



ISSP Methods Webinar on the combination of cross-country and cross-time comparisons using multi-level models

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Many international survey projects, such as ISSP, have the ambition to make comparisons over time as well as over space. Social scientists are typically interested to find out whether the preferences and behaviour of populations differ across territorial countries and evolve over time, but also whether and why the time trends vary cross-nationally. During its 40 years of existence, the ISSP collected a massive amount of data that can be used to answer such questions. Yet, despite the wealth of data, few studies actually fully exploit the opportunities of combining cross-time and cross-country comparisons.

This webinar discusses statistical tools for combining cross-time and cross-country comparisons. Thereby, we focus on a data structure that is common in large international survey projects: cross-national repeated cross-sectional data. I show how a specific version of the multilevel approach – the societal growth curve model – can be instrumental for mapping and explaining evolutions across countries, taking individual differences into account. The multilevel model is an extension of the regression model and partitions the variation of the dependent variable into components that can be attributed to various levels (e.g., the individual, time or country level). This feature not only allows separating the impact of individual and contextual characteristics, but also makes it possible to distinguish between cross-sectional and longitudinal effects of contextual variables.

The multilevel approach is illustrated using an empirical application studying the dynamics of perceived ethnic threat (Callens & Meuleman, 2024). This study analyses data from three rounds of the ISSP National Identity module (1993-2015). By applying societal growth curve models, we investigate the impact of nationalism as well as contextual indicators of group conflict.

Participation in this webinar presupposes basic knowledge of regression analysis. Prior experience with multilevel modelling is not required. Registration Link

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Callens, M. S., & Meuleman, B. (2024). Can nationalism and group conflict explain cultural and economic threat perceptions? Cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence from the ISSP (1995–2013). *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, 65(2), 205-228. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715223117762>

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