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Combining multiple evaluation methods

What does it mean when data appear to conflict?

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Background and methods

Research questions

- Do different QT methods ever result in **contradictory** findings and why does this occur?
- Do different QT methods ever result in **overlapping** or **complimentary** findings?
- What are the **implications** for selecting and combining QT methods?

Retrospective review of past QT projects

Case study approach. Selection of based on:

- Use of multiple QT methods
- Some overlap in test aims between methods
- Variety within materials tested:
  - substantive area
  - data collection method
  - data collection mode

Collation and reviewing of project materials

- Proposals
- Interview protocols
- Reports

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Different QT projects have different starting points

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Question testing and developmental stages

Scoping	• Conducted *before* questions are written • Clarify aims/ key concepts/ feasibility
↓	
Questionnaire Development	• First drafts of questions written
↓	
Exploratory testing	• Collecting initial *qualitative feedback* on new questions. Can be *open* or *theory driven.*
↓	
Quality assessment	• Collecting *quantitative metrics* on how well new questions perform in a survey context.
↑ ↓	
Explanatory/ Data driven re-testing	• Collecting *qualitative feedback* to explain issues detected by the quality assessment phase. Can only be conducted *post-survey.*

The case studies

The one where the public disagreed with the experts…

Case study 1: Conflict between FG and Expert Panel

	Focus Groups	Expert Panel
Stage	Scoping phase	Scoping phase
Shared aim	• To inform a new survey about people who employ their own care and support workers. • To get feedback on proposed Qn content and survey processes.	
Sample	82 participants- direct employers of care workers and representatives from voluntary sector groups	Meeting convened between data-users and survey methodologists
Conflicting finding	Anti-standardisation. Anti showcards and precodes.	Pro-standardisation. Pro showcards and precodes.

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Discussion and implications

- FG attendees anti-questionnaires as too ‘impersonal’ ‘scripted’ or similar to benefit application process.
- FGs did produce useful suggestions on Qn topics and language to use.
- Unrealistic to expect members of the public to have an understanding of more technical elements of research design

FGs more suited to explore **what types of information should be collected.**

Expert panel suited to **how information should be collected.**

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The one where a problem was hidden in a crowd…

Case study 2: Conflict between FG and CI

	Focus Groups	Cognitive interviews
Stage	Scoping and exploratory testing	Exploratory testing
Shared aim	• To test understanding of six new questions on 'violent extremism'	
Sample	103 participants. Quotas set for age, sex, religion and ethnic origin.	30 participants Quotas set for age, sex, religion and ethnic origin.
Conflicting finding	No comprehension issues detected	Comprehension issues detected with the term 'violent extremism'

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Possible causes and implications

- Comprehension/ ability issues easier to hide in focus group settings?
- Participants less willing to divulge comprehension issues in group?
- Time/ effort expended in CI?

