Recordings of prior refusals: Do they improve later conversion attempts?

Michael Chronister
Phone Room Supervisor
Danna Basson
Project Director

UW-Survey Center
UW-Madison
Outline

• Experiment introduction
• Introduction to Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS)
• WLS refusal protocols and training
• Outline of Experiment
• Hypothesis
• Mechanics
• Results
• Discussion
Experiment introduction

• In addition to reading call notes of the prior refusal will listening to an audio recording of the refusal improve our conversion rate?
• Implemented in CATI study
• Study utilizes coversheets (paper record of all info needed to call case) for call history notes
Introduction

• WLS (Wisconsin Longitudinal Study)
  • Started in 1957 with a one page survey of all Seniors in WI high schools N~30,000
  • Subsequent waves of data collection
    • 1975 Wave 1 Follow-up Phone Interview with random 1/3 of these original Graduates N~10,000
    • 1977 Phone interview with randomly selected Sibling of Graduates
    • 1992 Wave 2 Phone interview of Graduate Sample
    • 1994 Wave 2 Phone interview of Sibling Sample
Introduction

- WLS (Wisconsin Longitudinal Study)
  - Current Wave
    - 2004 Wave 3 Phone interview of Graduate Sample
    - 2004 Phone interview with Spouses of Graduate Sample
    - 2005 Wave 3 Phone interview of Sibling Sample (Still in Field)
    - 2005 Phone Interview with Spouses of Sibling Sample (Still in Field)
Introduction

• Previous Response Rates
  • ‘75 Graduate  89%
  • ‘77 Sibling   86%
  • ‘92 Graduate  87%
  • ‘94 Sibling   80%
  • ‘04 Graduate  88%
Sibling Sample

• Current Response Rate
  • 66%

• Current Conversion Rate (excluding Exp cases)
  • 14%

• Total Number of Cases in WLS Sibling Sample
  • 5612
Field Procedures of WLS Sibling

• All Respondents
  • Receive advance letter and magnet with WLS logo and toll-free number

• First refusals
  • Receive brochure and are contacted again to attempt interview

• Second refusals
  • Receive incentive and are contacted again to attempt interview (yet to be fielded)

• All interviewer-respondent interactions are digitally recorded, including refusals
Refusal Specialist Interviewers

- Refusals in the WLS are called by a select group of interviewers
- Experienced callers specifically trained on converting respondents in this study
- Additional training for this experiment
  - Describe the experiment
  - Introduce callers to audio playback system
  - Reinforce sensitivity and confidentiality
The Experiment

• Cases randomly assigned:
  • **Control Group** – a refusal brochure is mailed and a refusal specialist attempts interview after one week
  • **Experiment Group** – in addition, the interviewer is provided with digital audio recording of the first refusal

• Cases stratified by age, gender and IQ scores
  • Propensity to refuse or participate may be correlated with these respondent characteristics
Hypothesis

- Allowing interviewers to listen to the recording of the refusals will help improve their chances at converting a non-participant into a participant.
Important Variables

• Interviewer
  • Characteristics including rates and tenure
• Case Outcome
  • Complete, resolved other, second refusal
• Time spent in case
  • Time spent reading call history
  • Time spent listening to audio
Listening to Refusals

- Microsoft media player
  - Need visual display to pause, stop, and re-listen
  - Simple
- .wav files
  - Format of audio for other analysis
- Audio files were edited to be as short as possible
- Average length of edited audio file is ~ 2 mins
Time Spent Reading Call History

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE ENTER '1' BELOW WHEN YOU START READING COVERSHEET NOTES. THIS WILL START A TIMER. PLEASE TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED. UWSC WOULD JUST LIKE AN ACCURATE COUNT OF THE TIME SPENT READING PREVIOUS CALL NOTES.

<1> STARTED READING COVERSHEET NOTES
Time Spent Reading Call History

Caseid: 106053d
Item: stop_cs

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE ENTER '2' BELOW WHEN YOU FINISH READING COVERSHEET NOTES. THIS WILL STOP THE TIMER.

<2> STOPPED READING COVERSHEET NOTES
Accessing Audio Files

This case is part of the audio playback refusal conversion experiment. Enter '1' to playback the recording of the initial refusal. Enter '2' to bypass the recording playback.

<1> PLAY INITIAL REFUSAL RECORDING
<2> BYPASS PLAYBACK
Preliminary Results

- Listening to audio has no effect on success rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Audio</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversions, complete interview</td>
<td>7.4% (14)</td>
<td>9.2% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chi-Sq=0.35, p=0.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversions, partial interview</td>
<td>3.7% (6)</td>
<td>3.1% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chi-Sq=0.10, p=0.75)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Callback arranged</td>
<td>18.5% (30)</td>
<td>15.3% (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chi-Sq=0.58, p=0.44)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Refusal</td>
<td>48.2% (78)</td>
<td>42.9% (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chi-Sq=0.74, p=0.39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Results

- Listening to audio has no effect on time spent reading case history
- Time spent listening to audio is significantly shorter (28 seconds) than time spent reading call history (t-value=4.68, p<0.001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Audio</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time spent reading call history</td>
<td>45 secs</td>
<td>41 secs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(t-value=0.53, p=0.30)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent listening to audio</td>
<td>17 secs</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cases</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

• Results are preliminary; study still in field

• Number of cases
  • Cases subject to experiment is small, so minimal effects are hard to find
Discussion

- **Interviewer experience**
  - Only the most experienced call this study; effects may appear on a less-experienced interviewers

- **Listening to audio improves rates on all cases**
  - It is possible the experiment makes interviewers more conscientious, regardless of what kind of case they are calling

- **Respondent experience**
  - Rs have been part of the WLS for 50 years; their predispositions towards the study may be firm
Contact Information

Michael Chronister
Phone Room Supervisor
UW-Survey Center
608/263-3820
mchronis@ssc.wisc.edu

Danna Basson
Project Director
UW-Survey Center
608/265-9886
dbasson@wisc.edu