

Switching Data Collection Modes: Lessons Learned From Two Large, Longitudinal Surveys

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Switching Data Collection Modes:

Lessons Learned From Two Large, Longitudinal Surveys

MIDUS

Midlife in the U.S. National Study of Health and Well Being

The WLS

The Wisconsin Longitudinal Study



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Switching Data Collection Modes:

Lessons Learned From Two Large, Longitudinal Surveys

2 Large, Longitudinal, Multi-modal Surveys

Each have unique samples, and the budget to allow extensive efforts to obtain continued cooperation



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Switching Data Collection Modes:

Lessons Learned From Two Large, Longitudinal Surveys

Both surveys engaged in a mode switching effort to try to increase response rates and decrease data loss

Though the modes that we started with, and the modes we switched to were different, almost the exact same response rate was obtained



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Switching Data Collection Modes: Lessons Learned From Two Large, Longitudinal Surveys

- Overview of Project
- Description of Mode Switching Task
- Result of Mode Switch
- Lessons Learned from Switch



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MIDUS Survey Overview



Midlife in the U.S.
A National Study of Health
and Well-being

Conducted for

The UW Institute on Aging
and
The National Institute on Aging



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MIDUS Survey Overview

The Harvard Survey of Health and Life Quality

- Done in 1995/1996
- Over 7,000 randomly selected Americans
- Ages 25 to 75



HSHLQ Respondents
(National RDD Sample)

MIDUS (Midlife in the US)

- Done in 2004-2006
- Same 7,000+ Americans
- Now ages 35 to 85



MIDUS Respondents
(List Sample)

MIDUS Survey Overview



A 30-40 minute
telephone survey
(\$25 post incentive)



A 114 page mail survey
(\$10 pre incentive)
(\$25 post incentive)



An additional
telephone survey on
cognitive functioning
(no incentive)

MIDUS Survey Overview

Project 1

National Phone and Mail Surveys



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MIDUS Survey Overview

Project 1

National Phone and Mail Surveys

Project 2

Diary Survey and Collection of Saliva Samples

Project 3

Cognitive Functioning Personal Interviews

Project 4

Biomarker Medical Data Collection

Project 5

Neuroscience Data Collection



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Description of MIDUS Mode Switch



A 114 page mail survey
(\$10 pre incentive)
(\$25 post incentive)



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Description of MIDUS Mode Switch



114 Page Mail Survey

Typical 4 Wave Design

- Full Survey Mailing with Pre-Incentive
- Post Card
- 2nd Full Survey Mailing
- 3rd Full Survey Mailing

Description of MIDUS Mode Switch



114 Page Mail Survey

Additional Efforts To Obtain Mail Survey Complete Included:

- Personal touch calls to non-respondents
- Final 5th wave of survey sent, that included the \$25.00 post-incentive as a pre-incentive, and a pack of post-it notes with the MIDUS logo as a watermark, along with the 800# that they could call in on with questions



Description of MIDUS Mode Switch

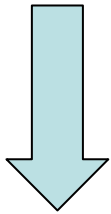


The result of all of these efforts was an 81.3% response rate overall!

Even with this excellent response rate, the Institute on Aging wanted to attempt to obtain at least a portion of the data collected in the SAQ via some other mode

It was decided that we would convert as much of the SAQ to a telephone survey as possible, and conduct a telephone version with all MIDUS SAQ non-respondents

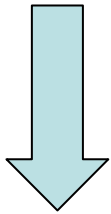
Description of MIDUS Mode Switch



Why did we decide to switch from self report mail survey to a phone survey?

