Doing Survey Research with Young People
An interactive workshop

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Edinburgh, 2 April 2014

Structure

09.00 – 09.30	Registration and refreshments
09.30 – 10.00	Welcome and introduction
10.00 – 11.30	Questionnaire design: Differences in conceptions of young people
11.30 – 11.45	Break
11.45 – 13.00	Methods to reach young people: surveying strategies
13.00 – 13.45	Lunch
13.45 – 15.15	Engaging with young respondents for dissemination
15.15 – 15.30	Conclusions
15.30 – 16.00	Break
16.00 – 17.30	Talk by and Discussion with Dorothy Currie "Asking adolescents: the challenges of survey research on young people"

Introduction and background

Rationale of the workshop

- Conducting survey research with adolescents, but not children

- Special challenges, rarely taught/trained

- Based on actual experience from work on young people's referendum survey

- Interactive approach: Learning from all course participants' experiences

- Flipped structure →   i. Exercises/discussion
                         ii. Instructor reflections and further discussion

Brief background to the project

- Investigating the attitudes of young people (14-17 year olds) on Scottish independence

- Rationale: Lowering of voting age to 16: Ability of this age group to vote in late 2014

- No random (probability), representative, complex survey of this age group so far

- No study to relate attitudes towards independence to other relevant factors for this age group

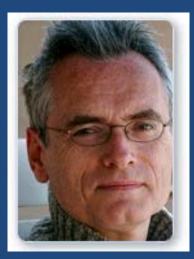- No survey so far to relate teenager and parental attitudes to each other

The project team

Dr Jan Eichhorn

Prof Lindsay Paterson

Prof John MacInnes

Dr Michael Rosie

Brief background to the project

→ More details will be discussed during the discussions of the exercises

Questionnaire design:
Differences in conceptions of young people

Questionnaire piloting

- Original questions based on existing, high quality surveys

- Questions piloted with 110 school students (14-17 years old) at Knox Academy, Haddington

- Feedback discussions with school students about applicability of questions → adjustments made to 1/3 of questions

Exercise 1: Adapting questions

- Original questions based on existing, high quality surveys

- Questions piloted with 110 school students (14-17 years old) at Knox Academy, Haddington

- Feedback discussions with school students about applicability of questions → adjustments made to 1/3 of questions

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→ In your groups, consider the piloting questionnaire used.

- Discuss which questions you think had to be changed based on the feedback from the pilot

- Develop ideas how these questions might have been changed

- Time: 30 minutes

In autumn next year there will be a referendum to decide whether or not Scotland becomes an independent country. You can assume that you would be allowed to vote. How likely would you be to vote in the referendum, on a scale going from 1 to 10, where 10 means you would be absolutely certain to vote and 1 that you would be absolutely certain NOT to vote?

In autumn next year there will be a referendum to decide whether or not Scotland becomes an independent country. Assuming you will have a vote, how likely would you be to vote in the referendum ?

1.   Very likely
2.   Rather likely
3.   Neither likely nor unlikely
4.   Rather unlikely
5.   Very unlikely

If Scotland were to become independent, would you feel confident about Scotland's future, worried, or neither confident nor worried? IF CONFIDENT or WORRIED: Is that very or quite confident or worried?

1.   Very confident
2.   Quite confident
3.   Neither confident nor worried
4.   Quite worried
5.   Very worried

If Scotland were to become independent, would you feel confident about Scotland's future, worried, or neither confident nor worried?

(same answer categories)

Please say which, if any, of the following words describes the way you think of yourself. Please choose as many or as few as apply.

1. British
2. English
3. European
4. Irish
5. Scottish
6. Other (Write In)

1. British
2. English
3. European
4. Scottish
5. Other (Write In)

Should the quality of education be the same for all children, or should parents who can afford it be able to pay for better education?

1. Same for everyone
2. Able to pay for better education

Should the quality of healthcare always be the same for everyone, or should people who can afford it be able to pay for better healthcare?

