

# **Census Internet and Electronic Data Collection: Discussion (Quick Thoughts on Several Topics)**

Mick P. Couper

Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, and  
Joint Program in Survey Methodology, University of Maryland

# National Survey of College Graduates

- To what extent do these findings generalize to other populations?
  - All with college degrees
  - Also, generally cooperative respondents (responded to ACS, provided phone number)
- Choice did worse than either sequence before start of CATI; mail first did better than web first, but at higher cost
  - Consistent with growing literature
- What about breakoffs: how many started Web but did not finish?
- What devices (smartphone, tablets) did respondents use?
- Job description
  - Length of response may be poor proxy for quality
  - Occupation classification remains a challenge for self-administration

# Electronic Reporting for Economic Programs

- Data quality, timeliness, and cost benefits likely to be larger for economic than demographic surveys
  - Yet, almost all of the research on Web survey design has been on demographic surveys
  - This needs to change!
- Analysis of paradata (e.g., item times, changed answers, edit failures) to identify major areas for design improvement
- I'm puzzled by the concerns over authenticity and trust, especially in the context of pre-registration and e-mail invitation to the next decennial
  - This needs more research
- Don't blame problems on respondents' hardware – maybe the problem lies with the Bureau's software!

# Bring Your Own Device

- Need a careful cost-benefit analysis of BYOD versus alternative (procurement of COTS devices?)
  - What kinds of devices would be acceptable?
  - What bandwidth/connectivity is needed?
  - Would this be app-based?
  - Where would data reside?
- Privacy/confidentiality concerns by enumerators and/or respondents, given recent NSA disclosures?

# Internet Options for Decennial and ACS

- The lack of an Internet response option in 2010 was a major error, and should not be repeated
- The Web version should be easy to access
  - E.g., Canadian Census required password generation only for suspend and resume
- The mobile option should not be an afterthought
  - What are the Bureau's plans in this regard? (CSAC asked for details)
  - What proportion of ACS respondents are attempting to use smartphones? How many are succeeding?
- ACS breakoffs:
  - Collecting e-mail addresses at the outset may be a deterrent
  - Will respondents have to start over, or can they resume where they left off?
  - What paradata analysis has been done to identify data quality issues?
  - ACS mixed-mode approach lends itself to adaptive design strategies – what about a methods panel to test ideas?

# Preregistration and Provision of E-mail Address

- To my knowledge, this has not been tested on a large scale
  - Glad to see you're testing this in 2014, but my hunch is it's not going to work
- View from e-commerce is that preregistration is a serious discouragement
- Research in Germany:
  - Asked Internet users for e-mail address in a FTF survey
  - In 2010 only 45% provided e-mail, in 2012 only 42% did so
- Why do so?
  - Pros: save mailing costs
  - Cons: concerns about spamming and phishing; e-mail churn; fake or little-used e-mails