

# Qualitative Telephone Interviewing

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# Outline

- Qualitative Data Collection and Semi-Structured Interviews
- Mode of Qualitative Data Elicitation and Data Archiving.
- Partners in Care
- Methods of Qualitative Telephone Interviewing
  - Design of CATI Data Collection Instrument
  - Note Taking / Note Editing
  - Analysis
  - Training and Monitoring Interviewers

# What Do Qualitative Researchers Want to Do ? (Research Goals)

- **Discovery**
  - Identify themes and their relationships
- **Description**
  - Range of variation
  - Measures of centrality
    - Average, Modal, Prototypical
  - Degree of variation around center
  - Details - Examples
  - Context
- **Comparison**
  - Group A is different/same as Group B
    - Compare ranges
    - Compare distributions of responses
- **Explanation**
  - Relate one set of variables to another set of variables
  - Can be causal or non-causal

# Qualitative/Quantitative or Structure/Knowledge?

1.

*Qualitative*

*Quantitative*

2.



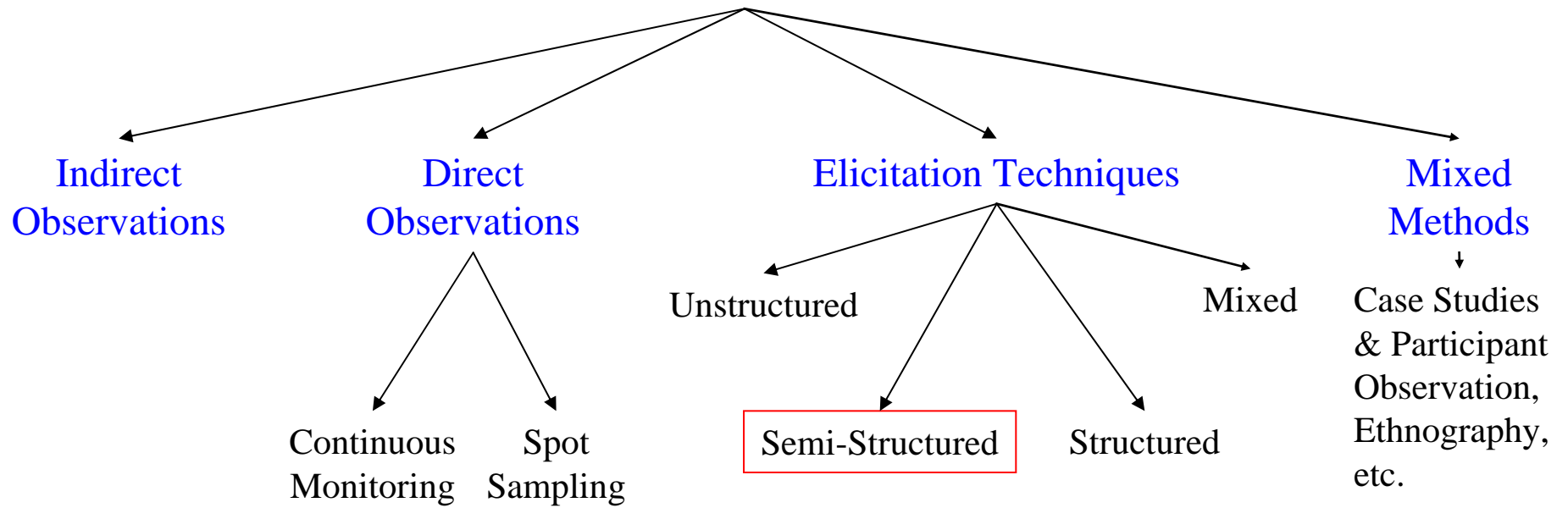
*Structure*



