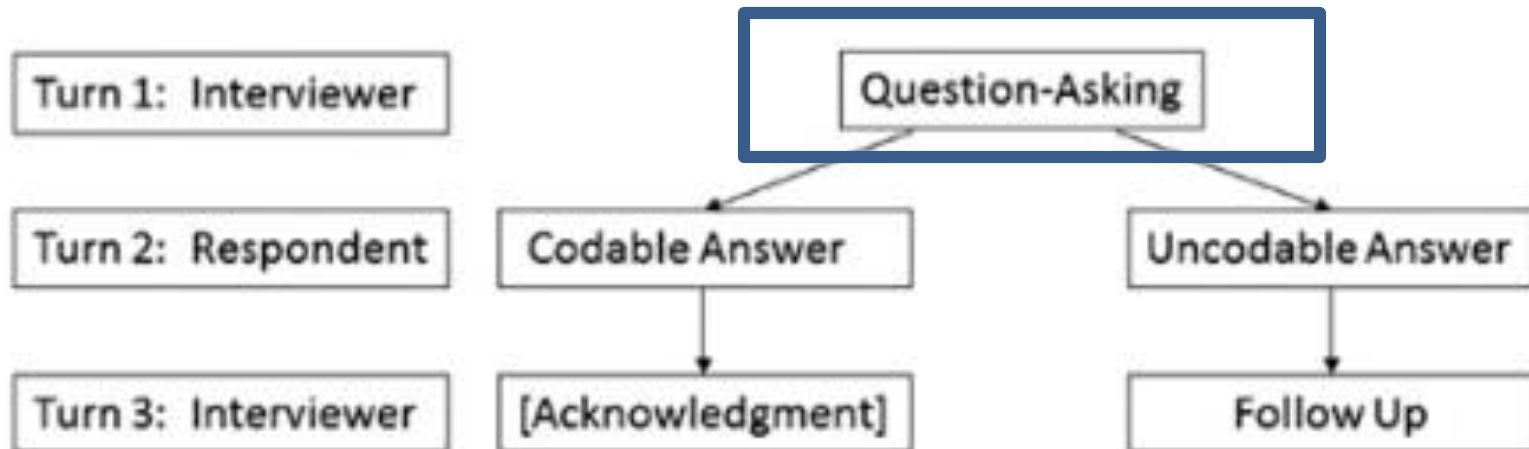
Proxy Responses

- Some surveys collect data about the selected respondent from someone other than the selected respondent
- Several advantages
 - Less time, and therefore expense, to use proxy reports
 - Use of proxies results in higher response rates
- General belief that self-reports are better than proxy reports
 - Proxy respondent may draw on general knowledge of the intended respondent rather than specific information about actual events
 - Exception: proxy respondents may be more willing to report sensitive behaviors

Standardized Interviewing

- Prevailing philosophy and practice of collecting survey data
 - Goal is to reduce interviewer-related error
- Guidelines
 - Read each question exactly as written
 - Only administer neutral probes
 - Only provide scripted feedback
 - Record answers exactly as given (and record open responses verbatim)
- In practice, interviewers may deviate from guidelines
 - Training and monitoring is necessary

