

# Overview of the Consumer Expenditure Survey Research Agenda

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# Outline

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1. Ongoing Survey Improvements
2. Research Agenda
3. Research Highlights (2013-15)
4. Redesign Challenges

# 1. Ongoing Improvements

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- 2003 – CAPI (CEQ)
- 2004 – CAPI (CED) demographics and income
- 2004 – Income imputation
- 2005 – Contact History Instrument (CHI)
- 2005 – User friendly diary form
- 2005 – Diary keying and auto-coding system
- 2009 – Telephone thresholds (CEQ)
- 2013 – Federal and state tax estimation
- 2015 – Bounding interview elimination
- Ongoing – Biennial CEQ instrument revisions

## 2. Research Agenda

### CE Redesign Elements

- Reduce error (in particular, underreporting)
- **Reduce burden (“secondary” objective)**
- Keep costs neutral (find cost savings)
- Monitor redesign results (verify effectiveness)



Gemini Project Plan

Related CE Research



Research Agenda

# 3. Research Highlights

Redesign Elements	Research Projects
Reduce Error	Admin Data *
	Proxy Knowledge (2013 CEQ Research Section)
	Proxy Reporting Lab Study
	Landmark Event Questions (2012 CEQ Research Section)
	FR Assessment of Respondent Effort (2012 CEQ Research Section)
	Respondent Use of Financial Software/Websites (2012 CEQ Research Section)
	CEQ Worksheet
	Predicting Panel Survey Response from Wave 1 Doorstep Concerns CE CHI Text Analysis Project
Reduce Burden	Respondent Burden Questions (2012 CEQ Research Section)
	2015 FR Survey *
Cost Neutral	Optimal Contact Attempts Verification
	Bounding Interview Elimination
Monitor Results	Data Quality Profile Prototype and Initial Requirements *
	CE Measurement Error Study

# Reduce Error: Measurement

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## ■ Auxiliary Data Sources

- ▶ New method with potential to inform about measurement error properties of CE estimates, supplement respondent-collected data, and reduce data collection and processing costs (McBride et al. 2015)
- ▶ Current project: Linking auxiliary housing data to CEQ records and comparing results to determine quality of CEQ estimates
- ▶ But a data source preference question (in CEQ Research Section) found that respondents preferred being personally surveyed regarding their expenditures, over data linkage

# Reduce Error: Measurement

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- Proxy Knowledge (CEQ Research Section)
  - ▶ Respondents who reported being “very knowledgeable” of other consumer unit member expenditures showed an increase in total reported expenditures compared to those reporting less proxy knowledge (McBride et al. 2015)
- Proxy Reporting Lab Study
  - ▶ Resulted in recommendations for the design of future proxy protocols (Yu 2013)

# Reduce Error: Measurement

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- Respondent Use of Financial Software/Websites (CEQ Research Section)
  - ▶ Associated with significantly higher expenditures and greater record use (McBride et al. 2015)
  
- Landmark Event Questions (CEQ Research Section)
  - ▶ Few respondents reported landmark events (McBride et al. 2013); unclear if questions prompted reports of expenditures that might have otherwise been missed



# Reduce Error: Measurement

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## ■ CEQ Worksheet

- ▶ Since CEQ respondents are asked to recall expenses from a 3-month period, it may be helpful to provide them with a worksheet to use during those months (To 2014)
- ▶ First stage focused on gathering FR input

# Reduce Error: Nonresponse

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- Predicting Panel Survey Response from Wave 1 CHI Doorstep Concerns
  - ▶ Reporting quality in final wave found to be differentiable by initial respondent concerns (Kopp et al. 2013)
  - ▶ Initial respondent concerns are also associated with likelihood of nonresponse (McBride & Tan 2014)

# Reduce Error: Nonresponse

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## ■ CE CHI Text Analysis Project

- ▶ Three additional themes consistently emerged from the refusal note field: *privacy*, *anti-government*, and *voluntary* nature of the survey (Martinez & Tan 2015)
- ▶ Connection found between the CHI doorstep concern items and the reasons for non-interview captured in the **'Other- specify'** field of the **CAPI** instrument

# Reduce Burden

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- Respondent Burden Questions (CEQ Research Section)
  - ▶ Interview length and quantity of interviews identified as the most burdensome dimensions (McBride et al. 2015)
  - ▶ Perceived burden linked to external indicators, such as interview length
  - ▶ Survey effort lower in respondents who reported high burden; this was partially mediated by disinclination to participate in the survey, such that pre-interview reluctance may be a component of later perceptions of burden irrespective of effort

