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THE BEHAVIOUR OF MAIL SURVEY NON-RESPONDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Over the past fifty years, researchers have become increasingly concerned with declining response rates to mail surveys. Previous attempts to increase response rates have focused on encouraging people to respond to a survey without necessarily determining why some have not responded. As a result, relatively little is known about the process of mail survey non-response. It has been suggested that by examining mail survey non-respondent behaviour and the reasons for it, future research can focus on factors with the greatest potential to increase response rates.

To test this proposition, the non-respondents of three separate mail surveys were followed-up. Each non-respondent was asked at which point non-response occurred and the reasons for their non-response. Some non-respondents were also asked how they could be influenced to become respondents.

A key finding was the large number of unreturned 'gone, no address' (GNA) survey packages. In the three surveys studied, an average six percent of packages neither reached their intended recipient, nor were 'returned to sender'. This suggests that conventional mail survey response rate calculations may underestimate actual response rates. A response rate formula that incorporates an allowance for unreturned GNAs would acknowledge this. Ideally, however, researchers would obtain the most recent sampling frame possible. But when this is not practical, they should be prepared to increase initial sample sizes to allow for unreturned GNAs.

In the three surveys studied, the most common stage for non-respondents to withdraw from the survey response process was once they had opened the survey package, but not started the questionnaire. The next most common source of non-response was potential respondents who began the questionnaire, but did not finish or return it. Lack of time was the reason most often given for not responding, and future research needs to investigate ways of reducing the perceived burden of mail surveys. Whether this could be achieved by reducing the questionnaire length, or by manipulating the visual cues and graphic paralanguage of the survey package, requires further investigation.

Other factors that may increase the probability of non-respondents participating in a survey include the survey topic and sponsor. Unfortunately, these aspects of a survey cannot easily be manipulated. Non-respondents are most likely to respond to local/social or politically-based surveys and least likely to respond to topics of a commercial nature. This suggests commercial or personal topics should, if possible, be nested amongst local/social or politically-based questions in a survey. Non-respondents are least likely to respond to surveys conducted by private research companies. If these companies can find a co-sponsor, approved by a respected organisation relevant to the study, this could help to increase their mail survey response rates.

Several researchers have suggested that attitudes to surveys, in particular, negative attitudes, affect the response to individual surveys. However, this suggestion was not supported in the research reported here. Only a small proportion of non-respondents studied were seriously concerned with issues of privacy and confidentiality. Few non-respondents felt over-surveyed, despite receiving on average five survey requests every six months. The only negative attitudes detected were that surveys often took longer than claimed, and that some mail surveys involved deception. While such perceptions cannot be changed quickly, it is possible for researchers to include honest time estimates in covering letters and to do their best to discourage sugging (selling under the guise of research).

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The value of mail surveys as a research tool is evident from their extensive use by government analysts, scientists and commercial researchers. The ability to select representative samples of a population has made it relatively easily and cost effective to collect data by mail, and to generalise the findings from a population subset to the wider group.

To ensure a valid representation of the population as a whole, one of the most important requirements for a mail survey is a high response rate. However, concern has been increasing among researchers about declining response rates to mail surveys. If mail survey response rates are declining, this could seriously compromise the validity and consequent usefulness of any survey results.

1.2 Trends in Mail Survey Response Rates

One of the reasons why surveys are effective is because of the voluntary participation of the selected respondents. As Groves, Dillman, Eltinge and Little point out "(I)n a fundamental sense, surveys work because the samples drawn into them want them to work. Without the active participation of sample persons, few of the statistical properties of the sample surveys would survive" (2002, p. xiii). However, in some instances, survey researchers have overlooked the voluntary character of response. As Goyder (1982) points out, non-respondents have increasingly been seen as 'social deviants' who are unwilling to complete their obligations when requested.

Unfortunately, from the early sixties, the voluntary participation of these unwilling respondents appears to have increased in all survey types (Baruch, 1999; Krosnick, 1999; Steeh, 1981). In an analysis of 141 papers, which included 175 different studies using both self administered and mailed questionnaires, Baruch (1999) found survey response rates had steadily decreased from an average of 64.4 percent in 1975, to 55.7 percent in 1985, later dropping to 48.4 percent in 1995. This is not an uncommon finding. Many other researchers also report similar concerns and further evidence for declining mail response rates (Kulka, Holt, Carter & Dowd, 1991).

Connelly, Brown and Decker (2003) analysed factors that could affect response rates for 105 mail surveys conducted by the Human Dimensions Research Unit at Cornell University between 1971 and 2000. Connelly et al. (2003) devised a multiple regression model to explain the differences in response rate due to independent variables including: saliency of topic, timing of mailing, font size, number of complex questions included in the survey, and the year of the survey. With all other variables held constant, Connelly et al.'s (2003) model suggests that response rates to these surveys dropped on average 0.77 percent per year over the 30 year period.

Dillman and Carley-Baxter (2000) examined response rates to 102 sample surveys of visitors to US National Parks between 1988 and 1999. Dillman and Carley-Baxter (2000) also used a regression analysis, with independent variables including salience, population characteristics and year of study. They found that the year of the study did not have a significant effect on the US National Parks mail survey response rates and that responses had not declined over the previous 12 years. However, it should be noted that the questionnaires in this survey were delivered in person rather than by mail, which may decrease the generalisability of the findings to normal mail surveys.

There is, however, other evidence that indicates no decline in mail survey response rates. Smith (1995) reports that in all modes of surveys, response rates may not necessarily be declining. He also suggests that the pattern of non-response is much more complicated than generally thought. When Smith (1995) examined response rates of 57 government, academic and commercial time-series for a mixture of survey modes, he found more decreases in response rates than increases. However, most of these individual series show non-directional trends (that is, there has been either no change in

response rates or only changes that offset previous changes,) rather than regular gains or losses (Smith, 1995). Similarly, in a meta-analysis of 45 studies, Hox & de Leeuw (1994) found that mail survey response rates were relatively stable between 1947 and 1992, and suggest an even higher rate in the early 1990s than in the past.

To further complicate the picture, it is possible that in situations where response rates appear relatively stable, it is only because researchers have developed new methods to sustain them. Dillman (2000), for example, maintains that with careful attention to the design and implementation of the survey in terms of repeated contacts and incentives, it is possible to regularly achieve mail survey response rates of 70 percent.

Overall, despite conflicting evidence, it seems more likely that mail survey response rates have declined over the last fifty years rather than remaining constant, or increasing. Certainly the factors that might be expected to cause mail survey response rates to decline - changing lifestyles, greater alienation of source groups in society, concerns about privacy, the number of surveys conducted - have increased over this period.

1.3 The Problem of Survey Non-Response

Whether mail survey response rates are steadily declining or not, any level of non-response can be a serious issue for survey researchers. Non-response occurs when a complete measurement is not taken from all members of a specified sample. Not only does non-response increase the cost of data collection and reduce the quantity of response, but its effects on the error properties of the survey statistics diminish the quality of the data.

As Figure 1 shows, non-response error comprises two components; the non-response rate and the difference between survey respondents and non-respondents on the variable of interest. If all other components are kept constant, the greater the number of non-respondents, the higher the non-response error. Though samples from surveys with low

response rates *can* reflect the characteristics of the target population, this is a possibility, not an empirical observation. However, as Figure 1 also shows, non-response bias is potentially avoidable, even with a low response rate; there is no possibility of non-response error if respondents and non-respondents respond the same way for a particular variable. Nevertheless, as Groves and Couper (1998) demonstrate, even with comparatively small differences between respondents and non-respondents on a particular variable, high non-response rates can increase the likelihood of biased survey estimates. As relatively little is known about non-respondents, survey researchers remain concerned with maximising the response rate for surveys.

Figure 1 Survey Non-Response Equation

$$\text{Non-response Error} = \text{Non-response Rate} \times (\text{Respondent Value} - \text{Non-respondent Value})$$

$$\left(\frac{nr}{n} \right) (Y_r - Y_{nr})$$

Where: Y_r = statistic estimated from the r respondent cases

Y_{nr} = statistic estimated from the nr non-respondents cases

n = total sample size

From the outset, it is important to differentiate the two types of mail survey non-respondents. Non-respondents include both 'active refusers' - those who refuse to respond by returning an uncompleted questionnaire; and 'passive' refusers - those who simply do not return the questionnaire (Gendall, 2003). While there may be little that can be done to encourage active refusers to participate in a mail survey, passive refusers may be able to be influenced into responding.

There are two ways to combat non-response. The first is to make corrections and carry out adjustment weighting to correct for non-response bias. Weighting adjustments are based on auxiliary information that has not only been measured in the survey, but is also available for the population from which the sample was drawn. A number of weighting methods exist including: post-stratification, the general regression estimator, iterative proportional fitting and calibration estimation (Bethlehem, 2002 cited in Groves et al., 2002).

An alternative to weighting for non-response is substitution. Here non-respondents are replaced with substitute, or 'matched' members of the population. This substitution aims to understand the impact of the non-response bias and to improve the research design to reduce the number of non-respondents (Groves et al., 2002; Yu & Cooper, 1983). However, both of these adjustment techniques are second-best solutions compared to achieving a good response rate in the first place.

The second way of minimising non-response is by the careful planning and implementation of research from the beginning (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1996). Helgeson, Voss and Terpening (2002) divide response influencing factors into two distinct groups: respondent factors and design factors. Respondent factors are those factors that are supposedly based in a potential participant's underlying attitudes. These are often examined or manipulated by appealing to the underlying psychological theories of survey response. In contrast, design factors are those mail survey participation inducers that are often, but not necessarily, derived from these theories.

A substantial amount of research has been carried out to determine ways of increasing response rates, in particular, on researcher-manipulable factors such as repetitive contacts, pre-notification, and incentives. Research has also recently begun to examine the impact of non-researcher controllable factors such as the survey sponsor (administrator) and topic. However, while research examining the influence of survey design factors on response rates is necessary, there are only a limited number of design variables that can be manipulated. Fresh insights must be gained from alternative sources into ways in which these design factors can be manipulated, before further empirical investigation takes place.

Despite suggestions that research on the process leading to non-response would help design more effective surveys (Helgeson, 1994), few studies specifically examine non-respondent behaviour (the exceptions are those conducted by Brennan & Hoek, 1992; and Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1996). Only one study was found that examined the relative levels of non-response at different stages of a mail survey (Kulka et al., 1991). Unfortunately, little explanation was given as to why the non-respondents in these studies did not move on to the next step, or how these non-responders could have been influenced to become responders.

Researchers interested in mail survey non-response appear to be using a theoretical scatter-gun approach to investigate possible response stimuli, without preliminary research into the stage at which respondents 'drop out' and the reasons for it. Research on the process leading to non-response would be useful in designing future mail surveys by identifying areas within the survey process where additional response stimulants may be required. These stimulants would be designed to encourage completion of the survey response process, minimising the potential for coverage error, and leading to more accurate and useful information.

In light of the limited amount of research examining mail survey non-respondent behaviour, this research project was undertaken to determine the relative levels of non-response at different stages of a mail survey, to examine why non-response occurs at each step, and how non-respondents react to a survey, both as a whole and to particular aspects, and to investigate factors that could increase the probability of non-respondents participating in a survey.

This thesis begins with a review of the relevant literature addressing previous attempts at explaining mail survey non-response and measures to minimise it. This leads to the objectives of this study, described above. Sections four and five describe the methodology and results of the research undertaken to address the study objectives. Finally, section six presents an in-depth discussion of the issues addressed in the study and outlines the conclusions reached.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Researchers appear to be tackling the problem of survey non-response in a number of different ways. Some researchers have examined specific factors aimed at reducing non-response, others have examined the underlying psychological theories of survey response or have taken a 'behaviour modification' perspective, and others have developed models and conceptualisations of the survey response process. This section examines the work conducted in these areas and their application to survey non-respondent behaviour.

2.2 Determinants of Mail Survey Response

A number of design factors may be employed to help reduce non-response in mail surveys. These are usually derived to some extent from the underlying psychological theories of mail survey participation described later in section 2.3. These techniques include: pre-notification, survey sponsorship, personalisation, survey topic, confidentiality, questionnaire format, incentives, reminders, including a pre-paid return envelope, and questionnaire timing.

A number of comprehensive literature reviews examining the effects of these different survey inducement factors exist. These literature reviews are a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies, general reviews and reviews of specific techniques. Table 1 shows 28 literature reviews published in the last 50 years, in which hundreds of original studies have been examined.

Table 1 Classification of Literature Reviews on Mail Survey Participation Inducers

Scope of review	Type of review	
	Qualitative	Quantitative
General	Scott (1961) Blumberg, Fuller & Hare (1974) Kanuk & Berenson (1975) Linsky (1975) Duncan (1979) Janssens & Pessemier (1980) Jobber (1986a) Jobber (1986b) Harvey (1987) Conant, Smart & Walker (1990) Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch (1996) Jobber & O'Reilly (1998) Kanso (2000)	Heberlein & Baumgartner (1978) Eichner & Habermehl (1981) Goyder (1982) Haglund (1989) Yu & Cooper (1983) Jobber & Saunders (1986) Fox, Crask & Kim. (1988) Bruvold & Comer (1988)
Specific	Jobber (1985) Worthen & Valcare (1985)	Armstrong (1975) Armstrong & Lusk (1987) Chiu & Brennan (1990) Schlegelmilch & Diamantopoulos (1991) Church (1993)

Source: Gendall (2003), based on Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (1996)

Unfortunately, as pointed out by Schlegelmilch and Diamantopoulos (1991), there are problems with a number of these reviews, especially (but not necessarily) the earlier reviews. For example, some studies showing no change in response rates are not included in a review, or if they are, they are subsequently ignored. In other reviews, information from the original studies has been incorrectly reported, or the statistical significance of results has been given unwarranted importance (Gendall 2003; Schlegelmilch & Diamantopoulos, 1991).

Gendall (2003) argued that, when evaluating the literature reviews on response rate determinants, it is valid to limit consideration of reviews only to those published in the last 20 years. As he points out, these reviews usually include the studies in earlier reviews, but are less likely to be susceptible to those problems identified by Schlegelmilch and Diamantopoulos. They also generally include quantitative reviews, which have an advantage over qualitative reviews as they provide a numerical estimate of the average size of an effect across studies involved (Gendall, 2003). Table 2 summarises the literature reviews on mail survey response rates conducted over the last twenty years.

Table 2 Summary of Reviews of Determinants of Mail Survey Response Rates

	Edwards et al. 2002 ¹	Kanso 2000	Jobber & O'Reilly 1998 ²	Roth & BeVier 1998 ²	Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch 1996	Church 1993 ³	Schlegelmilch & Diamantopoulos 1991 ³	Yammarino et al. 1991	Chiu & Brennan 1990 ³	Conant et al. 1990
Number of studies	251	55	nr	nr	23	38	27	115	15	147
Number of effects	292	277	nr	nr	nr	74	73	184	21	165
Publication years	1940-01	1962-88	1964-96	1990-94	1961-91	1931-88	1961-89	1940-88	1960-88	1980-88
Type of study	M	Q	Q	M	Q	M	M	M	M	Q
<i>Survey Features:</i>										
Monetary incentives	X	X	X		X	X		X		X
Non-monetary incentives	X				X	X				
Follow-ups/reminders	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X
Sponsorship	X	X	X		X					
Pre-notification	X	X	X ⁴	X	X		X ⁶	X	X	
Personalisation	X									
Covering letter appeals			X ⁵					X		
Outgoing postage			X							
Return postage	X	X	X		X			X		
Questionnaire length	X							X		
Questionnaire colour										
Recorded delivery	X									
Identification numbers				X						
Return envelope								X		
Foot-in-the-door methods										
Topic salience	X			X						

Note: 1. Odds ratio increased by 1.15 or more.
 2. Concerned with industrial samples.
 3. Review confined to specific survey features.
 4. Telephone pre-notification effective.

5. Anonymity effective for sensitive information.
 6. Authors concluded that pre-notification does not always work and may be counterproductive for industrial populations (p. 250).
 M = Meta-analytical Q = Qualitative nr = Not reported

Source: Gendall (2003)

Table 2 (cont.) Summary of Reviews of Determinants of Mail Survey Response Rates

	Haglund 1989	Fox et al. 1988	Armstrong & Lusk 1987 ¹	Harvey 1987	Jobber 1986a ²	Jobber 1986b ²	Worthen & Valcare 1985 ¹	Jobber 1985 ¹	Yu & Cooper 1983
Number of studies	315	82	34	nr	39	31	26	nr	93
Number of effects	nr	214	34	nr	57	58	26	nr	497
Publication years	1971-87	1961-86	1951-86	1934-84	1951-85	1951-84	1941-83	1939-82	1965-81
Type of study	M	M	M	Q	Q	Q	Q ⁶	Q	M
<i>Survey Features:</i>									
Monetary incentives	X	X		X	X	X			X
Non-monetary incentives					X	X			X
Follow-ups/reminders		X		X	X	X			X
Sponsorship		X							
Pre-notification		X		X	X ⁵				X
Personalisation					X				X
Covering letter appeals	X ³				X		X		
Outgoing postage									
Return postage			X		X	X			
Questionnaire length	X ⁴								
Questionnaire colour		X							
Questionnaire appearance								X	
Recorded delivery									
Identification numbers								X	
Return envelope				X					
Foot-in-the-door methods									X
Topic salience									

- Note: 1. Review confined to specific survey features.
2. Concerned with industrial samples.
3. 'Quality' of covering letter.
4. Positive relationship between length and response rate.

5. Telephone pre-notification effective.
6. Sign test on the direction of effects used.
M = Meta-analytical Q = Qualitative nr = Not reported

Source: Gendall (2003)

Helgeson et al. (2002) maintain that other than incentives (especially enclosed monetary incentives) and reminders or repeated contacts, there are no survey design factors that consistently provide a substantial effect on response rate. However, the literature reviews summarised in Table 2 reveal an additional three factors that significantly and consistently affect mail survey response rates. These are: pre-notification (or prior contact), university or official sponsorship, and topic salience (or respondents' interest in the topic). While other inducers may be effective in some situations, they do not consistently produce significantly higher response rates.

However, as Gendall (2003) points out, the latter two factors are generally beyond the researchers' control in any given survey. This leaves only three controllable factors that can be consistently depended upon to increase mail survey response rates: incentives, pre-notification and reminders. Unfortunately, with the use of these techniques, one of the key benefits of mail surveys, (that is, their relatively low cost,) is diminished, as incentives, pre-notifications and reminders generally increase survey costs. However, this cost obviously needs to be balanced against the cost of obtaining potentially biased estimates and the implications of the bias on the survey research.

It should be noted that, although the studies summarised in Table 2 are limited to the last 20 years, they do include studies extending back over the last 60 years. As Gendall (2003) suggests, this assumes the unlikely position that nothing changes and that an effect identified in 1960 still applies now. For example, as Kanso found: "Compared to studies conducted 25 years ago, the analysis suggests that the effect of outgoing postage seems to be decreasing while the effect of university sponsorship appears to be increasing" (2000, p. 12).

While further research relating to the influence of survey design factors on response rates is important, regrettably, it is relatively limited. There are only a finite number of design variables that can be manipulated and research into maintaining increasing response rates will need to move to different areas such as gaining information from non-respondents and industry experts regarding aspects that are both likely and unlikely to improve response (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1996).

These response determinants can be placed in two dominant paradigms; psychological (predominantly cognitive) theory and behaviour modification theory. Section 2.3 outlines the underlying psychological theories of survey response, and section 2.4 outlines the contrasting theories of behaviour modification.

2.3 Underlying Psychological Theories of Survey Response

There are a number of approaches to mail survey design that relate the underlying reasons for mail survey response to psychological theories: cognitive dissonance (Furse & Stewart, 1984), social exchange (Dillman, 2000), commitment/involvement (Evangelista, Albaum & Poon, 1999) self-perception (Bem, 1972; Allen, Schewe, & Wijk 1980) and leverage salience theory (Groves, Singer & Corning, 2000).

Before discussing these theories, it is useful to differentiate between theoretical explanations of survey participation/non-participation and techniques for inducing mail survey participation. Despite appearing similar, theory explains to what extent different techniques may work (Albaum, Evangelista & Medina, 1998). As Albaum et al. point out, concentrating solely on inducement techniques without having an understanding of the relevant theory can create a risk of respondents supplying bad data:

“It has been increasingly recognised that some inducements may have a negative effect on data quality. Such inducements may cause people to respond who otherwise, on the basis of some other motivating force(s), would not respond. For example, in a mail survey a person who would not respond because of lack of interest in, or knowledge of, the topic may end up returning the questionnaire after repeated follow-ups simply to stop receiving them. In this situation, the quality of response is at best highly suspect” (1998, p. 116).