Basic Question-Answer Sequence



Source: Schaeffer et al. 2020

Reading Questions – Best practice

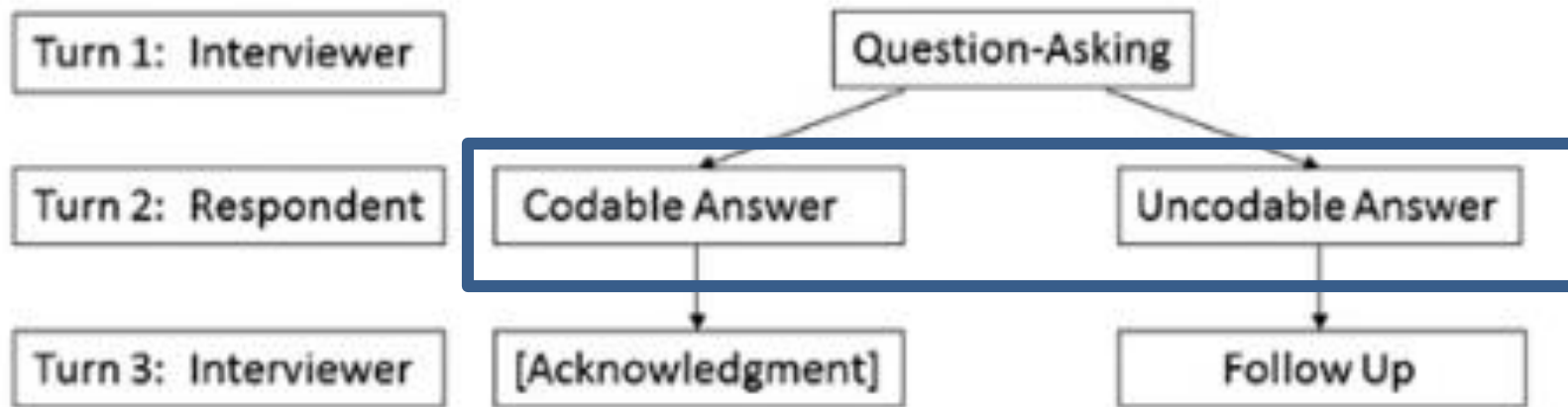
- Read questions verbatim
- Read questions in the order in which they are presented in the questionnaire
- Read in a pleasant but neutral tone of voice
- Be professional: avoid reactions that respondents might interpret as evaluative
- Read slowly

Reading questions – Interviewer Pace

- Read slowly
 - The ideal pace is about two words per second
 - Faster reading speeds may lead to respondent difficulties with question processing
 - Faster reading may communicate that respondent needs to answer quickly and that they cannot ask for assistance

From the Literature

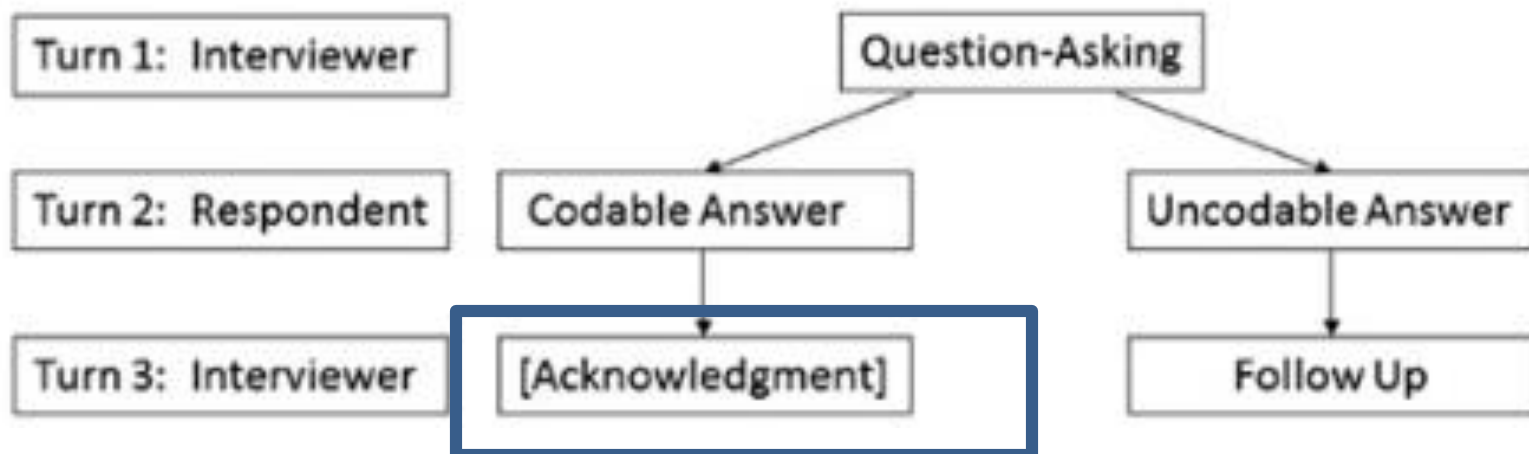
- Research from U.S. shows that interviewers may speed up over the field period, over the course of the interview, and when asking sensitive questions. Thus, monitoring may be required. (Holbrook et al. 2020)