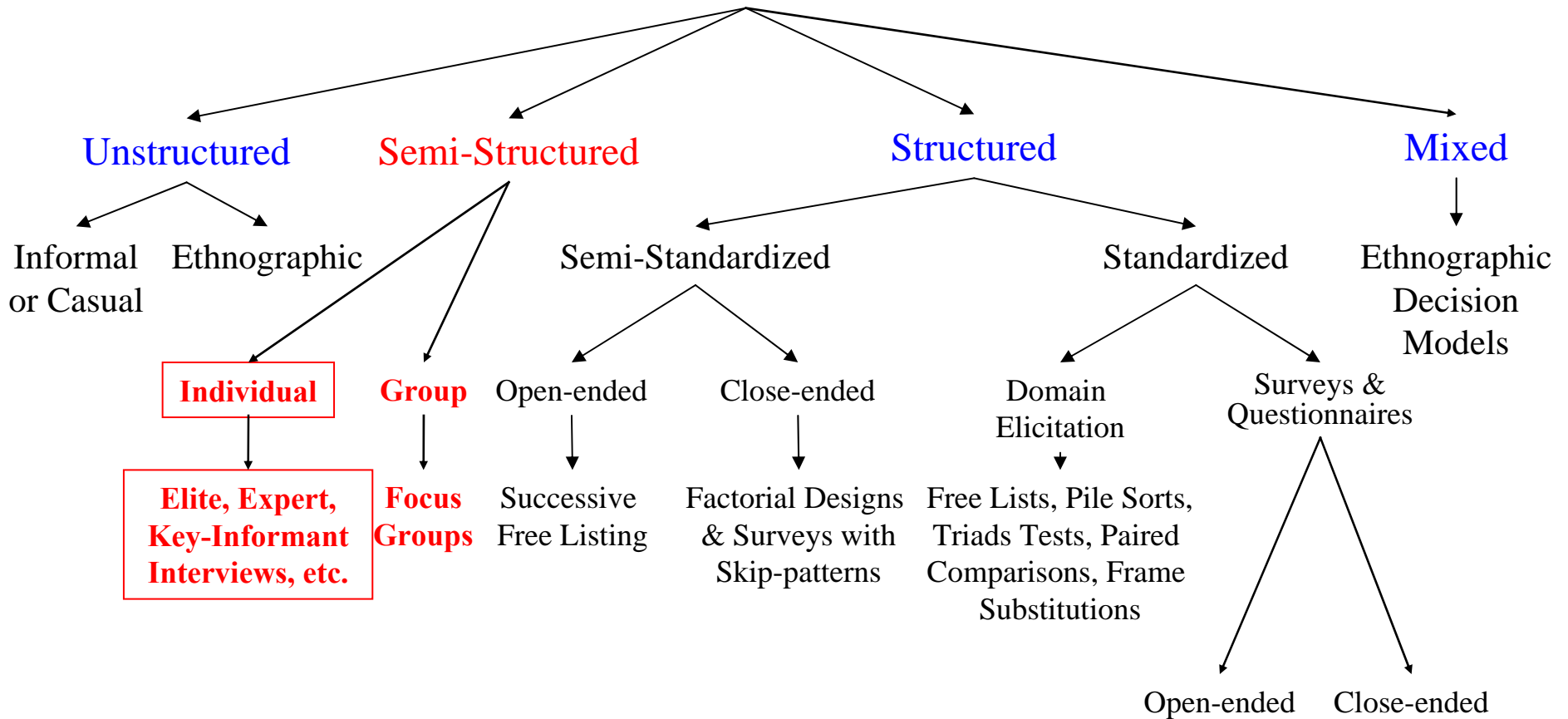
*Knowledge*

# Where Do Data Come From?

## Techniques for Producing Data



# Types of Elicitations



*Structure (same stuff, same order)*

Less



More

*Interviewer Control*

# Open vs Closed Questions

- Open-ended questions
  - Advantages
    - Captures full range of responses
    - In respondent's own words
    - May be most appropriate way of understanding respondents' categories
  - Disadvantages
    - Non-responses are difficult or impossible to categorize (e.g., medicine)
    - Labor intensive to code responses
- Close-ended questions
  - Advantages
    - Fewer non-responses
    - Easier to code
  - Disadvantages
    - Limited to investigator-determined categories
    - Limits the range of response variability and richness

# List vs Relational Questions

- List Questions

- What items/constructs exist & how salient are they

- Standard free lists
    - “Why” (e.g., “Why did you decide to join the military?”)
    - Description of things not related to time (e.g., “Can you describe the problems you’ve had with your health care provider?”)