However, this should be evident from comparisons of quality between early and late responses.

Cognitive dissonance

According to Festinger (1957), cognitive dissonance is a state that arises when people's behaviours, and the attitudes developed from these, do not fit with their pre-existing beliefs. As a result, people may attempt to reconcile their prior beliefs with their more recent behaviours. As Festinger states, "(T)he existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable, will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance... cognitive dissonance can be seen as an antecedent condition which leads to activity orientated toward dissonance reduction just as hunger leads to activity orientated toward hunger reduction" (1957, p. 3).

In mail surveys, it is assumed this process is prompted by a survey recipient receiving a questionnaire and covering letter asking for participation. Albaum et al. (1998) suggest that not responding may conflict with a person's self-perception of being obliging or at least being willing to answer a reasonable request. The inconsistency created by not responding will create a state of dissonance that recipients reduce by responding.

Alternatively, respondents may experience a degree of dissonance if they receive a small incentive without reciprocal action on their part. Dissonance is provoked by the feeling of unfairness (keeping something for nothing), which challenges personal values of fairness. To remove this dissonance, people may return the survey (Green, 1996). However, large incentives may have the opposite effect. These rewards can be viewed as a compensation for taking part in a survey and if so, are unlikely to induce feelings of cognitive dissonance in recipients.

However, this theory assumes that respondents actually experience dissonance, and thus that reducing dissonance is an important factor in the 'respond/not respond' decision of potential survey respondents (Albaum et al., 1998). However, few empirical studies have actually investigated levels of dissonance. Furse, Stewart and Rados (1981) infer that dissonance was created as a result of an incentive in a mail survey. However, they do not describe how this dissonance was established. As with Festinger's explanation earlier in the section, this explanation of response has been deduced from these behaviours rather than from empirical evidence.

Social exchange theory

Dillman (2000) considers using mail surveys to gain honest information from possible respondents as a special case of social exchange. Social exchange theory contends that the behaviour of an individual, (such as responding to a mail survey) is motivated by the benefit (or rewards) that behaviour is expected to, and usually does, bring from others. The likelihood of this behaviour occurring is a function of individuals' perceived costs of the behaviour, the benefits they expect to receive at a later date, and their belief that the rewards of the behaviour will outweigh the costs (Dillman, 2000; Albaum et al., 1998).

In terms of a mail survey, the cost of participating may include the loss of time and energy usually allocated to other activities, loss of privacy or control over private information, and the potential for embarrassment (Gendall, 2003). The benefits may include tangible rewards, the opportunity to supply helpful information, the satisfaction of helping the researcher, the enjoyment of answering an interesting survey, and the reinforcement of personal values (Gendall, 2003; Dillman, 2000).

This cost/benefit tradeoff has been described as a bookkeeping system of debits and credits based in a person's self perception and commitment/involvement with the object. By not acting in accordance with their value assessment, it is theorised that a person is likely to generate the same discordant feelings that characterise cognitive dissonance (Groves & Cooper, 1998).

This suggests that researchers should design surveys in such a way that participants' benefits and trust are maximised and participants' costs are minimised, thus increasing the likelihood of the return of a completed questionnaire. For example, providing a small financial incentive may not necessarily be effective for its monetary value or the feeling of dissonance created, but for the symbol of trust and reciprocation it suggests. However, it could be argued that it is not so much the reason for the return that is important, but rather the actual behaviour of a returned completed questionnaire.

In addition, the theory behind social exchange theory is tautological, as evidence of social exchange is based on respondents' behaviour and cannot be assessed independently of the behaviour it is supposed to predict.

Self-perception theory

Self-perception theory proposes that people seek to understand knowledge and attitudes about themselves by observing their own behaviour and the causes (or circumstances) surrounding it (Bern, 1972). Just as people infer attitudes of others by observing their behaviour, we suppose attitudes about ourselves by observing our own behaviour. This self-analysis occurs to such an extent that an individual's behaviour is credited to internal sources and is not seen as being due to situational pressures. As a result, a positive attitude towards a specific behaviour is developed and affects subsequent behaviour (Evangelista et al., 1999).

Allen et al. (1980) extended the concept of self-perception theory to cover the area of mail survey response. A technique based on this theory aims to stimulate participation in a survey by first gaining compliance to a small request. This may include answering a few questions in a telephone pre-call or suggesting some areas to think about in a pre-notification letter. By responding to this request, a recipient is likely to alter their self-perception (I am a responder) and sway subsequent future behaviour (return the completed mail survey). However, this does not explain why some people would respond to some mail surveys and not others. Presumably if this self-perception was altered for one survey, people would continue to perceive themselves as 'responders'.

Commitment/Involvement

Commitment/Involvement theory is closely related to both cognitive dissonance and self-perception theory. Sociologists use the concept of commitment to explain consistent behaviour, and have defined it as "a variable which encompasses the ranges of allegiance an individual may be said to have for the social system of which he (*sic*) is a member" (Hornback, 1971, p 65).

A key component of commitment occurs when an individual's decision concerning a specific behaviour has consequences for other, not necessarily related, activities. In addition, a person is in this position because of their own previous behaviour (Evangelista et al., 1999). Commitment/Involvement theory contends that people who feel particularly convinced about certain behaviour are less likely to cease that behaviour than those people that are not (Helgeson et al., 2002).

However, again, this concept or variable of commitment is tautological and not accessible to empirical measurement because the lack of independence between the measurement (the behaviour) and the outcome (also the behaviour) makes it impossible for the theory to explain or develop commitment.

Commitment/involvement theory can be expanded to explain survey respondent behaviour. There are various aspects in the survey design that potential participants may become involved with, including the sponsor, the researcher, the research process, or the survey topic.

Leverage-salience theory

Leverage-salience theory is based on earlier work by Groves and Couper (1998), who developed a method of face-to-face interviewing in which expert interviewers respond to individual concerns of participants. From these individual aspects, interviewers customise their requests to address those concerns or queries, a technique called 'tailoring'. By tailoring, interviewers attempt to modify their request for an interview so that it will be more positively received by the participant. For example, if an interviewer senses a participant is particularly concerned about the confidentiality of the information provided, the interviewer may spend extra time explaining the processes in place to protect confidentiality.

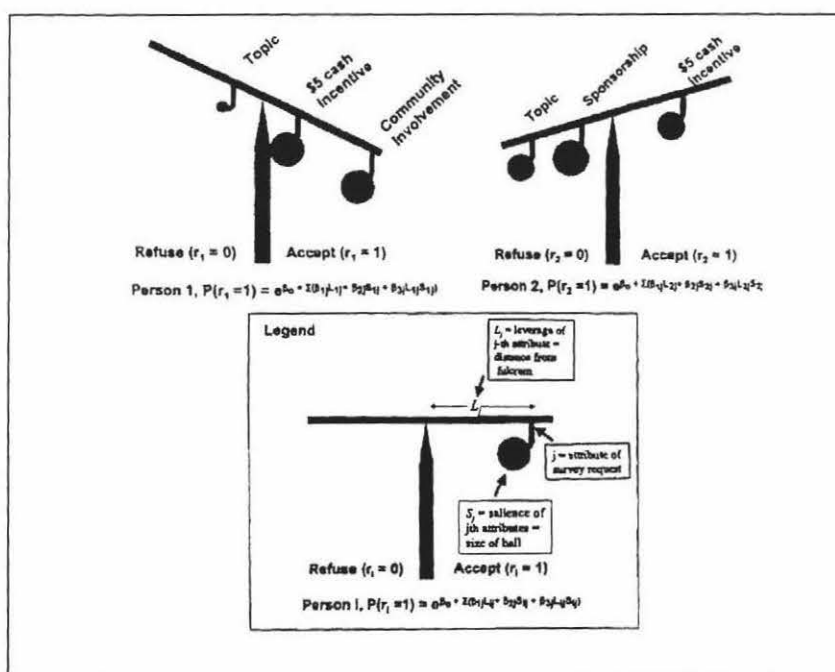
Groves et al.'s leverage-salience theory (2000) extended the original Groves/Couper framework to suggest how differences among individual participants may negate the positive effects of various mail survey design factors. Initially, Groves and Couper (1998) discussed how individual participants vary according to the aspects of an

interview relevant to their decision to participate. The weight an interviewer may give to a particular design factor will depend on the perceived background and personal experience of the interviewee. For example, an interview on sport may be more enticing to a person who plays sport as a hobby rather than someone who prefers to read or sew. In terms of a mail survey, the combinations of different mail survey design factors help determine whether or not a person will participate in a mail survey. This decision is described in Figure 2, which shows the threshold nature of factors impacting the decision to respond to a survey.

As Groves et al. explain:

“Consider a scale with multiple hooks on which to place weights, each hook representing some attribute of the request that could be judged relevant to the decision. The distance from the fulcrum to the hook measures the importance the sample person assigns to the attribute in the decision to participate (we label this distance the “leverage” of the attribute). The size of the weight placed on the hook reflects how salient the attribute is made during the survey request” (2000, p. 300).

Figure 2 The Leverage Salience Theory of Survey Participation



Source: Groves et al. (2000)

As Figure 2 shows, Person 1 would be more likely to participate in the mail survey as the two highly salient attributes with positive leverage (cash incentive and community involvement) outweigh the negative impact of the less salient survey topic. However, Person 2 is unlikely to participate in the mail survey as they are negatively inclined towards two salient factors (topic and survey sponsor,) which outweigh the sole high positive leverage towards the cash incentive.

As Gendall (2003) points out, Grove et al.'s theory is appealing because it takes into account what is known about respondents, their attitudes and their differing response to various survey design features. In addition, Groves et al.'s theory takes into account the possibility that design features may provide positive leverage for some respondents, while they may have negative leverage for others, and vice versa.

While Groves et al.'s theory offers a practical framework for describing survey participation, there are aspects that are uncertain. The first is that the theory does not describe how to get reluctant participants involved with the survey in the first place. Second, it is uncertain why leverage and salience are discussed as two separate factors. It is possible that an attribute with a higher level of salience would automatically increase its leverage. Third, it is unclear why Groves et al. consider respondent characteristics (such as community involvement) as if they were equal to survey design factors. While respondent characteristics have an effect on the survey participation decision, they can only be taken into account when designing a survey, and cannot be explicitly influenced (Gendall, 2003). Finally, as Figure 2 shows, these variables vary across individual respondents. This makes it difficult to determine how this theory helps researchers achieve the best possible aggregate response rate, or the least non-response error.

Other factors impacting survey response

In addition to the underlying theories of survey response, there are various stochastic factors that also may influence the decision to participate in a mail survey. These may be environmental or socio-demographic factors, sporadic factors, such as non-English

speaking or senility, or perhaps individual recipients' attitudes, all of which may explain variations in survey response behaviour.

In particular, attitude towards market research appears to have an impact on how an individual chooses to respond to a survey. Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998) propose "recent evidence suggests a trend of less positive attitudes towards participation in market research" (p. 1168). They also include individual survey respondent attitudes towards research in their conceptualisation of response behaviour (see section 2.5). Helgeson et al., (2002) also found response rate is strongly influenced by respondents' attitudes and perceptions, in particular, whether they have a positive opinion of the collection of research data.

Helgeson et al. (2002) have advocated the possibility of increasing response rates by conducting communication campaigns aimed at improving attitudes towards research. However, this suggestion has not been acted upon and, in the short term, general attitudes towards market research are uncontrollable, as a result research has continued to explore specific motivators that can be experimentally manipulated.

Green (1996) summarised the findings about the effects of socio-demographic factors on mail survey response, speed and quality. Consistent with previous reviews, evidence suggests that education has the greatest effect; the higher the level of respondent education, the more likely they are to respond, to respond more quickly and with a higher completion rate. While Green (1996) states that there is evidence for possible age and gender effects, evidence of other socio-demographic factors affecting response rates is non-existent.

All of the psychological theories discussed above are plausible alternatives for explaining the underlying psychological reasons for survey respondent behaviour. With the exception of leverage-salience theory, each of the theories outlined has also been examined and used by research practitioners (Albaum et al., 1998). However, none of these theories is all encompassing, nor is one theory necessarily more 'correct' than the others. As a result, while these theories are interesting they give no new practical guidance (other than already established mail survey administration norms) for eliciting responses from non-respondents.

In addition, a number of the theories discussed above (in particular cognitive dissonance, social exchange, self-perception theory and commitment/involvement) appear to be tautological and less accessible to empirical evaluation. While these theories are logical, they appear to have been deduced from behaviours rather than from empirical evidence.

The problem of measurement that affects these theories also affects cognitive approaches generally. That is, many cognitively based theories posit relationships between internal variables that cannot be observed directly, and behaviour, which is treated as both a measure of these behaviours and an outcome of their effect. This lack of independence between the causal and outcome variables reduces the usefulness of cognitive theories. The following section evaluates an alternative theory of consumer behaviour and its application to respondent behaviour.

2.4 Theories of Behaviour Modification

In contrast to the cognitive rationale for survey response, the behaviour modification perspective (BMP) may also explain how respondents react when they receive a mail survey.

According to Nord and Peter (1980), behavioural objectives can be achieved by studying environmental conditions and manipulating them to influence behaviour. They state BMP "...takes the prediction and control of behaviour as problematic and deliberately shuns speculation about processes which are assumed to occur within the individual such as needs, motives, attitudes, information processing, etc" (1980, p. 36).

In terms of a mail survey, a number of stimuli related to the survey package and content can be manipulated to influence a potential respondent's behaviour. The three key ways to modify and control behaviour include: respondent (or classical) conditioning, operant conditioning and ecological design.

Respondent conditioning

Nord and Peter (1980) describe respondent conditioning as occurring when a stimulus becomes paired with or precedes a behaviour. These behaviours have generally been thought to be under control of the autonomic nervous system and thus are not under the individual's conscious control.

Essentially, respondent conditioning is the process through which a previously neutral stimulus is able to elicit a response of an unconditioned stimulus through pairing the unconditioned stimulus with a neutral stimulus. For example, if a new product that people have a neutral feeling towards is frequently advertised before an exciting sports game, it is possible that product alone may come to elicit the same feeling of excitement without the sports event (Nord & Peter, 1980).

Alternatively, respondent conditioning also occurs when a person responds to a specific stimulus. In mail survey research, different aspects of the survey could evoke a response based on previous experiences. For example, the packaging of a survey may elicit a certain type of response; a plastic shrink wrap may have a greater likelihood of being opened than a brown or white envelope, as this type of packaging may be associated with magazines or catalogues that arrive in the post. Each component of a mail survey package is thus a stimulus that could increase the probability that respondents will open the package, and complete and return the survey.

Operant conditioning

There are two key differences between respondent conditioning and operant conditioning. Firstly, in respondent conditioning, an individual's actions are assumed to be involuntary, whereas in operant conditioning, the actions are understood to be within the *conscious control* of the individual. Secondly, in respondent conditioning, the stimulus is presented prior to or concurrent with the response, whereas in operant conditioning the behaviours are conditioned by manipulating the consequences, or reinforcement that occur *after* the behaviour.

There are two types of reinforcement: positive and negative. For example, if a free gift is given to a shopper at the time of purchase, according to Nord and Peter (1980) this will increase the probability that that shopper will purchase products from the same shop in the future; this is positive reinforcement. In contrast, the regularity of a particular behaviour can be reduced by introducing an adverse stimulus; this is negative reinforcement.

In terms of a mail survey, a positive reinforcement may be the opportunity to enter a draw for a prize that will reward response. A negative reinforcement may be the possibility of being sent a reminder letter if the questionnaire is not returned.

Shaping is another important concept in operant conditioning. According to Nord and Peter (1980), shaping is important as an individual's likelihood of performing certain behaviour can often be very small. By providing small positive reinforcements to successive actions, individuals are more likely to move on to the next stage of a particular behaviour, which must be performed before the desired response can be completed. For example, in a mail survey, an attractive package may lead to the questionnaire being opened, an informative letter may lead to the survey being filled in, and finally, by providing a return, postage paid envelope, respondents are encouraged to return the questionnaire.

Ecological design

Ecological design refers to the manipulation of the physical environment surrounding an individual to modify their behaviour. Ecological design has been frequently used in marketing, particularly in purchase locations. Displays stands are often placed in high traffic areas, and stores arranged to present stimuli in positions that are most likely to evoke a consumer response.

As Nord and Peter (1980) point out, direct mail is a way of introducing a stimulus to an individual's environment with the aim of increasing the probability of the individual at least being aware of a particular product. Similarly, mail surveys are a way of introducing a questionnaire into a potential recipient's environment, even if it is not

possible to further manipulate their environment. Non-monetary incentives are designed to create an environment conducive to completing the survey.

It should now be apparent that behaviour modification theory offers a simpler explanation of survey response behaviour. It is not so much that the psychological theories of survey response provided in section 2.3 are wrong, but more that they may be unnecessary. As Nord and Peter (1980) point out: "Respondent conditioning and other elements of BM (*sic*) focus on the manipulation of external factors and it is clear that consumer behaviour can be influenced through this external emphasis without a complete psychology of internal processes" (p. 37).

As stated earlier, one particular difficulty that arises in psychological theories is empirically proving their validity. By contrast, behaviour modification is much more amenable to empirical enquiry. Of course, behaviour modification does not tell us why people do things, but it does allow us to develop hypotheses that we can then test to determine how consistently certain effects apply.

2.5 Models and Conceptualisations of Survey Response Behaviour

In addition to studies examining determinants of mail survey response and the rationale behind these, several authors have suggested models of respondents' decision process (see Helgeson et al., 2002; Cavusgil & Elvey-Kirk, 1998; Childers & Skinner, 1996; and Furse & Stewart, 1984).

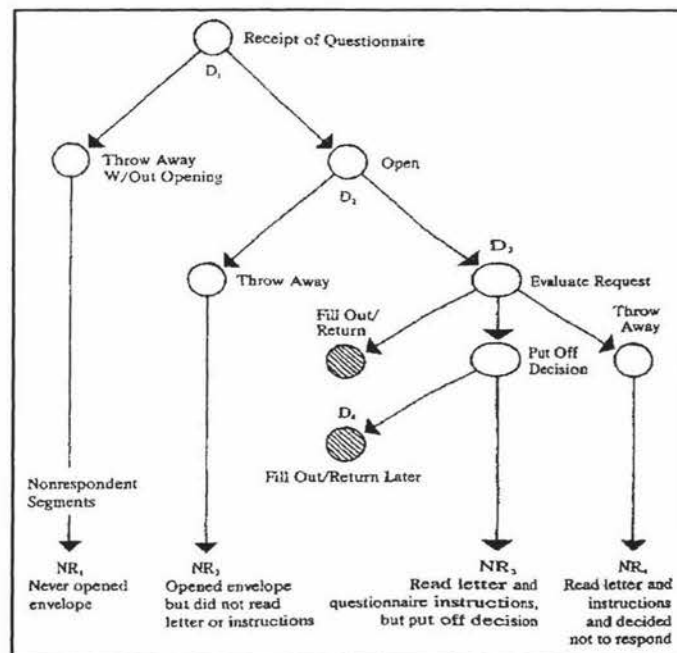
Response as a sequential decision making process

Furse and Stewart (1984) propose a basic model that views response to a mail survey as a set of sequential decisions, rather than a single decision to either 'respond' or 'not respond'. As Figure 3 shows, once a recipient receives a questionnaire package, the recipient must decide whether to throw it out with any other unsolicited mail, or to open it (D1). If the package is opened, after reading the covering letter, the recipient may

throw it away, or continue to examine the package further (D2). Next the recipient may choose to complete the questionnaire, to throw it out, or to set it aside for later (D3). If the questionnaire is set aside for later, the recipient may complete and return the questionnaire, or simply forget about it (D4) (Furse & Stewart, 1984).

From a behaviour modification perspective, these different stages act as shapers of the recipient's environment, and a stimulus for response. Figure 3 shows where the five effective participation inducers (or stimuli) identified earlier in section 2.2 fit most effectively. Given the large amount of unsolicited, 'junk' mail people receive, pre-notification (or prior contact) is most effective prior to D1 in prompting the initial opening of the survey package. Here, potential participants may not discard mail, especially a special delivery, if they are expecting it to arrive.

Figure 3 Response Decision Process



Source: Furse and Stewart (1984)

At D₂, pre-notification may also prompt potential participants to at least consider reading the material. As discussed in section 2.2, incentives, especially pre-paid monetary incentives, may invoke a feeling of dissonance if recipients do not accede to the survey request. After reading the initial material and assessing the task, potential participants still need to decide whether or not to respond (D₃). The source of

sponsorship is an important factor at this stage, as is the salience of the topic and, in some cases, the title of the person signing the covering letter (Furse & Stewart, 1984; Kanuk & Berenson, 1975). For those participants who put off responding to a later time (D4), an incentive may have additional value here, as would a reminder to prompt return.

