How Respondents Report Their Health Status:

Cognitive Interviews of Self-Rated Health Across Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Age, and Socioeconomic Status

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Self-Rated Health (SRH)

- Global rating of health status
  - “Would you say your health in general is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?”
- Widely used to study health
- What underlies these ratings?
- SRH is a perception of one’s health that includes
  - Health factors considered
  - Frameworks used to evaluate health
  - How health factors and components of the question are experienced, conceptualized, interpreted, and integrated
How Respondents Rate Their Health

- Prior research focuses on *which* health factors respondents consider
- Less known about *how* respondents take these health factors into account—the frameworks used to answer
- Also unclear how health factors and frameworks vary across social groups

Research Aims

- Mixed-methods analysis of cognitive interviews
- Describe the processes respondents undertake when rating their health
  1) *Which* health factors respondents take into account
  2) *How* respondents take health factors into account
- Examine variation across social groups
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Socioeconomic status (education)
Data

- 64 respondents, 9 interviewers
- Madison and Milwaukee areas
- Recruited through connections with racial/ethnic community leaders and in specific locations
  - E.g., churches, community centers, pow-wows
- Quota sample crossing four dimensions
  - Race/ethnicity (black, American Indian, Latino(a), white)
  - Gender
  - Age (30-55 years vs 56 years or more)
  - Education (high school or less vs some college or more)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Completed Interviews by Respondent Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or Less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-55 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excerpt from Interviewing Protocol

100. Would you say your health in general is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

- EXCELLENT
- VERY GOOD
- GOOD
- FAIR
- POOR
- DON'T KNOW
- REFUSED

PROBE-1: What were you thinking about when you answered [ANSWER] for this question.

PROBE-1a: What else were you thinking about?

Mixed Methods Analytic Approach

- Coding process
  - Inductive and iterative qualitative approach
  - Bottom-up process of coding themes that emerge from the data
  - Revise codes as data are added
  - Grounded theory, constant comparative method

- Analysis
  - Quantification of codes
  - Unit of analysis is respondent
    - Percentage of respondents with at least one of a particular code
    - Explore differences across social groups
Results

Themes

• **Types of health factors**
• Valence of health factors
• Conditional health statements
• Time
• General health statements
• Response process statements
### Types of Health Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percent Rs with one+ factor</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>SES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health condition</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>41% “I’m diabetic”</td>
<td>+o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonspecific</td>
<td>36% “my illnesses”</td>
<td>+o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence</td>
<td>17% “I have no medical conditions”</td>
<td>+y</td>
<td>+sc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health behavior</td>
<td>41% “I don’t exercise,” “trying to lose weight”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+sc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>25% “I went to the doctor,” “I don’t go”</td>
<td>+m</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical state</td>
<td>22% “in good shape” “overweight”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>19% “compared to my husband”</td>
<td>-L</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical functioning</td>
<td>14% “body working,” “ability to work,” “lazy”</td>
<td>+w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>8% “depression,” “I don’t have mental health issues”</td>
<td>o+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>6% “I’m at an age…”</td>
<td>+m</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Themes

- Types of health factors
- **Valence of health factors**
- Conditional statements
- Time
- General health statements
- Response process statements
Valence

- In psychology
  - Refers to emotions
  - Degree of attraction or aversion individual feels toward specific objects or events
  - Positive, negative, ambivalent

- Our operational definition
  - Affective orientation to the health factor based on what it implies about the quality of current health status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>“I have no illnesses”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>“I have several illnesses”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>“I’m about average”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>“I only have two things that’s not healthy about myself”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not discernible</td>
<td>“how I feel about my exercise”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
% Respondents with Valence by SRH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Ambivalent/Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Not Discernible</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Themes

- Types of health factors
- Valence of health factors
- **Conditional health statements**
- Time
- General health statements
- Response process statements
Conditional Health Statements

- Presence of one health factor depends on another
- 64% of respondents with at least one set

Conditional Health Statements

- Cascade (34%)
  - Presence of one health factor leads to the other
  - “if I didn’t have those [health conditions], my health would be excellent”
  - Positive association with education
- Contrast (36%)
  - Presence of one health factor juxtaposed with another
  - “I do have some medical issues, but other than that, my health is really good”
  - No differences among social groups
Summary

- Provides a more complete description of what underlies respondents’ ratings of their general health status
  - *Which* health factors respondents take into account
  - *How* respondents take health factors into account
    - Valence
    - Conditional health statements
    - Time
    - General health statements
    - Response process statements
  - How the health factors and frameworks used to rate health might vary across social groups

Thank you!

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