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General Interviewer Techniques: Developing Evidence-Based Practices for Standardized Interviewing

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General Interviewing Techniques

**Developing
Evidence-Based Interviewing Techniques
for the Standardized Interview**

Interviewers and Their Effects from a Total Survey Error Perspective Workshop
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
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General Interviewing Techniques: Developing Evidence-Based Practices for Standardized Interviewing

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Why revisit interviewing techniques?

- Recordings now available
- Interaction coding has labeled actions and features of actions
- Influence of response format (aka question form)
- Advances in analytic capabilities

Goals

- General goals
  - Balance traditional needs of standardization against other goals
  - Make reasons for decisions explicit
- Incorporate research
  - Influence of question form
  - Interviewing "style"
  - Conversational practices
- Fill gaps for interviewers and quality control monitors
  - Requires new vocabulary to clarify distinctions
  - Crystallizes specific issues (e.g., importance of instrument conventions)

Criteria considered in revising interviewing techniques

- Criteria
  - Need
  - Ease of training
  - Criteria for quality control and monitoring
  - Rapport and motivation
  - Efficient progress and reducing burden
  - Training the respondent
  - Instrument support
  - Reliability
  - Validity
- Research is uneven for these criteria
- Weighting of criteria varies across decisions

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Evidence-Based Training:

Key Structuring Concepts

Evidence-based training: Key structuring concepts

- Question-answer sequence

Question-answer sequence

Turn 1: Interviewer   Question

Turn 2: Respondent   Codable Answer   Uncodable Answer

Turn 3: Interviewer   [Acknowledgment]   Follow Up
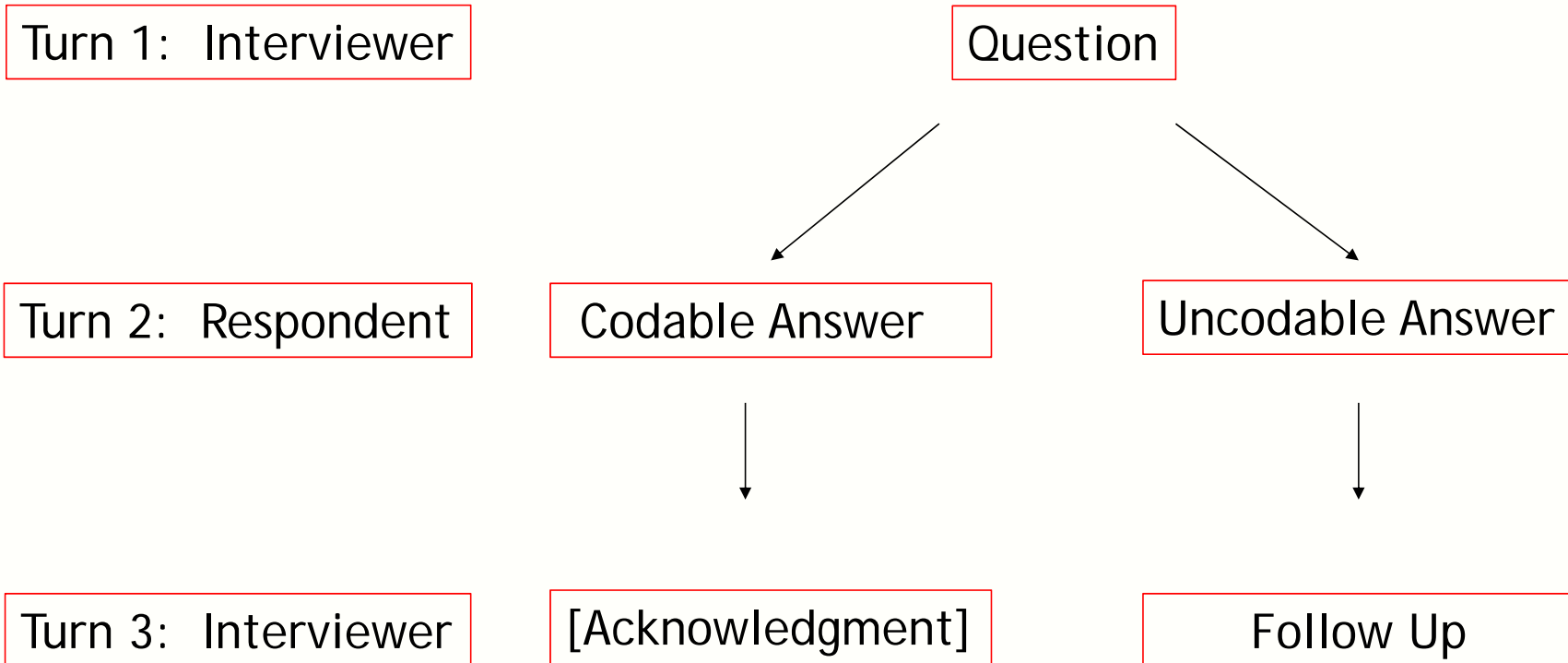
Outline of training in interviewing techniques