While Furse and Stewart's model (1984) may effectively describe the decision making process for respondents and those refusers who simply do not return their questionnaire, for the 'hardcore' refusers, the decision may be a single 'respond/not respond' choice. These refusers may have decided not to answer the questionnaire upon initial recognition of the package as a mail survey. As Brennan and Hoek (1992) point out, people tend to respond to mail survey requests in a consistent manner and, if they are not disposed to answering a mail survey, specific stimuli may have a limited role.

However, one stage that is omitted from this process is actual receipt of the mail survey. While Furse and Stewart (1984) were specifically examining the respondent decision process, but the contribution non-receipt makes to low response rates should not be ignored. As Brennan and Hoek found:

"Nearly 25 percent of people interviewed by telephone could not remember receiving the survey questionnaire. This may have been due to poor recall, or a disinclination to confirm their non-response, perhaps because they had treated the mailed questionnaire like 'junk mail' and discarded it. However, another possibility is that a proportion of correctly addressed questionnaires (verified from the telephone directory) may not have reached their destination." (2000, p 533).

While Brennan and Hoek (1992) could not confirm this possibility, they pointed out that it deserved further investigation as it may account for approximately 10 percent of their non-respondents. This possibility was consistent with earlier findings reported by Sosdian and Sharp (1980), who reported that access rather than resistance was a major factor in low response rates.

Only one study provides estimates of participation drop out at different stages of the response process (including actual receipt of the questionnaire). In 1991, as a result of significantly lower than expected response rates in the mailable component of the 1990 Census, the US Census Bureau conducted a national face to face survey of 2,478 households to determine the characteristics, circumstances and attitudes that may have related to census mail response (Kulka et al., 1991). These variables were examined in relation to a six-stage indicator of survey participation, similar to the stages identified by Furse and Stewart (1984). The stages included: not receiving the census form, receiving but not opening it, opening but not filling it out, starting it but not finishing, finishing but not mailing it back, and, finally, finishing and returning the census form. Results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Percent Distribution and Standard Errors for Census Participation

Stage of Census Participation	Level of Participation		Extent of Participation	
	%	S.E.	%	S.E.
Did not receive the Census form	10.8	(1.1)	-	-
Received the survey, but did not open it	3.2	(0.4)	3.6	(0.4)
Opened it, but did not start filling it out	4.1	(0.6)	4.6	(0.6)
Started filling it out, but did not finish	1.9	(0.3)	2.1	(0.3)
Finished filling it out, but did not mail it back	3.1	(0.5)	3.5	(0.5)
Mailed the Census form back	76.9	(1.4)	86.5	(1.4)
Total	100.0		100.0	
Sample Size	2,478		2,210	

Source: Kulka et al. (1991)

As Table 3 shows, non-receipt of the survey form was one of the key stages for non-response. While 23.1 percent of the sample did not respond, 10.8 percent of the sample (46.8 percent of total non-respondents) reported not actually receiving their census form. A further 7 percent received the form but either did not open it, or did not begin filling it out. Another 5 percent either started or finished filling it out but did not mail it back, and the remaining 77 percent completed and returned the Census form. Of the 89 percent of households that received the Census form, 86 percent returned the form (second column of Table 3), with remaining 14 percent dispersed relatively evenly across the previous four stages of participation.

This type of breakdown of the survey response process provides two key benefits. Firstly, it helps identify the stages at which non-response occurs and enables estimation of the proportion of individuals who begin, but do not complete, the response process. Secondly, this information may help develop tactics to prompt (passive and active) non-respondents to move further along the response process.

Response from a hierarchy of effects point of view

Helgeson et al. (2002) used the hierarchy-of-effects approach to develop a model of mail survey response¹. Hierarchy-of-effects models are commonly used in consumer and behavioural decision research, one of the most well known being the AIDA model (East, 1997).

Attention → Interest → Desire → Action

Helgeson et al. (2002) believe a similar order of decision phases can be applied to mail survey response behaviour. The key steps in their iteration of the model are:

Attention → Intention → Completion → Return

According to the hierarchy-of-effects model, gaining the attention of a recipient is a key initial step in the response process. According to Lachman et al., (1979, cited in Helgeson et al., 2002) attention is the focalisation and concentration of the consciousness and is necessary before a recipient can move to the intention phase. While Helgeson et al. (2002) provide no clear evidence that attention is a key step in the process, stimulus, it is a reasonable and logical assumption that a survey must first be brought to potential respondents' attention before they enter the response process.

Helgeson et al. (2002) continue to hypothesise that if a recipient's attention can be gained, the recipient can then begin being moved through the process. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, cited in Helgeson et al., 2002) describe intention as the subjective likelihood that attitudes and beliefs will be acted upon.

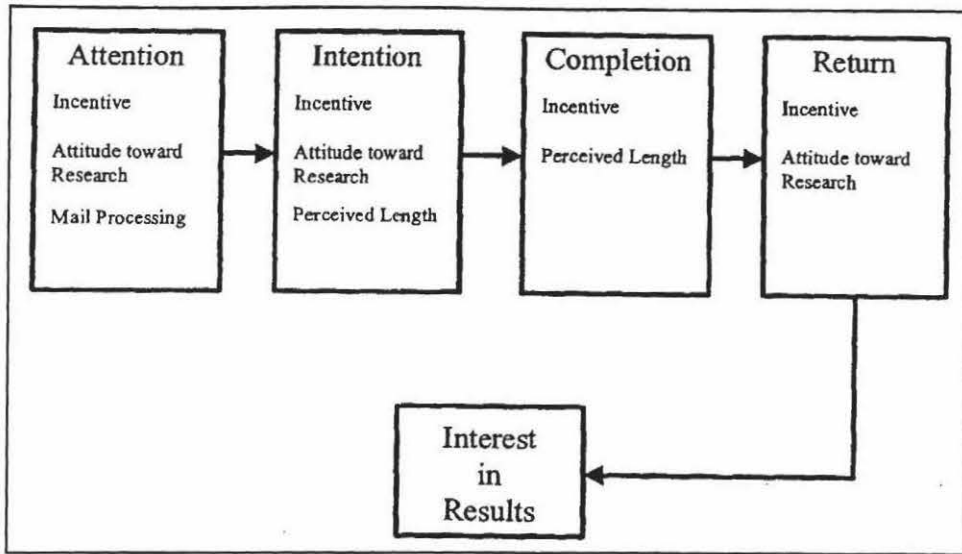
Helgeson et al. (2002) recognise that two pre-behavioural stages (attention and intention) do not guarantee that a survey will be completed. However, they assume that both stages are necessary before any decision to complete a mail survey can be made. No evidence is provided that this intention must exist. As suggested by behaviourists, perhaps it is possible that the potential respondent may have the questionnaire brought to their attention, and then fill it out straight away without developing a conscious intention.

While completion and return are the two behavioural phases of this process, Helgeson et al. (2002) suggest that it is the transition from the mental to the physical stage that is the most difficult. The participant must first complete the survey, which usually takes a certain degree of effort and energy, before returning it. While returning the survey still commands a degree of effort, Helgeson et al. (2002) suggest this action, after completing the survey, is less of an exertion.

Helgeson et al. (2002) argue that approaching the decision process from a hierarchy-of-effects perspective is beneficial as it suggests response logically flows from persuasion. As a result, researchers should prepare the participation request as a persuasive communication campaign. Helgeson et al. (2002) tested their model by sending a mail survey to a known sample of university students, then collecting data from the same sample regarding the different response influencing factors tested. Variables included survey design factors (coloured paper, hand stamping, greater personalisation, incentive) and respondent factors (attitudinal and personal constructs). A number of response influencing factors were found to affect the response process; these are shown in Figure 4.

¹ That is, that mail survey recipients approach the ultimate decision to participate through a process or series of steps in which the actual survey completion and return is the final threshold.

Figure 4 Variables Found to Affect the Response Process



Source: Helgeson et al. (2002)

Helgeson et al.'s (2002) findings were consistent with those described in section 2.2; of the survey design factors, a monetary incentive was found to have the greatest impact on survey completion. In the second phase of Helgeson et al.'s (2002) study, respondents were asked to fill in a short questionnaire. Despite the methodological issues in using a tool to measure itself, Helgeson et al. (2002) report that recipients' attitudes toward research, (also included in Figure 4,) play a larger role in their decision to respond than was originally thought.

While these findings are valuable, it would have been of greater interest if Helgeson et al. (2002) had tested these variables on non-respondents rather than respondents. Obviously, one or more of these factors may have contributed to the response, and it would have been beneficial to see which had made no difference to those who did not respond.

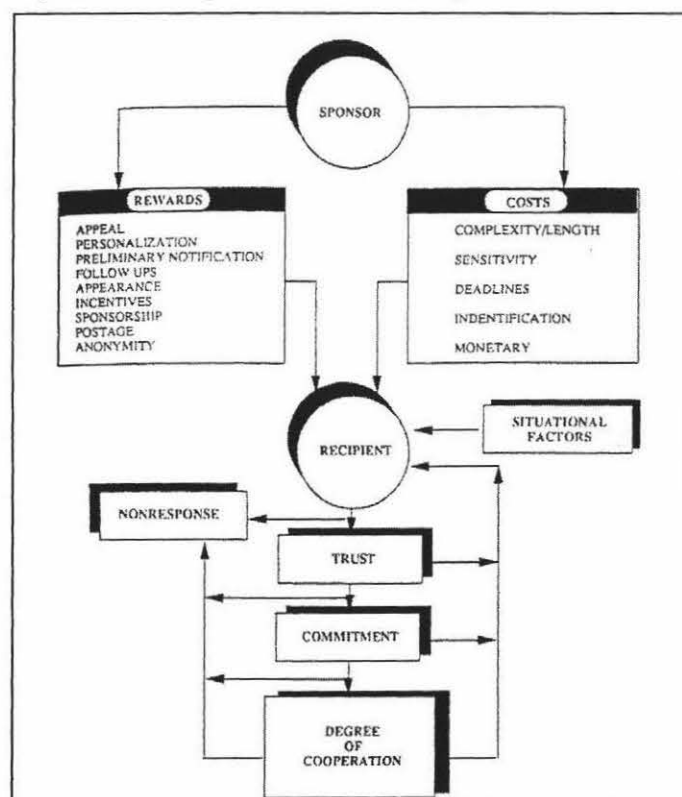
Response as a result of trust, commitment and cooperation

In contrast to the sequential models suggested by Furse and Stewart (1984) and Helgeson et al. (2002), Childers and Skinner (1996) propose an alternative framework for understanding and researching mail survey response behaviour. However, their model does encompass a similar sequence of phases as Helgeson et al. (2002) propose.

Childers and Skinner's model is based on exchange and equity theory, in particular the concepts of cooperation, trust and commitment. Survey response is perceived as the cooperative exchange of information by respondents in return for an opportunity to shape their environment. As Childers and Skinner point out: "Survey participants could only be reasonably expected to participate in a mail survey if they possess an expectation of receiving value for value (an equitable exchange)" (1996, p 205).

Figure 5 shows the combination of cooperation, trust and commitment within Childers and Skinner's (1996) proposed framework.

Figure 5 Conceptual Model of Survey Behaviour



Source: Childers and Skinner (1996)

As the model describes, the survey administrator must weigh up the expected outcomes against the costs and create a survey package that is likely to gain a response. The correlation between trust and cooperation is high (Cordeny, 1991; Mishra, 1993; both cited in Childers & Skinner, 1996), and, as a result, researchers must communicate a feeling of trust before potential participants choose to cooperate. However, this process

seems self evident. It may instead be useful to test the effect of a package that is, according this model, unlikely to gain a response, compared to one that is likely to gain a response.

The level of trust developed by the researcher may be affected by the salience of the survey sponsor; for example, participants may be more inclined to trust a research company such as AC Nielsen over a small, unknown research agency. In addition, knowledge of the sponsor and knowledge of the survey content has been found to increase levels of trust. Singer (1984) examined public reactions to ethical issues in research and found that the perceptions of trust were significantly influenced if the researcher was willing to supply information about the content of the research. This suggests that the openness of a researcher is likely to increase the level of trust, and possibly the likelihood of respondent participation. Despite this supposition, Childers and Skinner (1996) provide no evidence that increased trust will elicit a response.

Mail survey participation inducers (or shapers) are used as rewards, in either a tangible or an intangible form. Intangible rewards may include the content of pre-notification and covering letters, in particular showing a positive regard for the participant, stressing the importance of their participation, emphasising the opportunity to express their views and expressing gratitude (Childers & Skinner, 1996). Other rewards may include making the survey as interesting as possible, within the constraints of the topic.

According to Childers and Skinner (1996), tangible rewards such as including return postage or a monetary incentive may provide some economic benefit to participants, but act more to develop a sense of trust. As Dillman stated "...the reason that token financial incentives have been found so effective in mail questionnaire research may not be their monetary value, but rather in the fact that they are a symbol of trust" (2000, p 16). If nothing else, a small financial incentive may work by creating a feeling of dissonance, encouraging participants to return the questionnaire. Unfortunately, again, evidence as to whether or not a tangible reward acts to develop a sense of trust, or create a feeling of dissonance is not provided by Childers and Skinner (1996).

Costs to recipients may include the actual economic cost of returning the questionnaire. However, this is generally overcome by providing stamped self-addressed envelopes.

Childers and Skinner (1996) suggest the most significant cost is the energy or effort involved in completing well-thought-out answers to the questionnaire and the opportunity cost related to that. However, survey length can often be taken into account in the development of a survey to reduce the time participants must give up. Another cost is the sensitivity of the data being requested. Pre-specified deadlines may incur a large cost to the respondent, as could the possibility of embarrassment. The latter could be tested by examining the omission of items such as income in a mail survey.

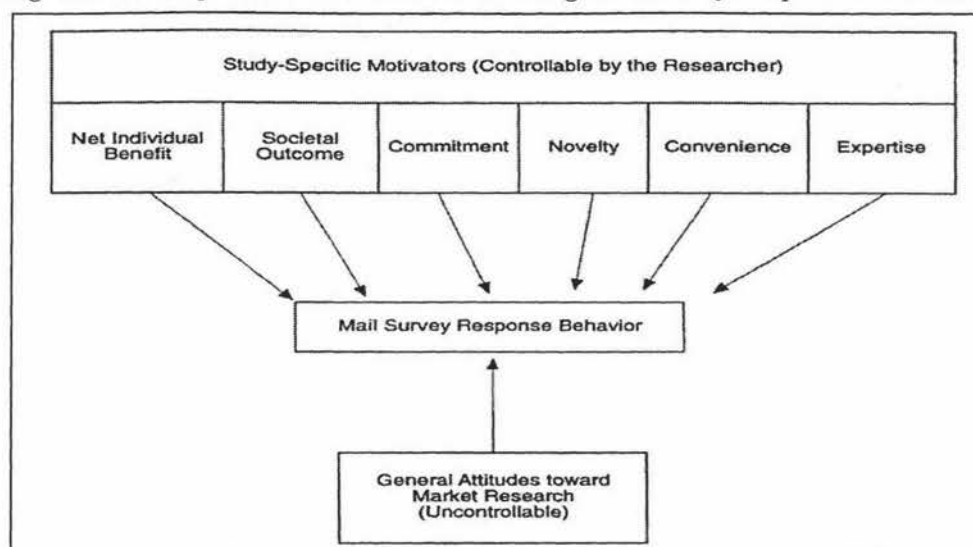
After developing a degree of trust, what Childers and Skinner describe as a “mental pledge” (1996, p. 197) is formed as a behavioural intention for the survey recipient. From here it is proposed that recipients assess the possible benefits and supposed costs of participating and make a decision on whether or not to cooperate. However, as with a number of these models and theories, this would be difficult to test empirically.

Response as a function of controllable motivators and uncontrollable attitudes

Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998) argue that survey respondent behaviour is a subset of human behaviour, in particular of co-operative human behaviour. As a result, they argue that the same motivators that affect human behaviour will motivate survey respondent behaviour. Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998) propose a conceptual framework that aims to encompass a large proportion of the literature on mail survey response behaviour based on the following motivators: net individual benefit, societal outcome, commitment (also suggested by Childers and Skinner, 1996), novelty, convenience and expertise. In addition to these motivators, the effect of general attitudes toward market research is included.

As Figure 6 proposes, each of these motivators contributes to mail survey response behaviour. Each of these six underlying motivators of response can be operationalised in a number of ways. For example, ‘net individual benefit’ can be operationalised by appeal type, personalisation and an incentive. Alternatively, novelty could be instigated by envelope type, covering letter form, or questionnaire format and colour.

Figure 6 Conceptualisation of Factors Affecting Mail Survey Response Behaviour



Source: Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998)

However, as with other models outlined in this section, Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk's (1998) model is just another possible alternative. As this section demonstrates, several researchers have attempted to develop their own conceptual models of the survey response process. While the frameworks outlined in this section are an important part of understanding survey respondent behaviour, again, there is no reason to assume that one is any better than the others. By themselves, they do not directly provide insights into how respondents and non-respondents actually react to a survey. However, they do provide a basis for thinking about the survey process and how response can be influenced.

In addition, some of the models outlined above (such as Childers & Skinner, 1996) suffer from the same broad tautological problems as the psychological theories outlined in section 2.3. There is also a lack of empirical evidence to support most of these models; again, problems of measurement may exacerbate this.

2.6 Studies of Mail Survey Respondent Behaviour

Despite the substantial amount of research examining the underlying psychological theories of survey participation and factors influencing the decision to participate in a survey, relatively little is known about the actual process leading to response, or non-response (Helgeson et al., 2002; Evangelista et al., 1999). While it has been suggested that this knowledge would lead to more effectively designed surveys (Helgeson, 1994), few studies actually exist that examine non-respondent behaviour. These studies have mostly used a 'survey on surveys' approach. This is illustrated by the studies conducted by Brennan and Hoek (1992), and Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (1996).

Brennan and Hoek (1992) conducted a mail survey of 602 New Zealand women to determine whether respondents, refusers and other non-respondents have different tendencies toward mail survey participation. They found that people tend to respond to mail survey requests in a consistent manner and that refusers have a different predisposition toward mail survey participation than other non-respondents. In particular, 'hardcore' refusers, those who will almost never respond, do not respond to repetitive contacts. This finding was consistent with earlier research conducted by Stinchcombe, Jones and Sheatsley (1981), who initially found that active refusers had rather different attitudes and behaviours to those of passive refusers. As Brennan and Hoek (1992) point out, the fact that active and passive refusers have different predispositions towards survey participation has significant implications for the design and evaluation of surveys. Although Brennan and Hoek's research did not explore the effect of factors such as incentives, active refusers do not respond to repetitive contacts. Brennan and Hoek's (1992) evidence also suggests that a considerable level of non-response may be due to not receiving the survey, rather than refusing to participate. However, it should be noted that this particular study was conducted over ten years ago. Given the attention paid to reducing response rates, additional information detailing levels of recipients not actually receiving mail surveys would be valuable.

Using both experts (marketing research managers), and industrial respondents (executives of major UK companies), Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (1996)

examined the possible impact of different design and implementation factors on industrial mail surveys. Mail questionnaires were sent to participants asking how 92 separate items were perceived to increase the likelihood of mail survey participation. The study generated a number of guidelines for mail survey research congruent with previous research. These include: having the study approved by an organisation respected by the participant, personalising the covering letter, providing assurances of confidentiality, multiple contacts, including stamped addressed return envelopes and providing a summary of the study's results (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1996). While some of these guidelines are relatively easy to implement, the practicalities of others, such as having the study approved by an organisation respected by the participant, may not be so realistic.

Although the research by Brennan and Hoek (1992) and Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch (1996), (and also Helgeson et al., 2002 as described in section 2.5) has led to valuable insights in survey respondent behaviour, as Goyder points out: "The epistemological limitation to surveys on surveys is self-evident; employing an instrument to measure its own performance is immediately contradictory" (1986, p. 28). As a result, researchers need to be aware that using a 'survey on surveys' approach creates an immediate and fundamental problem. However, this can be relatively easily remedied by taking a sample of non-respondents to a mail survey, and surveying them using a different methodology such as by telephone or personal interview.