CI more effective than FG at detecting issues in the **exploratory test** phase

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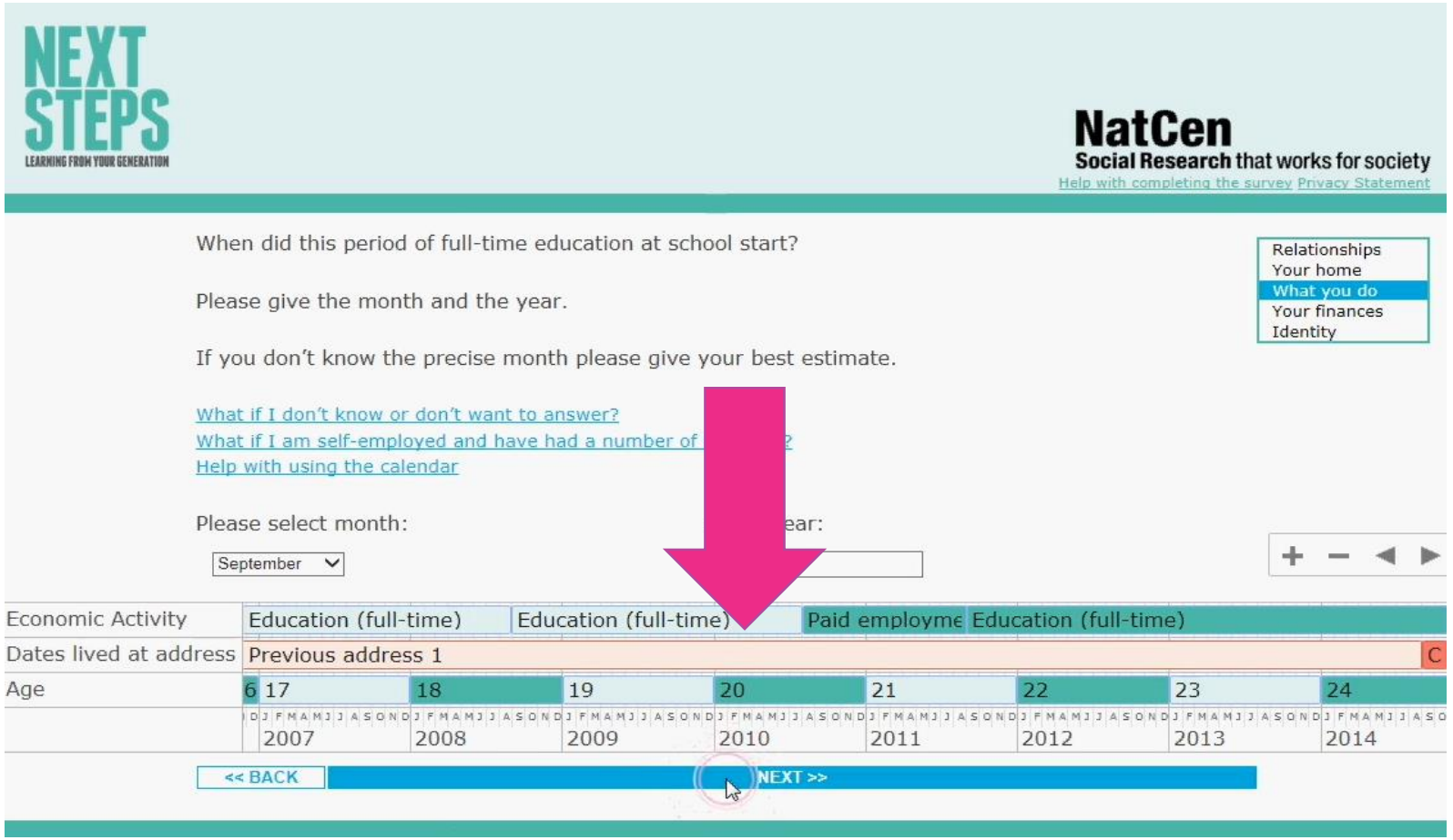
The one with the tension of 'depth' and 'breadth'

Case study 3: Testing usability of a computerised EHC



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Case study 3: Conflict between eye-tracking and pilot

	Eye-tracking (with CI)	Piloting (R debriefing Qs and interviewer feedback)
Stage	Exploratory testing	Exploratory testing
Shared aim	• To explore whether the EHC was used as intended. • To explore whether EHC was considered useful as an aid to recall.	
Sample	11 participants Quota sampling	63 participants in web/CAPI Quota sampling
Conflicting finding	Eye-tracking data showed no participants using EHC. Detailed feedback on why collected.	12 participants (19%) reported using EHC. Superficial feedback on visual design e.g. 'Make larger'

Possible causes and implications

- Eye-tracking collected objective evidence on what screen elements were being used. Did not rely on self-reports.
- Time/effort expended in pilot on EHC testing was minimal. Data collected insufficient in detail to produce recommendations

Brief pilot assessments may lack sensitivity to detect issues of interest.

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The one where we spoke to the wrong people...?

Case study 4: Conflict between CI and quant testing

	Cognitive interviews	Survey and validation
Stage	Exploratory phase	Quality assessment
Shared aim	To establish the success of 'permission to re-contact' statements/questions. CI to explore reasons for reticence. Survey to establish uptake	
Sample	69 participants. Quota samples based on age and sex. Other project specific quotas set. Recruitment using door-step screening and re-contact of survey respondents.	1,495 participants. Random selection of Hhs.

Conflicting finding	100% re-contact permission given in CI- no reticence detected… Not so in the survey…

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Case study 4: Conflict between CI and quant analysis

	Cognitive sample	Survey sample
Sample size	69	1,495
Agreed to re-contact	69 **(100%)**	1,249 **(83.5%)**
Agreed to provide email	56 **(81.2%)**	544 **(36.4%)**
Opened test email and clicked on link	17 **(24.6%)**	153 **(10.2%)**

Possible causes and implications

- CI sample not representative of general population
- CI recruitment techniques could mean only most 'willing/ amenable' take part?
- CI interview experience too different to survey interview experience to assess willingness?

'Willingness' in CI may not reflect 'willingness' in survey.

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Themes and conclusions

Themes and conclusions

- The most appropriate QT method is dependant on test aims and development stage

- A QT method's sensitivity to detect problems is affected by:
  - Who is interviewed
  - Contextual factors
    - 121 interviews versus group feedback
    - Replication of survey conditions
  - Effort expended

- Beware 'tagging on' additional aims to non-optimal QT method

Thank you

If you want further information or would like to contact the author,

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