Part 1. Introduction
Part 2. The Question-Answer Sequence
Part 3. Advanced Techniques
Part 4. Special Topics

Turn 1

Turn 2

Turn 3

Key structuring concepts

- Question-answer sequence
- Response format (question form)
  - The type of answer projected by the question

Response format: Yes-no

Do you feel you have <u>ever</u> been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?
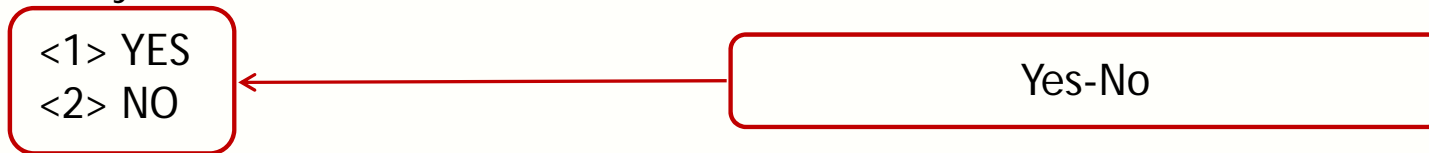
<1> YES
<2> NO

Yes-No

In general, would you say that your health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

<1> EXCELLENT
<2> VERY GOOD
<3> GOOD   Selection: Ordered Categories
<4> FAIR
<5> POOR

During the past week, on about how many days did you have at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, a malt beverage, or liquor?

___ NUMBER OF DAYS (0-7)   Discrete Value

Response format: Selection with ordered categories

Do you feel you have <u>ever</u> been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?

    <1> YES

    <2> NO

Yes-No Response Format

In general, would you say that your health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

    <1> EXCELLENT
    <2> VERY GOOD
    <3> GOOD
    <4> FAIR
    <5> POOR

Selection: Ordered Categories

During the past week, on about how many days did you have at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, a malt beverage, or liquor?

    ___ NUMBER OF DAYS (0-7)

Discrete Value

Response format: Discrete value

Do you feel you have <u>ever</u> been treated unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?

        <1> YES

        <2> NO

                        Yes-No Response Format

In general, would you say that your health is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

        <1> EXCELLENT

        <2> VERY GOOD

        <3> GOOD   Selection: Ordered Categories

        <4> FAIR

        <5> POOR

During the past week, on about how many days did you have at least one drink of any alcoholic beverage such as beer, wine, a malt beverage, or liquor?

    ___ NUMBER OF DAYS (0-7)   ←   Discrete Value Response Format

Common forms of survey questions: Selection with choice list

- Yes-no questions

- Selection questions

  - Ordered categories

  - Choice list

- Discrete-value questions

New vocabulary to use in training
Can also be used with clients and researchers

```
Which of these is the most important
problem facing this country at present:
Food and energy shortages, crime and
violence, inflation, unemployment, or
decreased trust in government?

<1>    FOOD AND ENERGY SHORTAGES
<2>    CRIME AND VIOLENCE
<3>    INFLATION
<4>    UNEMPLOYMENT
<5>    DECREASED TRUST IN GOVERNMENT
```

Key structuring concepts

- Question-answer sequence
- Response format (question form)
- Codable and uncodable answers