Only one study was found that used this approach. Kaner, Haighton, and McAvoy (1998) carried out a qualitative study to determine United Kingdom General Practitioners' reasons for not participating in a mail survey. Kaner et al. (1998) telephone interviewed 276 non-responders to a mail survey and found the main reasons for GPs not replying was that the questionnaires had got lost in paperwork (34 percent), that GPs were too busy for the extra work involved (21 percent), and that questionnaires were routinely 'binned' (16 percent). Kaner et al. (1998) report that higher workloads, including greater administration, meant that doctors' participation in research had become a low priority. Suggestions for increasing GPs' response rates included researchers being aware of the pressures of general practice and to reduce the amount of research material sent. They also suggested GPs would be more likely to respond to a mail survey if the topic was of interest, and if it involved local research applicable to

GPs. While this study is an excellent beginning, only GPs were examined and their responses may not necessarily be generalisable to the wider population.

In addition to a lack of research on non-respondents' actual behaviour, only Kulka et al. (1991) have examined the stage at which potential participants drop out of the response process. As reported earlier, the US Census Bureau conducted a national face-to-face survey of 2,478 households to determine the characteristics, circumstances and attitudes that may have related to census mail response (Kulka et al., 1991). While 23.1 percent of the sample did not respond, 10.8 percent of the sample (46.8 percent of total non-respondents) reported not actually receiving their census form. In terms of those choosing not to participate, concerns for privacy and confidentiality, alienation and mistrust of government were found to be major reasons for non-response. However, as this was a government-initiated census, it is difficult to determine whether issues of mistrust may apply as strongly to university or commercially instigated surveys.

In contrast to Kulka et al.'s (1991) study, which examined aspects external to the mail survey design as reasons for non-response, Helgeson (1994) took a more qualitative, phenomenological approach to examine how receiving a mail survey fits into a group of participants' lives. He examined how the survey research design influences respondents' decision to respond. As a result, he identified some reasons why participants may or may not respond, and developed a model suggesting how different variables can affect the decision to participate in a survey. According to Helgeson, the key variables that influenced response include: helpfulness and courtesy, obligation and guilt, interest in the survey and the surveying process or results, fun and entertainment, self expression, the impact of others, the attitude of respondents when they receive a survey, benefits to the respondents, and ease of response. However, in terms of non-respondents' behaviour, it should be noted that the inverse of why people respond is not necessarily why they do not respond. It is unlikely that non-respondents do so because they wish to be unhelpful and discourteous. Moreover, as Helgeson collected his data from only twenty-six business students aged between 21 and 41 years of age, the generalisability of the study is limited. However, Helgeson's research suggests hypotheses that could be tested, and outlines a method for examining survey response from a respondent's point of view.

2.7 Summary

Researchers have drawn on several psychological theories to explain the underlying reasons for survey response and non-response. In addition, several researchers have developed models detailing the process survey recipients go through when responding to a survey. Despite the surface plausibility of these theories, none offers a complete model of response behaviour or of how researchers can shape this to reduce non-response.

It has been suggested that better understanding of individual survey respondent behaviour will foster more effective survey design that will in turn improve response rates (Helgeson, 1994). However, few studies have examined individual respondent behaviour and even fewer have examined individual non-respondent behaviour.

Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk (1998) claim that the future of mail survey response process research efforts should focus on further elaboration of a conceptual framework. They suggest that the underlying motivating constructs must first be identified before a complete explanation of why mail survey recipients either respond or do not respond can be developed. However, before this can be done, researchers need to step back and explore possible reasons for non-response with the recipients themselves. While self reporting may not translate perfectly into behaviour, it may provide insights that could be investigated further.

The research reported here aims to combine and build upon the research conducted by Kulka et al. (1991) and Helgeson (1994), to determine the level of non-response at different stages of the mail survey process. Overall, it aims to better understand what happens when mail survey recipients do not respond and how non-respondents could be influenced to become responders. This would enable future research to focus on factors with the greatest potential to increase response rates and to move potential participants further along the response process.

2.8 Objectives

The overall objective of this research was to investigate non-response in a mail survey by replicating and combining aspects of Kulka et al.'s (1991) and Helgeson's (1994) research.

Specific objectives of this research included:

1. Determining the relative levels of non-response at different stages of a mail survey,
2. Determining why non-response occurs at each step,
3. Examining how non-respondents react to a survey, both as a whole and to particular aspects,
4. Investigating factors that could increase the probability of non-respondents participating in a survey.

The research process undertaken to address these objectives, the findings and corresponding discussion of the findings are outlined in the following chapters. The research process is discussed in section 3. The results are addressed in section 4 and a discussion leading to the conclusions formed in this research is contained in section 5.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to estimate the relative levels of non-response in mail surveys, to examine reasons for non-response, and to investigate ways of reducing non-response. To achieve this, three different mail surveys were conducted and non-response in these was explored using three different methods.

In addition, two specific measures for reducing non-response were tested in two of the surveys – the inclusion of an explanatory note ‘Important Survey on New Zealand’s National Identity Enclosed’ on the address sheet for one survey, and a graphic cover design on the questionnaire on another. The first of these measures arose out of the research conducted for this study; the second was prompted by previous research that suggested response rates could be enhanced by an appropriate cover design. These tests are described and discussed in section 4.4.

3.2 Survey One: Roles of Men and Women in Society

The initial survey

A sample of 400 Palmerston North residents was randomly selected from the Palmerston North and Rangitikei electoral rolls. The sample was restricted to those living in the Palmerston North and Rangitikei urban areas and to those under 70 years of age (because it was anticipated that people older than 70 may be difficult to interview if they turned out to be non-respondents). Each member of the sample was sent a self

completion questionnaire on 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society'. (The questionnaire had been used previously in a nationwide survey on the same topic.)

The questionnaire itself was an A4 booklet containing 20 pages and 67 questions (although the total number of individual question items totalled 113). It sought respondents' opinions, behaviour, and knowledge on a variety of issues examining the roles of men and women in marriage, work, and society in general. It also included an extensive demographic section. Each survey package contained an A4 questionnaire, a covering letter, and a reply paid envelope. The whole package was posted in an official Massey University foolscap, white envelope.

After nine days, all non-respondents were sent a reminder letter and a replacement questionnaire. After a further nine days, 243 questionnaires had been returned, leaving 157 non-respondents to be contacted. Details of the response to the survey are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Roles of Men and Women in Society Survey Response Details

Outcome	n	%
Successfully returned questionnaires	181	45.3
Non-response	157	39.3
Gone, no address	45	11.3
Refusal	7	1.8
Ineligible	10	2.5
Total Sample	400	100.0
Response rate		52.5%

The sampling frame of Palmerston North residents may be one reason for the relatively high response rate, despite sending only one reminder, as Palmerston North residents have traditionally supported student-based survey work. Another reason may have been the upper age limit set. Elderly respondents may be less likely to respond to a mail survey than younger respondents.

The follow-up survey

An attempt was made to contact and interview in person all of the 157 non-respondents to the initial survey. Nine interviewers were recruited, briefed, and given the names and addresses of approximately 16 non-respondents each. Briefing documents and interviewer instructions are reproduced in Appendix A. Table 5 shows the outcome of the follow-up survey.

Table 5 Subsequent Face-To-Face Interview Response Details

Outcome	n	%
Successful interviews	33	21.1
Respondent uncontactable	39	24.8
Gone, no address	56	35.7
Refusal	21	13.4
Ineligible	8	5.1
Total Sample	157	100.0
Response rate		35.5%

Despite considerable effort on the part of the interviewers, involving at least three call-backs for each respondent, only 33 interviews were successfully completed. This was partly due to the fact that a large number of respondents (56) had moved (i.e., were gone, no address) and a further 39 were uncontactable even after repeated attempts. In addition, 21 non-respondents refused to be interviewed, which was perhaps not surprising since they had already declined to take part in the mail survey itself. The 33 contactable non-respondents who agreed to be interviewed were each administered a face-to-face questionnaire based on the research objectives previously discussed².

The personal interview was organised into four sections (a copy of the interview questionnaire is reproduced in Appendix B). Three sections addressed the research objectives, and the final section gathered demographic information. The first section of the interview included questions regarding respondents' survey participation habits and their attitudes towards mail surveys in general.

² Three interview participants stated that they did not actually recall receiving the survey. These three non-respondents were still interviewed; however, the questions in section three were modified, asking participants to instead speculate on what they would have done had they received the questionnaire.

The second section of the interview determined the stage of the survey response process at which the participant became a non-respondent. Based on methodology previously used by Kulka et al., (1991), a task decomposition strategy was used. The interview participants were asked the following questions: if they recalled receiving the survey; whether they opened the envelope; whether they began answering the questionnaire; whether they completed it; and whether they posted it back. This information helped determine the relative levels of non-response at different stages of the survey.

This section also investigated why participant's non-response occurred at that particular stage of the survey. A number of reasons have previously been reported for not participating in a mail survey, such as over-surveying, negative attitudes to surveys, confidentiality issues, alienation, mistrust of the researcher, loss of control over private information, inertia, time lost for other activities, and the possibility of embarrassment (Dillman, Singer, Clark & Treat, 1996; Kulka et al., 1991). However, these appear to be reasons for not participating in a survey at all, rather than beginning and, subsequently, stopping part way through. This section of the research was designed to allow participants to explain for themselves why they either did not participate, or why they did not complete the questionnaire after beginning it.

In section three, a qualitative approach was used to determine how non-respondents reacted to particular features of the questionnaire. This section examined whether these aspects of a survey could prompt non-respondents to respond. Participants viewed alternative packages and considered differing elements of the covering letter, cover design, survey topic, and sponsorship, and indicated the extent to which these affected their decision to respond.

Throughout this section, questions were also asked to investigate ways in which non-respondents could be influenced to become respondents. For each feature, alternatives were presented to participants and questions asked about how this might affect their likelihood of participating in the survey.

Finally, in section four, in addition to having their gender recorded, participants were asked for demographic variables such as their year of birth, occupation, and education level.

3.3 Survey Two: National Identity

The initial survey

The second survey involved a random sample of 2000 people from the complete New Zealand electoral roll, plus an additional 200 selected from the Maori electorates (Maori are generally underrepresented in mail survey responses). Each member of the sample of 2,200 was sent a self completion questionnaire on national identity.

Again, the questionnaire was an A4 booklet of 20 pages. It contained 63 questions (with a total of 156 individual question items). The survey sought to determine respondents' opinions and knowledge towards a number of issues relating to New Zealand's national identity. The survey also included a large demographic section. Each survey package contained the questionnaire, a covering letter, a reply paid envelope and an official Massey University addressed cover sheet, which acted as an outer envelope. The whole package was shrink-wrapped in clear cellophane.

After 14 days, all non-respondents were sent a follow-up letter and replacement questionnaire. After a further 21 days, remaining non-respondents were sent a second follow-up letter and replacement questionnaire. A third reminder letter, without a National Identity questionnaire, was sent to all potential respondents who had not returned their questionnaire after a further 14 days. Response rate details after the three reminder letters, before the follow-up survey, are shown below in Table 6.

Table 6 National Identity Response Details

Outcome	n	%
Successfully returned questionnaires	981	44.6
Did not respond	940	42.7
Gone, no address	171	7.8
Refusals	55	2.5
Ineligible	53	2.4
Total Sample	2200	100.0
Response rate		49.6%

The follow-up survey

While the final reminder letter for the National Identity survey was designed to enhance the overall response to the survey, an attempt was made to use this reminder to gain information from non-respondents. To do this, four questions were printed on the back of the final reminder letter (see Appendix C). Recipients were able to complete and return this brief questionnaire if they were not willing to answer the National Identity questionnaire itself. This brief questionnaire was sent to all 940 non-respondents to the initial survey, Table 7 shows the outcome of the follow-up survey.

Table 7 Subsequent Questionnaire Response Details

Outcome	n	%
Successfully returned follow-up questionnaire	48	5.1
Returned initial questionnaire	42	4.5
No response	796	84.7
Gone, no address	40	4.3
Ineligible	14	1.5
Total Sample	940	100.0
Response rate		5.7%

While it can be argued that using a mail survey questionnaire to investigate non-response to a mail survey is inappropriate, in this case, it can be partially defended by observing that the purpose related to a particular survey rather than survey response in general. In cases where non-respondents would not be willing to respond to a survey on surveys, they may be willing to justify or explain their behaviour in relation to a particular survey.

3.4 Survey Three: Advertising Regulation and Consumers

The initial survey

The third survey involved another sample of 800 people from the New Zealand electoral roll, stratified by electorate. Each member of the sample of 800 was sent a self completion questionnaire on advertising regulations for prescription medicines.

The questionnaire was an A4 booklet containing 10 pages and 31 questions (with the total number of individual question items also totalling 31). It sought respondents' opinions on the advertising of prescription medicines, attitudes to prescription medicines, and possible regulations for prescription medicines. It also included a demographic section (six questions). Each survey package contained the A4 questionnaire, a covering letter, and a reply paid envelope. The whole package was posted in an official Massey University foolscap, white envelope.

After 14 days, each non-respondent was sent a reminder letter and a replacement questionnaire. After a further 14 days, 402 questionnaires had been returned. After refusals, 'gone, no addresses' and ineligible, a possible 276 non-respondents were left to be contacted. Details of the response to the survey are shown below in Table 8.

Table 8 Advertising Regulation and Consumers Survey Response Details

Outcome	n	%
Successfully returned mail surveys	402	50.3
Did not respond	276	34.5
Gone, no address/Ineligible	107	13.4
Refusals	15	1.9
Total Sample	800	100.0
Response rate	58.0%	

The follow-up survey

The follow-up survey for survey three was very similar to that for survey two. The only difference was that an attempt was made to telephone interview each of the 276 non-respondents, rather than personally interview them, or send them a mail questionnaire.

Again, the aim of this telephone interview was to derive additional estimates of the relative levels of survey non-response at different points in the process and to further examine reasons for non-response. The questions asked were the same as those used for the follow-up survey in survey two, but adapted to a telephone interview (a copy of the adapted format can be found in Appendix D). Three additional interviewers were recruited, briefed, and given the names and addresses of approximately 30 non-respondents each. Briefing documents and interviewer instructions are reproduced in Appendix D. Response rate details to the subsequent telephone interviews are shown below in Table 9.

Table 9 Subsequent Telephone Interview Response Details

Outcome	n	%
Successful interviews	60	21.7
Refusal/Respondent uncontactable	41	14.9
Phone number unavailable	155	56.2
Gone, no address ³	16	5.8
Ineligible	4	1.4
Total Sample	276	100.0
Response rate		59.4%

³ In this case a 'Gone, no address' refers to an interviewer getting through at the telephone number, but the person was no longer living there.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the results of the three follow-up surveys and has been divided into three sections: levels of non-response, reasons for non-response and reactions to aspects of a mail survey.

Section 4.2, Levels of Non-response, reports the relative levels of non-response to the mail questionnaire for all three follow-up surveys. Section 4.3, Reasons for Non-response, reports reasons why potential respondents did not move on to the next stage of the survey or complete it. It reports the frequency of survey requests and the levels of participation among non-respondents. It also reports the attitudes to surveys of these non-respondents' to 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' survey. Finally, section 4.4, Reactions to Aspects of a Mail Survey, examines reactions to different aspects of a mail survey.

4.2 Levels of Non-response

One of the key objectives of this research was to determine the relative levels of non-response at different stages of a mail survey.

Table 10 shows the relative levels of non-response at different stages for the 32⁴ successful follow-up interviews conducted with the sample members for 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' survey.

⁴ Although 33 successful interviews were conducted, one participant chose not to answer this question.

Table 10 Stage of Roles of Men and Women in Society Mail Survey Participation

Stage in Survey Process	Level of Participation		Extent of Participation	
	n	%	n	%
Did not receive the survey	3	9.4	-	-
Received the survey, but did not open it	1	3.1	1	3.4
Opened it, but did not read the covering letter	6	18.8	6	20.7
Read the covering letter, but did not start questionnaire	14	43.8	14	48.3
Started filling questionnaire out, but did not finish	5	15.6	5	17.2
Finished filling questionnaire out, but did not mail it back	3	9.4	3	10.3
Mailed the questionnaire back	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	32	100.0	29	100.0

As Table 10 shows, almost all of the interviewed non-respondents reported receiving the questionnaire, and only three did not recall receiving it. Of those who did recall receiving the questionnaire, the majority (69 percent) of the interviewed non-respondents opened the questionnaire, but did not begin filling it out. Of this 69 percent, approximately one third (21 percent) did not read the covering letter. A further 17 percent of non-respondents began filling the questionnaire out, but did not complete it.

Table 11 below shows the relative levels of non-response at different stages for the 48 short survey responses gained from the National Identity survey follow-up.

Table 11 Stage of National Identity ISSP Mail Survey Participation

Stage in Survey Process	Level of Participation		Extent of Participation	
	n	%	n	%
Did not receive the survey	2	4.2	-	-
Received the survey, but did not open it	4	8.3	4	8.7
Opened it, but did not read the covering letter	6	12.5	6	13.0
Read the covering letter, but did not start questionnaire	16	33.3	16	34.8
Started filling questionnaire out, but did not finish	11	22.9	11	23.9
Finished filling questionnaire out, but did not mail it back	2	4.2	2	4.3
Mailed the questionnaire back	7	14.6	7	15.2
Total	48	100.0	46	100.0

As with the first survey, almost all of the non-respondents who returned the short questionnaire reported receiving the initial National Identity survey. A large proportion of non-respondents received and opened the questionnaire, but did not begin filling it out (48 percent). An additional 24 percent started filling out the questionnaire, but did not complete it. It is also interesting to note that 15 percent claimed to have returned the questionnaire; however, only one of these was received.

Table 12 below shows the relative levels of non-response at different stages for the 60 telephone interviews conducted for the Advertising Regulations and Consumers survey.

Table 12 Stage of Advertising Regulation and Consumers Mail Survey Participation

Stage in Survey Process	Level of Participation		Extent of Participation	
	n	%	n	%
Did not receive the survey	15	25.0	-	-
Received the survey, but did not open it	5	8.3	5	11.1
Opened it, but did not read the covering letter	9	15.0	9	20.0
Read the covering letter, but did not start questionnaire	16	26.7	16	35.6
Started filling questionnaire out, but did not finish	10	16.7	10	22.2
Finished filling questionnaire out, but did not mail it back	4	6.7	4	8.9
Mailed the questionnaire back	1	1.7	1	2.2
Total	60	100.0	45	100.0

By comparison with the previous two surveys, the survey three follow-up identified a larger number of non-respondents not receiving the questionnaire (25 percent). Of those non-respondents who received the questionnaire, a large proportion opened it, but did not begin filling it out (56 percent). Another 22 percent starting filling out the questionnaire, but did not complete it. One interviewee reported returning the questionnaire, however this was not received.

A comparison of the relative levels of non-response from the survey one follow-up, the survey two follow-up, the survey three follow-up, and the Kulka et al. study (1991) are shown in Table 13.

Table 13 Comparison of Relative Levels of Non-Response⁵

	Kulka et al., 1991		Survey One		Survey Two		Survey Three	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Did not receive the questionnaire	268	10.8	104	33.0	212	16.6	138	23.4
Received the questionnaire, but did not open it	79	3.2	1	0.3	4	0.3	5	0.9
Opened it, but did not start filling it out	102	4.1	20	6.3	23	1.8	25	4.2
Started filling it out, but did not finish	47	1.9	5	1.6	11	0.1	10	1.7
Finished filling it out, but did not mail it back	77	3.1	3	1.0	2	0.2	4	0.7
Mailed the questionnaire back	1906	76.9	182	57.8	1026	80.3	407	69.1
Total	2478	100	315	100	1278	100	589	100

As Table 13 shows, all except the first stage received relatively similar drop out rates as the Kulka et al. (1991) study; in all three follow-up studies, there are a relatively large number of sample members who did not receive the survey package. Table 13 provides further evidence that of those non-respondents who received the questionnaire, the stage where the highest proportion of non-respondents drop out is after they open the package, but before filling out the questionnaire. There are also a high number of non-respondents who after beginning the questionnaire do not finish it.

Table 14 shows a comparison of the relative levels of non-response from the mean percentages of the three follow-up surveys and the only other previous study found to examine these levels: the Kulka et al. study (1991).

Table 14 Second Comparison of Relative Levels of Non-Response

	Kulka et al., 1991	Mean of follow- up surveys
	%	%
Did not receive the questionnaire	10.8	24.3
Received the questionnaire, but did not open it	3.2	0.5
Opened it, but did not start filling it out	4.1	4.1
Started filling it out, but did not finish	1.9	1.1
Finished filling it out, but did not mail it back	3.1	0.6
Mailed the questionnaire back	76.9	69.2
Total	100	100

⁵ To appropriately match the Kulka et al. (1991) study, information had been modified from the results section by including the gone, no addresses, and actual responses to the initial survey.

