

Refusal Aversion Training for CATI Interviewers

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Overview

- Introduction to refusal aversion training for CATI interviewers at UW Survey Center
- Goals to improve refusal aversion training
- Implementation of new refusal training at UW Survey Center
- Perceived effectiveness of new training
- Lessons learned

Refusal Aversion Training at the UWSC: The Basics

- Initial Training
 - 8 hours of classroom training
 - 12 hours of practical training
 - 8 hours of one-on-one training with experienced interviewers
 - 4 hours of mock interviewing with a supervisor (and subsequent constructive feedback)

Refusal Aversion Training at the UWSC: The Basics

- On-going training
 - Interviewers receive regular feedback from supervisors about their refusal aversion techniques during quality control feedback sessions
 - Full monitorings (conducted every 30 days)
 - Partial monitorings (conducted frequently, at random)

Refusal Aversion Training at the UWSC: Specialized Training

- Offered in addition to general training to help hone refusal aversion skills
- Designed to help both experienced and newly hired interviewers
 - New interviewers learn refusal aversion tactics and benefit from the accumulated wisdom of more experienced interviewers
 - Experienced interviewers can refresh their knowledge of refusal aversion strategies and improve their mastery of their own strategies by teaching them to new interviewers

Refusal Aversion Training at the UWSC: Specialized Training

- The training is moderated, which gives the UWSC an opportunity to encourage the use of the best refusal avoidance strategies

Overview of previous UW Survey Center refusal training

- Developed to be a review of best practices in refusal aversion
- Included Q&A session for interviewers to ask how to deal with specific refusal situations
- Included training on delivering flexible and verbatim introductions
- Was delivered mainly as a lecture-based classroom style training

Goals for our new training

- Increase interviewer participation during training by incorporating more
 - Discussion
 - Problem solving
 - Role playing
- Present material in a format that appeals to various learning styles
- Add flexibility to the training to allow it to be easily converted from a general training to project-specific one

Content of UW Survey Center Refusal Aversion Training

- Review importance of refusal aversion and its impact on survey research
- Ask interviewers to share a difficult or memorable refusal and discuss with the group the strategies to deal with it
- Talk about the idea of active listening and tailoring responses in CATI interviewing
 - Being 'on their toes' for any concerns that come up in calls
 - Using call notes to mentally prepare before dialing

Content of Refusal Aversion Training: Categorizing Respondent Concerns

- Review themes of common respondent concerns
- Discuss in group how respondents communicate these concerns and strategies to address them

Example Slide:

Themes of Common Respondent Concerns

- Time and Burden
- Legitimacy
- Purpose
- Confidentiality
- Government Involvement
- Why Me?
- Burn Out
- Sensitive Questions

(Groves and McGonagle, 2001)

Example Slide:

Assigning Concerns to Common Themes

I'm too
old for
this...

- Time and Burden
(or Why Me?)

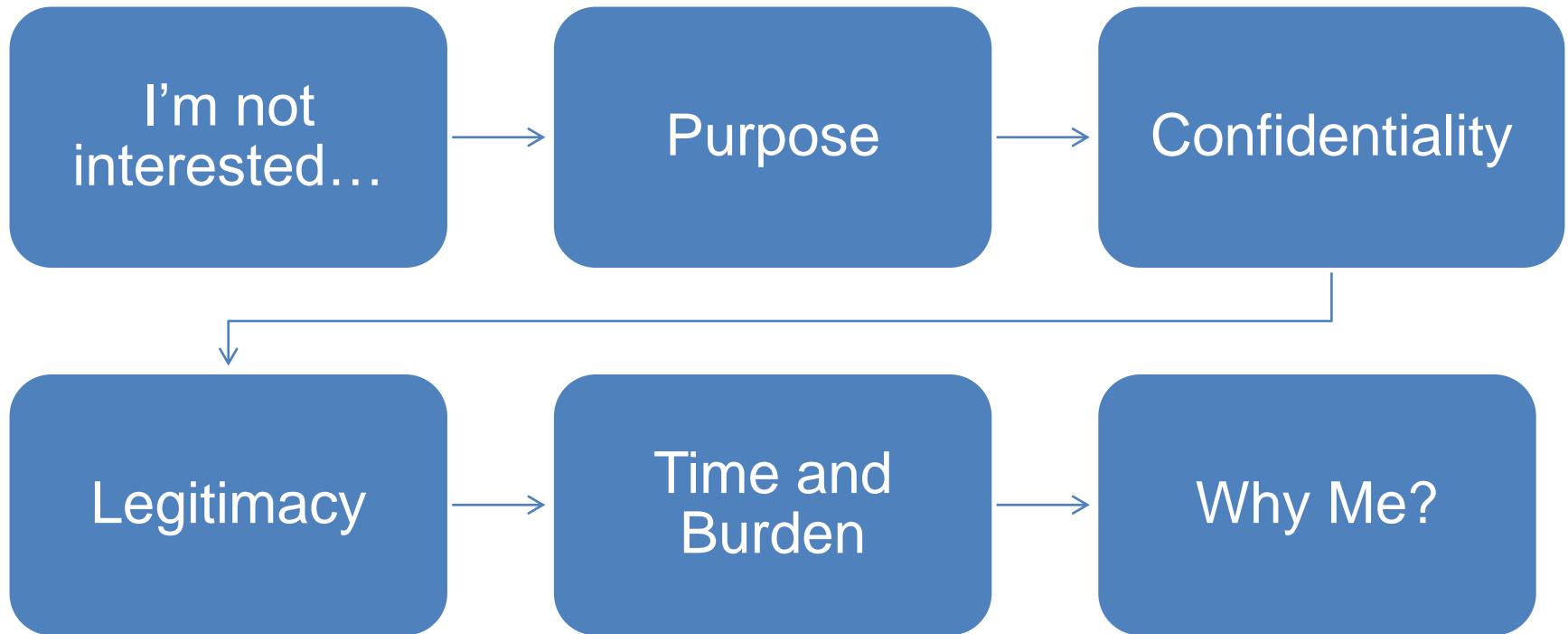
What's
this data
used for?

