



ESRC Question Bank One Day Conference

Programme and Abstracts

**'Survey Measurement: Assessing the
Reliability and Validity of Contemporary
Questionnaire Items'**

Royal Statistical Society, Errol Street, London

April 10th 2008

*ESRC Question Bank, Department of Sociology, University of Surrey, Guildford
GU2 7XH, United Kingdom*

Email: qb@surrey.ac.uk Telephone: 01483 682788



<http://qb.soc.surrey.ac.uk>

Programme for the Day

09.30 – 10.00	Registration
10.00 – 10.15	<i>Introduction</i> Professor Martin Bulmer, University of Surrey
10.15 – 11.15	<i>Question design and question translation in multilingual survey research</i> Dr Janet Harkness, University of Nebraska Lincoln and ZUMA, Mannheim, Germany
11.15 – 11.30	Discussion
11.30 – 11.45	Coffee / tea
11.45 – 12.45	<i>Field experiments for assessing question validity</i> Dr Patrick Sturgis, University of Surrey
12.45 - 13.00	Discussion
13.00 – 13.45	Sandwich Lunch (provided)
13.45 – 14.45	<i>Question design and measurement in mixed mode research</i> Dr Edith de Leeuw, University of Utrecht
14.45 – 15.00	Discussion
15.00 – 16.00	<i>What question testing methods can and can't tell us</i> Dr Pamela Campanelli, Survey Methods Consultant and Chartered Statistician
16.00 – 16.30	Discussion and concluding remarks
16.30	FINISH

Abstracts

Question design and question translation in multilingual survey research, Dr Janet Harkness, University of Nebraska Lincoln and ZUMA, Mannheim, Germany

Since the Second World War, a considerable body of literature has amassed on aspects of translation production or translation assessment in survey research. Some researchers have seen translation as a key to comparability across populations investigated, others as an insurmountable problem best avoided whenever possible. One response has thus been to develop detailed translation guidelines (cf. guidelines in the European Social Survey and the US Bureau of Census) and establish procedures for translation assessment. Another has been to reduce translation needs altogether or, alternatively, to simplify tricky areas for translation such as answer scales by reducing answer formats to dichotomous choices (as in the Gallup World Poll). This talk takes a third perspective. When surveys are designed for multi population studies, translation, I suggest, is best seen and treated as a matter of design. The presentation therefore illustrates the close relationship between instrument design, instrument adaptation and instrument translation. In many instances, however, a source questionnaire may already be “written in stone” before translation is ever considered. Thus theoretical underpinnings and strategies for other language version production in this context are also considered.

Field experiments for assessing question validity, Dr Patrick Sturgis, University of Surrey

Perhaps the most common way of evaluating the validity of a survey question before a main-stage survey is to subject it to some form of small-scale cognitive testing. While such techniques are of great value in diagnosing potential problems relating to respondent understanding and interpretation, they are less useful for determining the validity of alternate forms. That is to say, when a problem is diagnosed and alterations made to a draft question, we generally have no way of knowing whether the modified version of the item yields more accurate estimates of the concept we seek to measure. In this paper, I shall advance the case for greater use of field experiments in questionnaire design. I shall illustrate my argument with a number of examples drawn from research undertaken in collaboration with Ipsos-MORI.

Question design and measurement in mixed mode research, Dr Edith de Leeuw, University of Utrecht

Data collection in surveys can be carried out in several modes, such as face-to-face, telephone, self-administered mail questionnaires, and web surveys. With all these possibilities, the choice for a specific mode is difficult, and involves trade-offs between the strong and weak points of each mode. A new approach is to use multiple modes and combine all strong points in one single survey, which leads to a multi-mode or mixed mode survey. Mixed mode surveys are attractive because one can attempt to combine the strong points thereby compensating for the weaker points of the different modes. However, such a decision should not be made without careful thought and planning. Introducing a second, or even a third or fourth survey mode into the data collection plan, implies a more complicated, more expensive, longer, and more challenging survey implementation. Mixing modes also raises the question of data integrity: since a specific mode can have an effect on the responses that are obtained, mixing modes involves the possibility of confounding mode effects with substantive effects. When different modes are used, it is important that in the design phase of the survey steps are taken to minimize the impact of mode effects. This paper introduces the advantages and disadvantages of mixing modes and principles of measurement, and reviews strategies for questionnaire design, with the emphasis on strategies that can be used to minimize mode effects.

