










**INTERVIEWER EFFECTS  
AND  
UNDESIRABLE  
INTERVIEWER BEHAVIOUR**

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# Content

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## Partly based on

-  **Robbins (2018) New Frontiers in Detecting Data Fabrication**
-  **AAPOR (2003) Interviewer Falsification in Survey Research: Current Best Methods for Prevention, Detection, and Repair of Its Effects**

## Extract from the Interviewer briefing ESS8 (Katrijn Denies and Geert Loosveldt)

### Interviewer effects have been found on:

- Participation rates and rates of successful contact attempts
  - ☑ Blom, de Leeuw, & Hox, 2011
- Answers on attitudinal and factual questions
  - ☑ Loosveldt & Beullens, 2014
- Item nonresponse
  - ☑ Philippens & Loosveldt, 2004; Japec, 2005
- Interview speed and length
  - ☑ Loosveldt & Beullens, 2013a; Loosveldt & Beullens, 2013b; Japec, 2005
- Response styles (e.g. straight-lining)
  - ☑ Beullens & Loosveldt, 2013
- Association between indicators of latent constructs
  - ☑ Beullens & Loosveldt, 2014

 [www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round8/methods/ESS8\\_interviewer\\_briefings\\_NC\\_manual.pdf](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/round8/methods/ESS8_interviewer_briefings_NC_manual.pdf)

# Types of interviewer effects

## Before interview

- Regional effects
- Selection effects
- **Deviation recruitment rules**

## During interview (measurement error)

- Selection effects
- Social desirability
- **Deviation standardized interviewing**
- **Curb-stoning**

## After interview

- Processing errors
- **Falsification**

# Regional effects

**Interviewers working in a single region/PSU may interview similar respondents because of regional intraclass-correlation due to**

## **Population differences**




- Rural/urban areas; poor/rich areas; language differences, cultural differences; socio-economic differences

## **Interview conditions**

- Unsafe neighbourhoods may make evening calls less attractive resulting in an underrepresentation of employed respondents for some interviewers
- Some interviewers may be less willing to make evening calls in these areas, resulting in an even larger underrepresentation of employed respondents for some interviewers






# Selection effects

Interviewers may be more successful in obtaining cooperation for different types of respondents

-  Some interviewers may be more effective with elderly people, women, the higher educated, minority ethnic groups than others
-  Some interviewers may be highly successful in recruiting reluctant, uninterested respondents resulting in a high rate of satisficing (more DKs for these interviewers)
-  **Some interviewers may select other persons than the designated respondents (more willing persons, those that are more often at home)**




# Social desirability

Respondents may adapt their answers to characteristics of the interviewer:

-  **More positive about emancipation to female interviewers**
-  **Less racist to black interviewers**
-  **Less alcohol use and more religious behaviour from Muslim respondents reported to Muslim interviewers**
-  **Lower weight reported to thin interviewers compared to slightly obese interviewers**
-  **Lower item nonresponse on income when interviewer has no problem in reporting own income**

# Undesirable interviewer behaviour

Interviewers may digress from standardized interviewing

-  Rephrase or skip questions that the interviewer perceives as too difficult or too sensitive
-  Leave out 'boring introductions'
-  Interviewer satisficing
  - Small reported network size when questions have to be answered about every member of the network
  - Speeding
  - Straightlining
  - No probing (if probing is allowed)



# Data fabrication (falsification) (AAPOR)

## By the interviewer:









- Fabricating all or part of an interview: the recording of data that are not provided by a designated survey respondent and reporting them as answers of that respondent (curbstoning)
- Deliberately misreporting disposition codes and falsifying process data
  - ☑ Recording of a refusal case as ineligible for the sample
  - ☑ Reporting a fictitious contact attempt
- Deliberately miscoding the answer to a question in order to avoid follow-up questions
- Deliberately interviewing a non-sampled person in order to reduce effort required to complete an interview
- Otherwise, intentionally misrepresenting the data collection process to the survey management.

