

STUDY SERIES
(*Survey Methodology* #2003-15)

**Results and Recommendations from Cognitive Interviews
of the 2003 Reciprocity History Module**

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Report Issued: July 26, 2003

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Results & Recommendations from the Cognitive Pretesting of the 2003 SIPP Reciprocity History Module

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March 28, 2003

BACKGROUND

This report reflects the Center for Survey Methods Research's (CSMR's) evaluation of the 2003 SIPP Reciprocity History Module. The purpose of this evaluation is to examine respondents' reactions to both the new and revised questions in the module, and their knowledge of their own and/or their household's reciprocity history of certain government programs.

The objective of the Reciprocity History Module is to profile respondents' histories in receiving certain means-tested-benefits. This particular module obtains a profile of patterns of participation in certain government programs, specifically AFDC/TANF, Food Stamps, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) prior to the beginning of the SIPP panel. Specific questions address the first time a respondent participated in a particular program, the length of participation, and the number of times the respondent has been in the program.

Staff from CSMR conducted the interviews with a computer-automated instrument, containing questions from portions of the core SIPP instrument and the Reciprocity History Module. Although questions from another revised module—the Employment History Topical Module—were included in the instrument for pretesting purposes and followed the Reciprocity History questions, those results are not presented here.¹

This report contains the results of the cognitive interviews. In the next section, we describe the methodology used to conduct the interviews. Following that, we document the results of problems we encountered during the interviews. These problems are presented in the order of their appearance in the instrument.

RESEARCH METHODS

In October of 2003, CSMR staff conducted concurrent think-aloud interviews with twelve respondents in Front Royal and Richmond, VA and the Washington DC metro area. Interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to an hour and were audio-taped after gaining respondents' consent.

¹ Pretesting results for the Employment History Topical Module are available in a separate report authored by CSMR staff (Ashley Landreth).

Recruiting was conducted through local welfare agencies and community and job placement centers in the target areas, and the interviews were conducted in the agency offices, centers and at the Census Bureaus cognitive lab. The twelve respondents represented a variety of demographic groups: all were female; five were Black/African-American, six were Caucasian, and one was Native American; respondents ranged in age from 19 to 67. Eleven of the respondents had children who lived in the household. Only one respondent had some education beyond a high school diploma or GED and all were low income households. All respondents had received at least one type of means-tested benefit in their reciprocity history.

MODULE CHANGES

The following chart outlines any changes that were made to questions and were added to the instrument for this round of testing. It is important to note that certain new questions, and other follow-up questions, remain untested due to insufficient response paths. However, these questions are not expected to cause major cognitive burden.

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>The next few questions are about program benefits that YOU may have received at any time during YOUR adult life.</p>	<p>new intro</p>
<p>AFDC/TANF</p>	
<p>>CURADC<</p> <p><u>Form A:</u> Earlier I recorded that YOU [started receiving] [R-selected TANF name] [in [MONTHn] / this month]. Have there been any other times before this past [MONTH1] when YOU WERE authorized to receive public assistance benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC)?</p> <p><u>Form B:</u> Earlier I recorded that YOU [received] [R-selected TANF name] in [MONTHn]. Have there been any other times before this past [MONTH1] when YOU WERE authorized to receive public assistance benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC)?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new wording, new universe</p>

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>>EVERGARD<</p> <p>Some benefit programs are designed to help needy children. HAVE YOU ever had any children, or served as a child's legal guardian?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new question</p>
<p>>APLAFDC<</p> <p>HAVE YOU EVER applied for public assistance such as(such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC)?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>no change</p>
<p>>RECVAFDC<</p> <p>And HAVE YOU EVER received any of those benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC)?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>minor wording change</p>
<p>>ADCWHEN1<</p> <p>Earlier I recorded that the most recent time YOU started receiving [R-selected TANF name] was in [MONTH] of [YEAR/last year/this year].</p> <p>Was that the first time YOU had EVER received public assistance benefits such as(such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC), or had YOU been on public assistance before then?</p> <p>(1) [MONTH] [YEAR] was first time on public assistance (2) On public assistance before</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>ADCWHEN2<</p> <p>When did YOU first start receiving public assistance benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC)?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>no change</p>

