COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING METHODOLOGY IN 2018:

Current Trends and Recent Challenges

Kristen Miller, PhD
Collaborating Center for Question Design and Evaluation Research, NCHS
THANKS

• Paul Beatty, Census
• Gordon Willis, NCI
• Jennifer Edgar, BLS
• Heather Ridolfo, NASS
• Jennifer Madans, NCHS
• Cognitive interviewing methodology is a qualitative method
• Pulling in the body of qualitative literature is a good thing
• Cognitive interviews produce data that need to be analyzed
• More interviews are better; more diversity is better
• Question interpretation comes from social context
• There are multiple reasons for doing a cognitive interviewing study
• There is variation in how cognitive interviewing projects are conducted
REASONS FOR COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING

• New survey questions are developed
• Changes are made to existing survey questions
• Survey mode changes
• Another respondent group/language is added
• Feasibility of asking a question
• Assessment of validity and comparability
THEN AND NOW

OUT
(LESS THAN IT WAS)

• Sample Size
• To record or not to record?
• Recruiter Characteristics
• Scripted vs Unscripted
• Usability Testing vs Cog Interviewing
• Respondents’ Opinions
• Question Problems

IN
(MORE THAN IT WAS)

• Sample Diversity
• In what medium to record?
• Recruitment Data
• Probability vs Nonprobability
• Incorporation of Usability Techniques
• Respondents’ Experiences
• Question Constructs
STANDARDS FOR COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING STUDIES

Standard 1: Methodological plan
Standard 2: Sample
Standard 3: Protocol for interview
Standard 4: Analysis
Standard 5: Transparency
Standard 6: Reporting
Standard 7: Public accessibility
COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

- Establish a common understanding of principles
- Acknowledges different levels of quality
- Allows for continued discussion and revising
• What constitutes cognitive interviewing methodology? What are the criteria?

• How do you manage the practical challenges presented when conducting a real-life research project?
  • What and how much can be compromised so that the project can be successfully conducted?
COMMON CHALLENGES

- Interviewer limitations
- Respondent limitations
- Scheduling problems
- Inconsistent data quality
- Deficit understanding of qualitative principles within a statistical arena
ONGOING DISCUSSIONS

• How detailed do the interviews need to be?
• Given the need for outside interviewers, can there be some scripted-ness?
• How detailed do reports need to be?
• How ‘saturated’ do the categories need to be? How many interviews? How much regional and demographic diversity?
• Can interviews be conducted without being in-person?
• How flexible do we need to be when incorporating other languages? Other modes?
ADVANCEMENTS

- Analytic method for examining multi-cultural, socio-economic comparability
- Web technology—skype interviews
- Q-notes, online-shared data entry
- Recruitment data collection
- Web panel and non-probability surveys
FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

- Role of cognitive interviewing in the age of “big data” (Beatty)
- Self-evaluation of cog interviewing (Willis)
  - Are we accurately diagnosing question “problems”?
  - Are we accurately portraying what a question “captures”?
- Improvement of respondent recruitment
- Assess value of non-probability surveys
- Management of cog interviewing labs/staff and workload