1. Same for everyone
2. Able to pay for better healthcare

How much interest do you generally have in what is going on in politics?

1. A great deal
2. Quite a lot
3. Not very much
4. None at all

1. A great deal
2. Some extent
3. Not very much
4. None at all

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on."

Agree strongly
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Disagree strongly

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that young people find it difficult to understand what is going on?

(answer options unchanged)

Thinking about schools, do you think that

1. schools should be the same for everyone in the UK,
2. the Scottish Parliament should be able to decide what Scottish schools are like

Thinking about school education and in particular the curriculum and exams, do you think that

1. The curriculum and exams should be the same for everyone in the UK
2. or should the Scottish Parliament be able to decide what the curriculum and exams are like in Scotland?

Should Scotland be an independent country?

     1. Yes
     2. No

Should Scotland be an independent country?

     1. Yes
     2. No
     3. Undecided

Questions dropped

How proud are you of being British, or do you not see yourself as British at all?
How proud are you of being Scottish, or do you not see yourself as Scottish at all?

1. Very proud
2. Somewhat proud
3. Not very proud
4. Not at all proud
5. Not British

If Scotland were to become independent, would you feel pleased or sorry or neither pleased nor sorry? If pleased or sorry: Is that very or quite pleased or sorry?

1. Very pleased
2. Quite pleased
3. Neither pleased nor sorry
4. Quite sorry
5. Very sorry

Questions dropped

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "It doesn't really matter which party is in power, in the end things go on much the same." Do you

Agree strongly
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Disagree strongly

Questions added

Thinking about the debate on Scottish independence so far would you say,

1. I have enough information to make a decision
2. I'd like more information before I finally decide

Who have you talked about Scottish impendence with so far, if anyone at all? Of the following, please choose as many or few as apply.

1. Nobody
2. Parents
3. Friends
4. People in class
5. (Other – Write In)

To Parents: Education background

Summary

- Complexity of questions about abstract themes (such as constitutional positions) were not problematic

- Reading of questions required some variation (non-duplication of options in question)

- Some formulations were more easily received as patronising

- Certain concepts applicable to parents made no sense to young people

- Some concepts had to be specified in more detail to match the life context of young people

- Smaller answer option ranges were desirable

Methods to reach young people: Surveying strategies

Sampling young people

- 14-17 year olds only make up a small proportion of the population

- Conducting research with this group implies difficulties in reach, in particular when aiming for representative probability samples and under budget constraints

- There are a range of important ethical considerations that need to be taken into account

Exercise 2: Developing a sampling approach

- 14-17 year olds only make up a small proportion of the population

- Conducting research with this group implies difficulties in reach, in particular when aiming for representative probability samples and under budget constraints

- There are a range of important ethical considerations that need to be taken into account

→ In your groups, discuss options for an ideal sampling strategy to conduct a survey of 14-17 year olds. Consider

  - The size of budgets different options may require
  - The necessary sample size you would like to achieve
  - How to ensure proper ethical procedures in dealing with minors
  - Whether there may be meaningful ways of establishing non-probability samples should probability ones be impossible

  - Time: 30 minutes

Approach to our survey

- Telephone survey (80% landline penetration in Scotland, weights applied)

- Consultation by survey company (MRUK) to increase suitability for telephone interviewing

- Briefing and feedback with final adjustments with interviewers

- Weekly monitoring of survey progress and respondent distributions (sex, age)

- 8 Scottish parliament electoral regions used as strata

Structure of our survey

1. Ethical consent from parents

2. Questions to parents about background/view on independence

3. Interview with 14-17 year old

      i.   Questions on attitudes on Scottish independence

      ii.   Questions on orientations regarding national identity

      iii.   Questions on general political attitudes

      iv.   Questions about socio-demographic background

Alternative option considered

- Wide open access internet survey

- Non-representative, but very large scale

- Cooperation with a country-wide youth organisation

- Far-reaching promotion to reach high participation rate

- Comparison to population data on characteristics to apply weighting to population parameters

→ Not taken up because of concerns regarding representativeness

→ Not taken up because of political nature of the project for partner organization

→ Not taken up because impossible to achieve randomness

Internet surveys (1)

- Impossible to use truly random selection.