Turn 2:
Codable and Uncodable Answers

Question-answer sequence

Turn 1: Interviewer | Question

Turn 2: Respondent | **Codable Answer** | Uncodable Answer

Turn 3: Interviewer | [Acknowledgment] | Follow Up

Conversational Element	Response Format/Question Form			
	Selection			Discrete Value
	Yes-No	Ordered Categories	Choice List	
[None]				
Delay or other particles or tokens				
Repetition of exact match (or synonym)				
Confirming or negating token				
Repetition of part of question				
Modifiers - Certainty				
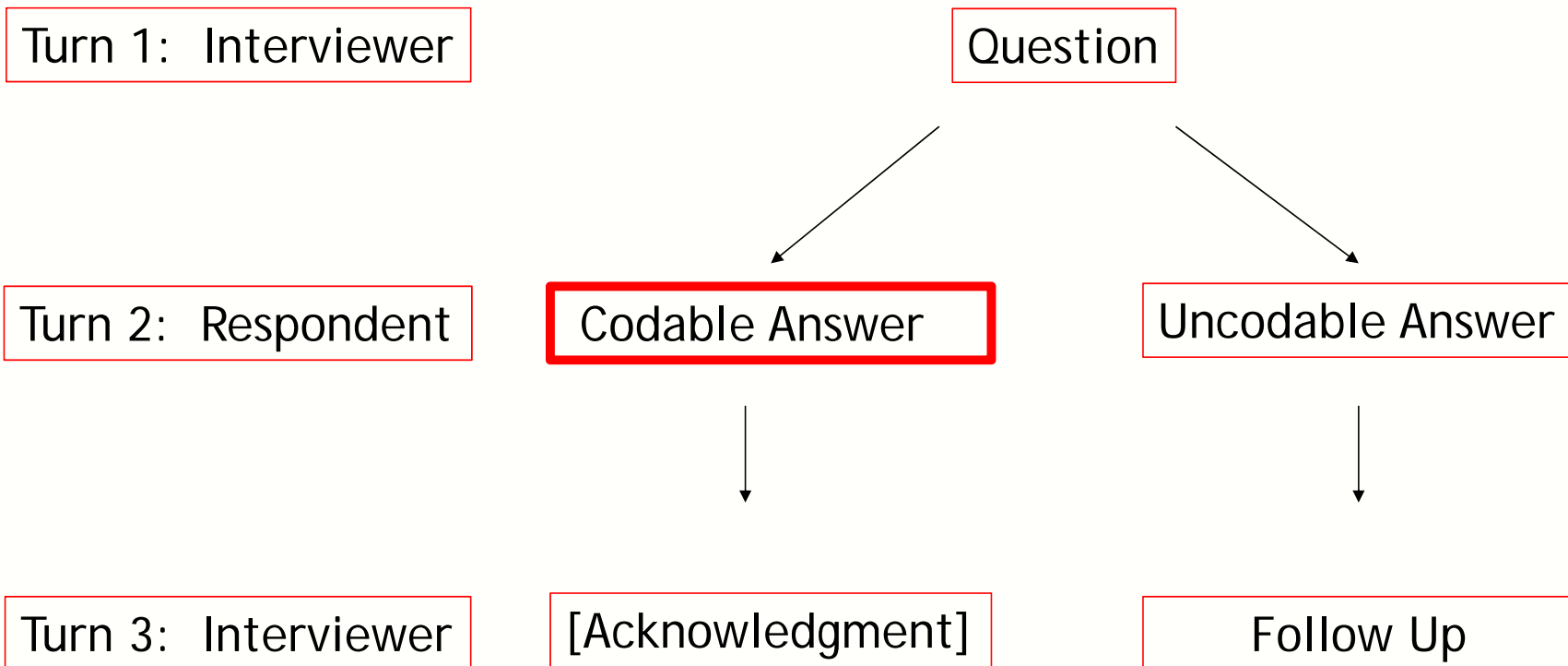
	Response Format/Question Form Selection			
Conversational Element	Yes-No	Ordered Categories	Choice List	Discrete Value
[None]				
Delay or other particles or tokens				
Repetition of exact match (or synonym)				
Confirming or negating token				
Repetition of part of question				
Modifiers - Certainty				

Conversational Element	Response Format/Question Form
	Yes-No
[None]	"yes" or "no" [19, 36]
Delay or other particles or tokens	"um no" [26.1] "uh no I haven't" [42]
Repetition of exact match (or synonym)	"for pay no uh-uh" [84]
Confirming or negating token	"uh no I haven't" [42] "no, i haven't had that problem, no" [54] "yes I did" [43] "for pay no uh-uh" [84]
Repetition of part of question	"yes yes i would say yes" [55] "no no" [56], "yeah yeah" [160]
Modifiers - Certainty	"oh yes definitely" [161]

