

Are they answering what we think we're asking?

The importance of pre-testing survey questions using cognitive interviews

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What is a cognitive interview?



The basis of cognitive interviews

1. Comprehending the item
2. Retrieving relevant information
3. Making a judgement based upon knowledge recalled
4. Mapping the answer onto the reporting system

(Tourangeau, Rips & Rasinski, 2000)

Identifying overt and covert problems

Testing question variations

- The assessment tasks assisted me in achieving the learning outcomes
- The assessment tasks provided me with opportunities to fully demonstrate my knowledge and skills
- The assessment tasks assisted my learning in this unit

The assessment tasks assisted me in achieving the learning outcomes

Student: [Reads question] I'd probably say neutral, because I learnt a lot about some areas ...

Interviewer: Did you actually know what the learning outcomes were?

... [Further discussion] ...

Student: To be honest, probably not really, no.

Interviewer: So ... there weren't clearly defined learning outcomes?

Student: Not really.

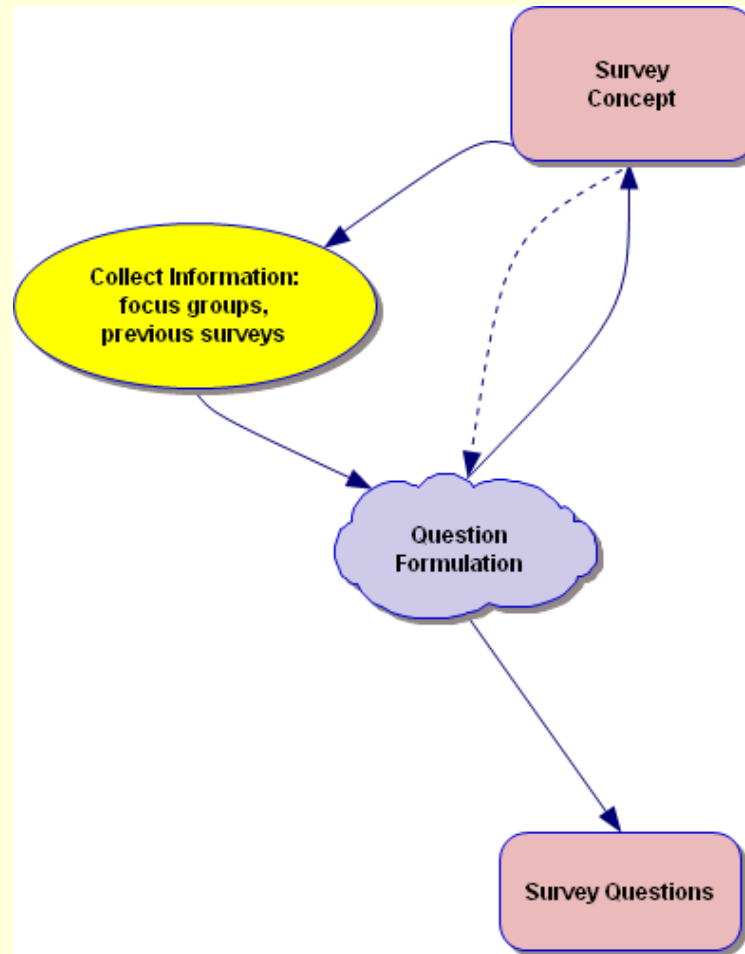
Interviewer: I'm surprised you gave it as good a score as you did!

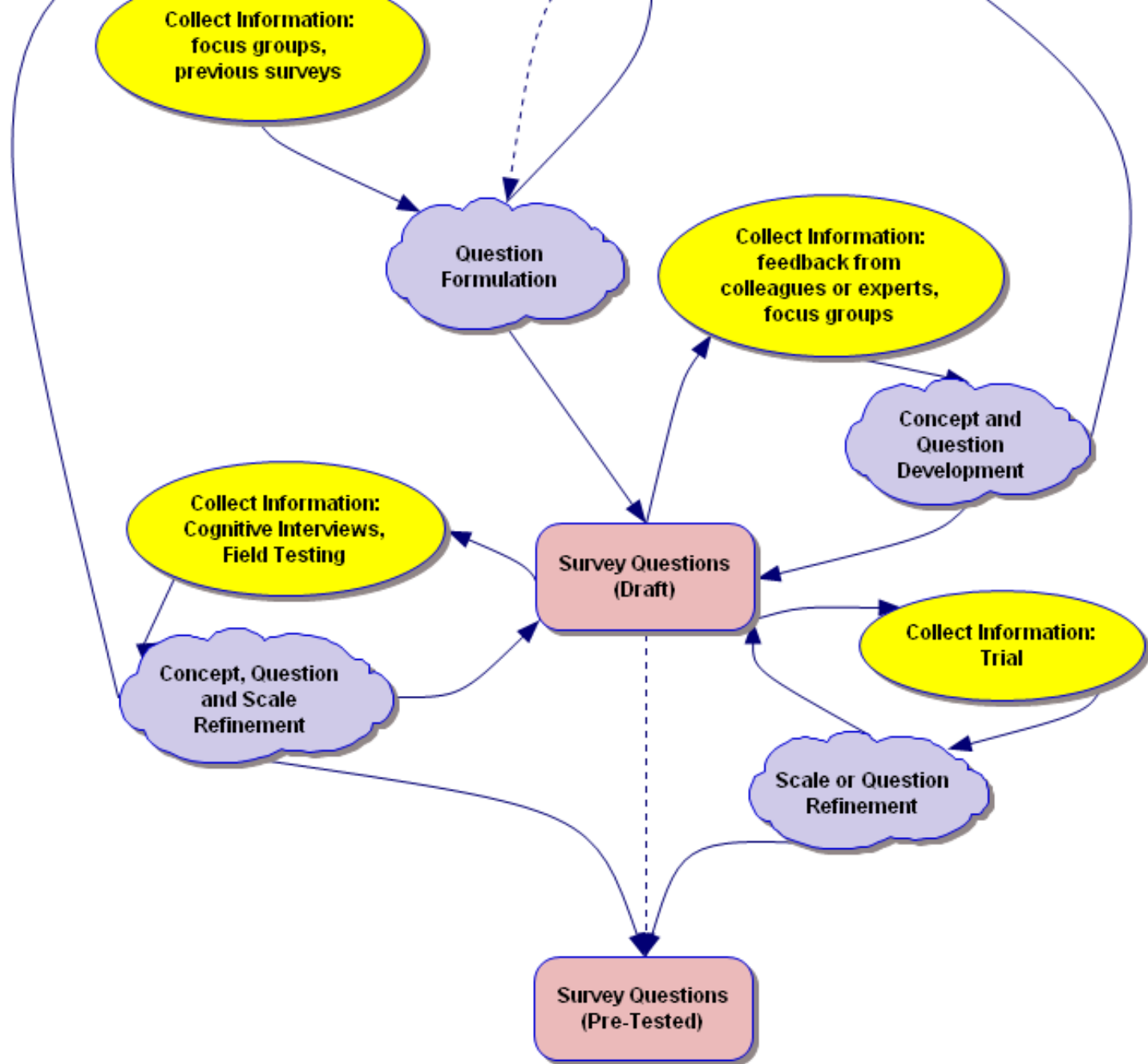
Student: Maybe I'm exaggerating the problem ... I was dissatisfied with the whole unit, it wasn't what I was expecting.



Conducting cognitive interviews

The survey development process





More Information ...

- My favourite all round reference is:
Willis, G. B. (2005). *Cognitive Interviewing:
A Tool for Improving Questionnaire Design*.
Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc

Questions