

Title: Does Participating in a Panel Survey Change Respondents' Labor Market Behavior?

Date/Time: Tuesday, May 31, 2016, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Ruben Bach, Institute for Employment Research, Nuremberg, Germany

Discussant: John Czajka, Mathematica Policy Research, Washington, DC

Chair: Stephanie Eckman, RTI International, Washington, D.C.

Sponsor: WSS Methodology Section and DC-AAPOR

Abstract: Panel surveys are a key resource to measure changes over time and perform causal analyses, but repeated participation in a survey can induce undesirable changes as well. Changes may occur in respondents' behavior and/or in their reporting of behavior. These changes, both in reporting and in behavior, that are due to repeated participation in a survey are called panel conditioning.

Using administrative data linked to a large German panel survey, we analyze changes in respondents' behavior due to repeated participation in the panel. We use propensity score weighting to estimate the average treatment effect of participation in several waves of the panel survey on the take-up of federal labor market programs. Results show that panel respondents participate in more programs than those who were also eligible for participation but were not selected. Moreover, we present preliminary findings, which show that panel respondents need less time to find a new job.

Our results suggest that panel conditioning not only affects the reporting of behavior (as previous studies have demonstrated), but can also alter respondents' actual behavior. Thus, researchers using panel data should be aware of this (often ignored) source of panel specific error. Our findings add to the sparse empirical literature on changes-in-behavior panel conditioning and will be of interest to all researchers who collect or analyze panel survey data.

Location: Bureau of Labor Statistics Janet Norwood Conference Center, Room 8

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