- Relational Questions

- How items/constructs are related to one another

- Structured interviews (e.g., pile sorts, paired comparisons, etc.)
    - Compare & contrast (e.g., “How is this episode of asthma different from the previous episode?”)
    - Frames (e.g., “How is X related to Y?”)
    - Mechanisms (e.g., “Describe the steps you have to pass through to process an application for welfare.”)
    - “How” (e.g., “How did you decide to join the military?”)
    - Descriptions of events (e.g., “Describe how your illness progressed.”)
    - Narratives

# Semi-Structured Interviews

## Funnel Interviews

### – Grand-Tour Question

- “Please recall the last time that you had a cold or the flu and describe the episode in as much detail as possible.”
  - **List data:** Salient components & larger context
  - **Relational data:** Interaction among salient components

### – Mini-Tour Questions

- **Signs/Symptoms:** “What signs and symptoms did you have?” [**List Data**]
- **Causation:** “What you think caused the illness?” [**List Data**]
- **Treatment:** “Please describe what you did about the illness from start to finish.” [**Relational Data: What & When**]
- **Social Support:** “Please describe how other people assisted you in your illness.” [**Relational Data: Who & What**]

### – Close-Ended Checklists & Survey Items

# Responses from a Semi-Structured Interview

## Grand-Tour Question

- Question: “Please describe the last time that you had a cold or the flu.”
- Answer: “This happened exactly 31 days ago. I remember this so well because the 1st day was also the 1st day that I quit smoking. My girlfriend and young child had already been affected and were recovering from the following symptoms: itchy throat and cough, stomach cramps, fever. The 1st day was not bad right away. I called in sick to work but I was really planning to use the opportunity to study for an exam the next day. To my surprise, by 5 PM I was bed ridden. The next day I was worse. I went to my exam, but I performed poorly. I skipped the rest of my classes. It was at this time that I realized I could use this as an opportunity to quit smoking. So far I have been successful. By Wednesday evening I was fine.”

# Why Use Grand-Tour Questions?

- **Grand-Tour Question**

- Question: “Please describe the last time that you had a cold or the flu.”
- Answer: “This happened exactly 31 days ago. I remember this so well because the 1st day was also the 1st day that I quit smoking. My girlfriend and young child had already been affected and were recovering from the following symptoms: itchy throat and cough, stomach cramps, fever. The 1st day was not bad right away. I called in sick to work but I was really planning to use the opportunity to study for an exam the next day. To my surprise, by 5 PM I was bed ridden. The next day I was worse. I went to my exam, but I performed poorly. I skipped the rest of my classes. It was at this time that I realized I could use this as an opportunity to quit smoking. So far I have been successful. By Wednesday evening I was fine.”

- **Grand-tour answers often place event in a larger context and elicit data you would never have thought to ask about.**

# Responses from a Semi-Structured Interview

- **Mini-Tour Questions**

- **Signs/Symptoms:** “What signs and symptoms did you have?”
  - Answer: “Sore throat, stomachache, fever.”
- **Causation:** “What you think caused the illness and why?”
  - Answer: “Some sort of infection, b/c I believe I caught this sometime after the rest of my family.”
- **Treatment:** “Please describe what you did about the illness from start to finish.”
  - Answer: “I rested when I felt like I needed it and took a lot of vitamins C and E.”
- **Social Support:** “Please describe how other people assisted you in your illness (e.g., giving advice or helping you).”
  - Answer: “Emotional support.”

- **Answers to mini-tour questions supplement and further focus grand-tour answers**

# What Is Data Archiving?

- Initial record
  - Video or Audio
  - *En vivo* notes
    - Free-flowing
    - Structured
- Subsequent conversion
  - Full transcription
  - Type-up notes
  - Dictate notes → transcribe dictation
  - Dictate notes → voice recognition software
  - Augment notes from original audio-recording

