

SENSORVEILEDNING

MEVIT4800 Written exam autumn 2018

1. Interview research in media and journalism studies is often conducted with people from different cultures, with children and with elites. Outline the challenges involved when interviewing these three types of subjects.

Task 1 counts for 15% of the total mark

A bit of a common-sense exam question in that it can be answered without having studied the syllabus in much detail. However the question relates explicitly to the first part of chapter 7 in Brinkman and Kvale, where they discuss the particular considerations researchers need to do when interviewing these types of subjects.

Expect to see quite a few common-sense answers (that might still be pretty good and reasonable).

Subjects across cultures: *The challenges involved with defining culture, yet typically depicted as a set of practices, subject positions and resources people draw on in their behaviour and actions.*

→ *Challenges in terms of different norms for communication and interaction – relevant also in the interview situation.*

→ *Challenges in being aware of how culture affects the interaction between interviewer and interviewee. The need for the interviewer to have some familiarity with the culture in question.*

Interviews with children: *Students should point to the importance of including children as interview subjects, as subjects who have the right to voice their opinions and experiences. Yet interviewing children requires tailoring the interview to children:*

→ *Awareness of the power imbalance between interviewer and child: particular need to avoid leading questions.*

→ *Refrain from conveying expectations about “right” answers.*

→ *Use age-appropriate questions and one question at a time.*

→ *Interviews in natural situations are often optimal (usually their homes)*

The students also have a relevant report from the EU Kids online project on their syllabus¹. This points to some additional, relevant points to consider, e.g.:

→ *Allow sufficient time for “warming up” and developing rapport.*

→ *Consider children’s concentration span – avoid too long interviews*

→ *Treat children as active participants (not passive respondents)*

→ *For children younger than 6 years, it is common to rely on parents or teachers as*

¹ Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S. & Haddon, L. (2013). How to research children and online technologies. Frequently asked questions and best practice (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50437/>)

proxies.

Notice that this fall, research ethics have not been part of MEVIT4800 (it is included in MEVIT4000). Students are therefore not expected to discuss research ethics with interviewing children as part of their answer.

Interviews with elites: *Leaders or experts in a community.*

→ Challenges with obtaining access to elites

→ Power asymmetry might remain an issue also after an interview has been scheduled (where the interviewer is not the person in the most powerful position)

→ Requires particular preparation: interviewer should be knowledgeable about the topic of concern, including domain-language. Be familiar with who the interviewee is. This home-work is important to balance the power asymmetry.

→ Experts may have “talking-tracks” and be very clear on what they want to communicate. This is challenging to get beyond (and the home-work comes in handy).

2. In chapter 15 in Brinkman and Kvale’s (2009/2015) *Interviews*, the authors write, “The trustworthiness, the strength, and the transferability of knowledge are in the social sciences commonly discussed in relation to concepts of objectivity, reliability, validity and generalization”.

Explain the implications of these concepts (objectivity, reliability, validity and generalization) when conducting interview research.

Task 2 counts for 20% of the total mark

This question allows students do delve into deep ontological and epistemological discussions about what exists in the world, what we can hope to know about it, and how we can go about acquiring that knowledge.

Relevant points to discuss:

Whether and how knowledge through interview research can be objective: how to avoid or at least reduce bias in interview research → interview research as a craftsmanship. Reflexive objectivity: being reflexive about the one’s own position (and perhaps unavoidable) contributions to the production of knowledge. Brinkman and Kvale also point to a particular strength in qualitative research here: interview subjects are given the opportunity to object to the researcher’s questions and assumptions.

Reliability as the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings. Students may well include how reliability in science is usually defined as whether a finding is reproducible at other times and by other researchers. Also relevant: avoid leading questions. Reliability in coding of interview transcripts. Emphasis of the importance of improvisation and flow in interviews (even if potentially detrimental to questions of consistency/reliability)

Validity – whether a study investigates what it intends to study. Relevant for the entire research process: the theoretical presuppositions of the study (deductive research where

research questions are deduced from theory); the adequacy of the design of the study; the interview situation (e.g. making sure interpretations of what the interviewee says); analysis and whether interpretations are sound; reporting and whether the main findings are included.

Generalizing – whether results are transferable to other subjects, contexts, and situations.

