INTERVIEWER EFFECTS AND UNDESIRABLE INTERVIEWER BEHAVIOUR

Ineke Stoop (SCP)
Content

- Interviewer briefing in the ESS
- Types of interviewer effects
- AAPOR on falsification
- Organisational correlates
- Detection and prevention
- Does it really happen in the ESS?
- What to do in the ESS?

Partly based on

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

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

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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

- 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)

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**

- **Transparancy?**
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No falsification</th>
<th>Falsification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No interviewer effects</strong></td>
<td>Standardised interview by well-trained experienced interviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interviewer effects</strong></td>
<td>Neighbourhood effects Selection effects Social desirability <em>Rephrasing questions that are too difficult</em></td>
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*CSDI Workshop, Limerick, March 2018*
References in briefing document Leuven


