

Developing a multiple contact interface for the TU to meet the needs of a complex household survey, Understanding Society

Abstract

This paper will describe three challenges that we faced in delivering Understanding Society in NatCen's Telephone Unit and the solutions we implemented:

1. The standard Blaise CATI dial screen is designed to schedule calls for one contact person in each household, but Understanding Society involves interviewing every adult in a household. Furthermore, each of these individuals can have a number of different telephone numbers, with some numbers common to all household members and others specific to the individual. To address this complexity, we developed a front end dial screen with a dynamic list of contact numbers. When someone had been interviewed the dial screen display was updated to reflect the current household status
2. In addition, the Blaise call scheduler can only record one appointment per household, but each person may need to have a separate appointment. Additional programming was therefore needed to find the next appointment for the household so that interviewers could add these to the call scheduler
3. A final obstacle is that the client's requirement was to have a record of contact with each person, but in practice interviewers ring telephone numbers rather than ringing individuals. As a result, within the instrument, contacts to a number had to be mapped onto a separate array of contacts with an individual.

In addressing these challenges, we needed to balance meeting the client's data collection requirements, integration with the main survey instrument and usability for the telephone interviewer. *In practice, we developed a number of dial screen sub-blocks to help telephone interviewers keep track of call records, stable contacts and appointments. Information from a successful call was presented on the dial screen ready for the next call so that interviewers could gain a quick snapshot of the current status of a case.*

The dial screen block required extensive interviewer testing and specific training. In the paper we will discuss how we addressed these challenges and identify some opportunities for future enhancements.

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