

20\_11\_21b Brief summary of points during UCLA CHIME webinar: (by Steve Gregorich and Anita Steward, CADAC / UCSF RCMAR)

### **RCMAR CHIME Methodological Webinar Series**

#### **Homero E. del Pino, PhD, MS**

*Associate Professor, Psychiatry and Human Behaviors, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Co-Director, RCMAR CHIME Research Education Core*

*“Strategies for remote/on line interaction with research participants during COVID-19”*

Monday, Sept 21, 2020, 3-4pm <https://youtu.be/Klmlsi3jnx8>

Dr. del Pino set out to conduct face-to-face interviews with Latino SGM. Because of the pandemic, he modified the originally planned face-to-face semi-structured interviews to occur via Zoom. His talk covered three content sections: (i) preparing for interviews; (ii) day of the interview; (iii) post-interview matters. The notes below are suggestions for others based on what he did in this context.

#### **Preparing for Interviews**

- Modify recruitment materials to describe the modified interview modality (IRB approved)
- Obtained IRB approval for a waiver of signed informed consent. A verbal 'Yes' was acceptable.
- Do a test run of Zoom with the participant before the actual interview
  - Be sure participant can connect, has a quiet/private place
  - Help participant understand what to expect during interview, including length
  - Help participant with Wi-Fi connection, make sure they have enough bandwidth
  - Also, cover instructions for the cash app that will be used for incentives (below)
  - Reminders to participant
    - Interview will be recorded, but deleted (if appropriate) after transcription/coding
    - Participant should use pseudonym ('fake name') during interview. Explain that this is to maintain confidentiality.
- Send the quantitative, demographic/background questionnaire to the participant to complete before the day of the interview. This can be an online REDCap survey. In this way, the day of the semi-structured interview will proceed more efficiently because the quantitative questionnaire will have been completed beforehand and the interviewer will be able to study the participant's responses prior to (and during) the interview.
- For semi-structured interviews, send the participant the first 3 questions (usually ice breakers) so they know what to expect, to give them a chance to think about the questions in advance, and to avoid putting the participant 'on the spot' at the start of the interview.
- Cash incentives – two apps to be able to give cash: Venmo and CashApp
  - Can help them set this up during test run
  - Venmo can send participant a debit card – no need for bank account, not tracked
  - The study created a written step-by-step guide with screenshots to help participants set up an account

- Send the participant a link for the actual Zoom interview that includes either a waiting room or a password.
- Tips for investigators
  - Update router, update zoom
  - 5 simple ways to improve Wi-Fi: <https://nyti.ms/2QMpGRs>
  - Note that before Dr. del Pino updated his router, he had some intermittent throughput problems with Zoom. That led to the audio quality problems, which resulted in additional transcription charges.

### **On day of interview**

- Well before the interview starts, check the participant's quantitative survey for errors/confusing responses. This provides a chance to clarify matters during the semi-structured interview. It also allows for the possibility of incorporating survey responses into the interview.
- Explain project to the participant again – allow them to discontinue
  - Explain all aspects including using a pseudonym, recording policy, etc.
  - Do this before starting the interview and the recording. This will help the flow of the interview and will avoid the study paying for such discussion being transcribed
- Explain process/prepare participants
  - A conversation not an interview
  - Explain that follow-up questions by the interviewer are not a 'challenge,' but a way to better understand the participant's responses
  - Let the participant know that they can ask questions
  - Tell the participant that you will be taking notes. Show them a sample of your notes/notebook (briefly) so they see that you actually are taking notes. In this way, when you look down to write, the participant will understand what you are doing (instead of wondering whether you are paying attention).
  - Tell the participant that it is OK to curse/swear. Provide an example modeling of that behavior (with some laughter)
  - Smile a lot – eases tension
    - Also, body language is important, even over Zoom.
- Obtain verbal consent. Also email a copy of the consent form to the participant.
- Let the participant know when you start recording.

### **Post-Interview**

- When finished:
  - Ask participant how they feel about the interview
  - Ask how their answers might have differed if this had been an in-person interview
  - Ask whether other questions should have been asked – from their point of view
  - Summarize your impressions of their answers and key findings
  - End on a positive note!
  - Tell them you are stopping the recording
- While still on Zoom, complete the payment transaction

- Get their Venmo code
- Ask them to “request” payment from you (to be sure you pay the right person)
- Set Venmo to private status (this ensures that no one else can see the payment to the participant, which keeps their participation in the study confidential)

**Advantages of doing remote interviews**

- Can recruit beyond geographic area
- Reduce travel time, more convenient for participants and for study staff
- More comfortable (at home)
- More flexible with respect to location
- Zoom is the new normal—people are more comfortable using Zoom now than at the beginning of the pandemic
- Some participants believe that virtual interviews feel more anonymous
- Some participants liked virtual interviews because they are more nervous in person
- Some participants indicated that virtual versus in person did not make a difference

**Disadvantages of remote interviews**

- Some loss of body language information
- Harder to establish rapport
- Humor/jokes harder to 'land'
- Quips sometimes not captured by audio because of audio quality issues and because people sometimes talk over one another
- Generational considerations