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Introduction

Understanding and Dealing With Organizational Survey Nonresponse

Steven G. Rogelberg
University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Jeffrey M. Stanton
Syracuse University

A survey is a potentially powerful assessment, monitoring, and evaluation tool available to organizational scientists. To be effective, however, individuals must complete the survey and in the inevitable case of nonresponse, we must understand if our results exhibit bias. In this article, the nonresponse bias impact assessment strategy (N-BIAS) is proposed. The N-BIAS approach is a series of techniques that when used in combination, provide evidence about a study's susceptibility to bias and its external validity. The N-BIAS techniques stem from a review of extant research and theory. To inform future revisions of the N-BIAS approach, a future research agenda for advancing the study of survey response and nonresponse is provided.

Keywords: *surveys; nonresponse; survey response; bias; response rates*

Field surveys can provide rich information to researchers interested in the human situation as it exists in vivo. In the context of organizational research, surveys can effectively and efficiently assess stakeholder (employees, management, students, clients) perceptions and attitudes for a variety of purposes. According to Kraut (1996), survey purposes include the pinpointing of organizational concerns, observing long-term trends, monitoring program impact, providing input for future decisions, adding a communication channel, performing organizational behavior research, assisting in organizational change and improvement, and providing symbolic communication. Because the value of a survey in addressing these purposes is dependent on individuals participating in the research effort, low response rates are a perennial concern among researchers and others who conduct, analyze, interpret, and act on survey results.

Low response rates can cause smaller data samples. Smaller data samples decrease statistical power, increase the size of confidence intervals around sample statistics, and may limit the types of statistical techniques that can effectively be applied to the collected data. A low response rate can also serve to undermine the perceived credibility of the collected data in the eyes of key stakeholders (Luong & Rogelberg, 1998). Most important, low response rates can undermine the *actual* generalizability of the collected data because of

Authors' Note: Both authors contributed equally to this article. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Steven Rogelberg, Organizational Science/Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001; e-mail: sgrogelb@email.uncc.edu.