- Legitimacy (or
Confidentiality)

Content of Refusal Aversion Training cont'd

- The training also gives interviewers an opportunity to ask about situations that do not fit into categories
- A common question from interviewers is how to handle respondents who simply say “I’m not interested...”

Example Slide: Strategy for “I’m Not Interested...”



Content of Refusal Aversion Training: Sharing Strategies

- The training also gives interviewers a chance to talk about their own strategies for handling categories of respondent concerns
- This also helps newer interviewers become comfortable identifying the categories of respondent concerns

Example Slide: Strategies to Address Common Concerns

Time and Burden

- We can work around your schedule.
- If now is a bad time we can call back.
- By giving us a few minutes of your time you can help us...

Legitimacy

- We aren't selling or advertising.
- The UWSC never does any telemarketing or market research.
- I can give you contact information for the clients of the study.

Content of Refusal Aversion Training: Role Playing Exercise

- Interviewers work in pairs, one playing the part of a refusing respondent and the other taking the role of the interviewer
- After each “mock call” the interviewers discuss how they would categorize the concerns given, and if there are any better/additional strategies to use

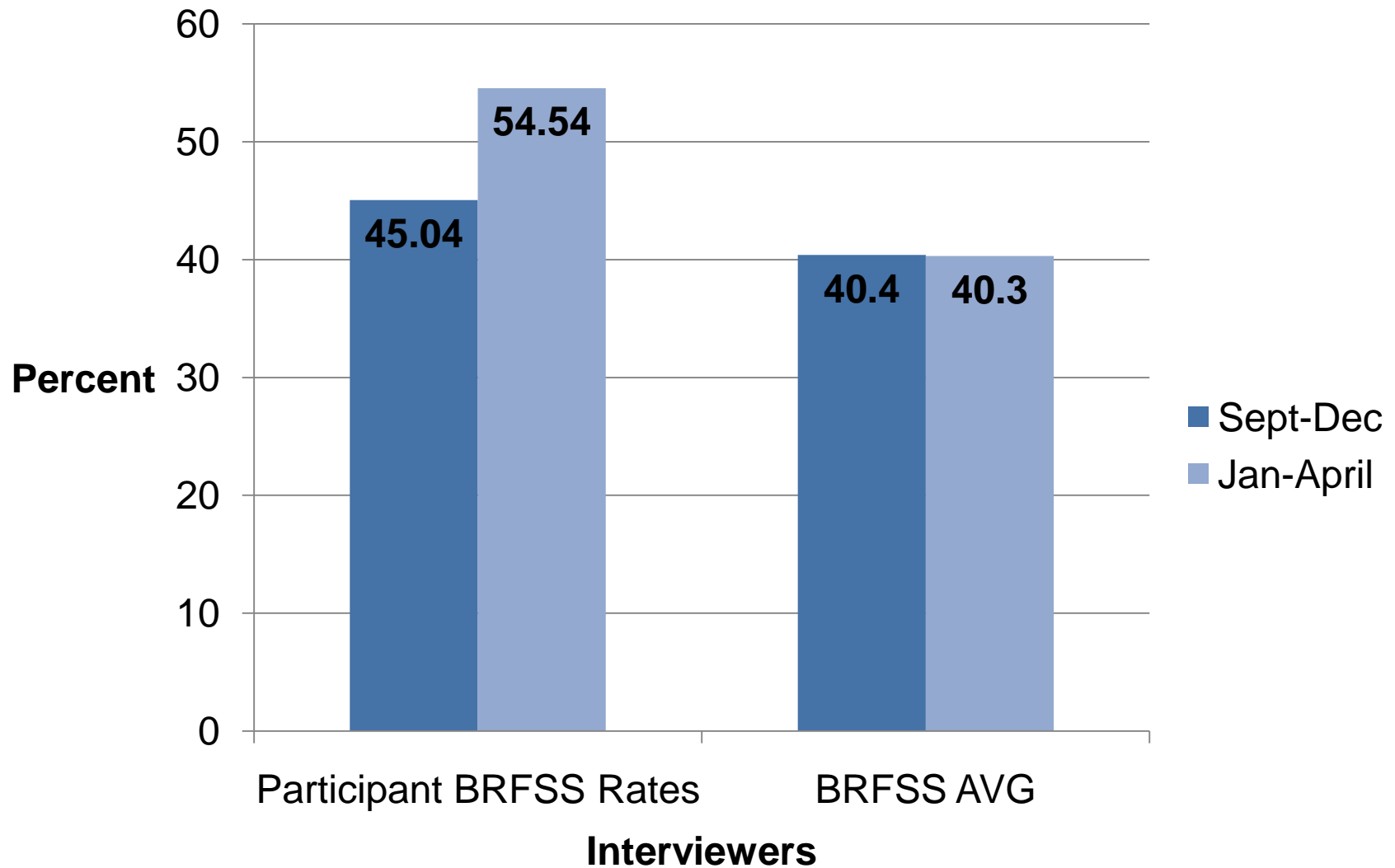
Content of Refusal Aversion Training: Individual Cooperation Rate Reports

