Grid and item-by-item formats in PC and mobile web surveys / Aigul Mavletova, Mick P. Couper, & Daniil Lebedev

Abstract: While grids or matrix questions are a widely-used format in PC web surveys, there is no agreement on the format in mobile web surveys. We conducted a two-wave experiment in an opt-in panel in Russia, varying the question format (grid format and item-by-item format) and device respondents used for survey completion (smartphone and PC). 1,678 respondents completed the survey in the assigned conditions in the first wave, and 1,079 in the second wave. Overall, we found somewhat higher measurement error in the grid format in both mobile and PC web conditions. We found almost no significant effect of the question format on test-retest correlations between the latent scores in two waves and no differences in breakoff rates between the question formats. The multigroup comparison showed some measurement equivalence between the question formats. However, the difference varied depending on the length of a scale with a longer scale producing some differences in the measurement equivalence between the conditions. The levels of straightlining were higher in the grid than in the item-by-item format. In addition, concurrent validity was lower in the grid format in both PC and mobile web conditions. Finally, subjective indicators of respondent burden showed that the grid format increased reported technical difficulties and decreased subjective evaluation of the survey.

Automatic versus manual forwarding in web surveys / Arto Selkälä & Mick P. Couper

Abstract: Several authors and software vendors advocate the benefits of auto forwarding in web surveys, but there is little empirical research on this approach. We experimentally tested automatic versus manual forwarding under different levels of cognitive effort. We manipulated information accessibility (low vs. high) and consistency requirements (yes vs. no), along with auto forwarding (AF) versus manual forwarding (MF) in two studies conducted among students in Finland. We find that an AF survey takes less time to complete, but only for those completing a survey on PCs or tablets; no time advantage is found for smartphone users. We also find that respondents in both AF and MF conditions return more often to items with higher cognitive burden (low information accessibility or a consistency requirement). MF respondents change answers more often than AF respondents. AF appears to reduce straightlining slightly. We find no difference in response consistency between two behavioral items between AF and MF, but a slight advantage for AF for two attitude items. Finally, respondents reported more positive experiences with the AF version. Auto forwarding appears to

somewhat more efficient and easy to use, but may decrease the quality of responses to cognitively demanding questions.

Multiple-choice versus matrix questions: A web survey experiment / Mingnan Liu & Alexandru Cernat

Abstract: While the choice of matrix versus multiple-choice questions has received considerable attention in the literature, it is still unclear in what situation one is better than the other. Building upon the previous findings, this study expands this line of research by examining whether the difference between the two question types is moderated by the number of response options. Through a web survey experiment, this study compares matrix and multiple-choice questions with 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11 response options. Additionally, we also investigate the impact of the device used to complete the survey on data quality. The results show that straight-lining and response time are similar between the two question types across all response lengths, but item nonresponse tends to be higher for matrix than multiple-choice, especially among mobile respondents. Also, measurement models reveal measurement equivalence between the two question types when there are fewer than seven response options. For matrices with 9 or 11 response options, analyses reveal substantial differences compared to multiple-choice questions.

Proneness to boredom mediates relationships between problematic smartphone use with depression and anxiety severity / Jon D. Elhai, Juanita K. Vasquez, Samuel D. Lustgarten, Jason C. Levine, & Brian J. Hall

Abstract: Research demonstrates that depression and anxiety symptom severity are related to problematic smartphone use. However, less is known about variables mediating these relationships. This study aimed to test whether proneness to boredom increased problematic smartphone use. We also tested whether boredom proneness mediates relations between both depression and anxiety symptom severity with problematic smartphone use. Using a cross-sectional design, we surveyed 298 American college students about their frequency of smartphone use, levels of problematic smartphone use, depression, anxiety, and boredom proneness. Using structural equation modeling, we modeled depression and anxiety symptom severity predicting boredom proneness, in turn predicting levels of problematic smartphone use and smartphone use frequency. Results demonstrate that boredom proneness predicted problematic smartphone use, but not smartphone use frequency. Boredom proneness mediated relations between both depression and anxiety symptom severity with problematic smartphone use levels (but not usage frequency). We discuss the phenomenon in terms of depressed or anxious college students having difficulty attending to their schoolwork, subsequently experiencing boredom, and engaging in problematic smartphone use to relieve their boredom.

Reports and communications

Conducting online surveys in China / Bing Mei & Brown, Gavin T. L.

Abstract: Using online surveys is becoming increasingly extensive and widespread. Social science research in China is no exception. However, due to contextual factors (e.g., technological constraints, social and cultural norms, and language barriers), prior successful methods may not apply. This article reports an alternative way of conducting online surveys in China, by combining local commercial online survey service providers with indigenous Web 2.0 applications. The case study demonstrates the feasibility of this approach and provides practical advice (e.g., adding incentives) on how to effectively conduct online survey in China.

Do polls influence opinions? Investigating poll feedback loops using the novel dynamic response feedback experimental procedure / Sveinung Arnesen, Mikael Johannesson, Jonas Linde, & Stefan Dahlberg

Abstract: Opinion polls may inadvertently affect public opinion, as people may change their attitudes after learning what others think. A disconcerting possibility is that opinion polls have the ability to create information cascades, wherein the majority opinion becomes increasingly larger over time. Testing poll influence on attitudes towards Syrian refugees and mandatory measles vaccination, we field survey experiments on a probability-based online survey panel. Through a novel automated procedure labeled the dynamic response feedback, we measure whether the answers from early poll respondents can influence the opinions of subsequent respondents who learn the answers of the previous respondents. Using this procedure, no feedback loops are identified.

Personalized Feedback in web surveys: Does it affect respondents' motivation and data quality? / Simon Kühne & Martin Kroh

Abstract: Web surveys technically allow providing feedback to respondents based on their previous responses. This personalized feedback may increase respondents' motivation and possibly the accuracy of responses. While past studies mainly concentrate on the effects of providing study results on future response rates, thus far survey research lacks of theoretical and empirical contributions on the effects of personalized, immediate, feedback on response behavior. To test this, we implemented a randomized trial in the context of the Berlin Aging Study II (BASE-II) in 2014, providing feedback regarding the respondents' personality tests (Big-Five personality inventory) to a subgroup of the sample. Results show only moderate differences in response behavior between experimental and control group. However, we find that respondents who received personalized feedback report higher levels of satisfaction with the survey.

Effects of smiley face scales on visual processing of satisfaction questions in web surveys / Mathew Stange, Amanda Barry, Jolene Smyth & Kristen Olson

Abstract: Web surveys permit researchers to use graphic or symbolic elements alongside the text of response options to help respondents process the categories. Smiley faces are one example used to communicate positive and negative domains. How respondents visually process these smiley faces, including whether they detract from

the question's text, is understudied. We report the results of two eye-tracking experiments in which satisfaction questions were asked with and without smiley faces. Respondents to the questions with smiley faces spent less time reading the question stem and response option text than respondents to the questions without smiley faces, but the response distributions did not differ by version. We also find support that lower literacy respondents rely more on the smiley faces than higher literacy respondents.

Book review

Social Signal Processing (2017), by Judee K. Burgoon, Nadia Magnenat-Thalmann, Maja Pantic, & Alessandro Vinciarelli, eds. Reviewed by Helmut Fink & Anja S. Göritz.