Contents

Preface ix

PART I: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND 1

1. Introduction to Cognitive Interviewing 3
   - What Is (and Isn't) Cognitive Interviewing? 3
   - A Broader Perspective: The Cognitive Testing Process 5
2. Setting the Stage for Cognitive Interviewing: First Principles of Questionnaire Design 12
   - Sources of Error in Self-Report Surveys 13
   - Why Do Survey Questions Produce Response Error? A Sociolinguistic Perspective 17
   - How Can We Avoid Problems in Survey Questions? 21
   - If We Are Proficient Designers, Why Do We Need to Test Questions? 27
   - Chapter Summary 30
   - Exercise: Question Evaluation 30
3. Background and Theoretical Origins: The CASM Approach 34
   - Origins of CASM as an Orienting Framework 34
   - Applications of Basic CASM Research 37
   - Cognitive Interviewing as Applied CASM Research 39
   - Chapter Summary 41
4. Cognitive Interviewing in Practice: Think-Aloud, Verbal Probing, and Other Techniques 42
   - Think-Aloud Interviewing 42
   - Verbal Probing Techniques 47

Concurrent Versus Retrospective Verbal Probing 51
Choosing Between Think-Aloud and Verbal Probing Techniques 52
Vignettes, Card Sorts, and Field-Based Probes 58
Chapter Summary 62

PART II: THE INTRICACIES OF VERBAL PROBING 65

5. Developing Standard Cognitive Probes 67

Examples of Cognitive Probing 68
Logical and Structural Problems 77
A Systematic Approach to Probe Development: The Question Pitfalls Model 79
Chapter Summary 83
Exercise: Using the QAS to Develop Probe Questions 84

6. Beyond the Standard Model of Verbal Probing 87

A Classification of Probe Types 87
Proactive Versus Reactive Probing 91
Standardized Versus Free-Form Probes 94
Chapter Summary 97
Exercise: Emergent Probing 98

7. A Further Perspective: Cognitive Testing as Expansive Interviewing 102

A Broad View of Cognitive Interviewing 102
The Ethnographic Interview as an Alternative Perspective 109
Merging Cognitive and Expansive Interviewing 113
Chapter Summary 114

8. Avoiding Probing Pitfalls 115

Are We in Danger of Finding Problems That Don't Exist? 115
Practices That Avoid Artificial Problems 116
Chapter Summary 126

PART III: THE COGNITIVE TESTING PROCESS 127

9. Selection and Training of Cognitive Interviewers 129

Interviewer Personality: Who Makes a Good Cognitive Interviewer? 129
Technical Background of the Cognitive Interviewer 131
How Should Cognitive Interviewers Be Trained? 131
Continuing Education in Cognitive Interviewing 134
Chapter Summary 135

10. Planning and Conducting Cognitive Interviews 136

Fitting Cognitive Testing Into the Overall Design Sequence 136
Preparing for the Interview: Subject Recruitment 137
The Interviewing Process 142
Twelve Logistical Issues and Considerations 143
Chapter Summary 150

11. Analyzing and Documenting Cognitive Interview Results 151

Characterizing Cognitive Interview Outcomes 152
The Analysis of Think-Aloud Interview Results 156
Analysis of the Probed Interview 159
Persistent Analysis Issues 168
Chapter Summary 172
Exercise: Analyzing Cognitive Interviews 172

PART IV: OTHER ISSUES AND TOPICS 175

12. Special Applications of Cognitive Interviewing 177

Adjusting to Survey Administration Mode 177
Cognitive Testing of Sensitive Questions 189
Cognitive Interviewing and Establishment Surveys 196
Testing Questions on Attitudes and Opinions 199
Interviewing Across the Age Range 202
Testing Non-Questionnaire Materials 204
Chapter Summary 205

13. Evaluation of Cognitive Interviewing Techniques 207

Theoretical Perspectives 208
Empirical Evaluation of Cognitive Interviewing 213
Are We Evaluating the Right Outcome? 224
Limitations of Cognitive Interviewing 225
Chapter Summary 228

14. Beyond Cognitive Testing: Affiliated Pretesting Methods 230

(Formal) Expert Review 231
Focus Groups 233
Behavior Coding 236
Reinterview Surveys 241
How Do Pretesting Methods Compare? 243
Chapter Summary 253

15. Recommendations and Future Directions 255

Twelve Recommendations for Cognitive Interviewing Practice 255
Future Directions for Cognitive Interviewing 261
A Final Case Study 268
In Conclusion 271

Appendix 1: Example of Cognitive Testing Protocol 273

Appendix 2: Examples of Findings From Cognitive Testing Reports 287

References 299

Index 321

About the Author 335