Response paper: Cognitive Interviewing (by Kristen Miller)

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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

- Basis for recent analysis short courses (e.g., Miller & Willis)
- These prove very popular
Summary of my response

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1) Integrative/interactive approach
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- Within-interview analysis
- Across interview analysis
- Across sub-group analysis
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1) Use qualitative method: *Grounded Theory*
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C.I. is a qualitative endeavor that *does* rely on established methods *(hold that thought…)*
Summary of my response

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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)**

Willis (2005) and others have advocated various comparative methods, e.g., "successive aggregation" of results
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6) Do *more interviews* (saturation)

We have *always* considered the issue of variation in interpretation (some would say that’s most of what we do!)
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6) Do *more interviews* (saturation)

The Tourangeau four-stage model was just a start – Increasingly we incorporate a range of *logical/structural* and *socio-cultural* factors.
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 variation
4) Get *beyond* cognitive model
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6) Do *more interviews* (saturation)
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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**"
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| | 1) Remove focus on how we *do* the interview (probing) | |
| | 2) Limit focus to *interpretive processes* | |
| | 3) *Eliminate rules* of good question design / “Expert” opinion | |
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New Ideas

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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1) Remove focus on how we do the interview (probing)
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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 less on “problems” with questions, and more on 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**
Summary of my response

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

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

**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 -- *satisfaction*
- 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**