Comparing the Probability-Based AmeriSpeak Panel and the In-Person 2016 General Social Survey: Mode, Device, Item Wording Experiments

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During 2016 GSS field period, NORC also fielded the GSS National Priority items using probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel

- Examine the impact of varying questionnaire design choices on responses among mode, device, and platform
- Compare responses to National Priority Items with the face-to-face GSS among different modes and devices/platforms

AmeriSpeak Panel Study

- Invited Sample: 5,000 (Gen Pop)
- Completion Rate: 40.2% (n= 2,010 interviews)
- Mode of Completion: Phone (15%) and Web (85%)
Experimental Design (2x2x2)

- **Long** vs **short** description of items
  - Replication of the GSS experiments - Wordiness of the spending items

- The use of **small grids** vs **non-grid** (single question) forms
  - Visual complexity and grouping
  - Grid version grouped items via a grid matrix on one screen

- **Implicit** vs **explicit** use of “don’t know” and “decline to answer” (DK/REF) response options
  - Implicit DK/REF response options provided skipping instructions at the beginning: “Some topics may be sensitive for you, and you can decline to answer any question. You will be able to skip any of the questions to indicate ‘Don't know’ or ‘Decline to answer’.”

AmeriSpeak Panelists were randomly assigned into 8 experiment groups
Outcome Measures from the National Priority Items

- **Acquiescence Rate**
  - Percent of cases selecting the mid-category (“about right”)

- **Don’t Know/No Answer %**
  - Percent of cases selecting the don’t know category or skipping the question
AmeriSpeak and GSS Comparison – Acquiescence Rate (“About right”)

Long versus short description of items

- AmeriSpeak LONG
- AmeriSpeak SHORT
- GSS LONG
- GSS SHORT

* p < 0.05;  + p < 0.10; Unweighted
AmeriSpeak – MEAN (Acquiescence Rate) by mode and device

Explicit vs Implicit DK/REF by Item wording complexity

- Explicit DK/REF Long
- Explicit DK/REF Short
- Implicit DK/REF Long
- Implicit DK/REF Short

* p < 0.05; + p < 0.10; Unweighted
AmeriSpeak – MEAN (Acquiescence Rate) by mode and device

Small Grid vs Single Question by Item wording complexity

- Small GRID Long
- Small GRID Short
- NO GRID Long
- NO GRID Short

Web
Desktop/ Laptop
HH Device

* p < 0.05;  + p < 0.10; Unweighted
AmeriSpeak and GSS Comparison – Don’t Know / No Answer %

Long versus short description of items

* p < 0.05; + p < 0.10; Unweighted
AmeriSpeak – MEAN (Don’t Know / No Answer %) by mode and device

Explicit vs Implicit DK/REF by Item wording complexity

- Explicit DK/REF Long
- Explicit DK/REF Short
- Implicit DK/REF Long
- Implicit DK/REF Short

* p < 0.05; + p < 0.10; Unweighted
AmeriSpeak – MEAN (Don’t Know / No Answer %) by mode and device

Small Grid vs Single Question by Item wording complexity

- Small GRID Long
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* p < 0.05; + p < 0.10; Unweighted
Below are the key points from the document:

- **Question wording effects are consistent in direction across studies**
  - Acquiescence and DK/NA rates are generally higher for more complex worded items

- **Different question design choices show dissimilar rates of acquiescence across modes and devices**
  - When DK/REF are explicit, respondents use them;
  - When DK/REF are not explicitly provided, respondents tend to choose middle category more often (regardless of mode and device)
  - Higher rates of DK/NA when items are presented via small grids
  - Handheld device users tend to choose middle category more often when items are presented in a no-grid format (marginal significance).
Questions?

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Thank You!