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>>AFDCWHEN<</p> <p>When did YOU first start receiving those benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC) on YOUR own, as an adult?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>revised wording,</p>
<p>>TMAFDCLG<</p> <p>When did YOU last receive public assistance benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC)?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>universe change only</p>
<p>>ADC1TIME<</p> <p>And WERE YOU on public assistance continuously between [AFDCWHEN date] and [TMAFDCLG date]?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>AFDCTIME<</p> <p>How many separate times did YOU go on public assistance</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. between [AFDCWHEN] and [TMAFDCLG]? 2. between [AFDCWHEN date] and MONTH1 1st? 3. between [AFDCWHEN date] and the most recent time YOU went back on, [spell start date from core]? 	<p>revised wording</p>
<p>END OF AFDC/TANF SUB-SECTION</p>	
<p>SSI</p>	

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>CURSSI</p> <p><u>Form A:</u> Earlier I recorded that YOU [started receiving] Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, [for YOUR child] [in MONTHn / this month]. Have there been any other times before this past [MONTH1] when YOU WERE authorized to receive SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p><u>Form B:</u> Earlier I recorded that YOU [received] Supplemental Security Income, or SSI, [for YOUR child] [in MONTHn]. Have there been any other times before this past [MONTH1] when YOU WERE authorized to receive SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new wording, new universe</p>
<p>>APLSSI<</p> <p><u>Form A:</u> How about Supplemental Security Income, or SSI...? (HAVE YOU ever applied for SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?)</p> <p><u>Form B:</u> HAVE YOU ever applied for SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>minor wording change</p>
<p>>RECVSSI<</p> <p>And HAVE YOU EVER received SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>minor wording change</p>

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>>SSIWHEN1<</p> <p>Earlier I recorded that the most recent time YOU started receiving SSI benefits was in [MONTH] of [YEAR/last year/this year].</p> <p>Was that the first time YOU had EVER received SSI, or had YOU received SSI benefits before then [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>(1) [MONTH] [YEAR] was first time on SSI (2) On SSI before</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>SSIWHEN2<</p> <p>When did YOU first start receiving SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>no change</p>
<p>>SSIWHEN<</p> <p>When did YOU first start receiving SSI benefits as an adult [either for YOURSELF or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>revised wording</p>
<p>>TMSSILNG<</p> <p>When did YOU last receive SSI benefits [either for YOURSELF, or on a child's behalf]?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>universe change only</p>
<p>END OF SSI SUB - SECTION</p>	

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
FOOD STAMPS	
<p>>CURFS< <u>Form X:</u> Earlier I recorded that YOU received Food Stamps within the past 4 months. Have there been any other times before this past [MONTH1] when YOU WERE authorized to receive Food Stamps?</p> <p><u>Form A:</u> Earlier I recorded that YOU [started receiving/receive] Food Stamps [in MONTHn / this month]. Have there been any other times before this past [MONTH1] when YOU WERE authorized to receive Food Stamps?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new wording, new universe</p>
<p>>APLFS< <u>Form A:</u> How about Food Stamps... ? (HAVE YOU ever applied for the Federal Government's Food Stamps program?)</p> <p><u>Form B:</u> HAVE YOU ever applied for the Federal Government's Food Stamps program?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>minor wording change</p>
<p>>APLFS2< What about when YOU WERE on [STATEPA/TANF/AFDC [or] SSI] before this past [MONTH1]? (Did YOU apply for Food Stamps then?)</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>RECVFS< And HAVE YOU EVER been authorized to receive food stamps?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>minor wording change</p>