→ *Emphasis of the value of qualitative studies for their own sake – undertaken for their ability to produce knowledge about one particular case.*

→ *Emphasis of analytical generalization: reasoned judgment about the extent to which findings can be generalized to other situations. The strength of rich contextual description which includes the researcher's argumentation – and connecting findings and interpreting these based on the extant literature.*

3.

- a. Explain how content analysis follows the standards of the scientific method.
- b. In content analysis it is important to conceptually define variables before operationalizing variables. Explain why this is important, and how the two together are important for meeting the standards of validity.

Task 3 counts for 20% of the total mark

a. Content analysis as considering objectivity – intersubjectivity; a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing based on theory (chapter 1 in Neuendorf). That is:

→ *the importance of (trying to) avoid the biases of the researcher. Striving for consistency even if all human inquiry is subjective.*

→ *A priori design: key point. Content analysis as deductive: all decision must be made before the measurement process begins.*

→ *Reliability: for content analysis, the particular importance of intercoder reliability.*

→ *Validity: are we measuring what we intend to measure?*

→ *Generalizability: can findings be applied to other cases/to the population from which the sample has been drawn. Probability samples (randomization).*

→ *Replicability: providing sufficient information about methods and protocols for others to replicate study.*

→ *Hypotheses testing based on theory: Again the importance of content analysis as deductive. Theory – hypotheses (posed before data collection) – testing of hypotheses – support of theory or revision of theory if non-confirming evidence.*

b. Conceptual definition of variables: how the researcher defines each variable/dictionary type definition of the variables. Provides guidance for the subsequent operationalization of the variables.

Operationalizing variables: the process of developing measures. The construction of the coding scheme (code book and code form).

No need to discuss all types of validity assessment, but students should emphasize that in order to make sure measures hit the target, the target must first be conceptually defined.

4. You have conducted a survey that includes the following variables:
 1. Gender (Female; Male)
 2. Age (Open-ended: age in years)
 3. Education (Primary School; High school, College > 4 years; College 4 years or more)
 4. Number of Facebook-friends (Open-ended: number of Facebook-friends)
 - a) What are the measurement levels for each of these variables?
 - b) What measures of central tendency are relevant for each of the variables and why?
 - c) What type of graph would you choose to depict the data for each variable and why?

Task 4 counts for 10% of the total mark

a) Students should be able to identify gender as categorical or nominal (and binary); age as ratio; education (as measured) as ordinal; and number of Facebook-friends as ratio.

b) Students should be able to decide on appropriate measures of central tendency relative to the measurement levels for each variable (mode for gender and education; mode, median and mean for age and number of Facebook-friends).

c) Students should be able to decide on appropriate graph relative to the measurement levels for each variable (e.g. bar chart for gender and education; histogram for age and number of Facebook-friends).

5. a) identify the correct answer and explain why this is correct, and b) explain why the other answers are incorrect:

If we take repeated samples from the population, descriptive statistics vary across samples. This is known as:

- a. Sampling error
- b. Standard error
- c. Sampling variation or variability
- d. Range

Task 5 counts for 10% of the total mark

Answer c) is correct (sampling variation or variability). *Sampling variation is the extent to which a statistic such as the mean varies in samples taken from the same population. Statistics will vary as samples will include different members of the population.*

Answer a) is incorrect. Sampling error refers to the difference between what the population parameter is (which we of course usually don't know), and the value estimated from the sample.

Answer b) is incorrect. The standard error is the standard deviation of the sample means or a measure of how representative a sample parameter is likely to be of the population parameter.

Answer d) is incorrect. The range is the spread or dispersion of scores in the data. The largest score minus the smallest score.

6. Identify the correct answer and explain why this is correct (you are not expected to explain why the other answers are incorrect for this task)

Complete the following sentence: A small standard deviation (relative to the value of the mean itself)

- a. Indicates that data points are close to the mean
- b. Indicates that the data points are distant from the mean
- c. Indicates that the mean is a poor fit of the data
- d. Indicates that the distribution of scores is normally distributed

Task 6 counts for 5% of the total mark

Answer a) is correct (indicates that data points are close to the mean). Students should explain the standard deviation as a measure of dispersion, or spread around the mean. **They are not expected to include the formula for calculating the standard deviation, but great if they explain that if the standard deviation is small (relative to the mean), then the scores/values in the data-set are not spread too widely around the mean (the mean is a good fit of the data).**

7. Identify the correct answer and explain why this is correct (you are not expected to explain why the other answers are incorrect for this task)

Which of the following is true about a 95% confidence interval of the mean?

