The Lost Letter Technique

Topic: Problems with sampling
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Assigned reading

Outline of presentation

• Purpose of the experiment
• How this technique works
• The results
• Other examples
• Advantages
• Limitations
Purpose

• Assess Community orientations toward:
  1. Political groups
  2. Institutions or Organizations
  3. Social Issues
How it works

- 400 stamped, addressed but unmailed letters
- 100 for each organization
- Distributed to 10 districts in 4 types of placements
- People’s choice
- The number of returned letters counted
- Return rates were calculated
The results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Shops</th>
<th>Cars</th>
<th>Streets</th>
<th>Phone Booths</th>
<th>Per Cent Return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Research Associates</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal letter</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the Communist Party</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the Nazi Party</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples

- Racial integration in North Carolina
- Wealthiness and altruistic behaviour
- Responses of overseas Chinese toward the Peking and Taiwan Governments in Hong Kong
- The presidential election returns
Advantages

- Consents from participants are not needed
- An ordinary action is used as the basis of measurement
- Can be used in domains whereby the answers are not clearly known
- Responses can be gathered up conveniently in a post office box
- Randomised and double-blinded experiment
Limitations

• Different population size for each district
• Non-random placement areas
• Lack of control
• Confounding factors - wealthiness and altruistic behaviour
Conclusion

- Used to assess people’s orientation
- Determine existing prejudice
- Reliable technique
THANK YOU