

Blended pretesting: Embedding web probing in between rounds of in-person cognitive interviewing

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2020 American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)

Annual Conference



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
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CBDRB-FY20-292 APPROVED BY DRB ON 2020-06-01

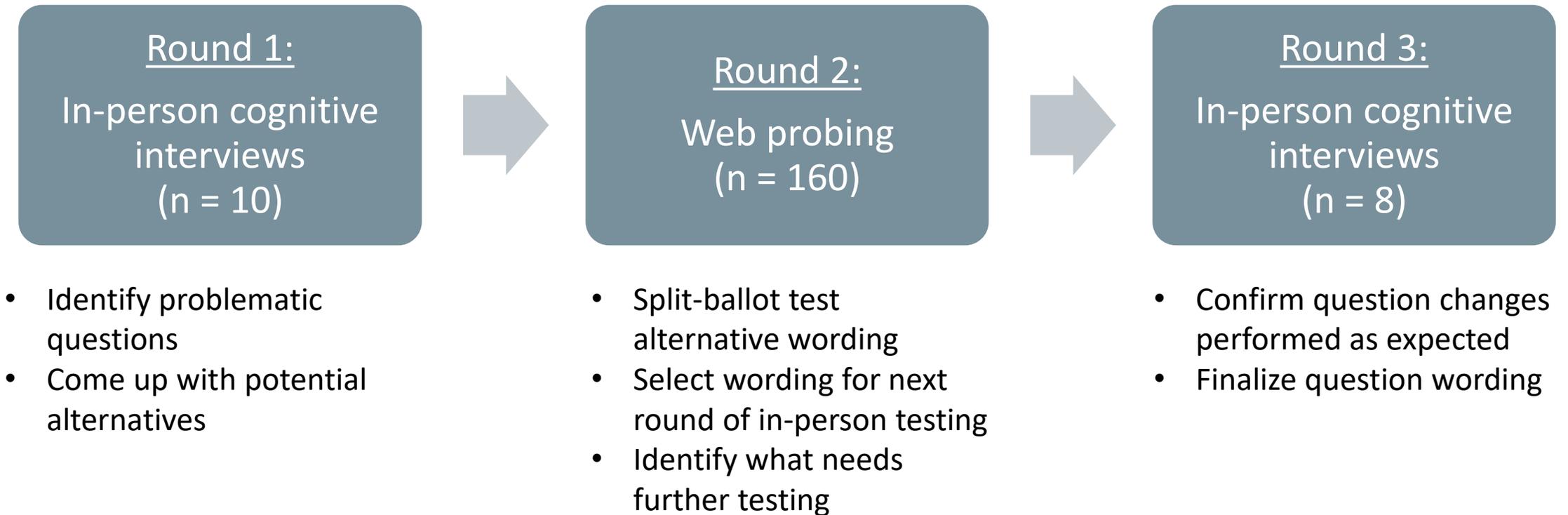
Background

- Pretesting in support of 2020 Census evaluation about respondents' privacy and confidentiality concerns
- New survey (some questions pulled from other sources)
- Questionnaire asks about topics such as:
 - Sensitivity of census questions for self and household members
 - Attitudes and beliefs about the census, government, and institutions
 - Attitudes and beliefs about privacy on the internet and more generally
 - Attitudes towards administrative record use

Background (cont.)

- Sample for the evaluation: those who self-responded to the census (mostly internet/paper) and those who responded with an interviewer (phone and in-person)
- Multi-mode survey: mail, telephone, and in-person interviewing
- English and Spanish questionnaires
- Limited time to pretest → Addition of web probing
 - Quick, inexpensive feedback from a larger group of respondents

Pretesting study design



Pretesting study design (cont.)

