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## Advances in research on survey interview interaction

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Although the past decade has shown enormous growth in the number of surveys conducted online, conducting surveys by means of telephone or face-to-face interviews is still a large research field. Especially face-to-face interviewers generate a much larger response rate (Bowling, 2005), due to increased possibilities of persuading reluctant respondents (Dijkstra & Smit, 2002; Ongena & Haan, 2016), respondent's preferences for modes of contact (De Leeuw & van der Zouwen, 1992), or their preferences for modes of responding (Bowling, 2005; Dillman et al., 1994; Groves & Kahn, 1979). Although data quality of telephone interviews may be lower than self-administered surveys (Chang & Krosnick, 2009, 2010), face-to-face interviews most likely improve quality of data collection (Bowling, 2005; Haan et al., 2017; Heerwegh, 2009). This is particularly true in case of complex surveys, in which conversational styles of interviewing are helpful. The debate on conversational versus standardized interviewing has different foci such as comprehension (see Conrad and Schober, this issue), memory (Belli et al., 2013), and motivation (task-oriented versus personal oriented interviewing, see Dijkstra, 1987). It is possible that rapport-building, and especially respondents' sense of rapport (Sun et al., 2020) plays an important role in improving response accuracy, though interviewers who deviate from scripts in an effort to build rapport may in some cases even reduce accuracy (Gabarski et al., 2016). In comparison with self-administered surveys, in interviews respondents might feel more pressure to provide correct answers and as a result do not use their retrieval and judgment abilities (Gooch, 2015), and thus effects of survey administration mode may depend on the respondents' cognitive skills (Gooch & Vavreck, 2019). This also aligns with the finding that *respondent* behaviors are more consistently associated with response accuracy than *interviewer* behaviors in a standardized interview setting (Dykema et al., 1997).

To take both non-response and data quality into account, it makes sense to study interviewer effects from the Total Survey Error (TSE) perspective (West & Blom, 2017). The various tasks for which interviewers may be responsible (i.e., generating sampling frames, making contact, gaining cooperation, asking survey questions, conducting measurements, maintaining motivation, and recording answers and measurements) result in various errors affecting coverage, nonresponse, measurement, and processing errors (Schaeffer et al., 2010; West and Blom 2017). Variability in response distributions may arise due to variability in interviewer behavior (West and Blom, 2017), and thus understanding origins of the degree of within-interviewer correlations in measurements (IICs) and finding ways to minimize IICs is the 'fundamental goal of research on interviewers' (Olson et al., 2020). For a wide variety of state-of-the-art research on interviewers and the effects that they can have on survey data from the TSE perspective we refer the reader to the recently published volume *Interviewer Effects from a Total Survey Error Perspective* (Olson et al., 2020).

In this issue, the focus lies on interviewer–respondent interaction; studying the complexity of interactions between respondents and interviewers (Ongena & Dijkstra, 2007) may help understanding interviewer effects. Interviewer–respondent interaction and its effects on respondent

cooperation and data quality is still a central topic in survey methodology. Interviewer–respondent interaction was also the main theme of the Third Groningen Symposium on Language and Social Interaction (GSLI, 2017) organized by the Center for Language and Cognition, University of Groningen, the Netherlands, on 19 and 20 January 2017. The aim of the symposium was to bring together scholars in the field of survey research methodology, studying interviewer–respondent interaction by means of systematic coding and quantitative analysis.

In this special issue, we include a selection of four papers of the symposium, among which two general discussion papers based on the keynote papers by Fred Conrad (University of Michigan), and Nora Cate Schaeffer (University of Wisconsin).

In the first discussion paper, Nora Cate Schaeffer's review shows how conversation analysis contributed to our understanding of how the practices of conversation intersect with the practices of standardization. By doing so she makes a distinction between call opening (i.e. the part of the interaction focused on generating cooperation of respondents), and interaction during the interview (i.e. consequences for measurement quality). The paper thus shows that actions during the call opening provide opportunities for researchers the effects of interviewer's actions very specifically, since the interaction has a measurable outcome: whether or not the respondent decides to participate in the interview. Interactions during the interview, as Schaeffer argues, are more constrained, though there is a much broader scope in outcomes; actions may affect reliability and validity of answers to individual questions, but also motivation and engagement of respondents in a more general sense.

The remaining papers take up different aspects of data collection. In the second discussion paper, Fred Conrad and Michael Schober review and synthesize several studies that evaluate the pros and cons of standardized and conversational interviewing. Studies show that in case of ambiguous key concepts in factual questions, conversational interviewing can dramatically improve response accuracy, at the cost of additional interviewing time. The same is true for interviews carried out by virtual interviewers. Across studies, the improvement in response accuracy is greater when the interviewer (real or virtual) can provide clarification regardless of respondents explicitly requesting clarification. Conrad and Schober also discuss how conversational interviewing can help improve quality in other ways such as reducing acquiescence and straightlining by better communicating the meaning of response scale values.

Kristen Olson and Jolene Smyth report the results of two experiments in which questions were presented to interviewers either with emphasis (i.e., full capitalization of important words) or without emphasis (i.e., no capitalization). Analyses indicate that question emphasis unexpectedly has little effects on substantive answers to survey questions and the interviewer–respondent interaction, and thus there is no evidence that questionnaire designers should use emphasis in interviewer-administered questionnaires to improve data quality.

Stephanie Fail, Michael Schober and Fred Conrad compare response latencies of answers to sensitive and non-sensitive questions in audio-recorded mobile telephone interviews. Half the respondents were interviewed by professional interviewers and the other half by an automated spoken dialog interviewing system (speech-IVR). Their findings show that respondents provide faster answers when answering sensitive (vs. non-sensitive) questions, for at least some survey questions; and when interviewed by a human interviewer (vs. an automated system). Generally, speech paradata are significantly associated with sensitivity of both questions and answers in mobile telephone surveys.

In conclusion, we think this special issue provides important contributions to the field of research on survey interview interaction. We would like to thank all authors for their valuable contributions and their patience while going through the review process. We also thank the reviewers for their careful reading and commenting of the manuscripts.

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