

Survey experiments II

Instructors: Alexandra Jabbour
Mathew Creighton (University College Dublin)

Organised by: Valentina Di Stasio & Filip Kostelka

Contact: Monika.Rzemieniecka@eui.eu

Dates and schedule:

Monday 19 May @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2, 9:30 – 17:00
Tuesday 20 May @ Badia Fiesolana, Seminar Room 2, 9:30 – 17:00

Credits: 10

Overview

A successful application of survey experiments requires that we anticipate the interpretative strengths and weaknesses of a given design. The workshop “Survey Experiments II” builds upon a strong foundation in the principles of experimental design, focusing on specific applications that address external validity and social desirability issues. The workshop is open to all students who have completed “Survey Experiments I”, as well as to those already familiar with survey experiments who have not taken “Survey Experiments I” but wish to deepen their methodological knowledge. It consists of two parts. In the first, Alexandra Jabbour will reveal the delicate balance between abstraction and concreteness in treatment design. The goal is to offer a deep understanding of how this balance shapes external validity and the key aspects to consider when designing a survey experiment. In the second part, Mathew Creighton will consider the meaning and mediation of social desirability in publicly expressed attitudes. The session will address the theoretical and interpretative frames required to understand how experimental design can reveal covert expression of controversial sentiment. This theoretical foundation will inform the application of the item-count technique, which can manipulate anonymity to elicit distinct response patterns that direct questioning in a survey cannot.

Requirements

Credit requirements include attendance, active participation, and group presentation.

Pre-course preparation: None.

Alexandra Jabbour is a Max Weber Fellow and part-time assistant professor at the EUI, affiliated with the department of political and social sciences. She conducts research at the intersection of political economy, political behavior and comparative politics. She obtained her PhD in political science from the University of Montreal in 2023.

Mathew Creighton is a member of the Geary Institute for Public Policy, University College Dublin, and Boğaziçi University. He is currently a principal investigator and overall coordinator of the Horizon Europe project EqualStrength, which examines prejudice and discrimination in employment, childcare, and housing throughout Europe. He served as the national (co)coordinator of the European Social Survey in Ireland between 2016 and

2023. His recent book “Hidden Hate – The Resilience of Xenophobia” was published by Columbia University Press in 2024. Based on survey experiments conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Norway, and the Netherlands, the book provides rigorous evidence that overt anti-immigrant sentiment is strategically expressed and can often mask greater intolerance that is only observed under conditions of anonymity. Mathew received a joint PhD in sociology and demography from the University of Pennsylvania in 2009.

Programme (indicative)

Monday, 19 May - DAY 1:

09:30–11:00 **Abstraction vs. Concreteness in Treatment Design**

- How abstract or detailed should experimental stimuli be?
- Trade-offs between experimental control and generalizability
- External validity

Break

11:30–12:30 **Hands-on Session and Q&A**

- Case studies varying the level of abstraction

12:30–14:00

- *Lunch break*

14:00–15:00 **Theoretical models of social desirability and masked expression**

- Overt expression of sentiment and the role of social desirability pressure
- Overt expression of sentiment and unconscious forms of masking
- Covert expression of sentiment and the role of anonymity

Break

15:30–16:30 **Overview of individual methods to overcome strategic masking**

- Motivation and mechanisms of implicit expression
- Advantages of measuring unconscious expression
- Disadvantages of equating unconscious expression and “true” sentiment
- Discussion of the use of strategic masking in the management of expression

16:30–17:00 **Q/A**

Tuesday, 20 May - DAY 2:

10:00–12:30 **Overview of group-level methods to overcome strategic masking**

- Motivation and mechanisms of strategically masked expression
- Time diary and recall methods to measure strategically masked behaviour

Break

- Anonymity and the item-count-technique to observe anonymously expressed sentiment
- Manipulation of social stigma to compare overt and covert expression

12:30–14:00

- *Lunch break*

14:00–16:30 **Application of item-count-technique to adjust estimates of proportions**

- Examples of covert measurement from the Netherlands, Ireland and Norway
- Examples of comparing covert and overt measurement from the Netherlands, Ireland and Norway

Break

- Examples of advantages and disadvantages of considering constant and time-varying characteristics as references for strategic masking.

16:30–17:00 **Q/A**

Reading list (suggestions only):

For Day 1:

Brutger, R., Kertzer, J., Renshon, J., Tingley, D., & Weiss, C. (2023). Abstraction and Detail in Experimental Design. *American Journal of Political Science*, 67(4), 979-995.

Creighton, M. J., Brenner, P. S., Schmidt, P., & Zavala-Rojas, D. (2019). Application of a List Experiment at the Population Level: The Case of Opposition to Immigration in the Netherlands. *Experimental Methods in Survey Research: Techniques that Combine Random Sampling with Random Assignment*, 181-193.

Ehler, I., Wolter, F., & Junkermann, J. (2021). Sensitive questions in surveys: A comprehensive meta-analysis of experimental survey studies on the performance of the item count technique. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 85(1), 6-27.

For Day 2:

Creighton, M. J., & Jamal, A. A. (2022). An overstated welcome: Brexit and intentionally masked anti-immigrant sentiment in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(5), 1051-1071.

Igarashi, A., & Nagayoshi, K. (2022). Norms to be prejudiced: List experiments on attitudes towards immigrants in Japan. *Social Science Research*, 102, 102647.

Imai, K. (2011). Multivariate regression analysis for the item count technique. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 106(494), 407-16.