- a. 95 out of 100 sample means will fall within the limits of the confidence interval.
- b. 95% of population means will fall within the limits of the confidence interval.
- c. There is a 0.05 probability that the population mean falls within the limits of the confidence interval
- d. 95 out of 100 confidence intervals will contain the population mean.

Task 7 counts for 5% of the total mark

Answer d) is correct (95 out of 100 confidence intervals will contain the population mean). We calculate confidence intervals to calculate the boundaries within which we believe the population mean will fall. If we'd collected 100 samples, calculated the mean, and calculated the confidence interval for the mean, then for 95 of the samples the confidence intervals would contain the true value of the mean in the population. **Again, students are not expected to include the equation for calculating the confidence interval of the mean.**

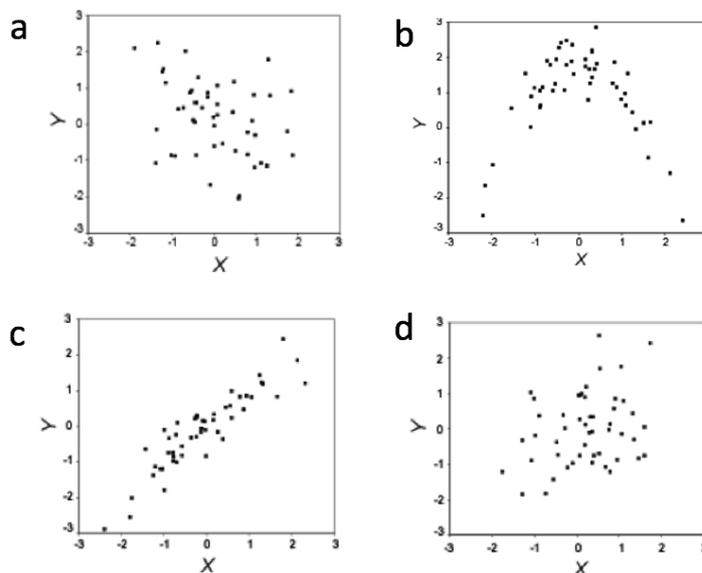
8. One of the research questions asked in the article “Sexy, strong, and secondary: A content analysis of female characters in video games across 31 years” (Lynch et al., 2016) is the following: “Is sexualization of female characters related to their capability?”

In this study “sexualization” is measured with five variables related to the character’s body as well as their movements for sexualization. These five variables were summed into a sexualization index (from 0 – Least sexualized to 5 – Most sexualized).

“Capability” was measured with variables related to whether the characters engaged in feats of physical strength or agility, and whether the characters engaged in threats of physical force or use of such force against other characters. These variables were combined into an index of capability. No information is provided by the authors on the minimum or maximum values for capability, but we assume it is similar to the sexualization index.

To address the research question, the authors conducted a bivariate correlation analysis. The result of the analysis indicates a positive relationship between sexualization and capability, $r = .23$, $p < 0.01$.

- Discuss if and why calculating Pearson’s correlation coefficient is an appropriate test statistic to address the research question.
- Does the result indicate a weak, middle or strong correlation?
- Which of the following scatter plots would is likely the closest to depict the correlation between the two variables? (a, b, c or d?)



Task 8 counts for 15% of the total mark

a) Pearson’s correlation coefficient as a test statistics for measuring the strength of a relationship between two continuous variables: $IV \rightarrow DV$.

Hayes (2005, extract on syllabus) argues it’s ok or at least very common to use also

for pseudo-interval data.

Only makes sense for linear relationships between variables.

Pearson's correlation coefficient is hence an appropriate test statistic to address the research question.

b) Pearson's correlation coefficient as varying between -1 (perfect negative correlation) and 1 (perfect positive correlation). 0 (no correlation). $r = .23$ hence indicates a relatively weak/small correlation.

c) Scatterplot d) is likely the closest depiction of the correlation between the two variables because it depicts a weak positive correlation (a depicts a small negative correlation; b depicts a curvilinear correlation; c depicts a large positive correlation).