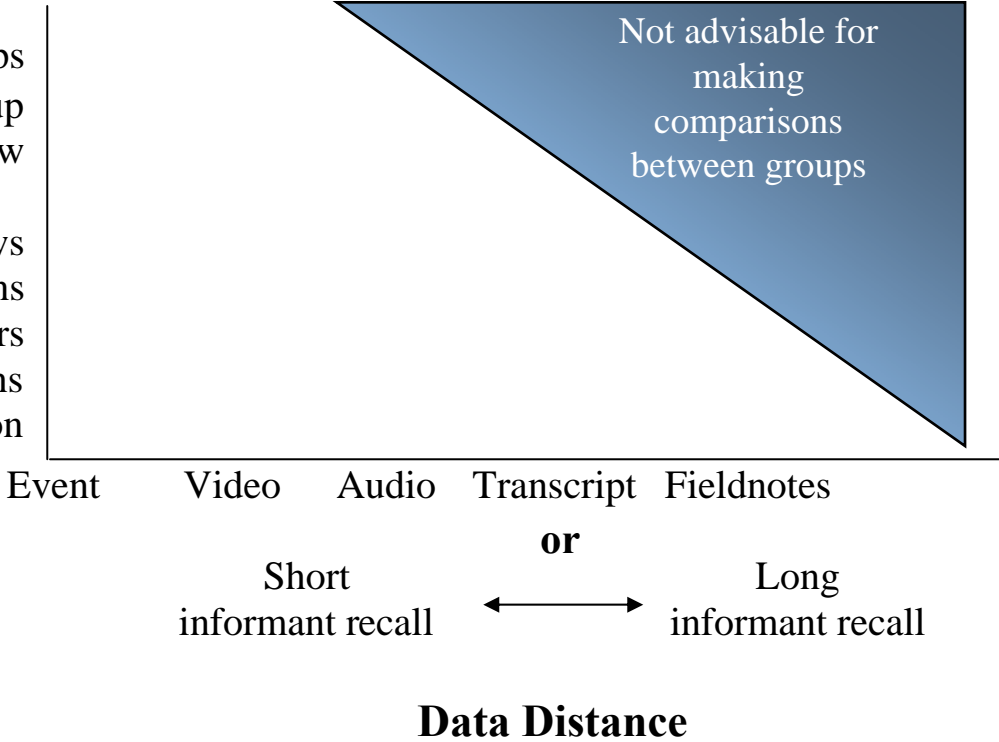
# Additional Considerations in Data Collection

- **Data Complexity:**
  - Total number of questions
  - Portion of unstructured questions
  - Number and size of answers
  - Number of speakers
- **Data Distance**
  - Information lost during recording process
    - Video, Audio, Transcripts, Fieldnotes
  - Error occurs during archiving process
    - Informant-Generated Errors
      - Data is misconstrued in recording events
      - Data is misconstrued when retrieved from memory
    - Research-Generated Errors
      - Biased field notes

# Why are data complexity and data distance important?

## Examples of Data Complexity Levels

- Unstructured focus groups
- Systematic focus group
- Unstructured ethnographic interview
- Semi-structured ethnographic interviews
- Multiple short answer questions
- Single short answers
- Multiple close-ended questions
- Single close-ended question



# Key Issues: The Missing Data Trap

- **Where data is lost or “Goes Missing”?**
  - Investigator lack of control in indirect observations or unstructured interviews
    - E.g., necessary data not available in human archeological record or topic not covered in meandering interview
  - Investigator forgets to cover topic or ask question in semi-structured interviews
  - Investigator asks only open-ended questions
    - I.e., The Problem of Nonresponse
  - Investigator asks questions that generate lists rather than relationship questions
  - Investigator fails to record data properly
    - E.g., don't videotape or tape record, rely on notes or memory
  - Only occasionally do we get missing data from respondents refusal to answer
- **What are the costs?**
  - Holes are filled in by investigator inferences (often erroneously)
  - Variable or theme is not analyzed because of lack of evidence
  - Analyses comes to erroneous conclusions
  - Death to comparison research

# Semi-Structured Interview Mode Effects

- What are the advantages disadvantages of:
  - Face-to-face
    - **Advantages:**
      - Can Read Body Language to Help Determine Follow-up Questions
      - See Facial Expressions
      - If in Respondent's Home, Can Make Observations about Surroundings
    - **Disadvantages**
      - Expensive: Limits Sampling
      - Difficult to Coordinate: High Non-Response
      - Lack of Anonymity
      - Difficulty maintaining eyecontact while writing notes and reading interview guide questions and probes.

# Semi-Structured Interview Mode Effects

- What are the advantages disadvantages of:
  - Phone
    - Disadvantages
      - Lose facial expressions, body language, physical context
        - » Pay more attention to other non-verbal cues, such as sighs, tone of voice, speed, volume?
      - Audio Quality
    - Advantages:
      - Inexpensive
      - More Anonymity
      - CATI: Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing
        - » Reduces Missing Data
        - » Control Probes
      - More Control Over Interviewers, Scheduling, Data Collection
      - Facilitates Analysis
        - » Coding being done by interviewers

