Contents

INTRODUCTION:
CALENDAR INSTRUMENTS IN RETROSPECTIVE SURVEYS 11

1.1. AREA OF APPLICATION: LIFE COURSE RESEARCH 12
1.2. RECALL ERROR IN SURVEYS 14
   1.2.1. Omission 14
   1.2.2. Dating error 16
1.3. AIDED RECALL TECHNIQUES IN SURVEYS 21
1.4. CALENDAR METHODS 24
1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND APPROACH 26

CHAPTER 2: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY 29

2.1. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY 29
   2.1.1. Representation and organization of events in autobiographical memory 30
   2.1.2. Life scripts 34
2.2. MEMORY FOR TIME 37
   2.2.1. TIME IN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY 37
      2.2.2. Reconstructing dates and durations 38
      2.2.3. Reconstruction strategies and dating accuracy 40
2.3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 41

CHAPTER 3: APPLICATION AND EFFECTS OF CALENDAR INSTRUMENTS IN SOCIAL SURVEYS 43

3.1. INTRODUCTION 43
3.2. CALENDAR INSTRUMENTS: APPLICATIONS AND RATIONALE 44
   3.2.1. Overview: different names, similar instruments 44
   3.2.2. Theoretical rationale of calendar instruments in retrospective surveys 46
3.3. DESIGN FEATURES OF THE CALENDAR 48
   3.3.1. Time dimension 48
   3.3.2. Domain grid 49
   3.3.3. Landmark events 50
3.4. POTENTIAL CHALLENGES IN CROSS-CULTURAL SURVEYS 52
3.5. Experiences with different modes of data collection 54
3.6. Effects of calendar methods on data quality 56
  3.6.1. Indirect comparisons between calendar data and regular survey data 57
  3.6.2. Agreement between calendar data and external sources 59
3.7. Operational costs of calendar procedures: fieldwork and sampling 63
  3.7.1. Interview time and data entry 63
  3.7.2. Interviewer training 64
  3.7.3. Non-response 64
3.8. Evaluations of the interviewing process 66
3.9. Conclusion and discussion 67

CHAPTER 4: CALENDAR INSTRUMENTS AND THE RETRIEVAL OF EVENTS FROM AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY 71
4.1. Introduction 71
4.2. Aim of the study 72
4.3. Method 73
  4.3.1. Sample 74
  4.3.2. Question-list 75
  4.3.3. Interviewing method 76
  4.3.4. Coding scheme and method of analysis 77
4.4. Results 82
  4.4.1. Retrieval of time-tagged events 83
  4.4.2. Event order cues 84
  4.4.3. Retrieval strategies based on event details, guessing, and temporal relationships 87
  4.4.4. Visual cues 87
  4.4.5. Data revision 88
4.5. Conclusions and Discussion 88
4.6. Limitations and suggestions for future research 89
CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION OF A CALENDAR RECALL AID IN A WEB-BASED LIFE COURSE SURVEY

5.1. Designing a calendar instrument for an online panel

5.2. Pilot study: Design of the questionnaire and calendar recall aid
   5.2.1. Sample
   5.2.2. Method
   5.2.3. Results
   5.2.4. Conclusion and recommendations

5.3. Study aim and hypotheses
   5.3.1. Break-off rates
   5.3.2. Completeness of retrospective reports
   5.3.3. Data consistency
   5.3.4. Interview duration
   5.3.5. Data revision
   5.3.6. Respondent evaluations

5.4. Method
   5.4.1. Experimental design
   5.4.2. Questionnaire
   5.4.3. Sample
   5.4.4. Data and operationalizations
   5.4.5. Analyses

5.5. Results
   5.5.1. Break-off rates
   5.5.2. Completeness of retrospective reports
   5.5.3. Data consistency
   5.5.4. Interview duration
   5.5.5. Data revision
   5.5.6. Respondent evaluations

5.6. Conclusions
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION 127

6.1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS 127
6.2. EFFECTS OF LANDMARK EVENTS AND VISUAL FEEDBACK GRID 131
6.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF VISUAL FEEDBACK AND LANDMARK EVENTS IN WEB-BASED SURVEYS 133
6.4. CALENDAR INSTRUMENTS AND THE SURVEY RESPONSE PROCESS 134
6.5. FINAL REMARKS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH 135

REFERENCES 137

APPENDICES 151

APPENDIX 4.1: RETROSPECTIVE QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN COGNITIVE INTERVIEWS 153
APPENDIX 4.2: CALENDAR USED IN ‘QUESTION-LIST PLUS CALENDAR’ CONDITION 167
APPENDIX 5.1: LIFE COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN WEB INTERVIEWS 169

SAMENVATTING 195