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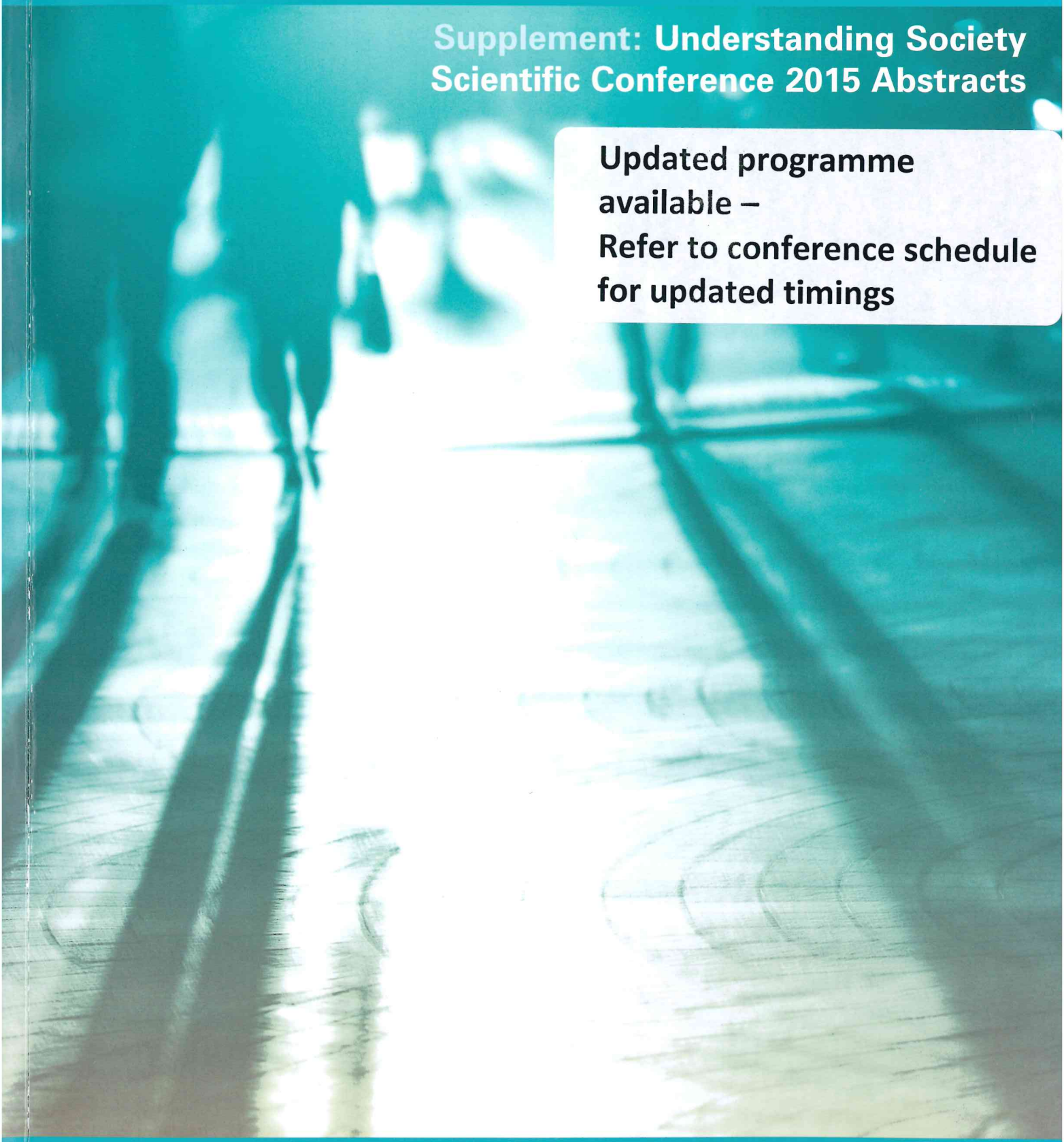
Updated programme available –
Refer to conference schedule for updated timings



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Understanding Society

THE UK HOUSEHOLD LONGITUDINAL STUDY

Understanding Society Scientific Conference

21st – 23rd July 2015

University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3SQ, UK

ABSTRACT BOOK

ISER University of Essex 50 years

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Parallel Session 2G Survey methods (coverage and non-response)

2G.1 The impact of following rules on the sample composition of household based panel studies

Nicole Watson, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Household based panel studies adopt following rules that identify who is followed over time and interviewed. These following rules expand the sample to include new births and adoptions, but may also include the other parent of these births/adoptions, new immigrants and other household members not already part of the continuing sample. Further, it is also normal practice in most household based panel studies to interview all adults living with a continuing sample member each wave. These following and interviewing rules will change the composition of the sample in ways that may not be anticipated by researchers, particularly those interested in household composition and household dynamics.

We examine what impact various following rules have on the sample composition via a simulation study. Drawing from Australian data, we use household changes from the *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia* Survey to add births, deaths, and other household joiners and leavers. Applying these household compositional changes to a sample over time, we examine five sets of following rules, including those adopted by *Understanding Society* and other major household panel studies. We find the sample grows in household types that frequently change (such as young people in shared accommodation or young couples) and reduce in single person and young family households. This effect is somewhat moderated by attrition and varies by the particular following rules adopted.

2G.2 The representativity of a panel for the general population

Annamaria Bianchi and Silvia Biffignandi, Management, Economics and Quantitative Methods, University of Bergamo, Bergamo, Italy

The validity of the estimates in longitudinal panels depends on the extent to which the sample remains representative of the target population over time. Several elements may potentially undermine the representativity of panels and be causes of bias in the estimates: initial non-response during the recruitment phase, non-response to subsequent surveys, and attrition. Moreover, decreasing response rates are reported for household panels in the last years. It is therefore essential to study the representativity of panels at different steps and to monitor their representativity in different stages of their construction and in the course of their life. Several indicators have been proposed in the literature. The most widely used one is the response rate. However, theory and empirical evidence show that it has a limited relation to nonresponse bias. More reliable indicators are based on the use of auxiliary variables.

In this talk, we first revise different concepts of representativity in the framework of panel studies. Next, we propose an original approach to study representativity of a household panel for the general population based on analyses carried out at different steps and the use of R-indicators. The proposed approach is applied to the first four Waves of *Understanding Society*. The analysis considers demographic variables, paradata collected by interviewers in the field and 'psychographic' variables known to be related to survey participation (political interest, personality traits, health). At each step it is found that attrition slightly affects representativity. More difficult subgroups over time are identified. The information provided could be useful to improve data collection in the next stages, the design of advance and reminder letters, interviewer training, and paradata collection.