	In-person interviews (2 rounds)	Web probing (1 round)
Language	English	English and Spanish
Sample	Convenience sample	Nonprobability panel through Qualtrics
Recruitment	Flyers, craigslist.com, personal connections	Emails sent to panel members
Recruitment criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents who handle mail • General demographic diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotas for sex, education, region, birthplace, ethnicity*
Incentive	\$40	Varies by panelist
Data collection period	Several weeks per round	3 days total
Geography	Washington, DC metropolitan area	Across the country
Mode	Self and interviewer-administered	Self-administered
Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full questionnaire • Probes asked retrospectively • Think aloud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial questionnaire • Probes asked mostly concurrently • Mix of open and closed probes

* Spanish only

Round 1 (in-person) findings

- Overall, questionnaire worked fairly well, but there were a few things we wanted to address:
 1. Name of survey was not interpreted as intended
 2. The phrase “worried...about your personal privacy” seemed to connote a higher level of concern than we intended
 3. Key phrase (“because of privacy concerns”) was being missed by respondents in questions about item and survey nonresponse
 4. Two questions about perceived potential for the census to cause harm seemed similar– do we need to ask both?

Round 1 (in-person) findings

1. Name of survey was not interpreted as intended

Name of survey: Web probing

Issue	Wording tested	Analysis
1. Name of survey	Split-ballot test: “2020 Census Experience Follow-up Survey” v. “2020 Census Opinion Survey”	<p>Some of these questions may appear on the [2020 Census Experience Follow-up Survey / 2020 Census Opinion Survey].</p> <p>What kinds of questions do you think will be asked on this survey? <i>Mark all that apply.</i> <i>(Randomized order)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> How many people are living or staying at your address<input type="checkbox"/> Name, age, race, Hispanic origin, and sex for people living or staying at this address<input type="checkbox"/> Feedback on experiences completing the 2020 Census<input type="checkbox"/> Attitudes towards the census<input type="checkbox"/> Attitudes towards the government

Name of survey: Web probing (cont.)

- No one got the full list of correct responses for either survey name
- Most people thought we would be asking how many people were living/staying at their address
- No meaningful differences in pattern of responses between the two conditions
- Results suggest neither survey name successfully communicated this wasn't a census re-interview
- Decided to continue probing on both names in next round of in-person testing and to consider testing a third name

Name of survey: Round 3 (in-person)

- Multiple probes on both names, including open-ended version of web probe (“What kinds of questions do you think will be asked on this survey?”)
- In this round, neither title worked perfectly but “2020 Census Opinion Survey” was better, so we switched to this name
 - More concise
 - Gave a slightly better indication of questions asked

Round 1 (in-person) findings

1. Name of survey was not interpreted as intended
2. The phrase “worried...about your personal privacy” seemed to connote a higher level of concern than we intended

“Worried” about privacy: Web probing

Issue	Wording tested	Analysis
2. “Worried” about privacy	Split-ballot test: “worried” v. “concerned” “In general, how [worried/concerned] would you say you are about your personal privacy? “	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comparison of response distributions• “What does it mean to be [worried/concerned] about your personal privacy?” (open-ended)

“Worried” about privacy: Web probing

In general, how [worried/concerned] would you say you are about your personal privacy?

	Worried	Concerned
Extremely	14% (11)	41% (33)
Very	10% (8)	24% (19)
Somewhat	33% (26)	20% (16)
A little	23% (18)	10% (8)
Not at all	21% (17)	5% (4)
Total	100% (80)	100% (80)

“What does it mean to be [worried/concerned] about your personal privacy?”

- Inability to control security and use of information: Hacking, identity theft, public release of personal information, sharing without permission
 - *“Not knowing who may get access to my information.”*
 - *“Fear having my personal data exposed makes me a target for identity theft, financial theft.”*
- General preference to keep some things to themselves (“too much information”)
 - *“I don't like all of the ‘spying’ by companies and government.”*
 - *“Government getting more [control] over people.”*

“Worried” about privacy: Web probing (cont.)

- Same themes in both versions, but difference in response distributions
- Decided to change question wording to “concerned” and confirm working as intended in next round of in-person testing

“Worried” about privacy: Round 3 (in-person)

- Probes
 - “What does it mean to be [worried/concerned] about your personal privacy?” (Replication of web probe)
 - “Do you think that being ‘worried’ about your personal privacy is the same as being ‘concerned’ about your personal privacy, or is it different?”
- Using “concerned” was a clear improvement over “worried”
 - Comments echoed what we saw in web probing
- We implemented this change