Table 14 confirms that a very high proportion of sample members (a mean of 24.3 percent) did not receive the survey package. Also consistent with Table 13 is evidence that of those potential respondents who received the survey package, the most common stage in which survey recipients drop out of the response process is after a participant has opened the package, but has not started filling it out.

It should be noted that the 'respondents' for survey two follow-up are different in the sense that they did send something back, whereas the 'respondents' for survey one and three follow-ups had to be tracked down.

4.3 Reasons for Non-response

In all three follow-up surveys, participants were asked why they did not move onto the next stage of the survey response process. A number of reasons were offered as to why the interviewed non-respondents did not respond to the initial mail survey (see Appendix E for individual comments), including: time, survey length, mistaken purpose, and illness.

Many of these reasons applied to all stages of the survey, though some were specific to this initial stage, for example, mistaking the purpose of the survey package. One person who did not even open the 'Roles of Men and Women in Society' questionnaire package stated that he "*thought they were offering me a course*"⁶. Another person who did not open the National Identity questionnaire "*assumed they were pamphlets.*" This is not unreasonable given that Massey University enrolment packs are sent out in similar packaging. While this may be a problem for organisations such as universities who are administering or sponsoring a survey, this may not be an issue for market research firms.

⁶ It should be noted that all quotes have been taken directly from interviewer's notes and non-respondent surveys.

For all three surveys, time was the primary reason that people gave for not proceeding to the next stage of the mail survey response process. This was expressed in two ways; first, that they did not have enough time, and second, that they were too busy.

"Too busy! Tried to do it, but haven't got time - work very long hours. It's not slackness, interested, didn't biff it out, but haven't had a chance to do it."

"Bad time of year – everyone's getting one million things, so if I don't have to do it, I won't. Too much coming in, not enough time."

I am regret that I have been such a dead loss when it came to completing your survey but I am extremely busy trying to make a living from a small business and the questions in the survey were very difficult and time consuming."

This explanation was qualified with comments such as "couldn't be bothered", "getting sidetracked" and "never getting around to it". For example, one woman stated that it was:

"More of a fact of timing when I got it. I saw it, opened it and didn't have enough time. So put it aside with intention of doing it later – obviously I didn't get around to it."

However, this could also be interpreted as a lack of motivation rather than a lack of time.

A small number of non-respondents stated that the length of the survey was why they did not participate. This is not unexpected given the length of the surveys, and also ties into the finding that a large number of people did not have time to fill the survey out. Perhaps if the surveys had been considerably shorter, more people would have been willing to devote time to filling them out.

Other reasons given related to the design of the survey, such as:

"Too many yes/no questions. I had opinions that I wanted to share."

Illness, or looking after another person with an illness was a reason given by a small number of participants. There were also a number of random reasons that prevented people from responding, or prevented them from moving onto the next stage of the survey process. These included reasons such as losing the questionnaire while moving, having a reading disability, not being sure about the answers, or being on vacation.

Over surveying

One reason suggested for declining response rates is the increasing number of survey requests people receive (Brennan, 1991).

Table 15 shows the number of survey requests each participant in the follow-up interviews for survey one had received.

Table 15 Number of Survey Requests Received Over Previous Six Months

Number of invitations	Mail survey	Telephone interview	Interview at home	Interview on street or in mall	Email or Internet survey
0	6	9	20	25	25
1	16	2	10	1	4
2	8	7	3	5	2
3	2	2	0	1	1
4	1	2	0	1	1
5	0	11	0	0	0
Total requests	42	85	16	18	15
Mean per person	1.3	2.6	0.5	0.6	0.5

The table illustrates that relatively few respondents had received face-to-face, email or Internet survey requests during the previous six months, each participant receiving a mean of 0.5 requests. This is significantly different to both mail and telephone survey requests. Almost all participants received at least one mail request (mean of 1.3), and the majority of respondents received at least two telephone interview requests. Although the mean number of telephone interview requests was 2.6, 11 people received five requests.

The fact that six respondents did not recall, or at least did not report, receiving a mail survey in the past six months is a reminder about the validity of self-reported data. All but one of these respondents subsequently remembered receiving the Men and Women in Society questionnaire, but their response to the question on mail survey requests received in the past six months was that they had not received such a request (we had, of course, sent these people a mail survey).

As Table 16 shows, the sample's response to the survey requests they received was low; most surveys were not participated in.

Table 16 Number of Surveys Completed Over Previous Six Months

Number of completions	Mail survey	Telephone interview	Interview at home	Interview on street or in mall	Email or Internet survey
0	24	18	21	27	27
1	6	4	10	1	3
2	3	5	2	4	2
3	0	3	0	0	0
4	0	3	0	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0
Total completed	12	35	14	9	7
Mean per person	0.4	1.1	0.4	0.3	0.2

Out of a total of 42 requests to complete a mail survey, only 12 were answered (29 percent). Of the 85 requests to complete a telephone survey, only 35 were answered (41 percent). Only 9 of the 18 requests to be interviewed in the street or in a mall were answered (50 percent). Of the 15 requests to complete a survey via email or through the Internet, only 7 were answered (47 percent). Despite this apparent low response for these survey modes, 14 of the 16 requests to be interviewed at home were answered (88 percent).

While, on average, each person completed 2.3 surveys over the previous six months, this was from an average of 5.3 requests per person. This large number of requests may help to explain why the participation rate was much lower than the request rate.

Negative attitudes to surveys

Another suggestion for the decline in mail survey response rates is negative ‘attitudes’ to surveys (Helgeson et al., 2002; Cavusgil & Elvey-Kirk, 1998). To examine respondents’ attitudes toward surveys, participants in the follow-up interview for survey one were each asked to state how much they agreed or disagreed with a list of statements about surveys. This list of statements and the summary statistics are shown in Table 17 (A table of frequency distributions can be found in Appendix G).

Table 17 Respondents’ Attitudes to Surveys

Attitude Statement	Mean	Mode
Surveys do not serve a useful purpose	3.7	4
Most survey research firms are honest and responsible	2.8	2
The term ‘survey’ is often used to disguise a sales pitch	2.6	2
Surveys give people an opportunity to express their views on important issues	2.2	2
Answering questions in surveys is usually an interesting experience	2.6	2
Surveys are an invasion of privacy	3.4	4
Surveys often take longer to answer than is claimed	2.9	2
Surveys are used to help manufacturers produce better products	2.2	2
Answering questions in surveys is usually a waste of time	3.5	4
Some survey research firms cannot be trusted to maintain the confidentiality of answers	3.8	4
On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree.		

Examination of non-respondents’ attitudes to surveys suggest that these were generally positive. Non-respondents generally agreed that surveys serve a useful purpose, gave people an opportunity to express their views on important issues, and that answering questions is not a waste of time. The majority believed answering questions in a survey is usually an interesting experience. Most also agreed that surveys helped manufacturers produce better products.

The majority of non-respondents agreed that surveys are not an invasion of privacy, and that most survey firms are honest and responsible. Relatively few agreed that some research firms cannot be trusted to maintain the confidentiality of their answers. However, just over half of the participants agreed that surveys often take longer to answer than is claimed, and that the term ‘survey’ is often disguised as a sales pitch.

Participants were also questioned about how they felt with regards to being asked to take part in surveys (see Appendix F for individual comments). They were further probed as to whether they had any issues in terms of loss of control over private information, confidentiality, mistrust of sponsor, or the possibility of embarrassment.

Most non-respondents stated that they were open to completing surveys, or at least did not mind being asked to participate. Another large proportion stated that their reaction depended on interest of the topic, or the circumstances surrounding the survey, such as time. For example:

“Depends on topic, if a good enough reason, will help. This one helps in their education.”

“Like to help if I can. But really time constrained. People will phone when you have people here, or are cooking. Just not much free time. Others may have more free time though.”

A small number of these non-respondents stated that they were not a “big fan” of surveys. One felt obligated to complete the questionnaire, and another completed surveys with reluctance.

Very few non-respondents were worried about confidentiality or had issues with trust and privacy. Those who were concerned qualified their answer by saying that it depended on what was being asked, for example:

“I don’t mind, a bit embarrassing if I don’t have the time, and I don’t like telling people no. Giving out personal information really depends on what they want.”

Unlike the findings of Kulka et al. (1991), only a small number of the non-respondents to survey one stated that confidentiality, alienation, mistrust of the researcher, loss of control over private information, and possibility of embarrassment were reasons why they did not respond, despite being probed. While this survey was on a different topic and sponsored by a university rather than the United States government, as Kulka et al.’s was, if these were issues for non-respondents, it is likely they would have arisen in some form.

Inertia and time lost for other activities were the only two reasons that were found to be similar in both this research and that by Kulka et al. (1991). However, a small number of people did state that they were not interested in the survey, or simply did not wish to participate.

It is interesting to note that, while the attitudes of this sample towards surveys were generally positive, these people did not respond to this particular survey, nor do they generally respond to more than half of all survey requests.

4.4 Reactions to Aspects of a Mail Survey

Each of the interviewed non-respondents to survey one were asked about their reactions to particular aspects of the initial mail survey and ways in which they might be influenced to become a respondent. Particular aspects included the outer envelope and packaging, covering letter, cover design, survey topic, and survey sponsor.

Outer envelope

Respondents to the follow-up interview for survey one were asked their reaction to receiving the initial survey package in the mail. They were also asked if they knew what it was, and if they thought it was junk mail (see Appendix H for individual comments).

Each respondent recognised that the package was from Massey University and none believed it was junk mail. The most common answer was that they wondered why Massey was sending them a package (see Appendix I for example of packaging):

“What is Massey sending me?! Didn’t know what it was, knew it wouldn’t be junk mail because of the packaging.”

However, a number of non-respondents were affiliated to Massey in some way and thought the communication could be related to that affiliation. For example, a number of people thought it was university course material, others suggested that it may have been the Massey Alumni magazine, exam marks, or an assignment. Overall, non-respondents were not negative about receiving the package, and all except one non-respondent, was intrigued enough to open the package.

Respondents were next asked how likely they would have been to open the package if it were in a brown Massey University envelope (see Appendix I). Almost all non-respondents said that the envelope colour would not matter and that they were as likely to open the brown envelope:

"Both pretty similar. Just the same. Doesn't make much difference. Hey – contains the same contents."

However, despite stating they would open the brown envelope, some non-respondents believe that this package did not appear to be a survey, but more like Massey University course work. One person thought a brown envelope indicated *"stodgy business"*, while another suggested a brown envelope was *"more important looking"*.

Non-respondents were asked how likely they would be to open a clear cellophane shrink wrapped package with a Massey University address sheet (see Appendix I). The majority believed they would still open the package. Typical comments were:

"Think because they all have Massey Uni on it then all look official and equal likelihood of opening."

"More interested in content than look. Dependent on when it's delivered – if you have the opportunity to respond. Captivating to see it was from Massey."

One participant said they would be even more likely to open the package as it looked *"more professional and important"*. However, a number of non-respondents commented that they were less likely to open the package as it looked like junk mail, or like some other sort of catalogue or magazine. For example one person stated that they were:

“Less likely than brown or white. That’s what junk mail comes in – all your magazines, etc. Probably would just chuck it out.”

When non-respondents were asked if they had any other comments to make about the envelope or packaging mail surveys came in, the general consensus of those who responded was that it did not really matter, that they would all be opened regardless of packaging style. It was more the name of ‘Massey University’ that prompted curiosity rather than the type of packaging. However, some reiterated that the cellophane shrink wrap resembled commercial information.

As a result of the number of interviewees suggesting that shrink wrapped packaging appeared to be a direct mail sales catalogue or some other form of junk mail, a specific measure for reducing non-response was tested in the second survey on National Identity. For half of the sample, the following statement was inserted on the address cover sheet (see Appendix J for examples):

“IMPORTANT SURVEY ON NEW ZEALAND’S NATIONAL IDENTITY ENCLOSED”

Response rates for the two sub-samples after two reminders were examined to determine whether this statement had an effect on response. The response rates are shown in Table 18.

Table 18 Response Rates to Samples With and Without Additional Cover Statement

	General Electoral Roll	Maori Electoral Roll	Combined Electoral Rolls
	%	%	%
Statement	41.8	27.0	39.2
No statement	47.6	32.6	45.6
Total response rate	44.7	29.4	42.4

The explanatory note attached to the survey address cover reduced the response rate, rather than increased it. Those packages with the statement achieved a response rate of 39 percent, 7 percent lower than those packages without the statement (46 percent). This may suggest that survey packages are opened to investigate package contents. If the content is described on the packaging, the intrigue and stimulus to open the package may be removed.

Covering letter

Participants in the 'Roles of Men and Women in Society' follow-up were asked a series of questions about the covering letter used in the initial mail survey. The key aspects of the covering letter included: an introduction heading, a description of the ISSP programme, the request to participate, mention of the reply-paid envelope, an explanation of how the respondents name was obtained, and an assurance of confidentiality (see for Appendix K actual covering letter).

In particular, participants were asked if they felt the purpose of the letter was clearly explained; if it was easy to read and understand; if there was any important information not included; and if there was any unnecessary information (see Appendix L for individual comments on the covering letter).

Almost all participants stated that the purpose of the letter was clearly explained. Only one person stated that a better explanation was required. One person commented that they did not actually read the covering letter properly; another also commented that it did not include a return date for the survey.

"Yes, probably why I opened the booklet. If it wasn't clear then I would have ripped it up. Wording fine, also said envelope was there so no stamp required."

"Yes, only one thing it didn't have was a date. Instead it said ASAP. May have made me more likely to respond if it had a date."

Overall, the response to the covering letter content was positive and the purpose of the letter was clearly explained:

"Yes. Thought it was straight forward. Saw straight at top and could see what it was about. Knew that Massey was doing it so I felt safe answering questions. And it was quite friendly. And had clear contacts as well."

Almost all respondents also believed that the covering letter was clear, and easy to read and understand:

“Yes. Set out in good paragraph and it’s pretty clear and not too long. Straight to the point. If it was longer, then I would be less likely to read it – get bored and put it down.”

“Yes, it is short and to the point. And it doesn’t waffle. Set out clearly – beginning explains purpose, middle explained who was sending it, and how they got my name. That’s important. The letter answered any questions I would have had.”

Only two respondents felt the letter was *“a bit ambiguous”* or *“complicated to understand”* and only one felt the letter needed to *“Get to the point”*.

All except one respondent thought that there was no additional information they would have liked that was not included. This respondent felt the letter needed to *“get straight to the point.”* However, some suggestions for the covering letter included:

“Could have put where and when the results would have been presented/published.”

“Having a deadline. I got another one sent to me and it needed to say if this could be forwarded by a certain date. Getting a second survey seems pushy – it should have a date.”

“Use was vague, what the end product would support.”

Respondents were asked what in a covering letter they thought would persuade them or other respondents to respond. They were also given suggestions to respond to, such the importance of including how their name and contact details were gained, the importance of the research, assurance of the validity of their response, the time demands of the survey, assurance of confidentiality, and the final use of the data. All except two respondents (who were not worried) stated that including how their name and contact details were gained was important:

“Yes, just want to know – how did a random person get my name? This might affect my response. May not take it as a professional sort of thing if it didn’t say how they got my name.”

"It would need to have that as I would like to know. I would be less likely to do it if it didn't explain."

The importance of the research was also something respondents thought should be stated. Typical answers included:

"Yes, have to put in the importance of the research... what's coming out of it?"

"Importance of survey – if it was going to be beneficial – not a waste of time."

Approximately half of the respondents believed that an assurance of the validity of their response should be included, for example:

"I guess so, we have got to have surveys, and if you are giving part of yourself that should be acknowledged."

"Yes, if I thought if it was going to 50,000 people then I wouldn't worry. But if they said they would really appreciate it, then more likely. If they say they want my help, then I feel appreciated. If I was on the street, I would be more likely to respond. I try to avoid surveys, but if one was mailed to me, it feels more important."

The other half of respondents believed it was not important:

"No, I figure if you interview 100 people you can expect 2 percent not to answer. So I figure I can fit into that category."

Given that the time available to the respondents appears to play a large role in the likelihood of completing a mail survey, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents believed including the time demands of the survey in the covering letter is important. For example:

"Yes, these are not questions that you just tick. You have to think about questions to give accurate answers. If they specify a time you get an idea of how long it will take."

"Yes, probably. If it said it took an hour you probably wouldn't bother, but if it was a quick one, then you would be more likely to respond."

However, one respondent suggested that including time demands may, in fact, deter people from responding. Others suggested that a return date may encourage response, however, another thought that a return date may deter response.

There was a mixture of responses when participants were asked if an assurance of confidentiality would increase the likelihood of response. One respondent stated that they would already assume confidentiality, and approximately one third believed that it is important:

"That's important. Just so you know everything you write isn't going to be given to other people."

"It would impact – if it was not mentioned, I would be less likely to answer."

However, approximately half did not see this as necessary, depending on what the survey was on, and as long as it did not lead to other unsolicited mail. One person also suggested that he or she would simply not answer a particular question if it was too confidential:

"No, because you are not hiding anything or secret. If you are doing things right, there is no problem."

"Confidentiality/name not such a big deal, but dependent on what's being asked. I would be annoyed if, as a result, I started receiving other mail."

"Not a biggie. Depends on what it is. Anything to do with money, financial well being – if you gave out how much money you earn, then I would be ticked off!"

Almost all respondents felt that the final use of the data was important, with particular emphasis on the fact that it would need to be particularly useful or helpful, for example:

"I would like to know what it is used for. If didn't know, I possibly wouldn't answer, because I would worry that I would end up with sales pitches or door knockers. I need to know it is genuine."

"Whether it would improve customer service or the product. The City Council survey asked a lot of questions about leisure, sport and cultural activities and that would be used to determine where money will be spent. Important to have input into that process."

"Not really worried about that. As long as it's useful, and it's being used, that's all I need to know."

Overall, the impression of the covering letter used in this mail survey was positive. While some respondents stated that various aspects of the covering letter, such as assurances of confidentiality, were not necessary, they also stated that they were not redundant.

Cover design

Participants were asked about the cover design of the initial questionnaire. Participants were questioned on what they thought about the cover used in the initial survey, about an alternative cover, and whether this alternative cover would have made them more likely to respond (see Appendix M for the two cover designs).

Most participants stated they liked the original cover and commented that it showed everything that was needed, in particular, the name of the sponsor and the confidentiality of the survey. Typical words used to describe the cover included: 'plain', 'simple', 'uncluttered', 'crisp', 'bureaucratic', 'clear', and 'professional' (see Appendix N for individual comments).

"I think it's fine. Lots of clear space but think it's appropriate. It is a functional product. It needs to look clean, clear, straightforward and uncluttered."

"I like the colour. The layout is pretty simple. Not lots of crap. Easy to read – I prefer a less cluttered cover."

"Good. Uncluttered and simple, which is good. All it needs is to do the trick, no smiling child pulling faces. It doesn't need to be a bank commercial."

In contrast, some respondents did not like this cover suggesting it was “*too plain*” or “*quite boring*”. Other comments included:

“Cover is uninteresting. Use of colours is nice, but I expect to see a bit of art work”

“It’s too plain – I prefer pictures and visual stuff – it’s straight-up boring.”

“Ok, but it doesn’t look like something you’d get from a university. Not very eye catching; they may want to talk to a designer and come up with something more appealing.”

Other respondents stated that “*It’s there to serve a purpose – just a cover*”, or that the design “*doesn’t concern him*”. Other respondents described the cover as:

“It’s ok. I don’t dislike anything about it. It’s set out nicely. Nice and clear. Easy to read. As long as I can read it.”

“Totally neutral. Doesn’t matter. Once you open it and read the cover letter, then you know it’s a survey and didn’t affect me. As long as it looks professional. It doesn’t need graphics, etc.”

When respondents were asked what they thought of the alternative cover, almost all preferred it over the first cover:

“I prefer this one – more details, better explanation. I would be more likely to respond to this.”

“Flash compared to the other one. Probably wouldn’t be more likely to respond, but still an improvement – it looks better.”

Few participants disliked it, and one stated:

“I don’t like it, doesn’t look professional. It looks more like it’s from a kindergarten than a university. I would be less likely to respond.”

However, despite the majority of people preferring this cover, only two thought it would make them more likely to respond. For example:

"I think this one is better presented. I like the way it is designed. You have the man and women there and the roles of society thing in the middle. I like the graphics. It's the same thing on each cover. Even though I like the design better on the second cover, I would have equal probability of responding to both."