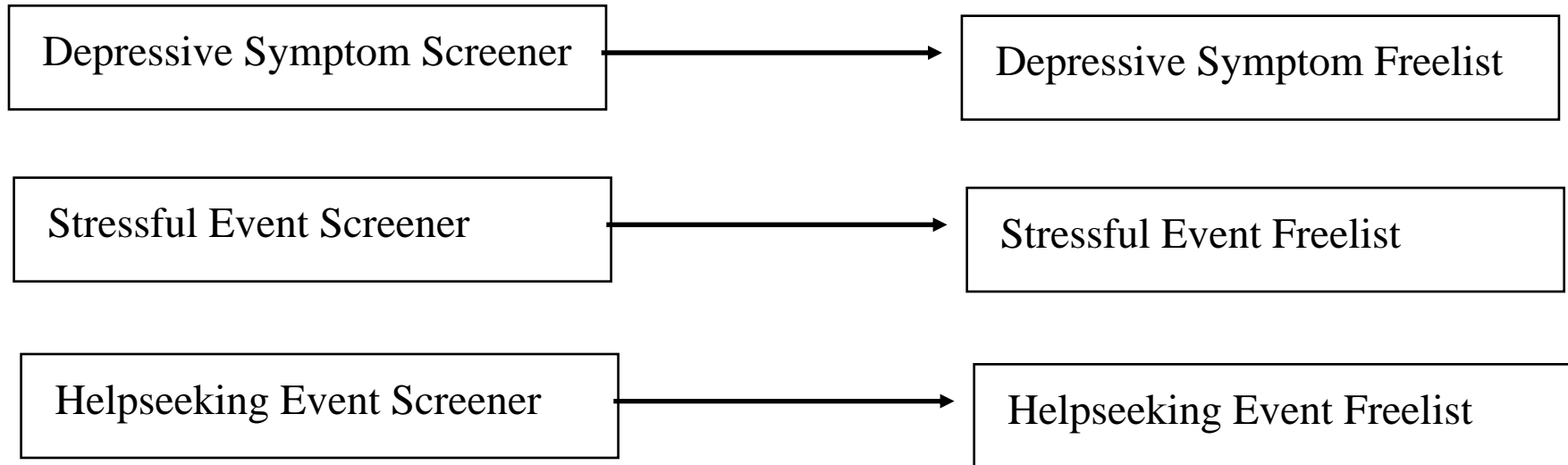
## Partners in Care

- Group-level randomized trial of quality improvement interventions versus usual care for depressed primary care patients.
  - Evidence Based
  - Medication
  - Therapy
- “Pathways to Outcomes of Care for Depression,”
  - 5-year follow-up of participants.
- QI interventions improved mental health outcomes more among minority groups (African American, Latino) than whites
  - substantially worse health outcomes for minorities than for whites among the controls (health outcome disparity)
  - QI minorities fared as well as whites and better than control minorities
  - Interventions eliminated health outcome disparities otherwise apparent among controls by five-year follow-up

# PIC: Eight Year Follow-up: Events Over Last 30 Days

- To describe long-term (seven-year) adaptation to and management of depression
- Examine group differences in participants' attitudinal and behavior responses to
  - Depressive Events
  - Stressful Events
  - Helpseeking Events
  - Proactive Coping Event
  - Positive Events
- **250 Interviewed 3 Times**
  - Coping with Stress and Depression In Last 30 Days
  - 2/3 Minorities, 1/3 Whites
- **Screening Questions Followed by Event Descriptions**
  - Screening for events over past 30 days
    - Close ended questions, Freelists, Checkboxes
  - Grand Tour, Mini Tour of events

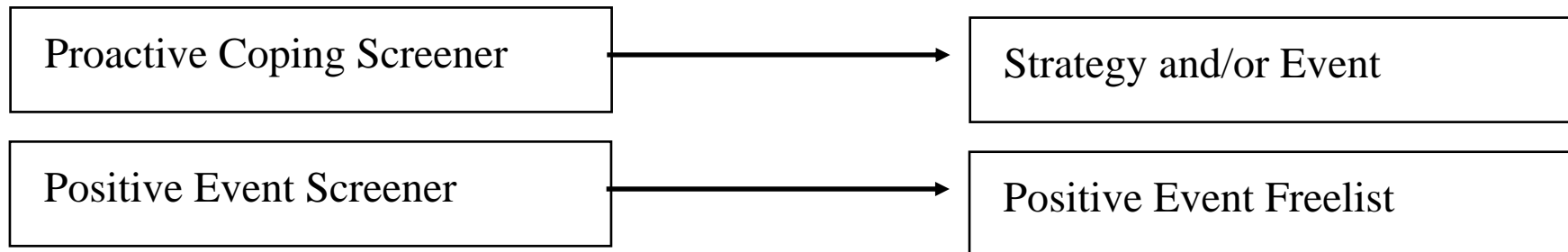
# Partners in Care Data Collection Design



