Mixed-Mode Surveys

GESIS Survey Guidelines

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These slides are based on the GESIS Survey Guideline paper about mixed-mode surveys:

Please cite the slides as:

A complete list of all references used on these slides can be found in the above mentioned Survey Guideline paper.

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Definitions

- **Mixed-mode surveys**
  Surveys in which different modes are used to collect data for a single data set

- **Concurrent mixed-mode surveys**
  The different modes for survey data collection are offered at the same time
  - i.e., respondents can choose between modes

- **Sequential mixed-mode surveys**
  The different modes for survey data collection are introduced sequentially
  - i.e., other survey modes are only introduced to non-respondents at later stages of fieldwork/in subsequent contact attempts
Definitions

- **Self-administered mixed-mode surveys**
  Surveys in which data are collected only with the two self-administered survey modes (i.e., web and mail)

- **Targeted mixed-mode designs**
  Surveys in which target persons are allocated to different survey modes in advance
  - e.g., a self-administered mixed-mode survey that only offers the paper questionnaire to target persons aged 65+
Effects of mixing modes on response, sample composition, and costs

- **Response Rates**
  Experimental evidence on response effects of mixed-mode vs. single-mode surveys is scarce and inconclusive.

- **Sample composition**
  Mixed-mode surveys mostly improve sample composition and reduce the risk of nonresponse bias.

- **Survey costs**
  Web-push-designs in which web is the only initially offered mode yield substantial cost-savings.
Mode effects

- **Mode selection effects**
  Respondents take part in their preferred survey mode
  - *Wanted* effects because by offering multiple modes researchers aim for including different segments of the population

- **Mode measurement effects**
  Survey questions are answered differently just because of the survey mode
  - *Unwanted* effects as they may confound with mode selection effects
  - e.g., 1) young people are more inclined to take part in a web rather than in a face-to-face survey (selection effect)
    2) respondents are more inclined to disclose criminal behavior in self- rather than in interviewer-administered survey modes (measurement effect)
Questionnaire design

- **Mode-specific design**
  The questionnaire is optimized for each mode separately
  - Obtaining the best possible data for each mode
  - Justified if estimates for the entire sample are key

- **Unified mode design**
  Differences in the questionnaires are reduced as much as possible (only instructions remain mode-specific)
  - Ensuring measurement equivalence
  - Justified if group comparisons are key
Empirical evidence on mode (measurement) effects

▪ Mode effects exist but tend to be small in well-conducted mixed-mode surveys
  ▸ Importance of questionnaire design

▪ Mode effects vary between different types of survey questions
  ▸ Basic demographics vs. attitudinal (especially sensitive) questions

▪ Mode effects are particularly pronounced when self- and interviewer-administered survey modes are mixed
  ▸ Very different contextual cues of these types of survey administration
Recommendations

- Use mixed-mode surveys if you expect low response probabilities for certain segments of the population in a single-mode survey (risk for nonresponse bias)

- Avoid mixing self- and interviewer-administered survey modes if the survey deals with sensitive issues

- Offer the different survey modes sequentially, starting with the cheapest mode to save costs

- Do not communicate the modes that will follow to your target persons (or only upon request)

- Consider to implement a targeted mixed-mode design if you have expectations about the mode preferences of different groups in your sample (which you can easily identify/address)