"I like second one better, because of its visual and proportional layout. No influence on responding."

"It's aesthetically pleasing – an attractive design on the cover. But I think the first one looks more like something for the collection of information. I think the second cover is more appropriate for a cover of a report, or for reporting the results of a survey. I don't know if it would make a difference. My decision wasn't based on the cover design. It just came down to bad timing for me."

While participants had suggestions on how a cover 'should' look ('big', 'bold' and 'including something that grabs your attention', 'a bit of colour', 'a bit of thought', 'professionalism'), a number of participants reiterated that the cover was not important. For example:

"The cover was nice, but I'm more interested in what's inside", and

"A flash cover wouldn't necessarily make me want to participate."

Participants were also asked to rate both covers on a 1-7 likeability scale (where 1 = Do not like it at all and 7 = like it very much).

Table 19 Likeability Rating Summary for Survey One Original and Alternative Covers

Individual Likeability Rating	Cover A Original Cover	Cover B Alternative Cover
Mean	4.2	4.7
Mode	5.0	5.0

As Table 19 shows, there was very little difference between the mean likeability of the two covers, both with means within 0.5 of each other, and both with modes of five.

This may suggest two things: that the use of a graphic in a cover only slightly increases its likeability, or that there is very little difference in the likeability of the two covers. Consequently, these two particular covers may not have been expected to show a difference in survey response.

To further investigate the effect of a cover graphic on survey response, a graphic cover design was tested on half the sample in survey three. This was prompted by previous research that suggested response rates could be enhanced, if only marginally, by a more 'likeable' cover design (Gendall, 1996). Two questionnaire covers were designed. One plain cover including the name of the study and the sponsor's details - Cover A, and another cover also including a stylised graphic - Cover B (see Appendix O for examples). The alternative covers were each allocated to half of the sample.

These two questionnaire covers were first tested for likeability (on a scale of 1-7) on a convenience sample of 40 potential respondents; results are shown below in Table 20. Response rates for the two sub-samples after two reminders were examined to determine whether designs had an effect on response. The response rates are also shown in Table 20.

Table 20 Response to Graphic and Non-graphic Cover Designs

	Mean Likeability Rating	Mode Likeability Rating	Response Rate ⁷ %
Cover A - Graphic	4.7	5.0	62.4
Cover B - No Graphic	3.7	3.0	61.8

As Table 20 shows, Cover A was liked more than Cover B. As a result, it was expected that Cover A would receive a significantly higher response rate than Cover B. However, as Table 20 shows, both covers received almost identical response rates regardless of their cover design (though the small observed difference in response is in the expected direction).

⁷ These two response rates were calculated two weeks after the follow-up telephone interviews were conducted, thus the response rate is slightly higher than that shown in Table 8.

Survey topic

Participants in the survey one follow-up were next asked what they thought about the topic 'Roles of Men and Women in Society' and whether this was a subject they were interested in. Almost all respondents believed the topic was interesting; others went further, qualifying that it was particularly interesting, as the roles of men and women have changed over time (see Appendix P for individual comments):

"A good topic. Attitudes are always changing. An often talked about topic."

"I found the questions quite interesting. I answered them and then I gave them to my partner to answer them, just to see how different we were. It's a topic that needs to be looked at, insofar as global issues and needs big changes in those areas."

"Interesting enough, as the roles are changing and evolving."

"Interesting and timely – a lot of women are head of their business, but they are burning themselves out doing business and family."

Only a small number were particularly enthusiastic:

"Yes really got into it once filling it out. Highly intrigued."

One interview participant seemed to sum up the general attitude towards the topic:

"Was interested, but not enough to read it at the time."

Very few non-respondents were not interested in the topic, but one non-respondent was unsure what the study was trying to achieve. Another non-respondent believed the topic had already been well covered:

"I think it's been thrashed and I can't see a lot of benefit out of it. It's an ongoing topic - roles were clear 20/30 years ago, but not so much now. Analysing it now, to me it doesn't seem that beneficial."

When asked if they had any other comments about survey topics in general, in particular, levels of privacy, or invasion of privacy, non-respondents were generally open about the topic. Most agreed that they would be least likely to answer topics of a personal nature, for example:

“I just think they have to be clear on what they are about. Certainly personal stuff is harder to divulge.”

“Some are ridiculous – personal finance/medical – too personal; privacy issues – you couldn’t trust them to keep confidential.”

A number of those interviewed also commented, as stated earlier, that the decision to participate in a survey often revolves around the topic:

“Depends what’s in it that relates to me. How it impacts me.”

“Need to be conducted carefully depending on subject – privacy; don’t want a feeling there is going to be a follow up – commercial. E.g. rating vacuum cleaners – get someone knocking on the door.”

Non-respondents were asked to rate the likelihood on the Juster Scale of responding to eight different survey topics (see Appendix P for individual frequencies). Each of the eight survey topics fitted into four different topic categories: commercial surveys, personal surveys, local/social surveys, and political surveys. These survey topics, and the participants’ mean likelihood of responding are shown in

Table 21.

Table 21 Mean Juster Probabilities for Differing Survey Topics

Topic category	Topic	Mean Juster Probability
Commercial	Home appliances	3.6
	Breakfast cereals	3.5
Personal	Your medical history	4.5
	Your personal finances	3.8
Local/Social	A second bridge for Palmerston North	6.4
	The ‘City Heart’ project	5.3

Political	The environment	6.5
	Immigration	4.8

As

Table 21 shows, commercial surveys are the least likely to be responded to, with only 35 percent of interviewed non-respondents saying they would be likely to respond to a survey on breakfast cereal, and 36 percent of interviewed non-respondents being likely to respond to a survey on home appliances.

Surveys on personal topics are also likely to have a lower response rate, with only 45 percent being likely to respond to a survey on their medical history, and 38 percent responding to a survey on personal finances.

Surveys on topics related to social or political issues received the highest likelihood of response from non-respondents. Approximately 65 percent would be likely to respond to a survey on a second bridge for Palmerston North or the environment, and around 50 percent of respondents stated they would respond to a survey on immigration and the ‘City Heart’ project.

Survey sponsor

Participants were next asked to use the Juster scale to rate the likelihood of responding to a survey on ‘The Roles of Men and Women in Society’ being conducted by various organisations. These organisations included government departments, education providers, private research firms and government affiliated organisations. These survey sponsors, and participants’ mean likelihood of responding are shown in Table 22.

Table 22 Mean Juster Probabilities for Differing Survey Sponsors

Sponsor category	Sponsor	Mean Juster Probability
Another university	University of Otago	6.1
Government department	Statistics New Zealand	5.6
	The Department of Internal Affairs	4.8
Private research firm	AC Nielsen Research	4.0

Government related organisation	Ministry of Women's Affairs	5.1
	Men's Health Collective	4.6

As Table 22 shows, non-respondents were most likely to respond to a survey on 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' if it was conducted by another university. Respondents are least likely to participate if a private research firm was conducting the same survey, with only 40 percent being likely to take part. While government departments and government affiliated organisations rated higher than private research firms, with between 46 percent and 56 percent respondents likely to respond, they still did not rate as high as education providers.

In addition to the Juster scale questions, respondents were asked whether a different sponsor or administrator of this questionnaire on 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' would have altered their likelihood of response. Participants were asked if a university conducting this survey meant that they were more or less likely to be involved, and what if the same information was being collected by a commercial research firm or a government department.

Consistent with the Juster predictions, almost all respondents stated they would be more likely to respond to a University-conducted survey (see Appendix Q for individual comments):

"More likely, as it would be conducted in a proper and professional manner. Information will be researched and constructed well. Good access to results for respondents. Researchers are better trained, will conduct intellectual analysis."

"More likely... if have time!! Because they are learning, that's why they are there. You go to Massey; you want to better your education. If we can help, we will."

"More likely; at least it's an institution that is learning, and you gain something out of it. But if it was a breakfast cereal, they probably do it to sell more cereal, so nothing is gained."

"More likely – because I know that they have a marketing section and we should support the people there. There are many things happening that Massey could do that other companies get paid to do (surveys)."

A small number of respondents stated that the sponsor was not important - *"It doesn't make much difference who funds the survey"* and only one respondent believed they would be less likely to participate:

"Less likely than StatsNZ. As StatsNZ is a governing body, Massey is doing it for other reasons. I trust the government to authorise those sorts of areas – Massey doesn't rate as a governing body."

Similarly, consistent with the Juster predictions, when respondents were asked the likelihood of response if a commercial research company was collecting the same information, the majority stated they would be less likely to respond. A number of respondents suggested that commercial companies are more interested in the monetary implications of the research, rather than the societal value of the research:

"Probably less likely. It's straight commercial activity, although probably does benefit society in some way. I would rather help students than a commercial firm"

"Less likely than Uni. I am very interested in education side, not the commercial side. By commercial, I mean business. Commercial research companies just create their own ideas. They won't listen."

Some respondents also commented that they would be less likely to respond unless they knew the commercial firm, suggesting a lower level of trust or credibility.

Approximately one third of respondents believed they would be more likely to respond to this survey if it was being conducted by a government department. But some respondents also commented that responding to a government survey is a way to make their opinions known:

"It would be a similar level to Massey Uni. You raise your voice that this is what you want. May go back to parliament and something better may happen to this country. More likely to respond to government than commercial research company. No one hears you. At least if you go through government, someone might hear you; to help the country is good."

“Would respond – I’ve got a lot to say – they could do something about (though probably wouldn’t).”

Another third stated they were neither more nor less likely to respond, and the remainder were neutral.

These findings suggest that the survey sponsor has an effect on respondents’ likelihood of responding, universities having the greatest likelihood of response and private research firms the lowest. However, there are a minority who believe sponsorship is not relevant to their response.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate non-response in mail surveys. Specifically, the objectives were to estimate the relative levels of non-response at different stages of a mail survey, to examine why non-response occurs at each step, how non-respondents react to aspects of a mail survey, and to investigate factors that could increase mail survey response rates.

To achieve these objectives, an attempt was made to contact the non-respondents of three mail surveys. A total of 141 non-respondents were contacted, a relatively high number given that, by their nature, non-respondents are hard to survey. A total of 33 non-respondents were interviewed face-to-face to determine their attitudes towards surveys, the stage of the response process at which they withdrew, why non-response occurred at that step, their reactions to aspects of the survey, and the factors that could increase the probability of them participating in a mail survey. In addition, 48 non-respondents returned a short mail survey, and another 60 answered a short telephone interview, both of which examined the stage of the response process at which they discontinued and the reasons for this.

This section discusses the findings reported in section 4, the implications of these findings, possible directions for future research, and, finally, some strengths and limitations of the research.

5.2 Levels of Survey Response

There are few estimates from previous research examining non-response to mail surveys of the relative levels of non-response at different stages of the response process. The findings of the research reported here suggest that survey package non-receipt is a significant, but generally unrecognised contributor to mail survey non-response. Across the three surveys studied, a mean of 24.3 percent of potential respondents claimed not to have received their survey package. This is, on average six, percent more than were recorded. Of those potential respondents who received the survey package, the most common stage at which survey recipients withdrew from the response process was after they had opened the package, but had not started filling the questionnaire out. Another important stage where non-respondents withdrew was after they had begun the questionnaire, but had not completed or returned it.

Survey package non-receipt may result from incorrect contact information, delivery errors, interception by others followed by failure to forward to the correct person, or the recipients failure to read or understand the survey request. Generally, the level of non-receipt is only been recognised when survey packages are returned to the sender, however, the actual number, including unreturned GNAs, appears be significantly higher than this. The finding of 24.3 percent survey non-receipt is considerably higher than the 10.8 percent of non-receipt found by Kulka et al. (1991), and the 10 percent reported by Brennan and Hoek (1992).

As the research reported here shows, a number of non-recipients were additional GNAs found in the follow-up surveys that had not been identified in the initial surveys. The discrepancy between measured and actual GNAs supports findings reported by Sosdian and Sharp (1980) who found that access failure rather than resistance was a key reason for mail survey non-response. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this under-reporting of GNAs is responsible for declining response rates, as there is no evidence that this is a recent phenomenon. Unfortunately, no level of instrument manipulation will increase response rates if potential respondents do not receive the questionnaire.

While package receipt is a stage in the response process that has been omitted from a number of models (see Furse & Stewart, 1984), it deserves further investigation. It would be particularly useful to develop an industry estimate of non-response due to non-receipt of the survey package. This could be investigated by following-up a series of mail surveys with telephone calls to determine which non-responses were actually non-receipts. This estimate may provide researchers with more realistic GNA rates, or at least motivate researchers to obtain the most recent sampling frame possible. In situations where obtaining a recent sampling frame is not possible (especially when any sampling frame may be out of date the day after it is published) researchers may require a larger initial sample to allow for a higher number of non-receipts.

Alternatively, as the number of GNAs received appears to be smaller than the number of unanswered questionnaires that should be returned, the formula used for calculating mail survey response could be modified to incorporate unreturned GNAs (and possibly undetected ineligible). This approach is not new; support for it comes from research organisations such as AAPOR (2000) and CASRO (1982). The conventional formula for calculating mail survey response is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Conventional Response Rate Formula

$$R1 = \frac{A}{A + D + E}$$

Where: A = Valid responses

B = GNAs

C = Ineligibles

D = Refusals

E = Non-returns

An alternative formula that assumes the proportion of (unreturned) GNAs in the non-returns is the same as the proportion of (returned) GNAs in the total sample is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8 Alternative Response Rate Formula

$$R2 = \frac{A}{A + D + E - \frac{B}{A + B + C + D + E} * E}$$

Applying these two formulae to the three surveys studied provides the following response rate information (for survey three, GNAs and ineligibles are combined, see Appendix R for equation workings):

Table 23 Comparison of Conventional and Alternative Response Rate Calculations

	R1	R2	Percent Difference
Survey One	52.5	55.4	2.9
Survey Two	49.6	51.6	2.0
Survey Three	58.0	61.3	3.2

As Table 23 shows, by incorporating the estimated proportion of non-returned GNAs in the response rate formula, survey response rates are slightly increased. This finding suggests that mail survey response rates as conventionally calculated are underestimated. By how much will depend on a number of factors such as the number of reminders used, and the currency of the sampling frame. Although this formula assumes that the number of returned GNAs is the same as the number of unreturned GNAs, this formula may provide a more representative response rate than without their inclusion.

In this study, the two key stages of potential respondent withdrawal are consistent with the Kulka et al. (1991) study. However, compared to Kulka et al. (1991), this research found a smaller proportion of non-respondents who received the questionnaire, but did not open it, and fewer non-respondents who finished the questionnaire, but did not mail it back. This suggests that additional stimuli are required to move potential respondents further along the response process in these two areas. Stimuli are first required to encourage recipients to begin the survey once they have opened the package. However, this assumes that once the questionnaire has been started, it will be completed and returned. To complement this, and address the second problem area, research into methods of encouraging the completion and return of the questionnaire is required. Some possibilities are discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4.

5.3 Reasons for Non-response

Probing non-respondents' reactions to requests to participate in the survey did not reveal any dominant reason for non-response. However, when asked specifically why they did not respond to the initial survey, lack of time was the most frequent reason given. This is consistent with Kaner et al.'s (1998) work that found approximately one fifth of United Kingdom General Practitioners had no time for extra work when asked why they did not respond to a mail survey.

Some reasons for non-response could also be related to survey design. In particular, one non-respondent interviewed reported that the length of the survey prevented them from completing the survey. It could also be inferred that the reported lack of time was a result of the perceived length of the questionnaire. In addition, the types and the order of questions may be more inhibiting to response than researchers generally assume. For example, one non-respondent stated the survey had *"Too many yes/no questions. I had opinions that I wanted to share"*. One survey also had a difficult first question which may have dissuaded potential respondents from completing the questionnaire. This is consistent with previous research, which found that the first question is the most crucial in determining whether or not the questionnaire will be answered, and that carefully ordered questions in easy-to-answer formats, can increase response rates (Dillman, 2000; Dillman, Sinclair & Clark, 1993).

If time and length are the greatest barriers to survey completion, future research could examine methods designed to reduce the perceived burden of the questionnaire; both in terms of length, time, and effort required. While past research demonstrates that questionnaire length affects response rates (Edwards, Roberts, Clarke, Di Guiseppi, Pratrapp, Wentz and Kwan, 2002; Dillman, 2000; and Yammarino, Skinner & Childers, 1991), few studies suggest how the perceived length could be reduced.

One immediate problem is defining questionnaire 'length'. Length could be defined by the number of questions, the number of pages, or the time taken to complete the questionnaire. However, if a survey was limited by the number of questions, the objectives of the research may not be achieved. There is also more to questionnaire

length than a simple count of pages; formatting the same number of questions onto fewer pages to make a questionnaire appear shorter is unlikely to reduce the perceived burden of the request. While the length of time taken to complete the questionnaire seems a reasonable measure, this will vary between respondents.

Indicating in the covering letter how long the questionnaire will take may help reduce the perceived time burden. However, this assumes that survey recipients read the covering letter. In addition, the credibility of the sponsor and potential for resurveying may be reduced if the questionnaire takes significantly longer than stated.

Another possibility for reducing the perceived burden is to manipulate the graphic design and layout of the questionnaire. In addition to non-verbal cues such as font, numbering and symbols, it is possible to manipulate a questionnaire's 'graphic paralanguage'. Graphic paralanguage refers to the three key elements of visual perception: brightness and colour, shape and location. Preliminary research has found graphic paralanguage to affect the likelihood of response to specific items (Davis, 1999). Dillman, Jenkins, Martin and DeMaio (1996) found tasks such as orientating the questionnaire and turning pages may burden less able readers because of the additional work required over and above reading the questions and response options. In addition, Featherston and Moy (1990) found the use of skip questions causes greater, rather than less, mental burden. These factors may increase the likelihood of non-response if a recipient was to quickly peruse a questionnaire.

The research described above warrants further investigation. A split sample experiment could test a conventional design against an alternative that has paid attention to the graphic aspects of questionnaire design that are expected to reduce respondent burden. By comparing response rates, researchers may be able to determine whether these aspects of a questionnaire's design will help increase response. It may also be useful to keep track of the cost of designing a more appealing questionnaire, as any increase (or decrease) in response rate may not warrant the additional design costs.

No other reasons for non-response stood out as applying to a number of non-respondents. An assortment of random reasons for non-response was given, including illness, vacation, and shifting. While these reasons are beyond researchers' control,

there is an element of time, or lack of time to each one. Research investigating methods of reducing the perceived burden of the questionnaire may apply equally to these reasons for non-response.

Over-surveying

On average, each non-respondent to 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' survey had completed 2.3 surveys over the previous six months, from an average of 5.3 requests. The majority of these requests were by mail and telephone. Almost all participants received at least one mail request in addition to 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' survey, and the majority of respondents received at least two telephone interview requests. However, relatively few respondents had received face-to-face, email or Internet survey requests during the previous six months, with each participant on average receiving less than one request in these modes. This suggests that either telephone surveys are swamping all the other methods of survey research and that telephone is now the dominant form of research, or that respondents may be confusing telemarketing and marketing research by telephone. This finding supports Brennan's (1991) assertion that New Zealanders' exposure to surveys is high.

While it is not possible to determine if these request statistics amount to excessive surveying of New Zealanders, this does seem a high level of survey requests. Unfortunately, the number of survey requests an individual receives is beyond a single researcher's control. The impossibility of survey volume regulation makes it difficult to limit the number of survey requests an individual may receive. Perhaps the only way to reduce over-surveying is to show restraint and only use a mail survey when other non-intrusive research tools such as behavioural observation will not suffice.

Negative attitudes to surveys

A positive attitude to surveys did not appear to influence recipients to respond to 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' survey. Time and topic appear to be more important determinants of response. This is in contrast to research literature which suggests individuals' attitudes towards research are important predictors of their

behaviour. (Cavusgil and Elvey-Kirk, 1998; Helgeson et al., 2002). However, the research reported is consistent with the established finding that there is only a very small group of 'hard-core' non-respondents and that most non-respondents to a particular survey are not non-respondents in general (Brennan & Hoek, 1992).

The findings of this study contrast with Kulka et al.'s (1991) conclusions. Kulka et al. (1991) found that concerns for privacy and confidentiality were significant reasons for non-response in the 1990 US Mail Census. In particular, they found that, while majority of their respondents did not have high levels of concern about privacy, there was a large minority for whom this concern was quite high, and who refrained from responding because of this. However, in the current study, this minority was even smaller. In New Zealand, surveys are not generally seen as an invasion of privacy, and respondents generally appear to trust survey research firms. Only a very small number of the non-respondents in this study stated confidentiality, issues with trust and privacy, loss of control over private information, and possibility of embarrassment as reasons why they did not respond, despite being probed. When these factors were of concern, respondents' decision to participate depended on the questions being asked. The only two similar reasons for survey non-response in both this research and that by Kulka et al. (1991) were inertia and time lost for other activities.