- At the end of each training session, participants are given a copy of their cooperation rates and are issued a challenge to try to make improvements
- Two months after participation, interviewers receive an updated copy of their rates so that they can track their own performance
- These rates are calculated as:
$$\text{completes}/(\text{completes}+\text{refusals})=\text{cooperation rate}$$

Perceived effectiveness of refusal aversion training

- There are many variables at play that make it difficult to determine the exact effect the refusal aversion training had.
- However, by comparing cooperation rates in a monthly-drawn RDD sample we can get a rough idea if the training had any effect.
- Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System
 - Monthly drawn RDD study by CDC
 - National study implemented state to state to track health trends

Perceived effectiveness of December training group



Perceived effectiveness of December training group cont'd

- Interviewers increased their calling rates by an average of nine percentage points in the four months following the training.
- Three of the participants in the December training group showed a decrease in their average calling rates over the subsequent four months.
- Months in which an interviewer did not call BRFS for at least 240 minutes (one calling shift) were excluded as outliers.

Perceived effectiveness of December training group cont'd

- December participants showed a general improvement in their average calling rates after the training.
- This is likely due to a variety of factors and cannot be solely attributed to the training, however it seems plausible that the training had a positive effect on interviewers' refusal aversion skills.

Lessons learned from the refusal aversion training

- Facilitating group discussion and individual participation in medium to large group sizes
 - Set tables in a U-shape to allow interviewers to talk to each other and make eye contact
 - Established open sight lines to the main presentation

Lessons learned from the refusal aversion training cont'd

- Guiding the discussion to emphasize preferred refusal aversion strategies
 - Interviewers often develop creative refusal aversion strategies that may work in isolated instances but would not be advisable as common practice. It was important to handle these situations in a way that didn't leave the interviewer feeling slighted.

Lessons learned from the refusal aversion training cont'd

- Budgeting time for discussion is a challenge in a group where everyone wants to participate
 - A two hour session allowed time to cover the background material and still gave ample time for role playing and questions
- Getting interviewers to participate did not prove to be as much of a problem as I at first feared.

Lessons learned from the refusal aversion training cont'd

- The UW Survey Center's new refusal aversion training was developed during a period in which we conducted a great deal of hiring.
 - The influx of new interviewers increased the need for refusal avoidance training.
 - The surge in project work that caused the hiring, however, made production hours a scarce commodity. Achieving production on phone studies, training for new interviewers, and the refusal aversion training all competed for hours.

Lessons learned from the refusal aversion training cont'd

- We tried to recruit interviewers not on shift to preserve production hours and conducted the training with groups of 14 to 16 interviewers in an effort to make the training as efficient as possible.

Interviewer comments about refusal aversion training

- “I enjoyed the workshop and it encouraged me to consider how to cater to specific refusals better.”
- “It’s nice to talk about refusals with other interviewers and to hear what works for other people.”
- “Some of the advice from experienced callers was very helpful.”
- “It helped to hear everyone else’s refusal stories because it made me feel like it isn’t just me that has to deal with tough refusals.”

Questions?

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