# Cost Neutral

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- Optimal Contact Attempts Verification
  - ▶ From a total survey error perspective, seven contact attempts was identified as an optimal threshold (Safir & Tan 2015)
- Bounding Interview Elimination
  - ▶ Eliminating the bounding interview can reduce data collection costs without adversely affecting data quality (Elkin 2013)

# Monitor Redesign Results

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## ■ Data Quality Profile

- ▶ A consistent, well-defined set of metrics can be used to establish baselines for monitoring trends in the quality of routine survey production activities over time (Fricker & Tan, 2012)
- ▶ These metrics also can be drawn upon to evaluate the impact of survey design options under consideration, as well as external interventions that affect the survey
- ▶ Will be available to external users, making data quality assessment more transparent

# Monitor Redesign Results

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- CE Measurement Error Study
  - ▶ Analyzed differences in measurement error over time due to design changes (Meekins 2014)
  - ▶ Recommended metrics to be used in the ongoing Data Quality Profile Project to monitor and evaluate measurement error

# 4. Redesign Research Challenges

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- Timing of ancillary research findings, synthesizing results into major in-progress redesign testing & implementation
  - ▶ Proof of concept test, large scale feasibility test, etc.
- Budget for research, testing, evaluation, and implementation
- Sample size requirements
- Pace of technological change
- Limitations of emergent technologies



# References

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## Reduce Error

### **Admin Data**

- Using Alternative Data Record Linkage to Enhance CE Data Quality: Scope of Work  
McBride, B., L. Erhard, B. Passero, and R. Schwartz (2015)

### **Proxy Knowledge (CEQ Research Section)**

- 2013 Research Section Analysis Final Report  
McBride, B, N. To, and E. Yu (2015)

### **Proxy Reporting Lab Study**

- Asking Questions about Household Member Activities to Improve Expenditure Reporting  
Yu, E. (2013)

### **Landmark Event Questions (CEQ Research Section)**

- 2012 Research Section Analysis Final Report  
McBride, B., E. Yu, M. Slomka, L. Erhard, and J. Davis (2013)

# References

## Reduce Error

### **FR Assessment of Respondent Effort (CEQ Research Section)**

- 2012 Research Section Analysis Final Report  
McBride, B., E. Yu, M. Slomka, L. Erhard, and J. Davis (2013)

### **Respondent Use of Financial Software/Websites**

- 2012 Research Section Analysis Final Report  
McBride, B., E. Yu, M. Slomka, L. Erhard, and J. Davis (2013)

### **CEQ Worksheet**

- CEQ Worksheet Phase 1 Final Report  
To, N. (2014)

### **Predicting Panel Survey Response from Wave 1 Doorstep Concerns**

- An Exploratory Study on the Association of Doorstep Concerns with Three Survey Quality Measures for the CE Interview Survey  
Kopp, B., B. McBride, and L. Tan (2013)
- Quantifying CHI Doorstep Concerns as Risk Factors of Wave 1 Nonresponse for the CE Interview Survey  
McBride, B., and L. Tan (2014)

# References

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## Reduce Error

### **CE CHI Text Analysis Project**

- An Exploratory Text Analysis Project for the Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey  
Martinez, W., and L. Tan (2015)

## Burden

### **Respondent Burden Questions (CEQ Research Section)**

- 2013 Research Section Analysis Final Report  
McBride, B, N. To, and E. Yu (2015)

## Cost Neutral

### **Optimal Contact Attempts Verification**

- Verification of an Optimal Contact Attempt Threshold for the Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey  
Safir, A., and L. Tan (2015)

# References

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## Cost Neutral

### **Bounding Interview Elimination**

- Recommendation Regarding the Use of a CE Bounding Interview  
Elkin, I. (2013)

## Monitor Redesign Results

### **Data Quality Profile**

- A Proposal for a Preliminary Framework for Monitoring and Reporting on Data Quality for the Consumer Expenditure Survey  
Fricker, S., and L. Tan (2012)

### **CE Measurement Error Study**

- Longitudinal Assessment of Measurement Error on the Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey: 1996 – 2010  
Meekins, B. (2014)

# Contact Information

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