

Third Parties in Face-to-Face Interviews: Qualitative Insights from 4 African Countries

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Acknowledgments

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Background

Literature

- Privacy – one-on-one interaction
- Growing literature about third parties
- Interviewer observations and correlations with survey responses
- Underreporting on sensitive topics

Gaps in Literature

- Are third parties passive bystanders?
- What are interactions among bystanders, respondents, and interviewers?
 - Who initiates
 - Content
 - Tone
- What action do interviewers take?

Our Research



- Qualitative approach using focus group discussions
- Participants are fieldwork staff
- Research questions
 1. Context: Why do people observe interviews?
 2. Interactions: What are interactions like? What do people talk about?
 3. Mitigation: What actions do interviewers take (if any) to mitigate third party presence?

The African Context

- Third parties are often present (e.g. 67% in Nigeria)
- Cultural context → survey interactions
- Collectivist cultural context
- Limited interactions with outsiders
- For more, see Weinreb (2006)



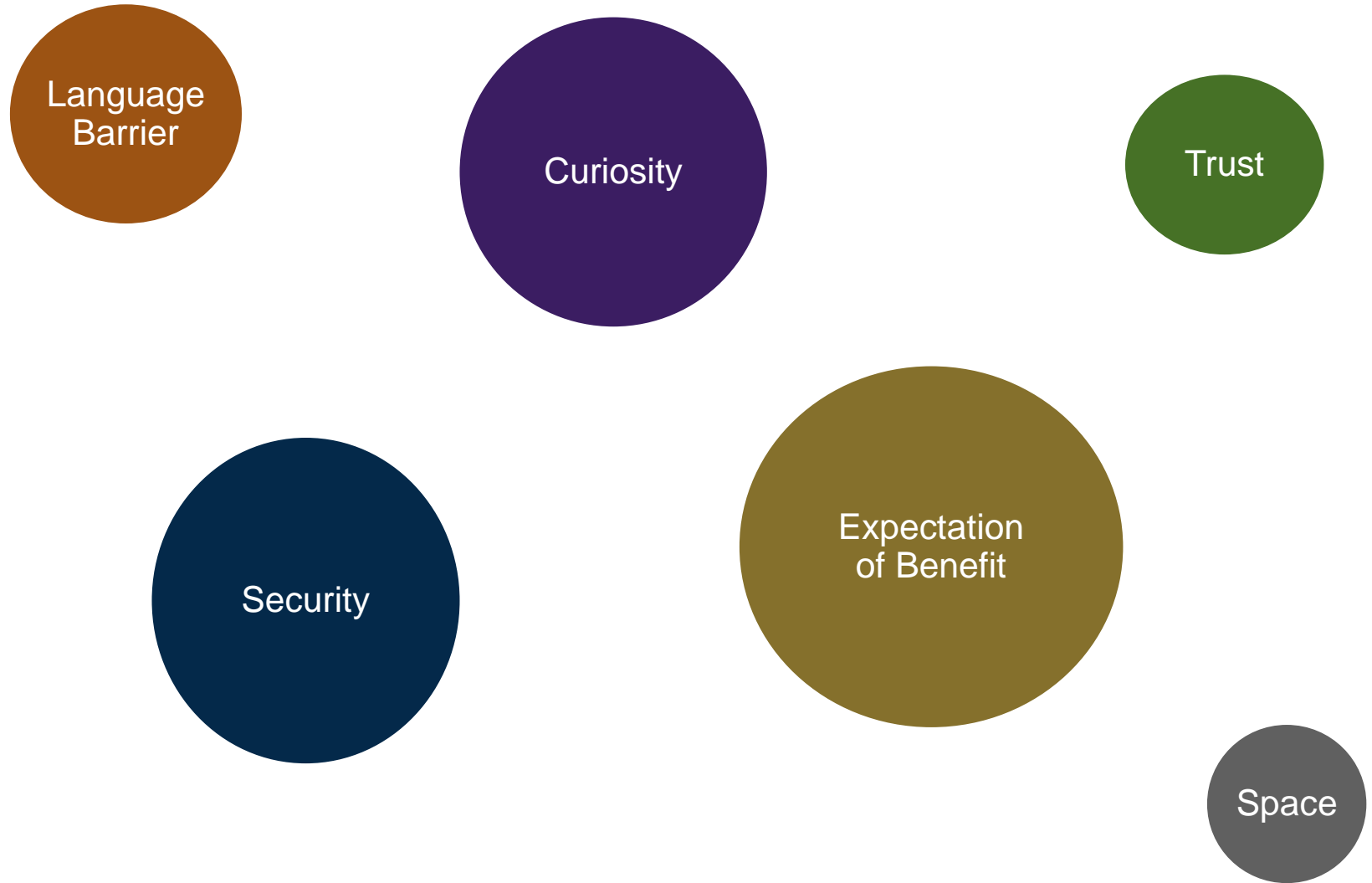
Method

- 8 Focus group discussions in Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda
- Field interviewers and supervisors
- Participants had experience on multiple surveys and topics
- Between 8 to 12 participants in each group
- Focus group discussions conducted in English, audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim
- Thematic content analysis
 - Researcher A read transcripts, generated codes
 - Researcher B coded transcripts, modified codes with Researcher A
 - Researcher C reviewed transcripts and codes



Why do People Observe Interviews?

