

Abstract for Keynote Presentation

TITLE: The Study of Interviewer Effects: The State of the Science and Necessary Future Directions

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ABSTRACT:

For nearly a century, survey researchers from many different fields have been examining the myriad ways that interviewers can affect the quality of survey data. Interviewers play several critical roles in ensuring that the data collected in face-to-face and telephone surveys are of high quality: they make contact with sampled persons and establishments, they recruit sampled units to participate in the survey, they record observations and other paradata on the sampled units, they ask survey questions, and they collect high-quality measurements from cooperating sample units. In truth, without interviewers, many important data products simply would not exist. Unfortunately, the interviewers hired to work on a given survey project may vary in terms of their ability to successfully carry out these tasks, and this variability may affect the overall quality of survey estimates. This presentation will introduce a Total Survey Error (TSE) perspective on the study of interviewer effects, and discuss new research efforts that seek to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of interviewer effects in surveys. Specific topics will include the decomposition of observed interviewer effects across the different stages of the survey process, comparisons of interviewer variance across different groups of interviewers, interviewer effects on survey paradata, and interviewer effects on regression coefficients. The presentation will consider the implications of this new research for survey practice, in addition to unanswered questions that require future research attention.