Conversational Element	Yes-No	Selection Ordered Categories	Selection Choice List	Discrete Value
[None]	"yes" or "no" [19, 36]	"not very willing" [59]. "stop" [12]	"hospital" [159]	"four" [58]
Delay or other particles or tokens	"um no" [26.1] "uh no I haven't" [42]	"oh I would favor it somewhat" [35]	"well at home" [130], "huh home" [11.1], "er at home"[149]	"oh, none at all" [61], "oh (mumble) oh just let's say fifty thousand dollars" [81]
Confirming or negating token	"for pay no uh-uh" [84]	"right I agree" [160]	"uh if there's no chance of recovery just no stop" [153], "no stop" [154]	"um yes, just probably about twice this week" [76]
Repetition of part of question	"uh no I haven't" [42], "no, i haven't had that problem, no" [54], "yes I did" [43], "for pay no uh-uh" [84]	"oh I would favor it somewhat" [35]	"this is my first marriage, my only marriage." [63], "hopefully at home" [131], "in my home I hope" [132]	
Repetition of exact match (or synonym)	"yes yes i would say yes" [55], "no no" [56], "yeah yeah" [160]		"hos home home" [152]	
Modifiers - Certainty	"oh yes definitely" [161]	"absolutely stop" [162]	"well I certainly would like to be at home which" [142]	"oh, none at all" [61]

A codable answer

- Occurs after respondent has heard the question

- Answers the survey question

- Matches the response format of the question

  - One of the response categories

  - The format on the screen

Defining a codable answer

- Occurs after respondent has heard the question
- Answers the survey question
- Matches the response format of the question
  - One of the response categories
  - The format on the screen

- Disregards most conversational elements
  - Tokens
  - Repetitions of the answer
  - Certainty and uncertainty expressions (e.g., "about fifty")
  - Elaborations that do not contradict the codable answer

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Codable answer: Depends on response format

- Yes-no questions
  - "Yes," "no," specific synonyms for "yes" or "no"

- Selection questions
  - One of the response categories read to the respondent
  - Unique portion of a response category

- Discrete-value questions
  - A specific, single number

People like me don't have any say about what the government does. Do you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree?

<1>   STRONGLY AGREE
<2>   AGREE
<3>   NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
<4>   DISAGREE
<5>   STRONGLY DISAGREE

Um, well, I could have more say if I wanted to, so I guess I disagree with that statement.

Turn 3:
Acknowledgements

Question-answer sequence

Turn 1: Interviewer	Question
Turn 2: Respondent	Codable Answer · · · Uncodable Answer
Turn 3: Interviewer	[Acknowledgment] · · · Follow Up
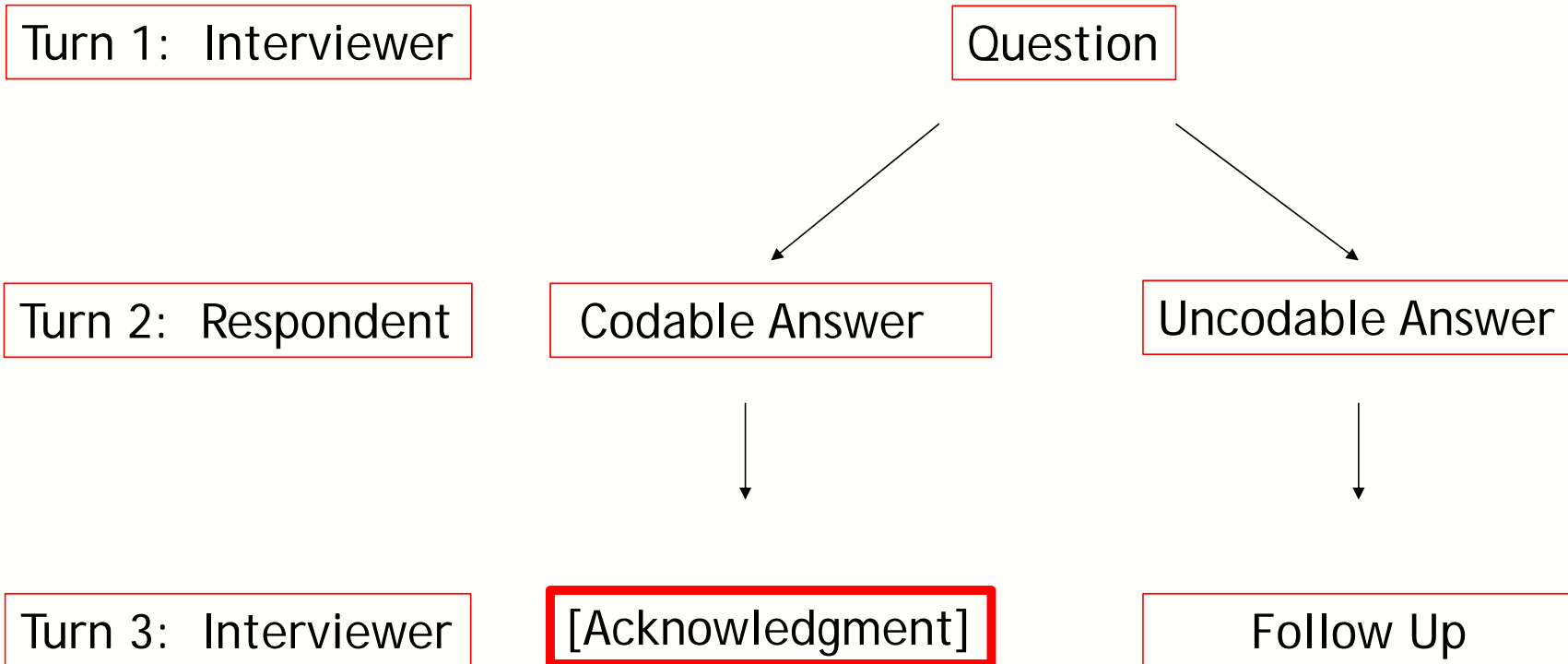
What "okay" is used for