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>>RECVFS2< What about when YOU WERE on [STATEPA/TANF/AFDC [or] SSI] before this past [MONTH1]? (WERE YOU also authorized to receive Food Stamps then?)</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>FSWHEN1< Earlier I recorded that the most recent time YOU started receiving Food Stamps was in [MONTH] of [YEAR/last year/this year].</p> <p>Was that the first time YOU had EVER received Food Stamps, or had YOU been on Food Stamps before then?</p> <p>(1) [MONTH] [YEAR] was first time on Food Stamps (2) On Food Stamps before</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>RECVFS3< What about when YOU WERE on [STATEPA/TANF/AFDC (or) SSI] before [FS “left-censored” spell start date]? (Did YOU receive Food Stamps then?)</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>FSWHEN2< When did YOU first start receiving Food Stamps?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	
<p>>FSWHEN< <i>[pop-up]</i> When did YOU first start receiving Food Stamps on YOUR own, as an adult?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>revised wording</p>
<p>>TMFSLONG< When did YOU last receive food stamps?</p> <p>MONTH: YEAR:</p>	<p>universe change only</p>

RECIPIENCY HISTORY QUESTIONS	WHAT'S NEW
<p>>FS1TIME<</p> <p>And WERE YOU on Food Stamps continuously between [FSWHEN date] and [TMFSLONG date]?</p> <p>(1) Yes (2) No</p>	<p>new screen</p>
<p>>TMFSTIME<</p> <p>How many separate times did YOU go on Food Stamps between [FSWHEN date] and MONTH1 1st?</p> <p><i>else:</i></p> <p>How many separate times did YOU go on Food Stamps</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. between [FSWHEN (= 1st received) date] and [TMFSLONG (= last received) date]? 5. between [FSWHEN date] and MONTH1 1st? 6. between [FSWHEN date] and the most recent time YOU went back on, [spell start date from core]? 	<p>revised wording</p>

MODULE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the most part, the module was smoothly administered. In this section we present the results of questions for which revisions were recommended. Due to the many alternative wordings and extensive pathways through each section of the module, too few respondents were administered some questions to provide meaningful evaluation. There were only a few problems with the instrument and these problems and associated recommendations are found below. Problems are presented in the order they are found in the module,

For each question in the module, there were many different pathways available depending on how a respondent answered in the core.

1. INTRO The next few questions are about program benefits that YOU may have received at any time during your adult life.

1.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues:

New introduction

1.b. General Findings:

Respondents generally did not have a problem with this introduction, although when probed about what was meant by “program benefits,” some had a difficult time articulating what they thought it meant. One change was made based on information obtained from another question (AFDCWHEN). This change is the addition of the phrase “in your/his/her own name.” The intent of the question is to identify when respondents received benefits in their own name, which usually coincides with being an “adult,” but not in all cases. It is possible, in some cases, for a person to receive certain types of program benefits before the age of eighteen, which most associate with being an adult.

1.c. Recommendation(s):

We recommend adding “in your/his/her own name” to be consistent with other questions in this module.

The next few questions are about program benefits that YOU/HE/SHE may have received at any time during your adult life or in YOUR/HIS/HER own name.

2. AFDCWHEN When did YOU/HE/SHE first start receiving those benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC) on YOUR/HIS/HER own, as an adult?

2.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues:

Revised wording - general understanding, recall issues

2.b. General Findings:

Most respondents did not have any problems comprehending or answering this question. However,

one respondent had a child when she was 16, and started receiving TANF and Food Stamps then. In the core, respondents are asked if they are currently receiving TANF and Food Stamps. When this question was asked, the respondent changed her answer. The interviewer was unsure whether she received more or less accurate data. The respondent became evasive when probed further - said she was unsure and could have been wrong about her first response. Asking the question about receipt "as an adult" seemed both offensive (pointing out that she had a child prior to the questionnaire's definition of being an adult) and potentially misleading (she could have started receiving benefits at that age). Over all, it proved to be an uncomfortable situation.

2.c. Recommendation(s):

Although this only affected one respondent in our research, it is likely to happen more often in a representative sample, given that it's not uncommon for women to have children at a young age. The intent of the question is to identify when respondents received benefits in their own name, which usually coincides with being an "adult," but not in all cases. We recommend deleting "as an adult" and replacing it with "in YOUR/HIS/HER own name".

When did YOU/HE/SHE first start receiving those benefits (such as STATEPA/TANF/AFDC) in YOUR/HIS/HER own name?