# Data fabrication (falsification) (AAPOR)

## By the organisation

- Fieldwork supervisor who chooses not to report deviations from the sampling plan by interviewers
  - Data entry personnel that intentionally misrecord responses
  - Members of the firm itself who add fake observations to the data set (may result in interviewer effects when artificial interviewer ids are used)
- Fabricating questionnaires
  - Duplicating questionnaires

# AAPOR: organisational factors fostering fraud

-  Hiring and training practices that ignore falsification threats
-  Inadequate supervision
-  Lack of concern about interviewer motivation
-  Poor quality control
-  Inadequate compensation
  - Poor pay
-  Piece-rate compensation as the primary pay structures
  - Payment completed interviews only
-  Excessive workload
-  Off-site isolation of interviewers from the parent organization.

# Does falsification really happen?

## **AAPOR (2003) report on interview falsification that primarily highlights training, supervision and recontact methods states**

- where appropriate methods are used, interview falsification is rare, involving only a small percentage of interviews and a substantially smaller percentage of interviews

## **Michael Robbins (2018)**

## **Statistical Journal IAOS (2016)**

- Progress in understanding survey data fabrication
- [https://www.iospress.nl/ios\\_news/progress-in-understanding-survey-data-fabrication/](https://www.iospress.nl/ios_news/progress-in-understanding-survey-data-fabrication/)

## **Experiences some cross-national surveys**

## **partially duplicate records have been found in the ESS**

- Records removed

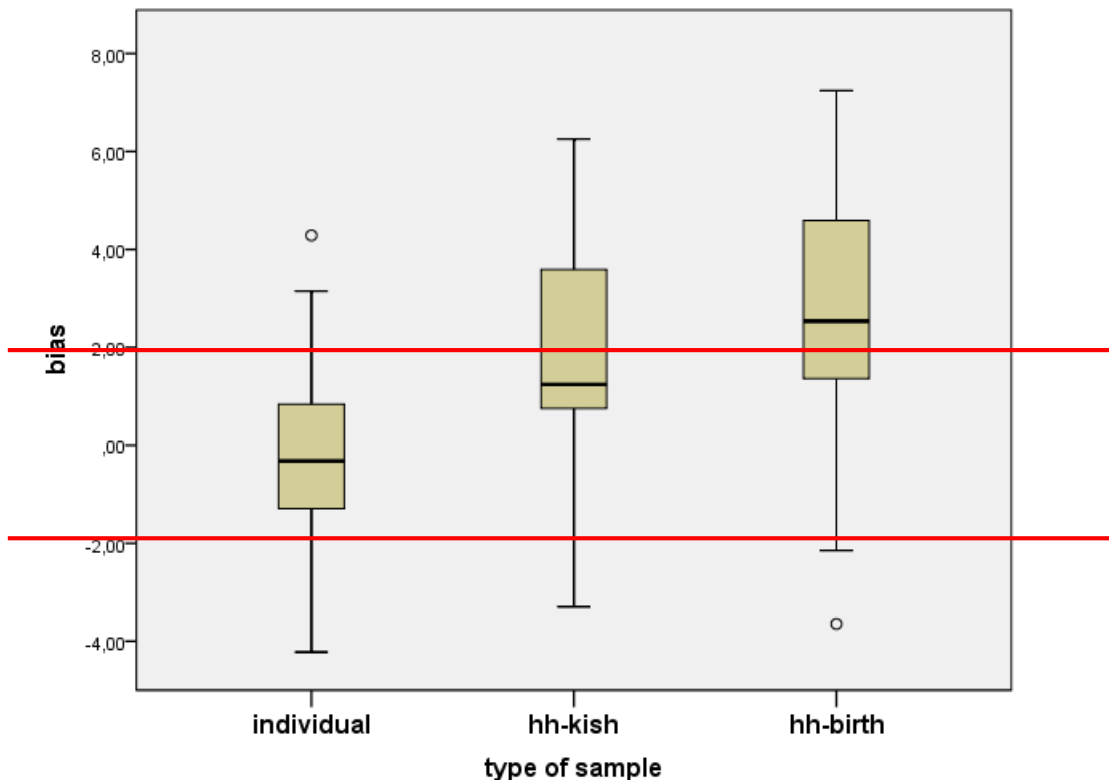
## **External criticism (Thiessen and Blasius, 2016, p. 626)**

