

Using a Parallel "CASES" Instrument to Edit Call Record Information and Remove Incorrect Interview data

(A Description of the SRC "FIX-IT" Program)

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INTRODUCTION

The Survey Research Center's "fix-it" program was written using the Berkeley CASES (Computer Assisted Survey Execution System) software. The fix-it instrument is used to edit data for CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) studies. The three main functions of the fix-it program are editing incorrect sample disposition information, editing incorrect interviewer information, and removing survey data from interviews conducted with ineligible respondents.

The CASES software allows the instrument writer to design multiple instruments that read the same data files. These instruments are referred to as "parallel instruments" in the CASES documentation. The main questionnaire instrument is written and executed in the e-inst directory of a study. The fix-it instrument is usually written and executed in the e-inst2 directory. If there are multiple parallel versions of an instrument (e.g. different language versions), the fix-it instrument can be located in a different e-inst directory such as e-inst3 or e-inst4).

One advantage of writing the editing features into a parallel directory rather than in the main instrument, is that there is more control as to who is allowed to edit sample dispositions. Access can be limited, through the use of a password in the instrument, to those who are given responsibility for sampling issues. This reduces the likelihood of improper usage. When the fix-it program is executed the first screen asks for the user's identification and the second screen asks for that person's password. If the person does not have access rights to the fix-it instrument or an incorrect password is entered, execution is terminated.

DATA-EDITING FEATURES

The first screen after the password screen offers the following options:

1. Change the status of a call attempt
2. Remove the last call attempt
3. Change the interviewer ID# for a particular call attempt
4. Exit program, no change made

The first option allows the fixit program to change the disposition code for any call attempt. After a call attempt is completed the interviewer records the outcome status of that attempt using one of the outcome codes listed in Table 1. Supervisors review the interviewer's recording of call attempt disposition codes and sometimes feel the need to change the disposition code chosen by the interviewer. A common example is interviewers trying to hide refusals under the code of call back. Correctly coding a refusal call attempt is extremely important, since the call disposition code is the most important factor in determining how future call attempts are handled. In addition, one of the criteria of interviewers evaluations is their ratio of completed interviews to refusals(see Table 2), thus it is important that the supervisor has the ability to assign the initial refusal to the correct interviewer.

There are many other less common reasons why supervisors decide to change the call disposition code

assigned by an interviewer. Some of these occur because of an interviewer keying error. Other sources of mistakes stem from interviewers misunderstanding how to properly code a call disposition. For example, an interviewer may code a call attempt as a respondent problem because the respondent is away for a week, whereas the proper code would have been to code the attempt as a call back for next week. In any event all mistakes by the interviewer in coding call dispositions need to be corrected so that future call attempts are handled correctly. In addition, corrections to the data file are needed so that the sample progress reports, interviewer progress reports and the finalized sample status report are accurate.

The fix-it program not only allows easy editing of call disposition codes, it also updates all the sample status variables and call attempt counters affected by the change.

To change the call disposition code:

1. Select Option #1, "change status of a call attempt"
2. Enter the call attempt that is in error
(You will be told total number of attempts)
3. Enter new call attempt disposition
(The old disposition is shown at the top of the screen, and a list of possible disposition codes is displayed.)
4. Verify the change
(The caseid #, the call attempt #, the old disposition, and the new disposition will appear in a confirmation screen).

There are safeguards built into this editing feature. For example, the status of a case can not be changed to a complete or partial complete when there are no interview data in the case. When there are data in the case and the status of the case is being changed to something other than a complete or a partial, a screen appears with the warning that the data will be deleted. The change must be confirmed at this point, in order for it to be made.

