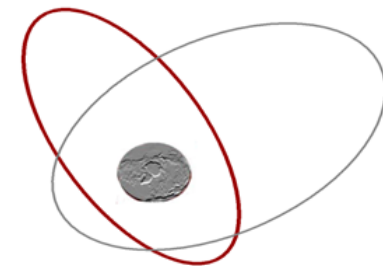




Understanding Society

THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY



# Achieving Comparability on Cross-National Longitudinal Surveys: Recent Initiatives and Future Possibilities

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An initiative by the Economic and Social Research Council, with scientific leadership by the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, and survey delivery by the National Centre for Social Research.

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# Overview

- Introduction
- Objectives of comparative longitudinal surveys
- Criteria for achieving the objectives
- Important features of design and implementation
- Three examples of standardisation initiatives:  
Birth cohort studies, Household panel surveys; EU-SILC
- Desirable future developments

# Objectives for Comparative Longitudinal Surveys

- Generic issues for comparative surveys:
  - Equivalence of concepts, measurement, representation
- Specific issues for longitudinal comparative surveys:
  - Time dimension in population definition, sample design;
  - Drivers of attrition may vary between nations;
  - Key measures are measures of change
  - Risk of important influences on measurement being confounded with nation (e.g. DI, mode, interviewer skill)

# Criteria I: Representation

- Standard definition of population, inc. time dimension
- Equivalent (preferably full) population coverage – dealing with births and deaths, etc
- Estimability of precision
- Equivalent (residual) non-response bias
- Equivalence of representation primarily in terms of change / stability

# Criteria II: Measurement

- Standard definitions of concepts, including change
- Equivalence of measurement

# How to Achieve the Criteria?

- Control of implementation of sample design inc. immigrants etc
- Control of implementation of following rules, tracking/tracing
- Study of non-coverage, non-response and attrition, with appropriate adjustment
- Appropriate methods for development and testing of concepts and measurement instruments – but this must additionally focus on the properties of the instruments for measuring change
- Control of design features known to affect measurement: how? When? To what degree? (e.g. DI vs INDI, self-completion vs interviewer-administered, CAPI vs PAPI, interviewer continuity)

# National Birth Cohort Studies



- Birth Cohort Studies started in different places and different times, with different emphases
- Researchers slowly realised potential for cross-national analysis
- No clear or explicit aim of comparability
- But in recent years a recognition of the need to understand why methodological differences exist
- Application in 2007 to create a network of studies

# National Birth Cohort Studies



- Eucconet ([www.eucconet.com](http://www.eucconet.com))
- Research Networking Programme of the European Science Foundation, funded May 2008 to May 2013
- To “share knowledge, expertise, tools and questionnaires”
- Meetings on consent; data management; tracking; interviewing children; record linkage; etc
- A gentle push towards standardisation



# National Household Panel Surveys



- Also started in different places and different times, but with less variation in focus and content
- Fewer in number than the birth cohorts
- Each new HPS since PSID has had comparability as a stated aim
- National funding can be a barrier to comparability
- Two international initiatives:
  - EPAG and EPUNet
  - CNEF

# EPAG and EPUNet

- European Panel Analysis Group (EPAG)
- Set up as informal consortium of 7 research institutes in UK, DE, IE, NL, IT, LU, DK
- European Panel Users Network (EPUNet)
- Created by EPAG and funded under EU-FP5, 2002-2006
- Focus on data users
- Identified many unnecessary differences and led to subsequent standardisation

# CNEF



- Cross-National Equivalent File  
(<http://www.human.cornell.edu/PAM/Research/Centers-Programs/German-Panel/cnef.cfm>)
- Harmonised data from seven HPS in UK, DE, CH, USA, Canada, Australia, Korea
- Combination of input and output harmonisation
- Project has provided some impetus for standardisation of design and has highlighted – but not solved - some issues of non-equivalence

# EU-SILC

- Introduced by legislation with standardised outputs and guidance/constraints on inputs
- Centrally co-ordinated by Eurostat
- Co-ordination has heavy reliance on legislation and documentation
- Limited central evaluation of procedures; weak process improvement

# Conclusions

- More progress on standardisation than on equivalisation
- Much greater standardisation of measures on HPS and EU-SILC than on BCS
- Standardisation of key procedures higher on HPS and BCS than EU-SILC
- Very different processes drive standardisation in the three cases
- Drive for equivalence mainly comes from analysts

# Future Developments



- Assessment of best practice
- Greater focus on representation issues?
  - e.g. standardisation of tracking procedures, interviewer continuity, etc
- Continued focus on measurement issues
- Shift focus from standardisation to equivalisation?
- (more likely to happen in representation sphere?)



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