- With respect to the European Social Survey we found that interviewers have a profound impact on the substantive solution.
- With respect to trust in institutions and several aspects of life we could show that in some countries the attitudes towards these items differ strongly by interviewer ...

## ESS as an example (3)

Over-/underrepresentation of females, by type of sample + within hh-selection method (ESS 1 – 6; 153 country-round-combinations)

$$\text{Bias} = \frac{(\% \text{female} - 50)}{\sqrt{(50 * 50) / n}}$$



Sample of **individuals**:  
 n = 70 cases from 15 different countries;  
 13 cases = 18.6%: bias > |1.96|

Sample of **hhs - Kish**:  
 n = 28 cases from 10 different countries;  
 11 cases = 39.3%: bias > |1.96|

Sample of **hhs - Birthday**:  
 n = 55 cases from 19 different countries;  
 38 cases = 69.1%: bias > |1.96|

# Detection of falsification

(partly implemented in ESS)

 **Call-backs**

 **Contact forms**

- Timing

 **Time stamps**

- Duration

 **(partial) Duplicates**

 **Satisficing (within interviewers)**

 **Survey answers (within interviewers)**

 **Correlations**

 **Answers to screening questions (short paths)**

**Finding suspicious cases is first  
step**

**Not all suspicious effects are caused  
by fraud**




**Proving fraud is very difficult**

# What can we do?

## Good questionnaire

-  **Understandable**
-  **Interesting**
-  **Not too long**
-  **Not too difficult**
-  **Not too sensitive**






## Fieldwork preparation

-  **Pay attention to risk of fraud in FWQ**
-  **Discuss with National Coordinators**
-  **Discuss with survey agency**









# What can we do?

## Before data collection: interviewers

-  **Interpenetrated design**
-  **Training and briefing**
-  **Inform interviewers about quality and control**
-  **Structure financial payments**
  - Per completed interview?
-  **Workload**

# What can we do?

## During data collection

-  **CAPI fieldwork**
-  **Taping interviews**
-  **GPS data**
-  **Monitoring**
-  **Interim files**
-  **Interviewer meetings**

# What can we do?

## After collection



### Back-checks

- By whom?
- How long after last call?



### Methods of detection

- Survey data
- Contact form data



### Removing records



### Transparency?

# Where are we now?

- 📄 **Many measures already in place in the ESS**
- 📄 **Undesirable interviewer behaviour has been found in the ESS**
- 📄 **Strong indications of unauthorised substitution have been found in the ESS**
- 📄 **Strong indications of falsification have been found in the ESS**
  - Records with part duplicates have been removed
- 📄 **We should try to minimise interviewer effects**
  - If only because they have an effect on the effective sample size

# We should try to prevent and detect falsification

## **Detected survey agency**

- Falsified interviews rejected
- Interviewer excluded
- New interviews conducted (?)

## **Detected NSD**

- Cases will be removed
- Design weights?

## **Detected data users**

- Trust in survey data (ESS) at risk









## **Not detected**

- Data quality at risk
- Wrong results

# Thanks for your attention

	No falsification	Falsification
No interviewer effects	Standardised interview by well-trained experienced interviewer	Records added by survey agency
Interviewer effects	Neighbourhood effects Selection effects Social desirability <i>Rephrasing questions that are too difficult</i>	Curb-stoning Unauthorised substitution Duplicating (part of) records

# References in briefing document Leuven

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