- Psychological view
- Conversational view

FIGURE 7.1. A REMINDER TO STOP SAYING "OK"
BETWEEN QUESTIONS.

Acknowledgments

1   FR   Well, I think give them an eight.

2   IV   Okay. All right. And please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of these statements. The first statement is: People like me don't have any say about what the government does. Would you agree or disagree with that?

3   FR   I agree, but, right, on the other hand I'm not intelligent enough to make all those decisions.

4   IV   Oh.

5   FR   And I've got enough about me to know that I don't want to do it. I don't that responsibility.

6   IV   Okay. All right. And, how about this one: Government agencies usually try to do what is best for the people.

Simple acknowledgment: "Thank you"

Now think about the last 12 months. Did you receive personal care for a
period of one month or more from a family member or friend because of a
health condition, illness, or disability?

```
<1>    YES
<5>    NO
```

*Hmm ... 12 months is a long time ...
Let me think ... Yes.*

Thank you.

Most common simple acknowledgments

Thank you

Okay

Repeating the respondent's codable answer

Mmhmm

Uhhuh

I see

Most common response-specific acknowledgments

Thank you for giving a single number

Thank you for selecting one of our answer categories

Thank you for giving an exact number

Thank you for thinking carefully about that

Thank you for thinking that through

Thank you for taking time to remember

I'm glad to hear that

I'm sorry to hear that

Turn 3:
Following Up an Uncodable Answer
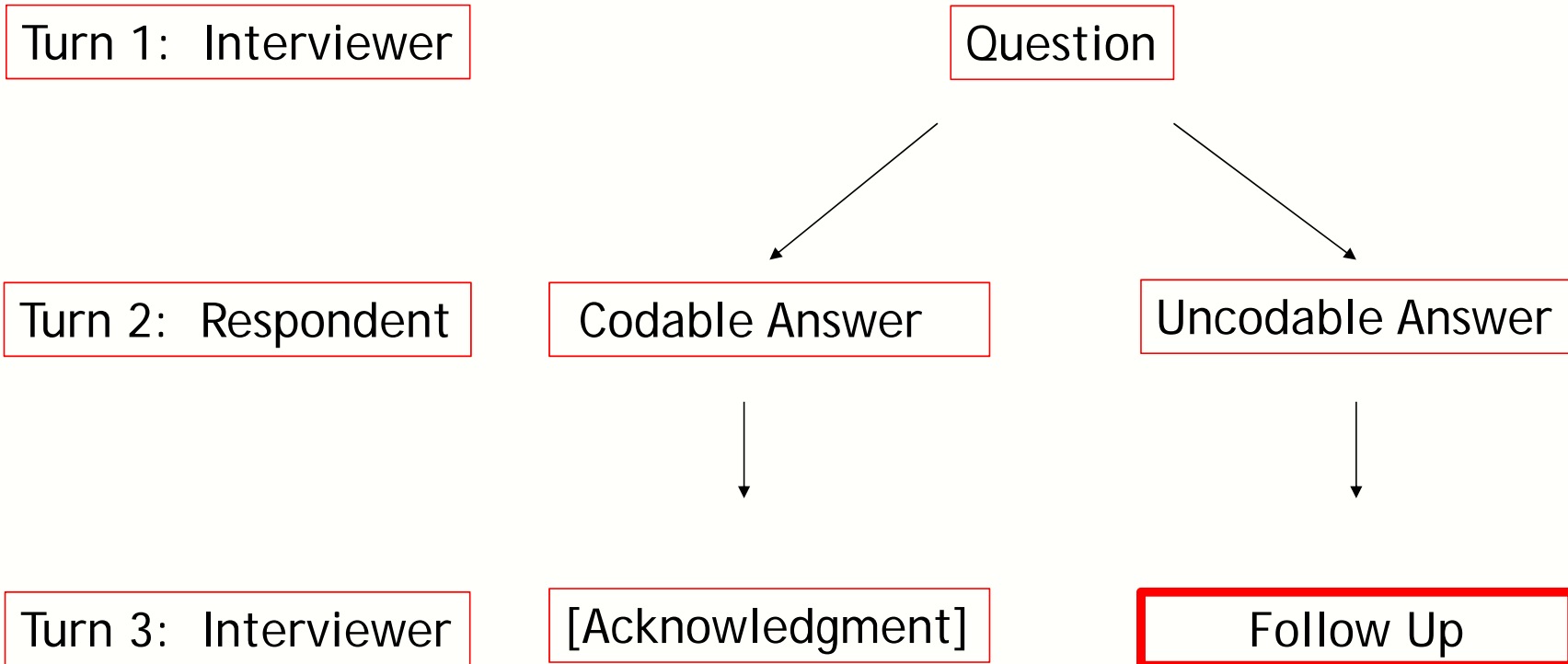
Question-answer sequence