- Respondent Preference
- Additional Phone Follow Up Had Higher Response Rate Than SAQ
- Respondents with vision problems had already successfully completed the SAQ by phone with interviewers

Challenges of Mode Switching



From efforts to complete SAQ with respondents on the telephone, we knew that we would have some challenges in switching to a phone survey

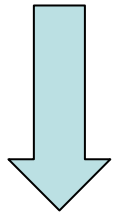


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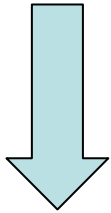


Challenges of Mode Switching



- Too many response options for respondent to remember and answer
- Some questions were placed in the SAQ originally so the respondent could consult documentation or family members for assistance
- Many items were laid out in a very graphical way in the SAQ, which is hard to describe/translate on the phone

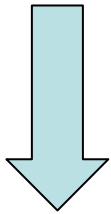
Techniques Used In Mode Switching



- Questions with very large numbers of response options were usually discarded from the phone survey
- Some were reworded, or broken into additional questions
- Respondents were allowed to seek help from family members or documentation when needed to provide dates or numbers of occurrences
- Interviewers were trained to reread questions as many times as needed so that the respondent could understand



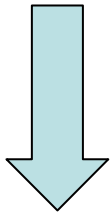
Techniques Used In Mode Switching



- Number of question versions were limited
- Interviewer directives mirrored SAQ directions

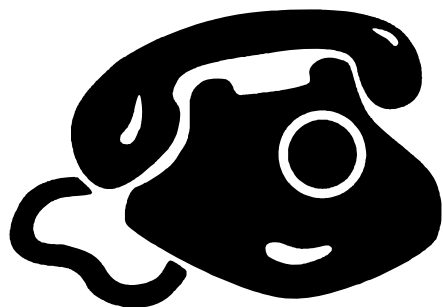


Techniques Used In Mode Switching



- Every effort was made to keep the questions as much like the original as possible, in hopes of avoiding extreme mode effects
- Similar order of questions was maintained in order to avoid order effects whenever possible
- Number of questions asked from SAQ was limited so that the phone survey would only be 45 minutes in length

Results of MIDUS Mode Switching



- Key data from the MIDUS SAQ was collected for an additional 365 respondents (40% of those fielded)
- Additional sample management data collected
- Reluctant respondents' commitment to survey was improved

Results of MIDUS Mode Switching



Response Rates By Wave

| SAQ Wave | Response Rate | Cumulative Rate |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 st Full Mailing | 59% | 59% |
| 2 nd Full Mailing | 11% | 70% |
| 3 rd Full Mailing | 8% | 78% |
| 4 th Full Mailing* | 3% | 81% |
| Phone Completes | 8% | 89% |



Lessons Learned from MIDUS Mode Switching

- Changing modes is time consuming for project directing and programming staff
- Changing modes is expensive (\$130 per complete)
- Changing modes has inevitable effects on the data
- Data may need to be dropped if mode effects prove too large

Lessons Learned from MIDUS Mode Switching

- Planning mode changes during the initial survey design would allow for question wording and presentation choices more amenable to mode change (Unimode design)
- Having multiple modes available to respondents from the beginning of a survey might increase response in a shorter period of time, or it might not

Now I'll turn it over to Kerryann and
the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study



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WLS Overview



Wisconsin Longitudinal Study
Tracking the Life-course
of the “Happy Days” Cohort

Conducted for

The National Institute on Aging



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WLS Overview

Previous Waves of the Survey

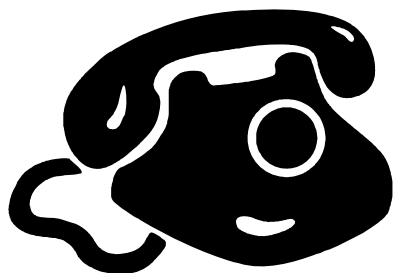
- April 1957: School Survey of Graduates
- 1975: Telephone Survey of Graduates
- 1977: Telephone Survey of N=2000 Siblings
- 1992: Telephone/mail Survey of Graduates
- 1993: Telephone/mail Survey of N=5500 Siblings
- 2002: Telephone/mail Survey of Graduates
- 2003: Telephone/mail Survey of Siblings