There appeared only to be two negative attitudes towards surveys. Firstly, that mail surveys often took longer than was claimed (which may explain why time was frequently cited as a reason for not responding). If researchers are going to include the amount of time required to complete a survey, they need to be honest about the actual time required. This concept is further discussed in section 5.4. Secondly, some respondents felt that some mail surveys involved deception in that they have sales pitches disguised as market research. This supports previous research by Brennan (1992), who reported approximately 60 percent of mail survey respondents believed that selling under the guise of research, or 'sugging' was an issue. There may be little that can be done to reduce the level of sugging in the sales industry. However, individual researchers and industry organisations should do their best to discourage the practice.

5.4 Reactions to Aspects of a Mail Survey

Previous research has found that the only effective researcher-manipulable aspects of a mail survey are incentives, reminders, and pre-notification. Official sponsorship and topic salience has also been found to affect respondents' likelihood of participation; however, these two variables are usually beyond a researcher's control. The results of the current study support this literature; in particular, the effect of different sponsors and topic types. The results also provide preliminary insights into the effect of variations in the outer envelope, covering letters and cover design on respondents' behaviour.

Outer envelope

The findings from the research reported here suggest it is not the package type that will impact mail survey response rates, but the information written on the package, namely the sponsor, and lack of description of the package content.

Almost all respondents were positive about receiving a survey package and believed they would open the three outer packages equally (white envelope, brown envelope and clear shrink-wrapped cellophane). However, some respondents stated that the cellophane shrink wrap resembled a commercial package. To test this, an additional heading describing the package contents was inserted on the cover of half of the cellophane shrink-wrapped surveys for the 'National Identity' survey. The response to the labelled packages decreased by approximately seven percent when compared to those without the statement; this suggests that clarifying the non-commercial status of the contents did not increase respondents' willingness to participate.

Although recognising the sender (Massey University), most respondents were intrigued as to the content of the initial package, and stated that this was the reason they opened the package. That is, the name of the sponsor, Massey University, stimulated the opening of the package, rather than the type of packaging per se. The package was generally not recognised as being a survey; however, a number of non-respondents were affiliated to Massey in some way and thought the communication could be related to

that affiliation. For example, they thought the package could be university course material, the Massey Alumni magazine, or an assignment. However, these associations are unlikely to apply to commercial organisations conducting mail surveys.

Previous research on survey packaging appears to have limited its scope to the commercial considerations of envelope size, the use of letterhead, and the effect of first class postage. Only one study was found to investigate the effect of different packaging types, reporting that unusual packaging such as a box may be more likely to attract a recipient's attention and prompt the opening of the package (Patchen, Woodard, Caralley, & Hess, 1994).

The results of this study suggest that respondents open a package to determine its contents. While people are not averse to mail surveys, if the content is described on the packaging, the stimulus to open the package may be removed, reducing the likelihood of a respondent opening the package. Sponsors should make use of this intrigue by emphasising their brand and removing content information from the package.

Covering letter

The findings reported here suggest that details outlining the source of respondents' names and contact details, stressing the importance of the research, assuring the validity of participants' responses, the time demands of the survey, assuring confidentiality, explaining the final use of the data, providing sponsor contact details, and perhaps a return date, should all be included in the covering letter. This is consistent with recommendations by Dillman (2000). Although some non-respondents stated parts of the covering letter, such as assurances of confidentiality, were unnecessary, they also stated that these were not redundant.

Despite this, some non-respondents believed that the covering letter had little influence over their decision to participate in the survey. Rather, the survey topic and time available played a bigger part in their decision not to participate. However, non-respondents suggested three possible ways to improve covering letters: firstly, explaining how and where results will be used; secondly, including a deadline; and thirdly, providing an estimate of how long the survey will take to complete.

Stating how and where survey results were being presented or published may be an important omission from covering letters. While this is not a regular recommendation for covering letters, a short paragraph or sentence could easily be included in the initial covering letter, or perhaps in subsequent follow-up letters. However, no empirical evidence was found describing the effect of this inclusion, and consequently this suggestion needs empirical testing. If it was not found to depress response rates, it may be a valuable addition to a covering letter, providing it does not make the letter too long.

Non-respondents suggested including a deadline identifying the latest date they could return the completed survey would increase their likelihood of response. While worth further investigation, including a return deadline may have mixed results. Previous research by Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch (1996) suggested a deadline may create a sense of urgency that may discourage response. It is possible a short deadline may be seen as an unreasonable request, resulting in a less favourably received appeal. Alternatively, the survey may be perceived by the recipients as rushed, or badly planned, and thus they may become less willing to participate in what they see as a poorly prepared study. However, this may only apply if the deadline is relatively short. Further research could investigate the effect of a more lenient deadline, during which time a reminder may act more as an encouragement for late responders than as a deterrent for otherwise obliging respondents.

As some non-respondents suggested, an indication of the time required to complete the questionnaire may be a helpful inclusion in a covering letter. As one non-respondent suggested: *"If they specify a time, you get an idea of how long it will take"*. However, this assumes that the amount of time required is not unreasonable. As another non-respondent pointed out: *"If it said it took an hour, you probably wouldn't bother, but if it was a quick one, then you would be more likely to respond"*. Researchers would need to be accurate and honest about the time estimated, as deviations may reinforce the negative attitudes that questionnaires often take longer than claimed. Covering letters for short questionnaires could include a time estimate, although it may be best to leave this estimate out on longer questionnaires to reduce the likelihood of depressing response rates.

Cover design

The findings of the current research suggest the inclusion of a graphic has a negligible effect on response rates. While it may help increase the overall impression of the package, the additional cost of designing a cover graphic may not be beneficial.

While the first set of covers tested received very similar likeability ratings; some non-respondents preferred the simple, more bureaucratic cover design and others the graphic design. This may suggest two things. Firstly, that the use of a graphic in the cover only slightly increase its likeability, or secondly, that there was very little difference in the likeability of the two covers. However, the second set of covers tested received different ratings; the cover including a graphic was rated significantly more likeable than the cover without a graphic. As the cover with a graphic was rated as more likeable, it was expected that this version would receive a significantly higher response rate. However, the response rates for both sub-samples were almost identical. (Perhaps this should not be surprising given that a proportion of non-respondents stated that the cover had little relevance to whether or not they responded to the mail survey.)

The current study suggests that a cover graphic has only a small effect on response rate, if it has any effect at all. To the extent that the observed effect was in the expected direction, it provides weak support for Gendall's (2003) conclusions that cover design likeability affects response rate, but for the observed effect was very small and non-significant. This suggests that surveying resources may be more beneficial if used for an additional reminder letter or incentive rather than questionnaire cover design.

Despite this, researchers may wish to investigate cover design as part of the larger issue of questionnaire design. It is possible that the cover design will have little effect in isolation; however, when incorporated with the graphic paralanguage and visual cues of the entire questionnaire layout, there may be some effect.

Survey topic

Other than the time available to a potential respondent, the topic of a mail survey appears to be the most important factor motivating mail survey response.

The findings of the current study suggest survey recipients may find a particular topic interesting, but it is the degree of relevance, or salience, and its impact on their personal life, that will motivate people to return a questionnaire. While this is consistent with previously reported research (Edwards et al., 2002; Roth & BeVier, 1998; Martin, 1994; Heberlein & Baumgartner, 1978), this research has only reported that a correlation between salience and response exists. This is not particularly helpful in designing a survey for the general population, as the topic's salience and likelihood of response will vary between individual recipients.

The research reported here provides some information on which survey topics may receive a higher response rate than others. Non-respondents were most likely to respond to local/social surveys (such as regional council proposals) or politically-based surveys (such as on immigration). Non-respondents are least likely to respond to surveys on topics of a commercial nature, (such as home appliances), followed by topics of a personal nature (such as personal finances). However, it would be useful to further test the effect of topic salience by comparing relative response rates, speed and completion levels on differing topics (political, local/social, commercial, and personal).

Unfortunately, researchers conducting commercial and personal based surveys may receive lower response rates than other topics. More commercially orientated topics such as personal finances or home appliances may need to be presented in a way that will incorporate or reflect potential respondents' local or national social context. Depending on the objectives of a study, this could be done by nesting questions amongst related, but more societal questions, even if these questions have little to do with the research objectives.

In situations where the topic cannot be manipulated, the survey may need to be co-sponsored by a credible source, such as a university or government-related organisation. This sponsorship may help counter low interest levels and help increase the likelihood

of response. It also may be beneficial to use an interesting survey title and to design a covering letter that will arouse interest. Alternatively, for topics of a commercial nature, it may be worth evaluating the use of other data collection methods such as mall intercepts or personal interviews.

Survey sponsor

The results of this study support earlier work that suggests surveys conducted by a university are more likely to be returned than questionnaires from other sources (Fox et al., 1988; Edwards et al., 2002).

Surveys from education providers, such as universities, are most likely to be responded to, followed by those from government departments, then government-related organisations. Private research companies, such as AC Nielsen Research, received the lowest likelihood of response, a finding that probably reflects the commercial nature of their research. Only a small number of non-respondents felt the survey sponsor was not important. For private research firms, this finding suggests that they should not find low response rates surprising, and may need to include additional design factors to stimulate response (such as incentives and additional reminders). Although not investigated in this research, response rates may also be low for consumer organisations conducting their own research.

Previous research has found that survey recipients are more likely to respond if a survey is sponsored by an organisation to which the recipient belongs, respects, or is familiar with such as an organisations which the respondent is a member or is affiliated to. However, other than a university, the definition of 'organisation to which the recipient belongs, respects, or is familiar with' remains rather vague. While this would vary from person-to-person, in addition to universities, common, respected, organisations have been identified in the research reported here.

While sponsorship is not an aspect of a survey that easily lends itself to researcher manipulation, it is possible that co-sponsorship or even approval from a university or government department may help increase mail survey response. If it was possible to

replicate the current study with a larger sample size, it would be of interest to determine the effect of co-sponsorship or endorsement. The relative effect of sponsors could be investigated by sending a survey that was either co-sponsored or endorsed by a university, a government department, and a private research firm, and comparing the relative response rates, speed and completion levels.

5.5 Strengths and Limitations

Many researchers have drawn on psychological theories to explain the underlying reasons for survey response, and developed equally valid models describing various plausible survey response processes. However, there are very few studies examining mail survey non-response specifically from a non-respondent's point of view.

The study reported here has combined and extended research conducted by Kulka et al. (1991) and Helgeson (1994). It has determined the level of non-response at different stages of the mail survey process, increased the understanding of what occurs when mail survey recipients do not respond, and identified factors that may encourage non-respondents to become responders. While some may argue that the results might not translate perfectly into behaviour due to the self-reported nature of the study, otherwise unattainable insights have been gained. This is particularly useful for New Zealand researchers as previous studies have been primarily focussed overseas.

There are a number of limitations and directions future research could take in this area. While directions for future research have been described throughout the discussion and conclusions, there would be benefits in replicating this study to allow generalisation to a wider population. As the non-respondents in this study were derived from surveys of the general public, the results cannot be generalised to specific populations. It would be beneficial to repeat this study on industrial or commercial populations, as even less is known about the factors that may influence mail survey response in these populations.

One of the main limitations of this research was the small sample of non-respondents in the three surveys. Although by their nature non-respondents are hard to contact, a larger

scale replication would help provide a greater representation of non-respondents. In addition, survey one was conducted solely in Palmerston North. As a result, a number of non-respondents may have been affiliated to Massey University. This affiliation may have influenced their likelihood of responding to the follow-up interview. Finally, despite every effort to train all interviewers well, some performed better than others.

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8 APPENDICES

Appendix A

Briefing Documents and Interviewer Instructions for Roles of Men and Women

ISSP Follow-Up Interview

MASSEY UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING BEHAVIOUR OF MAIL SURVEY NON-RESPONDENTS

Instructions for Interviewers

WHEN TO INTERVIEW

1. Interview on any day of the week except Sunday and public holidays.
2. Interview at any time during the day or evening, but not after dark.
3. Make all call backs after 6:00pm unless you have an appointment at another time. However, you should be particularly careful if interviewing in the dark.
4. Plan your work ahead. Start your interviews as soon as possible. Don't leave them until the last minute

WHERE TO INTERVIEW

5. You have been given a list of people who did not respond to the original ISSP survey, posted mid July. These non-respondents are the specific people we wish to gain information from. As a result you will not need to approach any houses other than those on your list.
6. If the designated respondent is not available on your original attempt, you should make a maximum of two call-backs on different days and at different times before you abandon that person and substitute another for it. If people other than your designated respondent are home, try to make an appointment for when your designated respondent will be available.
7. If you are refused an interview, or if after three calls at the same dwelling (the original contact and two call backs) an interview cannot be made, you should abandon that address.

RECORDING ADDRESSES AND CALLS

8. You must record details of each interview you attempt on your call sheet.
9. Each time you attempt an interview you should record the outcome by writing one of the following codes:
 - 1 Interview time obtained
 - 2 No one at home/respondent out, call again
 - 3 No longer at this address
 - 4 Respondent refusal
 - 5 Interview obtained
 - 6 Other

ELECTING INTERVIEWS

10. At each dwelling where someone answers the door, explain that you would like to speak with the person on your list.
11. If the selected person is not available, establish a time and day when it would be convenient to call back and interview him/her. Record this on your call-sheet. Also ask for the selected person's name, and record this so you will remember who to ask for when you call back.
12. You will first need to ask the identified person if they would be happy to be interviewed, and if so make a suitable time. You may find that right then suits, however for ethical reasons, we must give the non-respondents an opportunity to decline responding from the outset.
13. Only the specified person should be interviewed in a household and no "joint" interviews where two or more people act as respondents. You should make up to three calls at a selected dwelling in an effort to find the respondent there.

YOUR APPROACH TO THE INTERVIEW

14. Introducing yourself and persuading the respondent to give the interview is probably one of the most critical and difficult parts of interviewing. Your job is more than just making interviews with people who want to talk to you; it is selling people on the idea of being interviewed when there might be some resistance, especially as these are people who have not responded to a previous mail survey.
15. Most resistance is due to two causes: misunderstanding – that this is not really a survey, that it is a sales pitch; and 'don't want to be bothered' – 'too busy', 'an invasion of privacy'. You need to be able to overcome these objections by convincing respondents that:
 - you are calling for a legitimate reason and represent a reputable organisation;
 - you are engaged in important and worthwhile research; and,
 - the respondent's participation is vital to the success of that research.
16. Your voice, words and appearance must convey your credibility. So be courteous, cheerful and self-confident – without overdoing it. If your approach is uncertain, this feeling will be communicated to the respondent, who will react accordingly.
17. Approach people as if they are friendly and interested. Assume that they are willing to give you an interview.
18. If a respondent is busy, immediately explain that you would like to come back or call-back at a time convenient to them.
19. Brief introductions are more effective than long explanations. Many respondents will grant an interview with only a brief explanation of purpose; others will need more detail. Begin with a brief introduction and save your more detailed explanation to use as needed.
20. If you are asked, explain the purpose of the survey: "To ask find out information about mail survey response". Avoid making statements that might introduce bias into the actual interview or would give the respondent the idea that the topic was something he/she didn't know anything about.
21. Above all talk to people, not at them. If they believe you are really interested in them, they are more likely to participate.
22. To help establish your credibility as a bona fide interviewer, you have an identification badge and a letter of introduction. If any respondent would like further re-assurance or

information, s/he is welcome to call me at work (3569099 extension 5835) or at home (3550493). Alternatively they can call Phil at work (350 5582) or at home (356 9231).

23. If you find that you are getting repeated refusals, you should contact me so we can discuss how you might improve your response rate.

YOUR ROLE AS AN INTERVIEWER

24. As an interviewer, it is important that you be aware of the vital role you are playing in this survey. You are the link between the researchers and the respondents. The quality of the final results depends on your ability to elicit the information needed from respondents.
25. You should constantly think of yourself as a communicator. The questionnaire is your tool for communicating to respondents what we want to know. But unless you use it correctly your interviews will not be very productive.
26. Respondents, when stimulated properly by the questions you ask, will try to communicate information to you. Remember that some people express themselves poorly or incompletely; it is up to you to help them give you clear and complete replies – but this help has to be given without influencing their replies. Some more specific suggestions for offering neutral assistance are listed in the section below.
27. Finally, you have to note what respondents say on the questionnaire in such a way that the responses are clear to the data entry staff. This means you have to report responses completely and fill in something for every question, even if you are simply noting that the respondent did not know or refused to provide an answer. Please *write legibly*; data will be entered directly from the questionnaires so it is *very important* that respondents' answers are recorded clearly.

INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE

Questions and Answers

On the questionnaire, the questions you are to read aloud are in Caps and Lower Case, just like you are now reading. *INSTRUCTIONS TO YOU, WHICH YOU READ TO YOURSELF, ARE USUALLY ALL IN ITALISED CAPS LIKE THIS.* For instance:

1. Have you ever read a copy of	Yes.....1
the Manawatu Evening Standard?	No.....2 GO TO Q4

In this example, you read the question, but not the possible reply. Respondents' replies are usually recorded by circling the correct number opposite any question. Again, please be sure to write neatly and ensure that the correct responses are clear to anyone else who has to read the questionnaire.

Open-ended questions are those where the answer cannot be foreseen and the interviewer is asked to record as close as possible, *word for word* what the respondent says. All answers to open-ended questions must be recorded using the respondent's own words. It is difficult to do this, so do the best you can. Try not to interpret the respondent's answers in your own words or change the tense or grammar. If the respondent is speaking too quickly, it is important to ask him/her to slow down so you can record all he/she has to say.

Skip instructions

Most skip instructions look like this: *GO TO Q4*. These are instructions about what question you are to ask next. If there is no skip instruction beside the possible answers provided, you should continue to the next question.

Showcards and Props

Enclosed in your packet of materials is a set of showcards and props. You will use these cards whenever there is an instruction on the questionnaire telling you to, "SHOW CARD" or "SHOW PROP". (Each card is identified by a letter or title.) At that time in the interview you are to show that particular card or prop to the respondent as an aid in answering the question.

Asking the questions

You must ask the questions exactly as worded in the questionnaire. Words which you should emphasise are in *bold italics like this*, but you must not change the wording of a question, even if you think your change is an improvement. (You can note suggested improvements in your critique of the process!) Changing the wording of a question can change its meaning and this is likely to affect the answers respondents give. For this reason, it is very important to ask the questions as they have been written.

Please don't attempt to interpret any question for a respondent who fails to understand it. If the respondent gives you a blank look, or asks you what you mean, don't attempt to explain the question – all you can do is repeat the exact wording of the question slowly and distinctly, emphasising the key words. This is usually sufficient to convey the idea, but if the respondent is still unable to answer, your only choice is to record his/her answer as "don't know". Even if respondents ask you to explain the questions, try to ask them what they think it means and then encourage them to answer what they have just stated. If their interpretation is not correct, please put a note beside the questions to indicate that the respondent did not seem to understand what was asked of her/him.

Always ask every question (except "skip" questions), in the order in which they are printed on the questionnaire.

If you think the respondent needs time to think about a question, don't press for an immediate answer. If you think the respondent just needs reassuring, you may add to the question a neutral conversational remark, such as:

"We're just trying to get people's ideas on this."

or,

"There are no right or wrong answers, we're just interested in what you think."

Probing

Probing is the art of getting more information without leading or influencing the respondent in any way. When probing, your job is to remain neutral and not offer an opinion of your own. It is also important not to lead the respondent towards an answer.

Neutral probes which can be used to clarify or enhance a respondent's answer (such as "it's convenient") include repeating the last word or phrase as a query ("Convenient?"), or use "Yes", "mm" or "Uhuh", or an expectant pause. Rereading what has already been said can also be helpful. If respondents have been asked to explain something or to provide reasons, asking questions such as "anything else?" or "any other reasons?" can also encourage them to expand on their answer.

Closing answers

Sometimes respondents are more loquacious than is really helpful and, when you've heard the 5th iteration of their life story you may wish to move on to the next question. It is sometimes very difficult to move people along, but the following (stated politely) may help: "I've noted that, thank you, now could I ask you to think about... (next section)" or "Thank you, now, moving on to the next question...". However, always remember that respondents are doing you a favour and you must, at all times, treat them with courtesy and dignity.