TABLE 1
CALL STATUS REPORT

	Call Status	N	Percent
1	Completed Interviews	1000	39.9%
2	Partially completed interviews (Terms)	30	1.2%
3	Refusals	74	3.0%
4	Call Backs (appointments)	65	2.6%
5	Home Recorders	10	.4%
6	No Answers	21	.8%
20	Language/Age/Health Problems	84	3.4%
21	Finalized Partial completes	3	.1%
22	2nd Refusal	174	6.9%
23	Call Backs (finalized after 25 attempts)	35	1.4%
24	Household no longer available	22	.9%
25	Home Recorders (finalized after 25 attempts)	22	.9%
26	Refusal (finalized after 25 attempts)	11	.4%
30	No answer (after 20 attempts)	141	5.6%
31	Non Working phone number	516	20.6%
32	Non Household	297	11.9%
98	Possible ineligible respondents	<u>1</u>	<u>.0%</u>
		2506	100.0%

TABLE 2
COOPERATION RATE BY INTERVIEWER

ID#	COMPLETES	REFUSALS	COOPERATION. RATE
	<u>COMPLETES</u>		
	COMPLETES + INITIAL REFUSALS		
1009	33	8	80.5%
1120	46	10	82.1%
1121	27	10	73.0%
1156	86	12	87.8%
1160	45	22	67.2%
COLUMN TOTAL	<u>237</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>79.3%</u>

The second option, "remove the last call attempt", is a special case of editing an incorrect call attempt. This option is used when an interviewer either misdials a number or the interviewer dials correctly but then records the information in the wrong case-id. Often the interviewer will realize the error and report it immediately to the supervisor; other times it is caught when a supervisor attempts to verify the status of the case.

When the last call attempt is removed, the disposition of the case is changed to what it was on the call attempt previous to the last call attempt. To make this change:

1. Select Option #2, "remove the last call attempt."
2. Verify the change. (The caseid #, the call attempt #, and the disposition of the call attempt being removed will be displayed in a confirmation screen).

The third option allows the editing of the interviewer identification number associated with any call attempt. The interviewer must record his or her identification number for each call attempt. Occasionally the identification number is miskeyed. Either the interviewer realizes the error immediately and reports it to the supervisor, or the error is discovered when the "Cooperation Rate by Interviewer" table (see Table 2) is reviewed.

The following steps are taken to change the interviewer ID number:

1. Choose option #3, "Change the Interviewer ID# for a particular call attempt."
2. Enter the call attempt which is in error. (The total number of attempts will be displayed)
3. Enter the correct interviewer ID number. (The current interviewer ID # will be displayed.)
4. Verify the change. (The caseid #, the current interviewer ID number, and the correct Interviewer ID number will appear in a confirmation screen).

There is a disposition code for complete or partial interviews with possible ineligible respondents(see Table 1). This code is used when during or after an interview, the interviewer is given information that leads him or her to believe that the respondent is not eligible for the study (e.g. the population is households and we've reached a respondent in a nursing home, or adults are being interviewed and the demographics section of the questionnaire indicates that the respondent is 17). The interviewer then codes the case as an interview (or partial interview) with a possible ineligible respondent. A case is automatically assigned this code if the respondent does not verify the phone number called at the end of the interview.

When the fix-it program is executed for a case with this code, the following options appear:

1. NO, DON'T CLEAR DATA - BUT RETURN THIS CASE TO THE STATUS IT WAS BEFORE IT BECAME A PROBLEM.
2. EXIT THE PROGRAM, NO CHANGE MADE.
3. YES, CLEAR THE DATA.

If it is decided that the interviewer was incorrect and the respondent IS eligible to be interviewed for the particular study, option #1 is chosen and the case becomes a completed interview.

If the interviewer was correct and the respondent is NOT eligible to be interviewed for the study, option #3 is chosen. This clears the data and returns the case to the disposition it had on the previous call attempt. Before the data are cleared, a confirmation screen appears displaying the caseid number and giving the same options as above.

SUMMARY

The old method of editing sample disposition information data involved manually editing the physical data files, which was a very time-consuming and error-prone process. This was especially true when an early call attempt had to be changed, necessitating the editing of the data for each subsequent call attempt. The fix-it program always writes changes to the correct variables and all status and counter variables are automatically updated. This greatly reduces the chance of keying error and the amount of time needed to fix sample problems. When the status and counter variables are accurately and frequently updated, this improves the accuracy of programs which use these variables such as sample reports and auto-schedulers.

Another important feature is the portability of the program from study to study. The shell of the fix-it program can be written in as little as a week by someone who is familiar with the front-end. As long as the front end stores the sampling variables in the same location, it takes less than 10 minutes to update and prepare the fix-it program to be used for individual studies.