

INTERVIEWER CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH PRODUCTIVITY, COST EFFICIENCY, AND RETENTION

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Outline

- Background
- Research questions
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions

Study of Community Family Life (SCFL)

Data for this study originate from the SCFL:

- Longitudinal CAPI survey of 4,000 households in 6 low-income communities
- Employed 87 field interviewers
- Collected data on marriage and relationship status, attitudes toward marriage and child bearing, household structure, and child well-being
- Round 2 conducted between October 2009 and April 2010
- Sponsored by DHHS, Administration for Children and Families

Background

- It is expensive to recruit, hire, and train field interviewers
- Return on investment is maximized through high interviewer productivity, cost efficiency, and retention
- In Round 1, we experienced higher than anticipated:
 - Interviewer attrition
 - Hours per completed interview
 - Pay rates
- Overarching question: What interviewer characteristics are desirable when hiring? What is fact and what is fiction?

Research Questions

1. Are *experienced* interviewers more productive and cost-efficient?
2. Are interviewers who *live in the study area* more productive and cost-efficient?
3. Are interviewers who are *paid higher rates* more productive and cost-efficient?
4. What interviewer characteristics are associated with *retention*?

Methods

Interviewer characteristics examined:

- Previous experience as a field interviewer
- Pay rate
- Lived in the study area or not
- Retained or not
- Age
- Education
- Gender

Methods (continued)

Outcomes

- Productivity
 - number of completed interviews
 - total number of hours worked
- Cost Efficiency
 - hours per completed interview
 - miles per completed interview
 - expenses per completed interview
- Retention (remained employed for the duration of the study)

Method of Analysis

- Difference in means
- Bivariate analysis of correlation

Are Experienced Interviewers More Productive and Cost-Efficient?

	Experienced	Not Experienced	Difference
Total interviews completed	43	34	9
Total hours worked	353	275	78
Hours per interview	8.1	8.2	0.1
Miles per interview	64	74	10
Expenses per interview	\$87	\$75	\$12
Retained	94%	73%	21%*

*=p<.05 using a two-sided t test.

Are Interviewers Who Live in the Study Area More Productive and Cost-Efficient?

	Live in Study Area	Live Outside Study Area	Difference
Total interviews completed	45	36	9*
Total hours worked	294	305	11
Hours per interview	6.4	8.5	2.1*
Miles per interview	31	79	48*
Expenses per interview	\$49	\$86	\$37*
Retained	69%	83%	14%

*=p<.05 using a two-sided t test.

Are Interviewers Who Are Paid Higher Rates More Productive and Cost-Efficient?

	Pay Rate
Total interviews completed	.37*
Total hours worked	.36*
Hours per interview	.00
Miles per interview	-.02
Expenses per interview	.20
Retained	\$13.66 (retained) vs. \$12.25 (not retained)*

Table entries are Pearson correlation coefficients or comparisons of means.

*=p<.05

What Interviewer Characteristics Are Associated With Retention?

Interviewer Characteristics	Retained	Not Retained	Difference
Age	51	44	7*
Female	77%	94%	17%
Graduate degree	30%	6%	24%*
Pay rate	\$13.66	\$12.25	\$1.41*
Previous experience as an RTI field interviewer	41%	12%	29%*
Live in the study area	16%	29%	13%

*=p<.05 using a two-sided t test.

Limitations

- Initial case assignments were not random
- Most challenging cases were transferred to best interviewers
- Small sample size; should be replicated on study with a larger number of interviewers
- Results observed in low-income communities; may not be generalizable

Summary of Findings

- Experienced interviewers are *not* more productive or cost-efficient, but they are more likely to be retained.
- Interviewers who live in the low-income area where they work *are* more productive and cost-efficient. There is some evidence (not statistically significant) that they are less likely to be retained.
- Interviewers who are paid higher rates are more productive and more likely to be retained. They do not necessarily work more cost efficiently, however.
- Retained interviewers are more likely to be older, better educated, better paid, and have previous interviewing experience.

Conclusions

- If training costs are high and interviewer attrition is a potential problem, then target recruitment at interviewers with characteristics associated with retention.
- Interviewers who command higher pay rates are probably worth it.
- Experienced interviewers offer a good return on investment because they are more likely stay with the study until the end.
- Interviewers who live where they work are more productive and have fewer expenses. In low-income communities, however, they may have higher attrition.

Contact Information

- Slides available at www.rti.org/aapor
- Contact smitchell@rti.org with questions