



Response paper: Cognitive Interviewing (by Kristen Miller)

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Summary of my response

New Ideas

Not-so-new ideas

Good
idea

Maybe
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- 1) Integrative/interactive approach
- 2) Focus more on how we *analyze* C.I. results
- 3) Include *more information* on how analysis is done
- 4) Extend our approaches to consider *multiple levels*-especially the socio-cultural one

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4) Extend current approaches to consider *multiple* perspectives, especially the socio-cultural

- Basis for recent analysis short courses (e.g., Miller & Willis)

- These prove very popular

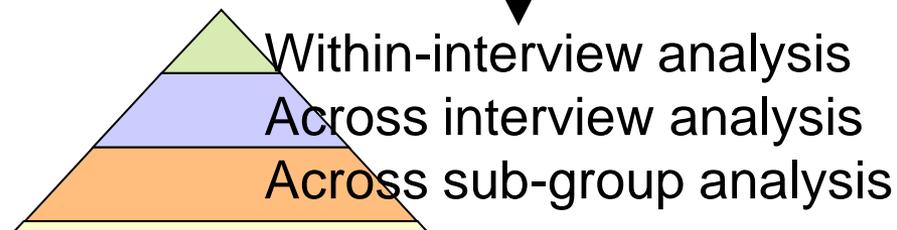
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- 1) Use qualitative method: *Grounded Theory*
- 2) Constantly *compare* results
- 3) Focus on interpretive *variation*
- 4) Get *beyond* cognitive model
- 5) Rely on *narrative text* approach
- 6) Do *more interviews* (saturation)

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- 1) Use qualitative method: *Grounded Theory*
- 2) Constantly *compare* results
- 3) Focus *C.I. is a qualitative endeavor that **does** rely on established methods*
- 4) Get *be*
- 5) Rely on *(hold that thought...)*
- 6) Do *more interviews* (saturation)

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- 5) Rely on
- 6) Do *m*

Willis (2005) and others have advocated various comparative methods, e.g., “successive aggregation” of results

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We have **always** considered the issue of variation in interpretation (some would say that's most of what we do!)

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The Tourangeau four-stage model was just a start – Increasingly we incorporate a range of **logical/structural** and **socio-cultural** factors

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Study of the subjects' narrative (story) is specifically accomplished by the use of ***Elaborative/Expansive*** probing ("Tell me more about that...")

- 3) Focus on interpretive v
- 4) Get ***beyond*** cognitive level
- 5) Rely on ***narrative text*** approach
- 6) Do ***more interviews*** (saturation)

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1) Use qualitative method: *Grounded Theory*

Conrad and colleagues have empirically investigated the influence of number of cognitive interviews on the number of issues identified in C.I. – **“More is better”**

5) Rely on *narrative text* approach

6) Do *more interviews* (saturation)

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- 1) Remove focus on how we *do* the interview (probing)
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- 3) *Eliminate rules* of good question design / "*Expert*" opinion

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DANGER! *Bad probing = Bad results*

I devote a whole chapter on “Avoiding Probing Pitfalls”

Stay tuned for what Kristen really thinks...

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Too narrow:

Yes, Comprehension/Interpretation processes constitute “the 800 pound gorilla”

But, that’s not all there is – retrieval, decision, response processes deserve independent attention

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Don't fire the experts too quickly...
(next)

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- 1) Do *a lot more* interviews
- 2) Focus on “problems” with questions, and make *question functioning*

I’m convinced we should conduct more, especially as we move to include more sub-groups

But – In application, we often CAN’T do enough to reach *saturation* or identify ALL *interpretive processes*

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- Irony abounds... Studying how questions function was the original focus of CASM

Loftus: Do respondents rely on forward, backward, or idiosyncratic retrieval strategies?

- ***Interesting, but it doesn't pay the bills!***
- Besides, I don't think Kristen means this

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Fundamental issue: Top-down versus Bottom-up approach

- ❑ ***Kristen advocates “Grounded Theory” -***
Emphasizes development of hypotheses from data
 - Bottom-up approach -- inductive
 - Aggressively empirical
 - Eschews imposition of a priori coding schemes
- ❑ **However...**

Top-down versus Bottom-up?

