

Centre for Comparative Social Surveys



ESRC National Centre for

Research
Methods

One-day conference on

**Mixed Mode Data Collection
in Comparative Social Surveys**

Programme

Thursday 15th September 2005

**City University, School of Social Sciences
Building, Room D111
St. John Street, London, EC1V 0HB**

9.30 – 5.30pm

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

9.30 Registration and welcome coffee

9.55 Session 1

Chair: Caroline Roberts, City University

10.00 *Mode dilemmas in cross-national survey time-series*

Roger Jowell
City University, UK

10.40 *Mixed mode data collection strategies in surveys: An overview*

Edith de Leeuw
Methodika, The Netherlands

11.20 Break

11.40 Session 2

Chair: Lars Lyberg, Statistics Sweden

11.40 *Mixing modes in the European Social Survey – Implications for data quality*

Caroline Roberts, Peter Lynn and Annette Jäckle
City University and University of Essex, UK

12.20 *In pursuit of equivalent answers to internet and telephone questionnaires*

Don A. Dillman
Washington State University, USA

13.00 Buffet Lunch

14.00 Session 3

Chair: Peter Lynn, University of Essex

14.00 *Effects of survey data collection mode on response quality: Implications for mixing modes in cross-national studies*

Jon A. Krosnick
Stanford University, USA

14.40 *A theoretical framework for the study of Mode effects*

Willem E. Saris
ESADE, Universitat Ramon Llull, Spain

15.20 Break

15.40 Session 4

Chair: Roger Jowell, City University

15.40 *Mixed mode methods in a world of social isolates, pervasive surveillance, and ubiquitous transaction records: a modest proposal*

Robert M. Groves
The University of Michigan and Joint Program in Survey Methodology, USA

16.20 Questions and Panel Discussion with Speakers

17.30 Wine Reception in the Atrium

Abstracts

Mode dilemmas in cross-national survey time-series

Roger Jowell

Professor and Director of the Centre for Comparative Social Surveys, City University, UK

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In conceiving and designing a national or regional survey, difficult choices often have to be made between the competing claims of alternative modes of data collection. Would postal or internet methods be appropriate? Would telephone interviewing be more cost effective (rather than just cheaper) than face-to-face interviewing for that project? Might a mixed mode approach be feasible and desirable? As potentially new modes of data collection such as the internet become more widely available, these choices become ever more complex.

But if such choices are tricky in national and regional studies, they are fiendish in multinational studies. In the first place, the choices multiply. Should each country use the same centrally-specified mode, as in the ESS to date? Or should the choice be limited to, say, two modes, as in the ISSP to date? Or, on the contrary, should a thousand flowers be allowed to bloom, with mixed mode and single mode alternatives varying by and within different countries?

We know that different modes of data collection tend to generate different response rates. We also know that they sometimes generate different answers to the same (or seemingly equivalent) questions. It remains true that certain modes, such as telephone and the internet, are by no means universally (or even yet widely) available in certain countries, and that self-completion modes continue to pose serious problems for countries with low levels of literacy. So, do such differences make face-to-face interviewing the only serious option for a cross-national survey comprising a range of disparate countries? Or could different modes in different countries safely co-exist, their most obvious variances and biases having been mitigated and/or corrected for?

A further dilemma faces existing multinational time series such as the ESS or the ISSP. If they are to contemplate changing or expanding their choice of modes in future rounds, how much damage might this inflict on the comparability of their measurements over time?

Mixed mode data collection strategies in surveys: An overview

Edith de Leeuw

Methodika, The Netherlands

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At the end of the 20th century a variety of data collection were used in social surveys and official statistics. Data could be collected by an interviewer visiting a respondent or phoning a respondent, or through self-administered methods, such as mail questionnaires. Advances in computer technology made computer-assisted survey methods possible, including methods for Internet and web surveys. This variety of data collection methods led to methodological questions, such as, which method to choose? which is best? Recently in survey practice multiple modes of data collection or mixed modes have become more and more popular. In this presentation I will outline the advantages and disadvantages of mixed mode survey designs,

starting with an overview of common forms of mixed mode design and discussing reasons for using more than one mode in a survey. This overview will end with a discussion of practical issues and an agenda for future research.

Mixing modes on the European Social Survey – Implications for data quality

Caroline Roberts

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Peter Lynn

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Annette Jäckle

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The European Social Survey currently insists on face-to-face interviewing as its sole mode of data collection. However, owing to the mounting costs of carrying out face-to-face interviews and the divergent traditions and experiences of survey research across the different countries participating in the survey, there is a growing need to explore alternatives. The central co-ordinating team of the ESS, in collaboration with Gallup Europe, has begun to investigate the feasibility of mixing modes of data collection on future rounds of the survey. In the near future, the most likely mixed-mode scenario for the ESS, if any, would be for countries meeting appropriately strict quality criteria to switch to telephone interviewing for the survey, either in conjunction with, or instead of face-to-face interviews. However, longer-term, alternative designs for multiple-mode data collection must be considered, in order to meet the challenges of rising survey costs and falling response rates, as well as to take advantage of the opportunities presented by new technologies.

Even relatively simple mixed mode designs – such as a switch to CATI in a small number of countries – could potentially threaten data quality, disrupting the continuity of the time-series for the countries concerned, as well as affecting the validity of cross-cultural comparisons. The research we are conducting on the ESS is aimed at exploring the extent and nature of that threat, and different methods of mitigating its impact.

