

Effect of Interviewers' Attitudes on Survey Nonresponse

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Theoretical Context

- Interviewing should be considered as any other job
- Literature in psychology of work stresses the importance of:
 - intrinsic satisfaction and motivation
 - individuals who draw their motivation from the **accomplishment of the task itself** tend to be more efficient
 - external factors such as **wage and fringe benefits** have, beyond a certain minimum, less impact on the level of motivation
 - job enrichment
 - workers who have **more autonomy and task variety** tend to be more motivated and, therefore, to get better performance
 - difficult to apply these principles to survey interviewing since there is a **need to get a standard product**
 - locus of control
 - attribution of the cause of a given situation to:
 - internal factors - ability to act upon a given situation
 - external factors - incapacity to act upon a given situation

Empirical Context

- Very few studies conducted in **private firms** as well as on **interviewers' attitudes**
- Highly data driven (no elaborated theoretical context guiding research)
- Knighton, Hubbard and Michaud (1999):
 - Higher response rate for those who believe that:
 - even the most reluctant respondents can be persuaded to participate
 - it is better to withdraw and try again later if a respondent appears likely to refuse
 - the voluntary nature of the survey should never be emphasized
- DeLeeuw (1999), Morton-William (1993), Van den Bergh & Houtkoop-Steenstra (1999): Positive impact of tailoring on survey cooperation

Research Hypotheses

- H₁ Attitudes and beliefs toward the job content are positively related to performance:
 - Interviewers who have **positive attitudes** toward persuasion tend to get a better performance
 - Interviewers who attribute performance to their own behavior first (i.e.: **internal locus of control**) also tend to get a better performance
- H₂ Related behavior:
 - Interviewers who report to **tailor the introduction** will get a better performance

Methodology

- Interviewers from 3 Canadian private firms conducting surveys during the Federal election campaign, Fall 2000
($N=16+13+8=37$)
- Items included in the questionnaire :
 - Attitudes toward interviewing task and survey research in general
 - Perceived determinants of survey participation
 - Reported behavior during interviews
- Performance measured by:
 - “Cooperation rate” **at first contact**
 - completes / (completes + refusals)
 - Note: Avoids the clustering of refusers by interviewers who work on refusal conversion

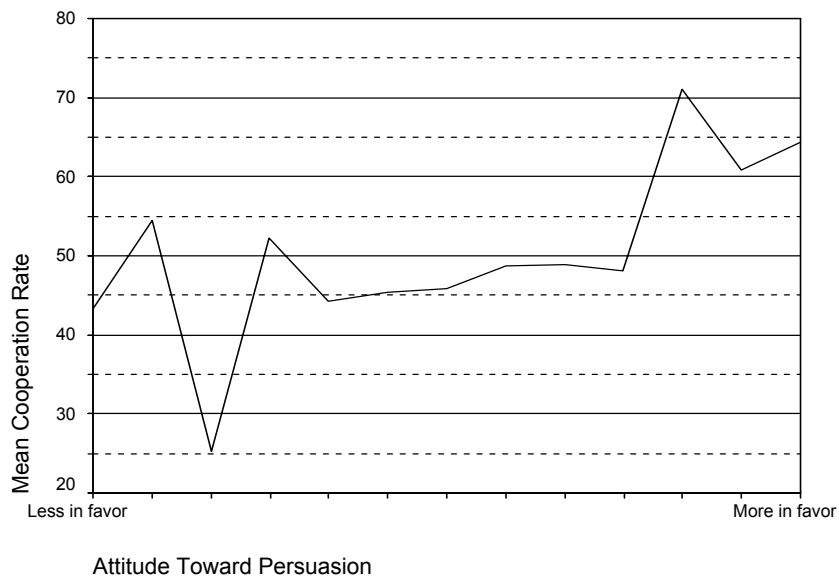
Results (1)

- **Beliefs and attitudes toward the content of the job have a positive impact on cooperation rate**

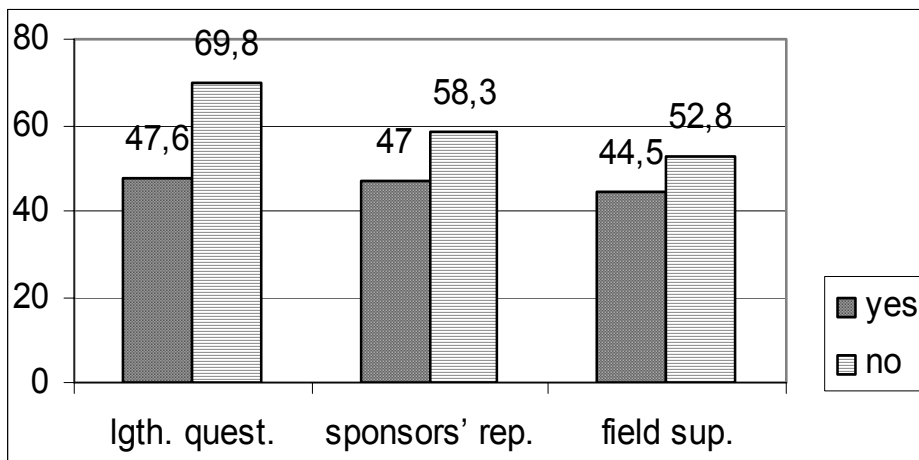
Interviewers who...