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## Depressive Event, Stressful Event, Helpseeking Event

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## Exit Event

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Stressful life events:

**13. Now I would like to know about the stressful events in your life. Please tell me about all of the events during the past 30 days that have been stressful to you in one way or another.**

INTERVIEWER: TYPE THE EVENT THAT THE RESPONDENT LISTS VERBATIM, ONE EVENT PER LINE. IF RESPONDENT HESITATES, CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING OR NEEDS CLARIFICATION, USE THE TEXT BELOW AS A GUIDE TO EXPLAIN FURTHER:

People have events or things that occur in their life that are **stressful, upsetting, cause anxiety, or affect them strongly** in many different ways. These events can be **negative events**, like a divorce or an illness in the family, or **positive events**, like a marriage or starting a new job. Stressful events **can be both big**, like a sudden death in the family, **or small**, such as a minor argument. Another way to think about it are events that made you feel like **your life had really changed** or **your future seemed less good**.

INTERVIEWER: IF THEY CAN'T NAME ANY STRESSFUL EVENTS, LEAVE TEXT BOX **BLANK** AND HIT NEXT. YOU WILL THEN HAVE TO CONFIRM THAT THEY DID NOT NAME ANY EVENTS.

WHEN THE RESPONDENT STOPS NAMING EVENTS, ASK THEM, "**Can you think of any others?**" UNTIL YOU EXHAUST THE LIST OF SOURCES OF HELP.

VIOLENCE

SET CALLBACK

BACK

NEXT

**14. Now I am going to read a list of types of stressful events just to make sure that these events either have or have not happened in your life over the past 30 days.**

INTERVIEWER: IF YOU ARE CERTAIN THAT THE RESPONDENT MENTIONED THE EVENT PREVIOUSLY, MARK THE EVENT "**Spontaneous Mention.**" IF THE RESPONDENT DID NOT PREVIOUSLY MENTION THE EVENT, READ THE EVENT DESCRIPTION. IF THE RESPONDENT AFFIRMS THAT THE EVENT HAPPENED IN THE PAST 30 DAYS, MARK IT "**Yes.**" OTHERWISE, MARK "**No.**"

**Spontaneous**

**In the past 30 days...**

- | <b>Mention</b> | <b>Yes</b>               | <b>No</b>                | <b>DK</b>                | <b>R</b>                 |  |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 14a            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you have a <b>serious argument</b> with someone who lives at your home?                                  |
| 14b            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you have a <b>serious problem</b> with a close friend, relative, or neighbor <b>not living at home</b> ? |
| 14c            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you <b>separate, divorce, or end an engagement or relationship</b> ?                                     |
| 14d            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you have <b>arguments</b> or other difficulties with <b>people at work</b> ?                             |
| 14e            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did someone <b>move out of your home</b> ?   |
| 14f            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did someone <b>close to you die</b> ?  |
| 14g            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you have a <b>serious injury or illness</b> ?  |
| 14h            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did someone <b>close to you</b> have a <b>serious injury or illness</b> ?                                    |
| 14i            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Did you have <b>financial problems</b> ?   |
| 14j            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Were you <b>laid off or fired from work</b> ?  |
| 14k            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Were you <b>robbed, raped or assaulted</b> ?   |

14l. Which of the events you mentioned has been the most stressful for you?