- Possible to apply weights to 'match' the achieved responses with *some* known characteristics of the target population:
  - age, sex, residence,

- But most characteristics of the target population of young people are *not* known,

- No matter how much is known about the target population, it is never possible to weight for unknown characteristics. Yet the only purpose of any survey is to precisely to acquire such information.

Internet surveys (2)

- Cannot check respondents identity or avoid multiple responses by individual.

- Respondents with a definite opinion on an issue are more motivated to participate.

- Internet survey organisations (e.g. YouGov) tackle this through panels of respondents participating in multiple surveys. As they build a profile of each respondent, it becomes possible to weight their response according to a a larger number of characteristics.

- Random samples are less biased, even taking account of non-response:

  eg reported turnout (%) in Scottish Parliament elections, comparing Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (random) with YouGov (internet):

	Actual	SSA (random)	YouGov (internet)
2007	52	61	78
2011	50	59	81

Source: John Curtice, ScotCen Social Research

Sampling strategies for young people (1)

- Via schools
(eg former biennial Scottish School Leavers' Survey, 1962-2002)

  - Advantages
    - Administrative structure
    - Sampling frame
    - School's authority could strongly encourage participation
    - Could link school (or teacher) characteristics to young people's responses.

  - Disadvantages
    - Bias towards 'official' view of knowledge?
    - How free are school pupils not to take part?
    - Clustering of responses (which can be taken into account only with complex statistical analysis)

Sampling strategies for young people (2)

- Via families

(eg youth panel in British Household Panel Study, now Understanding Society)

- Advantages
    - Sampling frame of adults gives access to young people
    - Parents' authority could strongly encourage participation
    - Could link parents responses to young people's

- Disadvantages
    - How willing are young people to express own views in context of family?
    - How free are young people not to take part?
    - Clustering of responses (which can be taken into account only with complex statistical analysis)

Engaging with young respondents for dissemination

Engaging beyond the survey

- Research work with young people often has an impact dimension to it

- Data on young people may provide an opportunity for attractive forms of engagement with young people on relevant issues (in this case political attitudes and public opinion formation)

Exercise 3: Developing an engagement plan

- Research work with young people often has an impact dimension to it

- Data on young people may provide an opportunity for attractive forms of engagement with young people on relevant issues (in this case political attitudes and public opinion formation)

→ In your groups, discuss options for engagement with young people beyond conducting the survey per se. Consider

- How engagement with respondents could be used further
- How results could be made useful to more young people generally
- Which other groups should be engaged with as potential intermediaries
- Any ethical concerns that may arise

- Time: 30 minutes

Engagement based on our survey

- **<u>Development of teaching materials</u>**

- Cooperation with two other projects

  - Scottish Social Attitudes Survey (with ScotCen Social Research)
  - Social Media Engagement (University of Strathclyde)

- Intended for use in senior high school years

- Using data on young people mostly to practice literacy in reading polls and survey

- Engagement with survey methods

- Cooperation with Modern Studies teachers and piloting phase

- Available for free online via AQMeN

Engagement based on our survey

- <u>Engagement in and with schools</u>

- Talks about research results

- Sessions on research methods, in particular in Modern Studies Advanced Higher Methods classes

- (Online) surveys within schools stimulating discussion about pupils' average positions compared to the population

- Contribution to external events for pupils (PSA Festival of Social Science event)

- AQMeN seminar for school classes (June 2014)

- Promotion and extension of teaching material package based on feedback and repeat survey

Challenges of engagement with young people

- Engagement *for* young people or *with* young people?

- Engagement as part of formal school curriculum, or directly?

- For a minority of young people: engagement as political activism?

Conclusions