How to Determine if Answer is Codeable

- Codeable if answer uniquely identifies a response category
 - synonyms are okay: “yeah”; “yep”
 - uncertainty is okay: “probably yes”
- Not codeable if answer fails to uniquely identify a response category
 - This is the case when no clear answer is given or two or more answers are given (“40 or 50”)

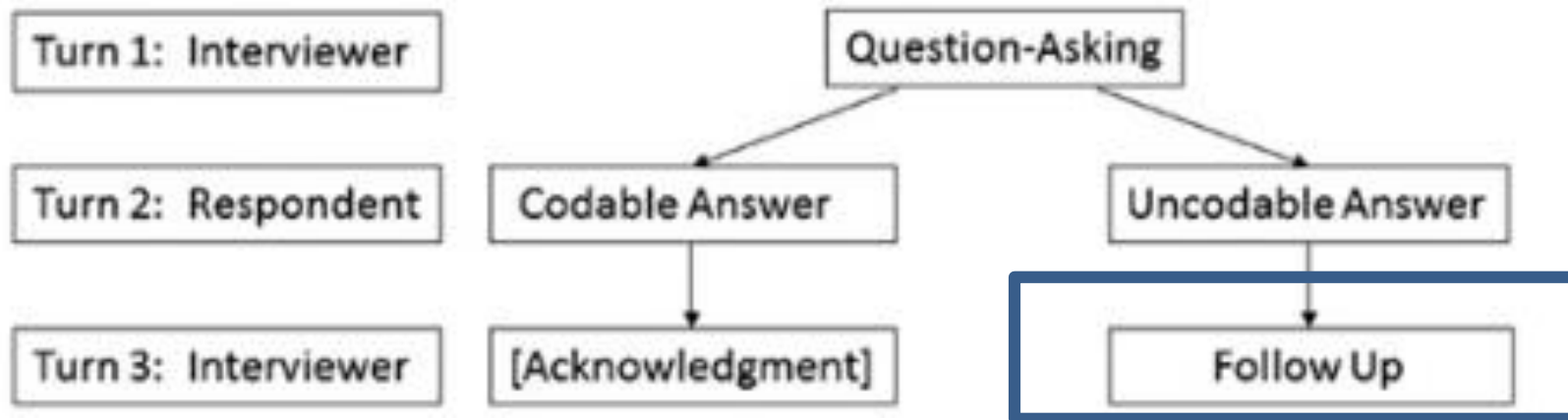
Adapted from Schaeffer et al. 2020



Providing Acknowledgment

- Interviewer should provide acknowledgement in appropriate way
- Should avoid expressing a point of view
 - Examples: “Thank you”; “okay” “mm-hm” and “uh-huh”
- May function as way to “train the respondent” by acknowledging that they are following instructions. Examples:
 - “Thank you for giving me a single number”
 - “Okay. Thank you for selecting one of our categories”
 - “Thank you for thinking that through”

Adapted from Schaeffer et al. 2020



Follow-up Techniques

- Repeat the question or response options as necessary
- When asked for a definition, read a standardized definition
- Administer neutral probes that are culturally appropriate

Examples Probes

Respondent...	Probe
...provides two answers	Which would be closer?
...does not provide a number when asked	What is your best estimate?
...says “I don’t know”	What do you think?
...asks for a definition (but there is none)	Whatever it means to you?

Building Rapport with Respondent

- Rapport: extent to which respondent perceives relationship with interviewer to be friendly and cooperative
- Requires *personal* interviewing style rather than formal business-like style
 - Small talk to connect with respondent on an individual basis (“Good for you” or “Me too”)
- Advantage
 - May motivate respondents to give more accurate answers
- Disadvantage
 - May introduce interviewer-related error because interviews are not standardized

Module Summary

- Interviewers play several roles; each can impact survey quality for better or worse
- Recruitment requires conversational/tailored approach whereas interviewing requires standardized approach
- Training is essential for interviewers to succeed at these tasks

References (1 of 2)

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Additional Resources

- Survey Research Center. (2016). *Guidelines for Best Practice in Cross-Cultural Surveys*. Ann Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. Retrieved from <http://ccsg.isr.umich.edu/>.
- Daikeler, J., & Bosnjak, M. (2020). How to Conduct Effective Interviewer Training: A Meta-Analysis and Systematic Review. Interviewer Effects from a Total Survey Error Perspective.

END OF VIDEO 3