Turn 1: Interviewer   Question

Turn 2: Respondent   Codable Answer   Uncodable Answer

Turn 3: Interviewer   [Acknowledgment]   Follow Up

Follow-up after an uncodable answer: Alternatives

- Repeating entire question
  - [+ response categories]
- Selection
  - Repeating all response categories
  - Ordered categories: Responsive follow-up or "Tuning"

    So would you say somewhat happy, very happy, or extremely happy?

- Yes-no questions
  - Balanced follow-up (= offering all response categories)

    So would you say 'yes' or 'no'?

  - Responsive follow-up with confirmation

    So you would say 'yes,' is that correct?

- Discrete value
  - Offering metric

    So how many days would you say?

- Immediate coding

Logic of answers to yes-no questions	Elements in List Joined by...	
	"or"	"and"
	[Has a doctor ever told you that you have...] How about a heart attack, coronary heart disease, angina, congestive heart failure, or other heart problems?	Example: Have you been able to bend, lift, jump, and run without difficulty and without help or equipment of any kind?
Form of answer		
Kernel + single element	Answer: "Yes, two heart attacks." Action: Immediate coding of kernel	Answer: "No, I can't jump." Action: Immediate coding of kernel
Single positive element	Answer: "Two heart attacks." Possible actions: Immediate coding, responsive confirmation follow-up, balanced follow-up, or reread question?	Answer: "I can jump." Possible actions: Reread question or balanced follow-up.
Single negative element	Answer: "Well, I haven't had a heart attack." Possible actions: Reread question or balanced follow-up.	Answer: "I can't jump" Possible actions: Immediate coding, responsive confirmation follow-up, balanced follow-up or reread question?

Selection questions with ordered categories: Tuning

Q: How well does this person understand your preferences and plans for future medical treatment? Extremely well, somewhat well, not very well, or not at all?

I   1   And how well does this person understand your preferences and plans for future medical treatment: Extremely well, somewhat well, not very well, or not at all?

R   2   Well

Selection questions with ordered categories: Tuning

Q: How well does this person understand your preferences and plans for future medical treatment? Extremely well, somewhat well, ~~not very well, or not at all?~~

I   1   And how well does this person understand your preferences and plans for future medical treatment: Extremely well, somewhat well, not very well, or not at all?

R   2   Well

Selection questions with ordered categories: Tuning

Q: How well does this person understand your preferences and plans for future medical treatment? Extremely well, somewhat well, not very well, or not at all?

I	1	And how well does this person understand your preferences and plans for future medical treatment: Extremely well, somewhat well, not very well, or not at all?
R	2	Well
I	3	Would you say extremely well or somewhat well?
R	4	hm extremely well

Discussion

Discussion

- Challenges
  - Require transcripts
  - Collections of transcripts vary in populations, training and monitoring regimes, question forms, and topics
- Gaps in knowledge are apparent
  - Almost no controlled experiments
  - Descriptive results better than none!
- Issues relevant in all types of research interviewing

Acknowledgments

Developed by:

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