

Designing and Developing Person-based and Topic-Based Data Collection Instruments

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Data collection operations at the U.S. Census Bureau often require gathering similar information from multiple persons in the same housing unit. There are reasons for collecting this data in a “person-based” format; that is, asking the entire series of questions about each individual, one-by-one, in the unit. Likewise, there are other reasons for using a “topic-based” technique to collect data, where each question is asked, one-by-one, of each household member.

This paper will examine a case study of the American Community Survey Content Test. Two instruments were programmed using Blaise 4.6 software, one of them using a person-based approach and the other using a topic-based approach in order to determine which method would be more effective. We will briefly review the background for considering the alternate approaches, discuss in some detail the design and development issues involved in creating the alternate data collection instruments, and consider what enhancements could be included in the Blaise software that would enrich the process.

Abstract