- ❑ **Either way, we get hammered**
- ❑ **Recent paper review – cross-cultural pretesting:**
 - *We need to incorporate theory!*
 - *Start with hypotheses, see if qualitative results support the theory*
 - *i.e. – We are too grounded in the data, in ‘tabula rasa’ manner, with no theoretical guidance*
- ❑ **Maybe this represents a disciplinary divide?**
 - **“Reviewer just doesn’t understand qualitative research”**
- ❑ **Does the Qualitative Research field supply the answer?**
 - *Kristen’s argument: We should be using established qualitative research methods*

But... The qualitative research field hasn't decided on best practices

- ❑ ***10TH Conference in Advances in Qualitative Research – Vancouver, 10/09***
- ❑ ***“Grounded Theory” is a good bandwagon, but, we have...***
 - A) Objectivist Grounded Theory Method - Glazer and Strauss)***
 - B) Constructivist Grounded Theory Method (CGTM) – Charmaz***
 - C) Abductive Research Strategies (ARS) – Blaikie***
- ❑ ***These differ/disagree, concerning rigidity of coding, use of a pre- versus post-data collection imposition of researcher perspective, etc.***
- ❑ ***Some variants look like what we have done – others look like what Kristen wants us to do***

My conclusions from review of qualitative methods field

(1) Our field needs a more impressive vocabulary!

-We have nothing that can compete with “Abductive Research Strategies”...

(2) The qualitative research field is struggling with the same issues as we are, concerning –

-Use of coding schemes

-Proper role of researcher/expert perspective

-Means for collecting and analyzing qualitative data

(3) It would help us to decode the language used across fields to identify commonalities

- Use of “Constant Comparison Method” within a “Grounded Theory” approach is similar to application of Bayesian reasoning (gather data, modify hypotheses) – Willis (2005)

“Top-down” can help: Let’s not forget about the value of experts

- ❑ **Kristen tends to disparage Expert Review as opinion that is unsupported by data**
- ❑ **Good point – but don’t throw the baby out yet...**
- ❑ **I believe that the value of experts is a nuanced issue:**
 - ❑ **Depends on WHEN and HOW experts are used**
 - ❑ **Expert review is vital at the ‘input’ point in the process (prior to testing)**
 - ❑ **But these results may also come at the ‘output’ point – after the interviews are done**

Some things don't emerge only through postmodernist interaction... The "Expert" can tell what's wrong!



Source:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/7702913.stm

I agree with Kristen that this is the major problem we face...

■ **Conduct interviews**



■ **Make conclusions and recommendations**

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■ **Conduct interviews**



?

What happens in this interval?

- How are interview results (data) processed?
- How are these turned into conclusions about question functioning?
- Where do recommendations for question revision come from?

■ **Make conclusions and recommendations**

Do we need more systematic analysis procedures?

- Miller et al. comparative study --
- US, Canada, England, Italy, Australia:
 - *Do countries and subgroups have differing interpretations?*

Overall during the past four weeks, how much difficulty did you have with walking long distances, for example 500 [yards/meters]?

■ Italians:

- There is no difficulty with measurement

■ US/Canada/Australia:

- Measure (500 yards/meters) is unknown to many subjects

■ *Are Italians simply better at estimating distances?*

■ *Or, were differences a function of the testing process?*

Upon reflection: There were critical differences between cognitive interviews (so, unsystematic approaches):

- 1) *Nature of data production*: The manner in which probing was conducted to produce data
- 2) *Procedures for data analysis*: The process by which the data were converted into results and then into conclusions/ recommendations
 - > In particular, in the degree to which conclusions were based on **empirical evidence** obtained through testing, as opposed to **expert review** by interviewers (opinions)

Cardinal rule concerning data production:
Focus on *quality* of the original data

K. Miller et al. multi-national study:

S1: *“Yes, sure, I know what 100 yards is.”*

Versus:

S2: *“Yes, 100 yards is the length of a football field. I know this because I was in the marching band a few years ago and we had to march up and down the field 5 times everyday.”*

S2 seems better... a richer description

Probing must actually “probe”... often through follow-up (Tell me more about that...)

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This is why (relying on Kristen's own example) I argue that probing IS vitally important! (i.e., garbage in/out)

What kinds of evidence do we need to figure out whether cog interviewing is 'effective'?

- Kristen's paper provides a nice *illustration* of her preferred methods, but not a systematic comparison of different methods
- Before coming to firm conclusions, we need to rely on *experiments*, and *quasi-experiments*, to (a) compare approaches; and (b) evaluate outcomes
 - (a) *Comparison of think-aloud versus retrospective probing for self-admin questionnaire (Bates & DeMaio, 1989) - similar*
 - (b) *Willis and Schechter (1997): Do results of C.I. predict data distributions from different question versions, in a field environment - yes*

Summary – “Best of” what Kristen offers

- Qualitative data collection/analysis relies on stories ('narratives')
– *“Tell me more...” is usually a very effective probe*
- However, a limited sampling of these stories = **anecdotes**
these are insufficient
- By careful conduct of more interviews, we can gather enough stories that we get good coverage of what the question is measuring -- *saturation*
- This approach also allows us to move to a **multi-level viewpoint** – beyond the individual (psychology) to the broader level – *socio-cultural realm*
- This viewpoint suggests **specific steps** we can take within the realm of our existing paradigm concerning data collection and analysis
- **So, we should push our current ‘paradigm drift’ along**