Instructions for Field Research

August 21, 2007

Dear Colleagues,

As researchers within the Worlds of Journalisms *project, we all would like to see that the data we use and disseminate to the academic community meet commonly accepted methodological standards. It is vitally important to comparative research that the data obtained from different countries are collected using standardized and therefore compara-ble techniques. All Principal Investigators are, therefore, kindly asked to observe the prin-ciples listed below. Following these rules will ensure the reliability of the study's data.*

Thomas Hanitzsch
Central Coordinator

I GENERAL RULES

A *Questionnaire and data sheet*

(1) The *Worlds of Journalisms* project requires the implementation of a common questionnaire (for journalists) and data sheet (for news organizations) fully and faithfully.

(2) The master questionnaire is drafted in English. Principal Investigators are responsible for the translation of the questionnaire into their local language. Whenever possible, translated questionnaires must be back-translated into English by someone other than the person who did the original translation. Alternatively, translation could involve a multilingual team of researchers to ensure language equivalence to a largest possible extent.

(3) In principle, every question in the master questionnaire must be asked in every survey. In exceptional cases, where a Principal Investigator feels a question is irrelevant or inappropriate for her/his country, s/he may ask the Central Coordinator for permission not to ask that particular question ahead of time.

B *Data submission and documentation*

(1) The Central Coordinator will provide an empty SPSS data sheet to all Principal Investigators in due time.

(2) After the completion of the survey, Principal Investigators should send a cleaned and complete data set to the Central Coordinator as soon as feasible.

(3) Data sets should be accompanied by a detailed methodological documentation.

C *Sharing of data sets*

The data set will be compiled and revised by the Central Coordinator and then made available to Principal Investigators. Principal Investigators are free to publish papers based on their national data at any time. Comparative findings using the complete data set, however, shall be published collaboratively at least during the first two years after completion of data collection in all countries. It is planned to publish the findings from comparative analysis in a series of articles submitted to recognized international journals as well as in a comprehensive book volume. After an embargo period of two years, every Principal Investigator is free to use the complete data set for individual and collaborative publications.

II DATA COLLECTION: GETTING STARTED

A *General*

(1) Method: The mode of data collection for the interviews with journalists is telephone interviewing. Face-to-face interviewing is justified in cases where cultural circumstances do not allow for telephone interviewing. Other modes (e.g. by mail or online) are not acceptable.

(2)   Period of data collection: Data collection period for the *Worlds of Journalisms* project is August 22, 2007 through October 31, 2007. In exceptional cases, fieldwork may extend until December 31, 2007. In case such an extension is needed, the Central Coordinator should be contacted ahead of time.

B   Establishing contact

(1)   Interviewers must establish informed consent by telling the respondent the following five items (see introductory script below): (a) the full name of the interviewer; (b) on whose behalf the interviewer is calling; (c) the purpose of the study; (d) the approximate length of time the survey will take, and (e) the fact that participation is voluntary and confidential.

(2)   If respondents hesitate to participate, interviewers may convince them to do so by referring to one of the following: (a) that they are not selling anything; (b) that they "really appreciate" the respondent's help; and (c) that the answers of the journalists really matter.

Introductory script

Good morning (afternoon, evening.)

My name is ………<full name>, and I am working for the ………<institution>. We are conducting a survey that is very important for the understanding of journalistic cultures in different countries. The study is simultaneously conducted in 15 nations.

Let me assure you that the information you provide will be kept in strictest confidence. No one except authorized project staff will see your answers. Your information will be combined with answers we get from 1,500 other journalists throughout the world. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any of the questions you do not want to answer.

The interview will take about 30 to 40 minutes. I realize your time is valuable, and I will try to get through the questions as quickly as possible.

Let me begin, please, by getting some information about your present job.

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(3)   Frequently asked questions and answers:

Question: *Why don't you call someone else?*
Answer: Because that would be faulty research. We have been very careful in devising a sampling strategy that allows comparing journalists from very diverse media systems. The selection of media is based on a set of pre-specified criteria, including the media's reach, agenda-setting function as well as the distinction between national and local media. Your participation is, therefore, vitally important to ensuring valid and reliable information that can be compared across the nations.

Question: *How do I know that you are really from ……..<institution>?*
Resolution: If the respondent expresses a strong doubt about who the interviewer really is, interviewers can give this person an institutional phone number.

Question: *How long will this take?*
Resolution: Interviewers should give an honest estimate of the length (30 to 40 minutes) and tell the respondent they will go as fast as possible, or offer to call back at a more convenient time.

C   Non-response

(1)   In general, refusals should be kept to an absolute minimum.

(2)   All refusals must be documented in the methodological report sent to the Central Coordinator.

(3)   Refusals and possible responses:

> **Too busy:** *This will only take a short time. I can call you back at a more convenient time. What would be a better time within the next few days?*
> **Respondent doesn't like telephone surveys:** *We do the survey by phone because it is much faster than interviewing people in person.*

(4)   All refusals responses should be probed once:

> **Generally:** *Everything you say is completely confidential and it is important that we get your opinions.*
>
> **For demographics:** *I want to reassure you this information is all confidential. We are just making sure we are talking to a wide range of individuals.*
>
> **On income:** *I want to reassure you we are not looking for an exact income, just a range...* **or** *These data are important for the surveys, we need to know from what social environment we got the answers.*

(5)   Preventing termination of interviewing:

> **Situation:** In the middle of the survey, the respondent asks, "Are we almost done?"
> **Resolution:** Interviewers should convey their appreciation and let them know you will move as quickly as possible to complete the survey.
>
> **Question:** I don't have time to finish the survey.
> **Answer:** *I realize your time is valuable, and I'll try to get through the rest of the questions as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, your opinions will not be counted unless we complete the entire survey.*

III THE INTERVIEW

A   General standards for interviewers

(1)   Make yourself familiar with the questionnaire before you start working.

