Using Card Sorting in Face-to-Face Interviews: A Research Note

Szde Yu
Assistant Professor, School of Community Affairs, Wichita State University, USA

Rebekah Patterson
Adjunct Faculty, Department of Criminal Justice, Penn State University, USA

Kathleen J. Hanrahan
Professor, Department of Criminology, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA

Abstract

This article introduces an interviewing method that incorporates the card sorting technique in qualitative interviews. The proposed method has been tested in the present study regarding public perceptions on crime seriousness. The interviewees were asked to perform card sorting to illustrate their perceptions, and face-to-face interviews ensued. It was found the card sorting technique can be very helpful especially when participants are to discuss abstract concepts or perceptions that are more commonsensical than knowledgeable. First, it allows for visualization of otherwise abstract perceptions. Second, it records any

* Received for publication April 12, 2014; final revision received June 4, 2014; accepted June 9, 2014.
changes of perception during the interview when the perception could be fluid. Third, it helps participants organize their thoughts and thus they are more likely to assert useful information for analysis. Forth, it compensates for the participant’s verbal limitation. Fifth, it provides a readily organized scheme, originating from the subject directly, for analysis. Sixth, it adds consistency to qualitative interpretation. Finally, it guides questions and therefore instead of saying the participant is responding to the interviewer, it is more like the interviewer responds to the participant’s sorting results.

**Keywords:** card sort, crime seriousness, perception, cybercrime