Themes: Why do People Observe Interviews?



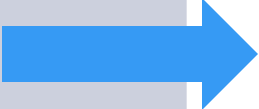
A. Curiosity

Reason

Genuine interest

Unfamiliar with research

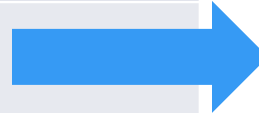
Gender issues



“... we live in the same compound and I notice a stranger is talking to her... because of the affection I have for her, I’ll want to know what they are discussing, and see if I can be part of it.” (Nigeria)

A. Curiosity

Reason
Genuine interest
Unfamiliar with research
Gender issues



“Most people don’t know much about research. And when you get to some places, and you start talking to them about research, they ask what research is about.” (Nigeria)

“Many people or respondents didn’t know the meaning of research because when you are going to do interviews, a lot of them are scared.” (Tanzania)

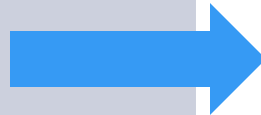
A. Curiosity

Reason

Genuine interest

Unfamiliar with research

Gender issues



“Mostly when I interview women that’s when people come in and they listen in what you are trying to say.” (Kenya)

“If you are interviewing someone’s boyfriend or girlfriend the partner will definitely stay and see what are you up to.” (Tanzania)

B. Expectation of Benefit

- Immediate benefit for bystander or respondent
- Future benefit
- Prestige of acknowledgement



B. Expectation of Benefit: Immediate Benefit

Respondent-driven <ul style="list-style-type: none">Respondent invites others to receive a benefit	<i>“[In the] research we did about alcohol, so when you are done with one respondent, he goes out and tells the others that ... up there, there is free alcohol (laughter).” (Kenya)</i>
Third party-driven <ul style="list-style-type: none">Third party joins the interview because they expect reward for participating	<i>“When you are doing research concerning products, some people get close believing that after the discussion, they will be provided with something...after the discussion.” (Tanzania)</i>

Expectation of immediate benefit was more common for surveys of consumer products (e.g., juice, laundry detergent, beer) rather than surveys on social topics

Safety concerns

“... I think people fear because nowadays, our country is not safe...” (Tanzania)

Distrust identity of interviewer

“... the respondent thought maybe [the interviewer] could be from [the] government tax collection office, so my respondent was like not comfortable.” (Tanzania)

“... the respondent was angry and asked the QC guy if he was the police.” (Nigeria)

**What happens when third parties
are present?**

A. Impact on respondent reporting

Respondent over-reports to impress bystander

“Like do you have a TV? You have what? Do you have a phone, do you have electricity iron. She will answer yes to all because she wanted her neighbor to think that she is higher social class.” (Tanzania)

Respondent under-reports to hide information from bystander

“Yea, then there are some people who live discrete lives from their household members. Let’s say a husband smokes but doesn’t want the kids to find out. If you find such a man in his home with his kids, definitely he will not tell you I smoke.” (Uganda)

A. Impact on respondent reporting

Respondent changes answer when bystander comes around

“At times religion also is a problem, maybe the way the belief of the family is, maybe they made it a must that nobody must smoke in that house and that particular child is smoking, immediately the father comes in and stands, automatically the responses change because of the father, so it’s bystanders that are a problem.” (Abuja)

A. Gender and power matters

Third Parties Interrupt Interview

In a survey about alcohol, a husband terminated his wife's interview.

According to the interviewer, the husband said:

“If they have not brought you beer, how do we benefit? We are not benefitting from this interview; you have other things to do, let them go. I had to terminate the interview then.” (Uganda)

Third party only observes but has an impact

“They [bystanders] intimidate...I will give an example of a wife, a husband is there just quiet, he has allowed you to interview her. Some questions you will ask the wife and you will see her saying, “I don't have an answer” or keeping quiet. Just know that one is not going to come out because she knows, if I say this something will happen after, even if the husband has not said anything.” (Uganda)

What actions do interviewers take to manage third parties?

A. Techniques

- Proper introduction of survey and requesting privacy can help if the bystander is curious

“I think there the most important thing is the introduction. The moment you give them a clear introduction and a clear explanation in the language they understand, both educated and non educated people will leave...” (Uganda)

- Use respondents to manage the bystander

“...if you think it’s hard to let a bystander leave, you can ask the respondent to ask the bystander to leave, this works well sometimes.” (Tanzania)

- Telling bystander that you will talk to them later

“So these people would surround you, would come and try to contribute. You would tell them no, I am only interviewing this person and I will come to you later.” (Uganda)

Discussion

Conceptual Implications

- **Bystanders are active ...**
- **... even before the interview**
- **As a result, interviewers have a lot to handle**



Practical Implications

- **Training** of interviewers should emphasize management of third parties
- **Survey organizations** should focus efforts on sensitizing local communities to survey teams to enhance legitimacy
- **Questionnaire designers** should go beyond “was someone ever present?” and collect richer data, within confines of questionnaire format
- **Data analysts** should recognize that third parties may have influenced responses
- **Researchers** could continue to explore interactions through qualitative methods

More Information

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