What question testing methods can and can't tell us, Dr Pamela Campanelli, Survey Methods Consultant and Chartered Statistician

The introductory part of this presentation focuses on differences between the testing used for single survey questions versus standardised multi-item scales, the pros and cons of this testing, and how validity and reliability are considered in each case. The remainder of the presentation discusses the range of “newer” methods currently available to test survey questions for both interview and self-completion modes (including expert review, systematic forms appraisal, interviewer rating form, cognitive interviewing, respondent debriefing, behaviour coding, and focus groups for question testing). What can and can't these methods tell us? More importantly, where should future research into “question testing” take us?

Speaker Biographies

Dr Janet Harkness is a cross-cultural survey methodologist whose research focuses on the interface between instrument design, adaptation, and implementation. She has a multi-disciplinary academic background and training – comparative medieval studies (M.A.); linguistics, cultural anthropology (Ph.D.); survey methods and cross-national survey research (ZUMA). She became a Descartes Laureate in 2005. She is Director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Survey Research and Methods Program (SRAM) and the UNL Gallup Research Centre (GRC). She holds the Donald and Shirley Clifton Chair in Survey Science there and is also a full professor in English at UNL. She moved from ZUMA, Germany, to Nebraska in 2005, retaining an affiliation to ZUMA as a Senior Scientist. She is a member of the Central Co-ordinating Team of the European Social Survey and heads several methods groups in the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). She has published, presented, and taught on numerous aspects of cross-cultural survey research.

Dr Patrick Sturgis is Reader in Sociology at the University of Surrey. His research interests focus on the dynamics of public opinion formation and change and the social psychology of political behaviour. He has a particular interest in how political knowledge/sophistication influence decision making and belief system structure and the generation of social and political trust in advanced democracies. He also has an ongoing programme of research into public reactions to science and new technologies, particularly those relating to bio-medicine and modern genetic science. He conducts survey methodological research, focusing mainly on the measurement properties of commonly used survey questions. In conjunction with Ipsos MORI, he is currently running a series of large scale experimental design studies investigating social-cognitive aspects of the survey response process. He has a strong interest in the application of structural equation models to socio-political and policy oriented research questions, particularly with respect to their application to panel/repeated measures data. He is an associate fellow of Southampton Statistical Sciences Research Institute (S3RI), associate editor of 'Survey Research Methods' and deputy director of the ESRC Question Bank.

Dr Edith de Leeuw specialises in survey methodology and statistics. She graduated in Amsterdam and was a Fulbright scholar at WSU, a visiting scholar at UCLA, and visiting international fellow at the University of Surrey. At present she is senior researcher at the Department of Methodology and Statistics, Utrecht University. Ms. De Leeuw is associate editor of *JOS* (<http://www.jos.nu/>) and member of the editorial board of *Sociological Methods and Research*, *Field Methods*, and *MDA*. She has co-organized international conferences on survey methodology and was co-editor for the resulting monographs, which were published by Wiley. She publishes in international scientific journals; her most recent publications focus on mixed-mode studies, web surveys, children as respondents, survey quality and nonresponse, and cross-national research. Ms. De Leeuw is co-editor of the recently published *International Handbook of Survey Methodology*. More information is available at <http://www.xs4all.nl/~edith/>

Dr Pamela Campanelli is a Survey Methods Consultant and U.K. Chartered Statistician. She received her Ph.D. in statistics from the London School of Economics, and an M.A. in applied social research and B.A. in psychology from the University of Michigan. Prior to becoming an independent consultant, she was a Research Associate at the University of Michigan, a Survey Statistician at the U.S. Bureau of the Census, a Chief Research Officer at the UK Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex, and a Research Director at the Survey Methods Centre at the National Centre for Social Research, London. Her main interests and publications are in the study of survey error and data quality issues, with special emphasis on questionnaire design, question testing strategies, interviewing techniques, survey nonresponse, and survey sampling. In addition to her consultancy work, she regularly teaches short courses for CASS, the CCSR, the RSS, for Central government departments, for survey research companies, for UK universities, for the University of Michigan Summer Institute (linked to the Joint Programme in Survey Methodology), and for the University of Hong Kong, as well as for various other institutions and businesses (see www.thesurveycoach.com).