3. ADC1TIME And WERE YOU on public assistance continuously between [AFDCWHEN date] and [TMAFDCLG date]?

3.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues:

New Screen - general understanding, recall issues

3.b. General Findings:

This question seemed to be a little difficult to comprehend for those respondents with a lower educational level. The problem seemed to be lack of familiarity with the word "continuously." In a few instances the interviewer had to rephrase the question and ask "did you get it every month?". When worded like this, respondents were able to answer without any problems.

3.c. Recommendation(s):

We recommend rewording this question so that respondents with a lower educational level will be able to understand what was being asked without the interviewer having to simplify the question for them.

And did NAME receive that cash assistance every month between [AFDCWHEN date]

and [TMAFDCLG date]?"

4. SSIWHEN When did YOU first start receiving SSI benefits as an adult [either for YOURSELF or on a child's behalf]?

4.a. *Question Notes & Potential Issues:*

Revised wording - general understanding, recall issues

4.b. *General Findings:*

Respondents did not have any difficulty understanding this question. However, a change is recommended to be consistent with other changes in the instrument.

4.c. *Recommendation(s):*

We recommend deleting "as an adult" and replacing it with "in YOUR/HIS/HER own name."

When did YOU/HE/SHE first start receiving SSI benefits in YOUR/HIS/HER own name [either for YOUR/HIM/HER-SELF or on a child's behalf]?

**5. APLFS Form A: How about Food Stamps... ?
(HAVE YOU ever applied for the Federal Government's Food Stamps program?)**

Form B: HAVE YOU ever applied for the Federal Government's Food Stamps Program?

5.a. *Question Notes & Potential Issues:*

Minor Wording Change

5.b. *General Findings:*

Although there were no comprehension problems with this question, we felt that the question was a little wordy. A few respondents asked, "you mean Food Stamps?" The majority of respondents do not refer to this program as the "Federal Government Food Stamps Program," but simply as "being on/receiving Food Stamps."

There was also some confusion about whether a respondent should report food stamps that were received by another member of the household. For example, one respondent reported that she did receive food stamps and continued to answer the follow-up questions. With further probing, the

interviewer discovered that she was reporting food stamps that her mother had received when she lived with her as a minor. Also, it is most likely that the respondent herself had not applied for them. This is not the intention of the question. Although food stamps are distributed at the household level, the goal of this question is to identify the applicant and primary recipient of the food stamps (to eliminate an over-count).

5.c. Recommendation(s):

To simplify the wording of this question, we recommend eliminating the fills and using the same wording/format for all respondents.

We also recommend adding “in your own name” to stress that we are asking specifically about food stamps for which the respondent was the applicant and primary recipient, not receipt of food stamps while living in a parent’s (or another person’s) household.

Have you ever applied for Food Stamps in your own name?

6. FSWHEN When did you first start receiving Food Stamps on YOUR own, as an adult?

6.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues:

Revised wording - general understanding recall issues

6.b. General Findings:

The same issue was seen here that was discussed previously with AFDCWHEN. If a person has a child and receives food stamps prior to turning 18, this question seems inappropriate and offensive. The critical issue is not whether the person is 18 or older, it is whether the food stamps were in the person’s name, or in someone else’s name.

6.c. Recommendation(s):

We recommend We recommend deleting "as an adult" and replacing it with "in YOUR/HIS/HER own name."

When did YOU/HE/SHE first start receiving Food Stamps in YOUR/HIS/HER own name?

7. FS1TIME And were you on Food Stamps continuously between [FSWHEN date] and [TMFSLONG date]?

7.a. Question Notes & Potential Issues:

New Screen

7.b. General Findings:

This question had issues identical to ADC1TIME. It seemed to be a bit difficult to comprehend for those respondents with a lower educational level. In a few instances the interviewer had to rephrase the question and ask “did you get it every month.” When worded like this, respondents were able to answer without any problems.

7.c. Recommendation(s):

We recommend rewording this question so that respondents with a lower educational level will be able to understand what was being asked without the interviewer having to simplify the question for them.

And did NAME receive Food Stamps every month between [FSWHEN date] and [TMFSLONG date]?