(2)   Make sure that you are in quiet surroundings and will not be disturbed.

(3)   Follow the instructions about procedures contained in the questionnaire.

(4)   Do not hand the questionnaire to the respondent unless there are specific instructions to you to do so.

(5)   Speak briskly but clearly. Be sure that you will be understood the first time. Read every question slowly so that the respondent can comprehend its meaning.

(6)   Read every question exactly as it is written, even if you think it could be worded better.

(7)   Do *not explain* and *comment* on questions in the questionnaire. If the respondent does not understand a question, repeat it another time.

(8)   Ask all questions in the exact order in which they are presented.

(9)   Don't leave out any questions which the respondent is supposed to answer.

(10) Do not suggest answers to the respondent unless they are explicitly specified in the questionnaire.

(11) Read aloud all alternative answers if the respondent is supposed to choose one of the predetermined alternatives.

(12) Write down exactly what the respondent says in answer to a given question if he/she has been given an "open question". If the respondent is going too fast, a good technique to slow them down is to repeat what they have said so they must wait for you to catch up with them.

(13) Write down in the margins of the questionnaire what the respondent says if it is impossible to choose a code that corresponds to what he/she says, and there is no "Other, specify" alternative.

B   Specific instructions for interviewers

(1) All remarks and notations in the questionnaire should be entered with a ballpoint pen using black ink. *Pencils should not be used.*

(2) The answer given by the respondent must be indicated by circling the number corresponding to the answer.

(3) Any corrections to the answers provided are to be based only on what the respondent says and are to be indicated by crossing out the incorrectly indicated code or written number, etc.

(4) Everything printed in *italic letters* is intended only for the interviewer and *must not be read* to the respondent.

(5) The alternative answer choices "Don't Know" and "Refused" *should never be read* to the respondent.

(6) The arrow sign (➔) behind certain answer categories indicate a "go to" instruction to skip unnecessary questions. For example, the code "No ➔ 6." in question 4 means that for those who answered "No", it is not necessary to ask question 5, but they can go directly to question 6.

Don't Know: means that the respondent has no clear opinion, is not sure what to say, can't decide between categories, or plainly says don't know.

Refused: means that the respondent does not want to answer the particular question.

IV THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Field notes A1 (CODE_INT)
Every interview is assigned a unique code to identify the interview. The code consists of the following three parts:

- A three-digit code for the name of the medium (e.g. "NYT" for the *New York Times*). This code must be used for all interviews conducted with journalists from this news organization as well as for the corresponding organizational data sheet.

- A unique three-digit code for the interviewer's name (e.g. "THA" for Thomas Hanitzsch).

- A two-digit serial number for all interviews as they are done in each news organization. For every first interview in a particular newsroom, the serial number is set to "01". Since five journalists are interviewed in most news organizations, the serial number will rarely exceed "05".

Field notes A2 (RANK)

We assume that there are three general levels in the editorial hierarchy based on the key responsibilities in the newsroom:

- *Senior managers* are on the highest level as they have the power to shape the strategic goals of their news organizations. Their authority ranges across the entire newsroom or across large divisions within the newsroom.

- *Junior managers* are on the middle level of the editorial hierarchy and make operational decisions on a day-to-day basis. They are typically responsible for smaller divisions within the newsroom, such as a department, a beat, a desk, or a bureau.

- The *non-management staff* forms the lowest level of the editorial hierarchy, consisting of rank-and-file journalists. These journalists gather and produce the news and information, and they usually have no or very little editorial responsibilities.

Question 2 (BEAT_1):

"Beat" means a specific subject area of coverage, such as foreign affairs, sports, or local news.

Question 18:

(TRUST_PM) By "parliament" is meant the highest legislature in a given country. In a parliamentary system the government is constitutionally answerable to the parliament. In nations with bicameral legislatures, the lower house should be selected (e.g. Germany: *Bundestag*; Spain: *Congreso de los Diputados*; UK: *House of Commons*). Presidential systems usually give more power to the government, which is the case, for instance, in the United States (*Senate*) and Russia (*Duma*).

(TRUST_GT) "Government" refers to the highest level of the executive body in a given country. The government usually consists of the head (Chancellor, Premier, Prime Minister – or President, for presidential systems) as well as a Cabinet and/or Ministers.

(TRUST_OR) Charitable or voluntary organizations are those which work for the public good. Examples are Greenpeace, Amnesty International, and Care International.

Question 19:

(PD_LO_1) The emphasis is on *supporting* official policies.

Question 20:

(ID_HI_2)   What methods of reporting are actually questionable depends on the cultural context. Badgering unwilling informants might be questionable in most contexts, while in some nations, paying for information is not considered unethical.

(RE_HI_2)   This item means that, given the inherently complex nature of ethical dilemmas, journalists should be able to base their ethical decisions on personal judgment instead on universal rules.

Question 25:

(INFL_MAN) By "management" is meant the top (executive) level of the newsroom or media organization.

(INFL_ETH)   The emphasis is on conventions and ethics of the newsrooms in which the interviewed journalists work.

Question 26:

(INFL_SEN)   This item refers to the fact that certain information, topics and/or kinds of coverage can lead to easy irritation or upset in some communities. The publication of Muhammad caricatures in Danish media is a case in point.

Question 38 (SOC_ACTV):

Charitable organizations and NGO's are those which work for the public good. Examples are Greenpeace, Amnesty International, and Care International. By "local committees" are meant any kind of organized social activity on the community level.