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Researchers often assume that promising anonymity to survey respondents shields results from social desirability bias. Anonymous surveys yield higher levels of socially inappropriate responses, but no studies have shown that responses gathered under anonymous conditions are also more accurate. Instead anonymity may act as a double-edged sword. Although anonymity decreases a person's motivation to engage in self-presentational motives, it also decreases accountability, thereby decreasing motivation to thoughtfully read and respond to questions. Two studies reported here demonstrate that anonymous participants provide less accurate responses than identifiable respondents. In the first study, participants researched a topic on the web, and then, after an anonymity or identifiability manipulation was delivered, were surveyed on their experience. The design of this experiment allowed us to assess actual versus reported web surfing behavior, time spent on the survey, and non-differentiation of response options between anonymous and identifiable conditions. In a second experiment, participants in the identifiable and anonymous conditions were questioned on various behaviors they may or may not engage in, including drinking, exercising, and sexual behaviors. The design of the questionnaire allowed us to determine if anonymous participants engaged in response behavior that would indicate that they were devoting fewer cognitive resources than identifiable participants, such as higher levels of acquiescence, non-differentiation, and selecting "don't know" options or writing less on open-ended questions. Although the studies replicate the social desirability findings of past research, anonymous participants also engaged in behavior that indicated that they were not as engaged in reading and responding to questions as identifiable participants. In addition, the experiments indicate a larger discrepancy between true behavior and reported behavior in anonymous conditions than in identifiable conditions. These studies suggest that anonymity may not be a costless panacea to the social desirability problem.

The effect of 'Do-you-remember' Probes in Event History Calendar Interviews

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Event History Calendar (EHC) interviews have been developed to improve respondent's recall of retrospective information, and are becoming a popular replacement of conventional (standardized) interviews. The current study contributes to further development of calendar interviewing approaches by systematically examining sequential patterns of interviewer-respondent verbal interactions in EHC interviews, and their effects on data quality.

Contrary to conventional interviews, EHC interviews give interviewers freedom to probe in their own words. Conversational interviewing styles in EHC interviews may also provoke narrative styles that may stimulate recall of autobiographical information. However, the extent to which interviewers should be allowed such freedom is subject of an ongoing debate on standardized versus conversational interviewing. This debate was primarily focused on whether interviewers should be allowed to clarify questions, but not on what specific memory cues interviewers can provide in their probing.
Since little is known about the way interviewers utilize their freedom to probe and how this may influence respondent behaviour, this study focuses on spontaneous probes and the resulting quality of the answers obtained. Sequential analysis of interviewer-respondent interaction was performed on 120 transcripts of EHC interviews of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics.

One main finding is the differential use of timing probes. Instead of the direct question "and when did X happen?" about 15 percent of the timing probes are spontaneously formulated as "do you remember when X happened?" However, probes asking for specific elements (e.g., "What was the street name?")

are less often converted into 'Do-you-remember' probes (i.e., "Do you remember the street name?"). Analysis showed that these probes were related to data quality: respondents are more than three times as likely to give a don't know answer after 'Do-you-remember' probes than after direct probes. More findings demonstrate that interviewers probing styles are related to the quality of the interviewer-respondent interaction.

Methodological Briefs: Improving Multimode Data Collection

Probability of Selecting Response Mode Between Paper- and Web-Based Options: Logistic Model Based on Institutional Demographics.
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During the last decade, a rapid growth in online surveys supported by advances in survey software technology and increased Internet usage inspired a great deal of methodological research to gain a better understanding of this survey mode. Most of this methodological research, however, focuses on individual respondents who participate in surveys to the general public. Are online surveys ready to replace paper-and-pencil formats for the purpose of studying organizations? When organizations have a choice, which method do they prefer? What factors influence a company's decision in the survey mode selection? The findings addressing these questions are based on primary research data collected by the Graduate Management Admission Council through its 2006 Diversity Survey of business schools in the United States. In addition to the traditional paper-and-pencil survey format, these US business schools were offered the alternative of completing the survey online. Using logistic regression, this research aims to estimate which institutional demographic characteristics influence the survey mode choice in establishment surveys. Depending on institutional demographics, which are typically known to the researcher, the results may be helpful in choosing which survey mode to utilize when conducting survey research of organizations.

Long-Term Efficacy of Sequential Mixed-Mode Designs on Response Rates and Cost in a Panel Survey.
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Declining response rates in both cross-sectional surveys as well as panel surveys are of great concern to survey researchers (Groves & Peytcheva, 2008). One increasingly common method of increasing response rates is to switch the mode of administration in order to recruit nonrespondents (de Leeuw, 2005). Most often, these sequential mixed-mode designs use a relatively inexpensive mode for the initial contact attempts, then switch the mode at follow-up to a more expensive mode. While the use of sequential designs and their impacts on response rates are well-documented in cross-sectional surveys, we know little about their utility with respect to response rates and cost in panel surveys. The Relationship Dynamics and Social Life (RDSL) study is a panel survey that uses a design that initiates each wave in web and follows up nonrespondents in CATI at each wave. Web response rates tend to be lower than CATI response rates (Dillman et al., 2008), although the costs of CATI tend to be far greater than web (Couper, 2005). Thus, RDSL aims to balance cost and response rate concerns by only using CATI for the more difficult respondents. But panel respondents may be exposed to this sequential design, altering future behavior. This study will examine the impact of RDSL's sequential design on longitudinal response rates across modes, changes in the mode of completion, and changes in cost.