Round 1 (in-person) findings

1. Name of survey was not interpreted as intended
2. The phrase “worried...about your personal privacy” seemed to connote a higher level of concern than we intended
3. Key phrase (“because of privacy concerns”) was being missed by respondents in questions about item and survey nonresponse

Refusal because of privacy concerns: Web probing

Issue	Wording tested	Analysis
3. Refusal because of privacy concerns	<p>Split-ballot test:</p> <p>Original: “How often do you refuse to answer surveys because of PRIVACY CONCERNS?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never• Rarely• Sometimes• Very often” <p>Revised: “Because of privacy concerns, how often do you refuse to answer surveys?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never• Rarely• Sometimes• Very often”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comparison of response distributions• “What were you thinking about when you answered this question?” (open-ended)

Refusal because of privacy concerns: Web probing (cont.)

	Original (Capitalized)	Revised (Intro phrase)
Never	8% (6)	10% (8)
Rarely	43% (34)	41% (33)
Sometimes	39% (31)	43% (34)
Very often	11% (9)	6% (5)
Total	100% (80)	100% (80)

Refusal because of privacy concerns: Web probing (cont.)

- Respondents said some surveys are “too personal”
 - *“I always refuse to enter surveys that collect name and or address. I usually enter a false birthdate.”*
 - *“I answer surveys when I believe they are legitimate and not infringing on my privacy.”*
- Respondents consider benefits/costs of responding
 - *“Surveys (so far) have used my information for positive results.”*
- They are not always sure why questions are being asked or how data will be used
 - *“Wonder what will happen in the future with the data.”*

Refusal because of privacy concerns: Web probing (cont.)

- No real differences in probe responses by version, but the intro phrase version still seemed more practically useful
- We switched question to use revised intro phrase version and decided to continue probing in next round of in-person testing

Refusal because of privacy concerns: Round 3 (in-person)

- Probed to ask how they came up with their answer and asked for examples
- In this round, the revised intro phrase order worked well
- This change was implemented

Round 1 (in-person) findings

1. Name of survey was not interpreted as intended
2. The phrase “worried...about your personal privacy” seemed to connote a higher level of concern than we intended
3. Key phrase (“because of privacy concerns”) was being missed by respondents in questions about item and survey nonresponse
4. Two questions about perceived potential for the census to cause harm seemed similar– do we need to ask both?

Similar questions: Web probing

Issue	Wording tested	Analysis
4. Similar questions	<p>Show both questions again at the end of the survey:</p> <p>“We are almost done with the survey. Here are two questions that you saw earlier:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you believe that answering and submitting your census form could harm YOU?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes• No2. How concerned are you, if at all, that the answers you provide to the 2020 Census will be used against you?<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extremely concerned• Very concerned• Somewhat concerned• A little concerned• Not at all concerned”	<p>“Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion? <i>(Randomized order)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• These questions are asking me the same thing.• These questions are asking me different things.”

Similar questions: Web probing (cont.)

Which of the following statements comes closest to your opinion?

	Frequency
These questions are asking me the same thing	64% (102)
These questions are asking me different things	36% (58)
Total	100% (160)

- We decided to ask this probe in the next round of in-person testing before making a final decision

Similar questions: Round 3 (in-person)

- We asked a version of the web probe in person (“Do you think these questions are asking the same thing, or are they asking different things?”)
- In this round, responses to the in-person probe were similarly mixed
- People who thought they were different commented on the scales
- Some thought one of the questions was more “general”
- We decided to delete one of the questions since we were concerned about length of the survey

Conclusion

- Overall, web probing was a useful supplement to a small number of in-person interviews
 - Quick feedback from a larger number of respondents
 - Provided clear path forward on 2/4 issues identified in round 1
 - Guided selection of focused probes for round 3 of testing
- However, not a panacea
 - Evidence was inconclusive on several issues that then required further testing
 - Some unhelpful responses
 - Only tested self-administered mode

A few practical suggestions for web probing between rounds

- There are several steps that can be taken prior to finishing round 1
 - Select sample and draft email invitation text (if necessary)
 - Program as much of the web probing instrument as possible
 - Finalize data cleaning procedures
- Use a mixture of closed and open-ended probes to facilitate quick analysis and decision-making
- Consider using tools such as NVIVO

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