VIOLENCE

SET CALLBACK

BACK

NEXT

# Interview Matrix

	Depressive Event	Stressful Event	Helpseeking Event	Proactive Coping	Positive Event
<b>Grand Tour</b>					
Context					
Social Context					
Thinking					
Feeling					
Actions					
Compare/ Contrast					

## MODULE 2: Stressful Events:

STRESSFUL EVENT: [FILL IN WITH TEXT OF MOST STRESSFUL EVENT FROM Q#14]

**16. You mentioned previously that [INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE STRESSFUL EVENT] occurred in the past 30 days. Think back and describe to me what happened. Start at the beginning and tell me everything that happened.**

INTERVIEWER: GUIDE THE RESPONDENT THROUGH A **DESCRIPTION OF THE EVENT** FROM **START TO FINISH**. PROBE ABOUT WHAT THEY **DID**, WHAT THEY **FELT**, WHAT THEY **THOUGHT**, **WHO ELSE** WAS INVOLVED, WHAT WAS **GOING ON**, HOW THEY **COPE**D WITH THE STRESS, **SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES** WITH THE PAST

VIOLENCE

SET CALLBACK

BACK

NEXT

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT

16a. What was going on?

PROBE: ASK THEM **WHERE THEY WERE**, **WHAT WAS GOING ON IMMEDIATELY BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER.**

THINKING

16c. What were you thinking?

PROBE: ASK ABOUT **WHAT WAS GOING ON IN THEIR MINDS** DURING THE EVENTS, ASK ABOUT **DECISIONS** THEY MADE AND WHY, ASK ABOUT **GENERAL STRATEGIES** THEY USE TO COPE WITH STRESSFUL EVENTS.

ACTIONS

16e. What did you do?

PROBE: ASK THEM TO DESCRIBE THEIR **BEHAVIORS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER** THE **STRESSFUL EVENT**. HOW DID THE EVENT **AFFECT THEIR LIVES?**

VIOLENCE

SET CALLBACK

SOCIAL CONTEXT:

16b. Who was involved?

PROBE: ASK ABOUT THE **ROLE** THESE PEOPLE PLAYED IN THE EVENT. ASK ABOUT **SEEKING AND RECEIVING HELP** FOR THE STRESS FROM SOME KIND OF **PROVIDER.**

FEELING

16d. What did you feel?

PROBE: ASK ABOUT THE **EMOTIONAL EFFECT** OF THE EVENT ON THEM, **BEFORE DURING AND AFTER.** ASK ABOUT HOW THEY **DEALT OR COPE**D WITH THE STRESS.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

16f. How was it similar or different to situations in the past?

PROBE: ASK IF THEY **FELT, ACTED, THOUGHT, OR COPE**D **DIFFERENTLY OR SIMILARLY** TO **OTHER STRESSFUL EVENTS.**

BACK

NEXT

# Finalizing/Completing Notes

- 2 goals
  - Filling in details/cleaning up
    - Abbreviations
      - Write out fully or give a key to abbreviations
    - Do they make sense?
  - Create Structure
    - Info in correct places (Coding)
    - Structure answer in question
- Procedure:
  - Default is to edit notes without audio
  - Use audio when necessary:
    - Quotes
    - Inaudible
    - don't understand

# Raw Notes

16. You mentioned previously that [INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE STRESSFUL EVENT] occurred in the past 30 days. Think back and describe to me what happened. Start at the beginning and tell me everything that happened.

promised f that would take her but then realize she didn't want to take her bc she wasn't feeling good

f has 2 daughters that could have taken her but she doesn't ask them and asks R instead - one daughter has refused and the o/ one is sick but R thinks she should still be able to take her - R's own daughter could "make adjustments" but R thinks f and f's daughters don't have a good relationship

R feels she should stay at home

R talked w/ friend abt it, said she wasn't going to take her anymore but then friend gave her a "long sad story" and R felt sorry for her

so then she took her - goes 3x/week - has been going on for the last month - now is getting tired of doing it

when she wasn't feeling good - sometimes when you know you're anxious, doesn't like to drive bc "anything can happen when you're not on your best behavior" so that's when she doesn't want to drive -- "not feeling good" = feeling anxious

trying to keep calm in traffic is overwhelming

16a. What was going on?

was overwhelmed bc R's mother ash been visiting and R's sister wasn't helping w/ their mother

Sister was expecting to do everything, didn't even invite their mom over - made R angry

16b. Who was involved?

Friend - daughters prob don't have good rel. w/ her - R met her abt 5 yrs. ago

friend was in a car accident - going to physical therapy for broken collarbone, can't drive

Childhood friend is dying of cancer - this is a diff. Friend

16c. What were you thinking?

"sometimes you just need your own quiet space sometimes"

sometimes says yes to things w/o thinking

# Edited Notes

16. You mentioned previously that [INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE STRESSFUL EVENT] occurred in the past 30 days. Think back and describe to me what happened. Start at the beginning and tell me everything that happened.