- ...have positive attitudes toward persuasion
- ...believe that:
 - it is better to seek an immediate cooperation than to arouse R's interest in the survey
 - the same interviewer should call back in case of a refusal
- ...believe that survey cooperation IS NOT influenced by external factors
 - ...tend to get a higher cooperation rate**

Mean Cooperation Rate According to Attitude Toward Persuasion



Mean Cooperation Rate According to Perceived Determinants of Survey Cooperation



Results (2)

- **Related behavior**

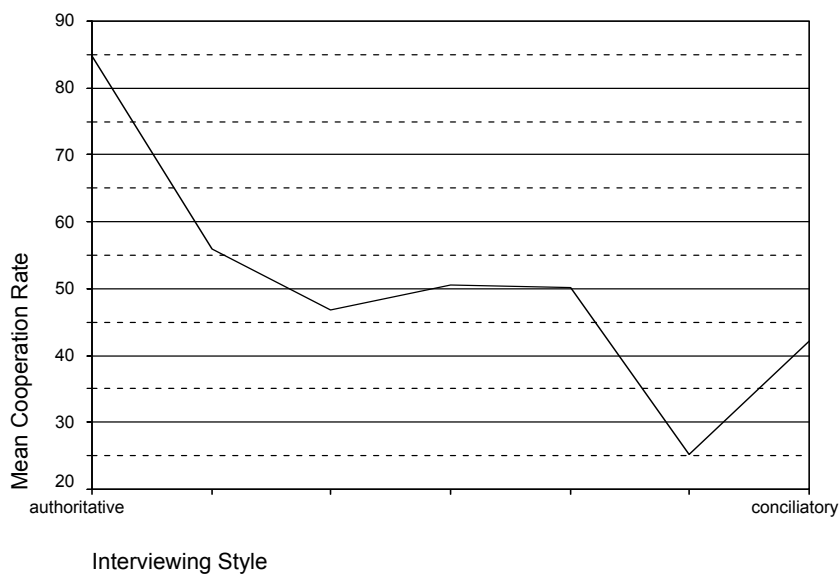
- Reported tailoring of the survey introduction according to the R's level of stress...
 - Self-declared authoritative style of interviewing...
- ...are related to a higher cooperation rate**

- **Characteristics of work experience...**

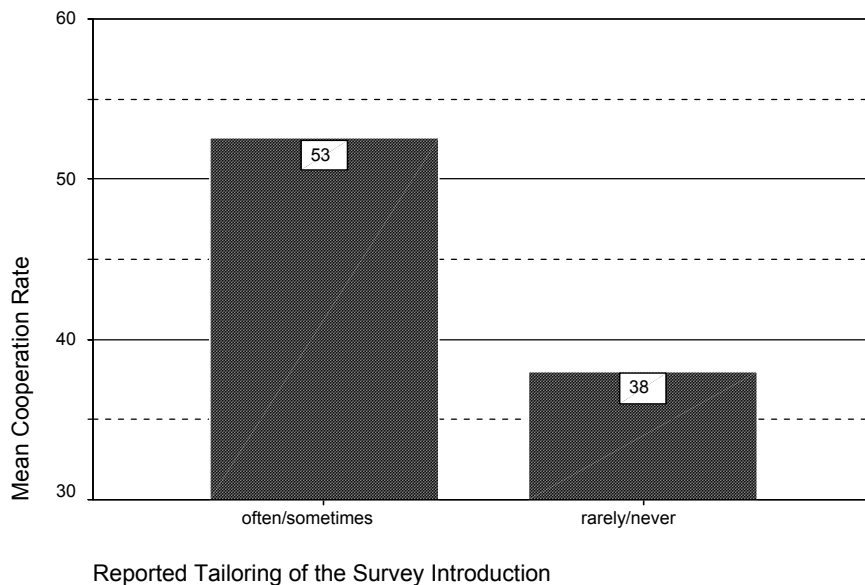
- seniority within the firm
- number of hours worked per week
- previous experience in call centers as customer service representatives

...are positively associated with the cooperation rate

Mean Cooperation Rate According to Reported Interviewing Style



Mean Cooperation Rate According to the Reported Tailoring of the Survey Introduction - R's Level of Stress



At the Firm Level

- No difference in interviewers' mean cooperation rate across firms
- However, there is a difference in interviewers' reported attitudes from firm to firm
- Other analyses would be necessary to understand how a variation in attitudes across firms is not followed by a variation in mean cooperation rate from firm to firm, **especially since there is some evidence that these attitudes have an impact on cooperation rate**

Conclusions & Limitations

- Results consistent with previous findings (Knighton, Hubbard & Michaud, 1999; Lehtonen, 1996; Morton-William, 1993; DeLeeuw, 1998)
- **Tailoring** is associated with a better cooperation rate
- **Motivation toward the content of the job** is positively related to cooperation rate
- **Internal locus of control** is associated with a better cooperation rate
- Analysis limited by the small population sample
- Some measures need to be addressed at the firm level
- More serious analyses would require:
 - to have more cases in order to be able to perform multivariate and multilevel analysis
 - to take refusal conversion into account