Features of the Sample

- Random selection of 1/3rd of Wisconsin high school graduates in 1957
- List sample
- Began with an N= 10,000
- Currently with an N ~ 8141
- Cohort of men and women, born primarily in 1939, precedes by about a decade the bulk of the baby boom generation



WLS Data Collection Overview



75-minute
telephone survey
(advance letter with
token pre-incentive)



50-page
mail survey
(\$10 cash pre-
incentive)



20-page
supplement
survey for
parents with
nonnormative
children



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WLS Telephone (CATI) Data Collection Effort



- Majority of cases received over 30 call attempts; some as many as 100 but no less than 15 call attempts
- Extensive tracking and locating effort
- Refusal conversion with special token incentives (including a '57 Greatest Hits music CD)
- 85% response rate achieved



Description of WLS Mode Switch



Telephone and Main Mail Survey question items were mutually-exclusive

Non-Respondents of the Telephone Interview did not receive the Main Mail Survey



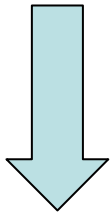
Goal: Develop a unique mail survey to collect crucial items from the telephone interview and from the main mail survey

Target: Send this unique mail survey to all non-respondents

Description of WLS Mode Switch

- Convert key telephone interview items to SAQ format
- Retain key mail survey items from main SAQ
- Script special cover letter to Non-Respondents to accompany this unique Non-R SAQ (50-pages)
- Include \$10 cash pre-incentive

Description of WLS Mode Switch



Why did we decide to switch from a telephone interview to a self-administered questionnaire?

- Respondent Preference
- Only possible way to collect some of the main mail survey items
- We had seemingly good addresses for some cases but could not obtain a phone number for the R

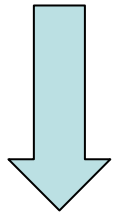
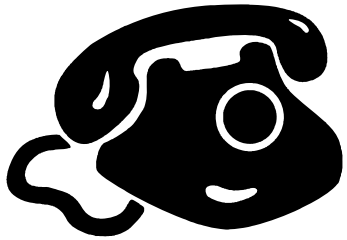


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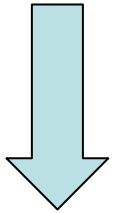
Challenges of WLS Mode Switching



- Time-consuming process for client investigators to decide which items were most important to capture with the SAQ
- Unfolding questions in the CATI had to be graphically laid out in the SAQ
- The resulting SAQ jumped from topic to topic more quickly than ideal
- Separate data entry instrument had to be programmed



Techniques Used In WLS Mode Switching



- Every effort was made to keep the questions as much like the original as possible, in hopes of avoiding extreme mode effects
- Similar order of questions was maintained to avoid order effects whenever possible
- The length of the resulting SAQ was kept to 50 pages (same as the main mail survey sent to CATI respondents)



Results of WLS Mode Switching



- Key data from the WLS CATI was collected for an additional 567 respondents (41.5% of those fielded)
- Additional information such as that a respondent had died or become incapacitated was learned during the field period
- Respondents that did not feel capable or willing to spend time on the telephone were happy to have a chance to share their experiences on paper



Results of WLS Mode Switching



| | Response Rate | Cumulative Rate |
|--|---------------|-----------------|
| CATI Effort | 85% | 85% |
| 1 st Full Mailing 504 completes out of N= 1368 Refusals and Non-Rs | 6% | 91% |
| 2 nd Full Mailing 47 completes Non-Rs only | 0.05% | 91.05% |
| 3 rd Full Mailing 16 completes Non-Rs only | 0.02% | 91.07% |



Lessons Learned from WLS Mode Switching

- Mode switching from CATI to SAQ may be worth the additional cost (\$80 per complete) given the increase in response rate
- Mode switching may be a good solution to boost response rates when incentives and other strategies have already been tried
- Consider doing a split experiment that would provide a more concrete method of detecting mode effects in the data



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Questions / Comments?

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