This paper presents the findings of a mixed mode experiment conducted in Hungary in July 2005. Three experimental groups were included in the design. Two groups were interviewed using face-to-face interviewing and one was interviewed by telephone. Of the face-to-face groups, one group used showcards (as is currently the practice on the ESS), and the other used no showcards, to ensure comparability with the telephone group. The analysis presented looked at a range of indicators of data quality, in order to identify differences in responses (mode effects) attributable to the mode of interviewing (telephone or face-to-face) and differences attributable to the mode of presentation of response options (visual or aural). We discuss the implications of the findings for future data collection policy on the ESS.

In pursuit of equivalent answers to internet and telephone questionnaires

Don A. Dillman

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Significant challenges exist to obtaining the same answers to survey questions when asked by telephone vs. the Internet. In this presentation I will discuss results from a number of experiments aimed at obtaining equivalent data across these survey modes. One of the issues examined is the conversion of structures that is often made when going from telephone to web, ostensibly for the purpose of making them questions easier to ask on the web, e.g. changing forced-choice telephone questions to check-all web formats. I also report the results of multiple experiments done in a search for a format for asking scalar questions that will produce the same distributions for both modes. The difficulty of obtaining equivalent answers to such questions is traced to differences in the type of communication being used to present questions to respondents, aural for telephone and visual for the web. I argue that understanding effects of these two kinds of communication is essential for finding ways to achieve equivalent answers for a variety of questions commonly asked in telephone and web surveys.

Effects of survey data collection mode on response quality: Implications for mixing modes in cross-national studies

Jon A. Krosnick

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During the last 30 years, a large literature has accumulated showing how survey results differ depending upon whether the data are collected in face-to-face interviews, via telephone interviews, or via computer-assisted self-administration. Professor Krosnick will review this literature and offer some general conclusions about the advantages and disadvantages of each mode. In addition, the presentation will highlight ways in which measurement error differs systematically between the various modes. Thus, the idea of mixing modes in a single survey or in a time series means that results may well differ as a result. The talk will offer suggestions regarding ways to manage and minimize data distortions associated with mode mixing.

A theoretical framework for the study of mode effects

Willem E. Saris

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In this paper a general framework will be presented for the study of mode effects. A distinction is made between coverage errors, non-response errors and observation error. It will be shown that the effect of the data collection on the response distribution can be described by a multiplication of a set of matrices that represent selection processes and response processes (Saris 1997).

In case respondents answer the same questions twice but in a different mode of data collection the response effects (observation errors) can be estimated using a latent class model. Further analysis of the information available shows that the coverage error can be estimated. However the non-response error can not be estimated without further assumptions. Maybe acceptable assumptions can be made to estimate these non-response errors. Then also the distribution of the latent variable could be estimated but so far we were not able to suggest such assumptions. On the other hand it will be shown that it is possible to develop a procedure to estimate the response distribution for one mode of data collection on the basis of the response distribution for the other mode of data collection.

Mixed mode methods in a world of social isolates, pervasive surveillance, and ubiquitous transaction records: A modest proposal

Robert M. Groves

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Survey nonresponse rates appear to be increasing in most of the wealthier countries of the world. This trend has led to increased costs of survey data collections. With fixed budgets, this has implied smaller respondent data sets and higher standard errors of estimates. Further, the common medium of survey data collection, the telephone, has experienced an introduction of a variety of privacy protection devices (e.g., answering machines, caller identification) that reduce access to the target population, and a growing set of the population with no traditional line telephone in their residence. Thus, mobile telephone surveys are a focus of current methodological inquiry. Similarly, the rise of the Web has launched intense methodological investigations of its human measurement potential. The new media, however, require the active participation of the respondent and thus appear to produce even greater challenges to survey participation.

Simultaneous to the growing threats to traditional methods of collecting information about large scale populations, there is a dramatic rise in new media of communication and new tools for collecting information on the population. These include nonobtrusive measurement devices, as used in television viewing and radio listening studies, but are rapidly expanding through technological developments; as used in video observation of public spaces and traffic flow; and as used in entrance and exit monitoring. They include large-scale administrative record systems, which contain person-level records on the population, but also transaction records for purchases or other behavior-based events.

The paper speculates on the ingredients of a society that would permit a coordinated data collection, fusion, and analysis system to take advantage of these resources.

About the Conference

This conference is part of a Short-term Project funded by the ESRC's National Centre for Research Methods. The grant holders of the project are Professor Roger Jowell (City University), Caroline Roberts (City University) and Professor Peter Lynn (University of Essex).

For further information, please contact:

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About the Centre for Comparative Social Surveys

The Centre for Comparative Social Surveys was set up in the School Social Sciences in October 2003 and works closely with the Department of Sociology. It is housed on the Ground Floor of the Social Sciences Building.

It hosts the multi-nation European Social Survey (ESS) funded by the European Commission, European Science Foundation and national funding agencies. The Centre is the lead partner in the project, under its director and Principal Investigator, Professor Roger Jowell, together with Rory Fitzgerald, Caroline Roberts, Gillian Eva, and Mary Keane.

The ESS is designed to measure and explain trends in attitudes, beliefs and values across countries in Europe (and its close neighbours). Designed to exceptionally high standards, its twin aims are to improve comparative social measurement within and beyond Europe. Fieldwork is conducted every two years.

In every round, core questions are asked about political orientations, attitudes and behaviour; underlying social and moral values; national, ethnic and religious allegiances; and, socio-demographic variables. Other topics are covered on a 'rotating' basis, following a Europe-wide competition. So far subjects such as immigration and asylum, active citizenship, attitudes to health and medicine, the balance between work and family and economic morality have been, or are about to be fielded.

ESS data are freely available to anyone and may be accessed directly via the archive at <http://ess.nsd.uib.no> or through the ESS main website www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

Individual queries should be directed to the team at ess@city.ac.uk.