R promised her friend that she would take her to her doctor's appointments, but then realized that she didn't want to take her because she wasn't "feeling good."

[I WISH I WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED UP ON R'S COMMENT ABOUT "FEELING GOOD" AND FOUND OUT MORE SPECIFICALLY WHAT SHE MEANS WHEN SHE SAYS IT.]

R's friend has two daughters that could have taken her to her appointments, but she doesn't ask them to do so. Instead, she asks R for the favor. One of R's friend's daughters has refused to help her mother, and the other one is sick, but R thinks that this daughter should still be able to take her mother to her appointments. In the case of R's family, her own daughter could "make adjustments" if it was necessary (i.e., R's daughter would take her to the doctor, even if the daughter was sick), but R thinks that her friend and her friend's daughters don't have a good relationship.

R feels she should stay at home, rather than take her friend to her doctor's appointments. [I ASKED WHETHER R HAS DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE WITH HER FRIEND.]

R has talked with her friend about it, and told her that she wasn't going to take her to her appointments anymore. When she did this, however, her friend gave her a "long sad story," and R felt sorry for her so she continues to help her friend even though she doesn't really want to.

[BASED ON THE TONE OF THE INTERVIEW, IT SEEMS THAT SIMILAR EVENTS MAY HAVE BEEN COMMON THROUGHOUT R'S LIFE. SHE SEEMS LIKE SOMEONE WHO MAY GET "PUSHED AROUND" MORE THAN THE AVERAGE PERSON. PERHAPS DUE TO HER QUIET AND COMPASSIONATE NATURE, THAT SHE HAS WORKED HARD TO STAND UP FOR HERSELF AND TAKE CARE OF HERSELF MAY BE WHY SHE WAS SO RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS THINGS SUCH AS STRESSFUL EVENTS AND OTHER "NEGATIVE" ISSUES DURING THIS INTERVIEW.]

After her friend gave R this "long, sad story," R took her to her appointments. They go three times a week, 3x/week, and she has been doing this for the last month. Now R is getting tired of taking her friend to her appointments.

[I ASKED WHAT IT IS ABOUT TAKING HER FRIEND THAT IS TIRING.]

When she wasn't feeling good - sometimes when you know you're anxious, doesn't like to drive bc "anything can happen when you're not on your best behavior" so that's when she doesn't want to drive -- "not feeling good" = feeling anxious. R said that when she

# Analysis

- Design of data collection with analysis in mind
- Text boxes represent a priori codes
- Additional thematic codes will be developed by the project team
- CATI data collection allows for the exportation of text directly into text analysis software (Atlas.ti)
- Analysis of Notes (not transcripts)
  - Disadvantage
    - Potential loss of data
  - Advantage
    - Less Expensive, can have larger sample size
    - Have audio recordings for potential transcripts
    - Interviewers ask better questions?

# Hiring Interviewers

- Talent
  - Curiosity
  - Friendly, Build Rapport Quickly
- Understanding of Research Question
  - Grad Students who are learning to do research
  - Clinical Psychologists

# Training: Skills

- Asking Questions
  - Types: Freelists, Grand Tour, Mini-Tour
  - Probes: types, variation, appropriateness, amount
  - Focus on Specific Events
- Taking Notes
  - Immediate notes
    - Interview flow, Audio recording failure, minimize completion time
  - Complete notes
  - Types of Notes
    - Paraphrase, Quotes, analytic
  - Coded notes

# Training: Skills

- Stages in building skills
  - Asking questions/probes
    - Group, one-on-one
  - Taking notes
  - Completing notes
- Putting it together
  - Practice, Role playing
    - Other interviewers
    - People Outside the Project
    - People who represent study population
    - Actors

# Interviewer Management: Evaluation

- Training Evaluation
  - Group evaluation
  - Self evaluation
  - Other interviewer evaluation
- Post training evaluation
  - Practice interviews
    - Skills
    - Uniformity of interview
  - Test
    - Understanding of purpose of interview
    - Consistency of training

# Interviewer Management: Monitoring

- Identify Need for Further Training
- Promote consistency
  - Across interviews
  - Across Interviewers
  - Across Monitors
- Bad Habits
- Interviewer Feedback
  - Voice
  - Probes
  - Asking Questions, Focusing Interview
  - Notes