PERSONAL SAFETY

28. You should put your personal safety first when deciding when and whether to attempt a face-to-face interview. Although we have never had an interviewer abused, this is no guarantee of safety. If you feel nervous, team up with a friend and conduct the interviews while the friend waits for you. *Never* put yourself in a situation where you feel your safety may be compromised. If situations arise where you do not feel comfortable, terminate the interview ("thank you very much for your time, that's all I need to ask you") and leave at once.
29. You should also ensure that you conduct yourself in a way that may not be misconstrued by the person you are attempting to interview. There are some frightened people in the community and it is important that you introduce yourself quickly and clearly, to dispel any concerns your visit may have caused.
30. The times of day you conduct your interviews, as well as your manner, appearance and behaviour are all important. Make sure you use your name tag, and present the letter of introduction from me. I will be available during lecture times to discuss any concerns you might have.
31. In conclusion, remember that survey research should be an enjoyable experience for both the interviewer and the respondent. The key to being a successful interviewer is to be thoroughly familiar with the survey questionnaire, its questions and requirements, and to be well rehearsed before beginning the interviews. First-time interviewers typically feel nervous and anxious before they begin. However, in our experience, most interviewers enjoy the task once they get started, and are left with a great sense of accomplishment when they have finished. So – rehearse, rehearse, rehearse! Then, get into it as soon as possible.

Happy interviewing!

Anna Finn

Written by P Gendall March 1989.

Amended by M C Brennan September 1994; W A Thomas February 1997, 1998; J Hoek 2000; P Gendall, 2003; A Finn, 2003.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
BEHAVIOUR OF MAIL SURVEY NON-RESPONDENTS
INTERVIEWER NOTES

INTRODUCTION

These notes are designed to help you understand the purpose of each question and to help you in administering the questionnaire. Please make sure that you practise the questionnaire until you feel you can administer it confidently; this will make a big difference to the experience you have as an interviewer (and to your respondents' experience too!).

The survey begins with a general introduction. I've suggested an introduction (on your Survey Contact Sheet), however, you can amend this if you prefer. The important points are to identify who you need to speak to and, if that person is not available, to make a time to speak to him or her.

Once you have selected the appropriate respondent you must start your interview by reading the statement of confidentiality (and respecting this). If someone does not wish to answer a question, you should note this on your questionnaire, then move on to the next question.

Questions

1. This is a general question, designed to get the respondent thinking about surveys they have taken part in. If the participant has not taken part in any surveys, skip to question 3.
2. This is also a general question to determine how many of the surveys they were asked to participate in, they actually did participate in.
3. This is the first of the open-ended questions. It is designed to find out how respondents felt about being asked to participate in a survey. You will need to probe for answers. Prompts have also been included in the question.
4. Comprises a set of ten attitude statements rated on an agree/disagree scale. Give the respondents SHOWCARD A and ask them to use the scale shown.
5. This question is straightforward. Simply show the respondent the ISSP package and ask if they recall receiving it. If they do not, move on to question nine.
6. This question is designed to determine how far through the survey response process the respondent got.
7. Here you need to check how far through the response process the respondent got, then ask them why they did not move on to the next stage. You will need to know what the next stage is so that you can use the specific wording in the question. For example if they did not finish filling it out, you will need to say "Can you please tell me why you did not ... finish filling it out".
8. This question is straightforward.
9. – 16. These are a series of open ended questions to get an idea of how respondents feel about the different manipulatable aspects of a survey. They are relatively straightforward

(as long as you've practised!), you just need to make sure you show the correct props, and write down their answers as directly as possible. Feel free to use the back pages of the questionnaire if you run out of room

17. For this question you will need to use the likeability scale on SHOWCARD B. It is a continuous scale, you just need to record the corresponding number.
18. & 19. These again are open ended questions that will need to be carefully recorded.
20. This question, a. – h., use the Juster Scale. Give respondents SHOWCARD C and ask them to use this. Make sure you give respondents time to read and understand the scale (make sure you understand it yourself!) and explain it to them if they seem unsure how to use it.
- 21 & 22 These again are open ended questions that will need to be carefully recorded.
23. Juster scale again - see notes for question 20.
24. Another open-ended question!
25. Year of birth has proven to be a good question for determining a respondent's age. Few respondents object to giving this and it is more accurate than asking for age.
26. Use SHOWCARD D.
27. This is another open-ended question designed to give respondents a chance to comment on the survey or the questionnaire.
28. Make sure you record the sex of the respondent.

If you have any questions about your interviewing, please feel free to come and see me.

Cheers,

Anna Finn
18 July 2003

Appendix B

Personal Interview for Survey One

CONFIDENTIAL
ID.....

MASSEY UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
BEHAVIOUR OF MAIL SURVEY NON-RESPONDENTS PERSONAL INTERVIEW
AUGUST 2003

SECTION ONE: PAST SURVEY EXPERIENCE

First I'd like to ask you some questions about surveys in general.

1. Since the start of this year, how many times have you been asked to take part in the following types of surveys?

	Number of Times
a. A mail survey	_____
b. A telephone interview	_____
c. A personal interview at home	_____
d. A personal interview on the street or in a shopping centre	_____
e. A survey by email or on a website	_____

IF NONE GO TO QUESTION 3

2. And how many of these surveys did you complete?

	Number of Times
a. Mail survey	_____
b. Telephone interview	_____
c. Personal interview at home	_____
d. Personal interview on the street or in a shopping centre	_____
e. A survey by email or on a website	_____

3. How do you feel about being asked to take part in surveys?

<i>PROBE AS TO:</i>	Did you have any issues in terms of:
	Loss of control over private information: Confidentiality issues
	Possibility of embarrassment: Mistrust of sponsor

4. Here are some things people have said about surveys. Can you please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? For these questions I would like you to use the scale shown on this card.

GIVE SHOWCARD A AND TICK ONE BOX FOR EACH STATEMENT

Do you agree or disagree that...	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
a. Surveys do not serve a useful purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
b. Most survey research firms are honest and responsible	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
c. The term 'survey' is often used to disguise a sales pitch	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
d. Surveys give people an opportunity to express their views on important issues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
e. Answering questions in surveys is usually an interesting experience	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
f. Surveys are an invasion of privacy	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
g. Surveys often take longer to answer than is claimed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
h. Surveys are used to help manufacturers produce better products	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
i. Answering questions in surveys is usually a waste of time	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8
j. Some survey research firms cannot be trusted to maintain the confidentiality of answers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 8

SECTION TWO: ISSP ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN

4. Do you recall receiving a copy of a survey on the Roles of Men and Women in Society from Massey University recently? It looked like this.

SHOW PROP 1: ISSP PACKAGE

Yes ☐ 1
 No ☐ 2 - GO TO Q9

5. When you received this package...

	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Did you open it?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
b. Did you read the covering letter?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
c. Did you begin to fill out the questionnaire?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
d. Did you finish filling it out?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
e. Did you post it or return it?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

6. Can you please tell me why you did not...

ASK ABOUT NEXT STAGE IN QUESTION 6

IF REMINDER MENTIONED, TICK YES, IF NOT MENTIONED, ASK Q8

7. Do you recall receiving a second copy of the survey?

Yes ☐ 1
 No ☐ 2

SECTION THREE: INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF SURVEY DESIGN

Now I'd like you to think about particular aspects of a mail survey.

PACKAGING

8. This is an example of the survey envelope that was posted to you.

SHOW PROP 1: ISSP PACKAGE

What was your reaction to receiving this in the mail?

PROBE AS TO: Did you know what it was?

Did you think it was junk mail? Why?/Why not?

9. Now I'd like to show you some survey packages.

PROBE AS TO: Would you be likely to open the envelope/package if it had looked like this?

Why? Why not? More likely than the white envelope?

SHOW PROP 2: BROWN ENVELOPE, then

SHOW PROP 3: SHRINK WRAPPED PACKAGE

10. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the envelope or packaging mail surveys come in?

COVER LETTER

11. This is a copy of the cover letter that was posted to you.

*SHOW PROP 4: COVER LETTER**IF PARTICIPANT HAS NOT READ, ALLOW TIME TO READ*

- a. Did you feel the purpose of the letter is clearly explained?
- b. Was it easy to read and understand?
- c. Was there any information that you'd like that wasn't included?
- d. Any unnecessary information?

12. What in a covering letter would persuade you or other respondents to respond?

PROBE AS TO: What would you like a covering letter to tell you? What about...

How we got your name and contact details	The importance of the research
Assurance of the value of their response	The time demands of the survey
Assurance of confidentiality	The final use of the data

13. Are there any other comments you would like to make about survey covering letters?

SURVEY COVER DESIGN

14. This is a copy of the questionnaire that was posted to you.

SHOW PROP 5: ISSP SURVEY COVER (A)

- a. What do you think of this cover's design?
PROBE If like or dislike elements mentioned, and why?

15. This is an alternative cover, what do you think about this one?

SHOW PROP 6: ALTERNATIVE ISSP COVER (B)

- a. What do you think of this cover's design?
PROBE If like or dislike elements mentioned, and why?
- b. Would you have been more likely to respond?

GIVE AND EXPLAIN SHOWCARD B

16. Now, using the scale on this card, could you please tell me much you like each of these two covers?

	Don't like it at all						Like it very much
Cover A	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7
Cover B	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

17. Are there any comments you'd like to make about the survey cover design?
PROBE AS TO: The professionalism of the cover options, Impression of survey cover

SURVEY TOPIC

18. This particular survey was aimed at collecting information about the 'Roles of Men and Women in society'.

- What do you think about the topic of this particular survey?
- Was this a subject that you were interested in? How interested?

19. For the next few questions I'd like you to use the scale on this card.

GIVE RESPONDENT SHOWCARD C

Please take a few minutes to look at the scale. *GIVE RESPONDENT TIME TO READ SCALE.* As you can see the scale goes from zero to ten. 'Zero' means that there is no chance, or almost no chance, you would do something; 'ten' means that you are certain or practically certain you would do it. If you're not completely sure what you would do, you can choose a number between zero and ten.

Using the scale on this show card, how likely you would be to respond to a mail survey, on the following topics.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----------|
| a. | A second bridge for Palmerston North | _____/10 |
| b. | Home appliances | _____/10 |
| c. | Your medical history | _____/10 |
| d. | Immigration | _____/10 |
| e. | Breakfast cereals | _____/10 |
| f. | The 'City Heart' project | _____/10 |
| g. | The environment | _____/10 |
| h. | Your personal finances | _____/10 |

20. Are there any comments you'd like to make about mail survey topics?

PROBE AS TO: Level of privacy/invasion of privacy

SPONSORSHIP

21. This particular survey was sponsored by Massey University. By that, I mean it has been administered and will be analysed by staff at Massey University.

a. Does the fact that a university is conducting the survey mean you would be more or less likely to be involved?

b. What if this information was being collected by a commercial research company?

c. What if the same information was being collected by a government department?

22. Using this scale again, could you please tell me how likely you would be to respond to a survey on 'The Roles of Men and Women in Society' being conducted by the following organisations.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| a. Statistics New Zealand | _____ /10 |
| b. AC Nielsen Research | _____ /10 |
| c. The Department of Internal Affairs | _____ /10 |
| d. University of Otago | _____ /10 |
| e. Men's Health Collective | _____ /10 |
| f. Ministry of Women's Affairs | _____ /10 |

PROBE ANY INTERESTING RESPONSES? – E.G. WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

(By interesting I mean any high Juster scores, or comments made.)

23. Are there any other comments you'd like to make about mail survey sponsorship or administration?

SECTION FOUR

Finally, I'd like to ask a few questions about you.

24. In which year were you born? 19____

25. Which of these statements best describes your highest level of formal education?

GIVE PARTICIPANT SHOWCARD D READ STATEMENTS AND CIRCLE ONE

No formal schooling ☐ 1

Primary or Intermediate school ☐ 2

Secondary up to 3 years ☐ 3

Secondary for 4 years or more ☐ 4

Some tertiary education ☐ 5

Completed university or polytechnic degree ☐ 6

26. Are there any comments you would like to make about this interview?

Thank you for helping us with this survey

27. Record Respondent's sex:

Male ☐ 1

Female ☐ 2

Appendix C

Final Reminder and Adapted Questionnaire



Massey University
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Kaupapa Whai Pakihi

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North
New Zealand
T: 64 6 350 5593
F: 64 6 350 2260
www.massey.ac.nz

30 October 2003

NATIONAL IDENTITY

I know I have written to you several times about our survey on National Identity in New Zealand, but I would like to make one more attempt to persuade you to fill out our questionnaire.

So far we have had 900 questionnaires returned, representing a response rate of 48%. Our aim is to reach 1000 valid questionnaires and a response rate of 50%. This will ensure that our survey represents all New Zealanders, which is why I am asking you again for your help.

Two questions which several people have asked me are "What happens to the results of the survey?" and "Can you guarantee that my answers will be kept strictly confidential?" In answer to the first question, we always send the results of our surveys to people who might be interested in them, including politicians, public servants, and staff at other universities. In the past, Treasury, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry for the Environment have used our results.

In answer to the second question, I can assure you any answers you give will be kept strictly confidential (and your questionnaire will be destroyed when the information in it has been entered in our data file).

If you feel that the information we are asking you for is none of our business or that you don't have time to answer our questionnaire, I apologise for bothering you again. However, I hope that I might have been able to convince you to take part in this survey. If you would be willing to help, but don't still have a copy of the questionnaire, please ring me collect on (06) 350 5582 or email me on p.gendall@massey.ac.nz

Even if you decide not to answer the questionnaire, I would be grateful if you would answer the four questions on the back of this letter and return it to me in the reply-paid envelope provided.

Yours sincerely

P J Gendall
Professor of Marketing

IF YOU WOULD PREFER NOT TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONNAIRE, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD ANSWER THESE FOUR QUESTIONS AND RETURN THIS LETTER IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED (NO STAMP IS REQUIRED).

THIS WILL GIVE US SOME IDEA ABOUT WHO DID NOT RESPOND TO OUR SURVEY AND WHY.

1. Please indicate the year in which you were born. Year: 19_____

2. What is your sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

3. When you received the National Identity survey...

	Yes	No	Don't know
a. Did you open it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Did you read the covering letter?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Did you begin to fill out the questionnaire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Did you finish filling it out?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Did you post it or return it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Can you please tell me why you did not move on to the next stage?

Thank you for helping us!

Appendix D

Adapted Telephone Questionnaire

CONFIDENTIAL

ID.....

**MASSEY UNIVERSITY - DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
BEHAVIOUR OF MAIL SURVEY NON RESPONDENTS TELEPHONE INTERVIEW**

Hi, my name is _____ from Massey University. Could I please speak to _____?

Recently we sent you a survey on Advertising Regulation.

Would you mind answering a couple of questions about it?

1. Do you recall receiving the survey?

Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2

2. When you received the survey...

Yes	No	Don't know
-----	----	------------

a. Did you open it?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

b. Did you read the covering letter?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

c. Did you begin to fill out the questionnaire?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

d. Did you finish filling it out?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

e. Did you post it or return it?

<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
----------------------------	----------------------------	----------------------------

28. Can you please tell me why you didn't (move on to the next stage)?

Thank you very much for your time

Briefing Documents and Interviewer Instructions for National Identity ISSP

Follow-Up Interview

MASSEY UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING BEHAVIOUR OF MAIL SURVEY NON-RESPONDENTS INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS

YOUR APPROACH TO THE INTERVIEW

1. Introducing yourself and persuading the respondent to give the interview is probably one of the most critical and difficult parts of interviewing. Your job is more than just making calls and making interviews with people who want to talk to you; it is selling people on the idea of being interviewed when there might be some resistance.
2. Most resistance is due to two causes: misunderstanding – that this is not really a survey, that it is a sales pitch; and ‘don’t want to be bothered’ – ‘too busy’, ‘an invasion of privacy’. You need to be able to overcome these objections by convincing respondents that:
 - you are calling for a legitimate reason and represent a reputable organisation;
 - you are engaged in important and worthwhile research; and,
 - the respondent’s participation is vital to the success of that research.
3. Your voice, words and appearance must convey your credibility. So be courteous, cheerful and self-confident – without overdoing it. If your approach is uncertain, this feeling will be communicated to the respondent, who will react accordingly.
4. Approach people as if they are friendly and interested. Assume that they are willing to give you an interview.
5. If a respondent is busy, immediately explain that you would like to come back or call-back at a time convenient to them.
6. Brief introductions are more effective than long explanations. Many respondents will grant an interview with only a brief explanation of purpose; others will need more detail. Begin with a brief introduction and save your more detailed explanation to use as needed.
7. If you are asked, explain the purpose of the survey: “To ask people their opinions on food labelling”. Avoid making statements that might introduce bias into the actual interview or would give the respondent the idea that the topic was something he/she didn’t know anything about.
8. Above all talk to people, not at them. If they believe you are really interested in them, they are more likely to participate.
9. To help establish your credibility as a bona fide interviewer, you have an identification badge and a letter of introduction. Obviously, when you are telephoning you cannot show the respondent an identification badge or letter. Therefore, it is essential that you give your name and who you represent clearly and slowly at the beginning of the interview. If any respondent would like further re-assurance or information pass them on to me (Anna)

10. Be aware that these people have supposedly been send a questionnaire and reminder. Some may not be interested, some may not even have received the packages. Some may also be to ill, or physically unable to have completed the original surveys, and consequently unable to come to the phone. A bit of tack may be required.

YOUR ROLE AS AN INTERVIEWER

1. As an interviewer, it is important that you be aware of the vital role you are playing in this survey. You are the link between the researchers and the respondents. The quality of the final results depends on your ability to elicit the information needed from respondents.
2. You should constantly think of yourself as a communicator. The questionnaire is your tool for communicating to respondents what we want to know. But unless you use it correctly your interviews will not be very productive.
3. Respondents, when stimulated properly by the questions you ask, will try to communicate information to you. Remember that some people express themselves poorly or incompletely; it is up to you to help them give you clear and complete replies – but this help has to be given without influencing their replies. Some more specific suggestions for offering neutral assistance are listed in the section below.
4. Finally, you have to note what respondents say on the questionnaire in such a way that the responses are clear to the data entry staff. This means you have to report responses completely and fill in something for every question, even if you are simply noting that the respondent did not know or refused to provide an answer. Please *write legibly*; data will be entered directly from the questionnaires so it is *very important* that respondents' answers are recorded clearly.

INTERVIEWER NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Although there are only two questions, these notes are designed to help you understand the purpose of the two questions and to help you in administering the questionnaire. Please make sure that you practise the questionnaire until you feel you can administer it confidently; this will make a big difference to the experience you have as an interviewer (and to your respondents' experience too!).

The survey begins with a general introduction. I've suggested an introduction (on your Survey Contact Sheet), however, you can amend this if you prefer. The important points are to identify who you need to speak to and, if that person is not available, to make a time to speak to him or her.

Questions

9. This question is designed to determine how far through the survey response process the respondent got.
10. Here you need to check how far through the response process the respondent got, then ask them why they did not move on to the next stage. You will need to know what the next stage is so that you can use the specific wording in the question. For example if they did not finish filling it out, you will need to say "Can you please tell me why you did not ...1finish filling it out".

Appendix E

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview - Reasons for Non-Response

Survey One

Question Seven: Can you please tell me why you did not...?

I thought they were offering me a course.

More of a fact of timing when I got it. I saw it, opened it and didn't have enough time. So put it aside with intention of doing it later – obviously I didn't get around to it.

I was away in Auckland and Tauranga. I still haven't filled it out.

Had been away. At first I thought it may have been something to do with personal studies. When I saw it wasn't, put it to one side.

Just didn't have time. Had other stuff on. Planned to read it later, but didn't have time.

Two reasons. One was time. Second, as I work in public affairs we have just put out the results, so I was a little confused. It has already been in the newspaper. Time – just personal factors. Lots of extracurricular stuff.

Too busy. Work a 40 hour week and then lads. Day full on, briefly went through it but didn't find the time.

Read it, but lost it while moving office around.

Read it, but haven't had the time – been busy.

Can't remember – a while ago.

No time, very busy.

Too many yes/no questions. I had opinions that I wanted to share.

Never got around to it. Kept seeing it there and just never managed to do it.

Reading disability – need wife/person to read for me. Don't mind doing them otherwise.

Didn't have enough time (looked at it a couple of times). Like to be thorough when completing a survey. Questions were general – hard to interpret.

I got sidetracked, then went away for work for a week and then had a week's holiday.

So busy that I couldn't have time to do it. I am in such a hurry all the time. People coming and going. Had someone that did it regarding Islam and as I am a Minister I did it as it was good timing and the interviewer came out to do it.

Thought it would take up some time and didn't have time. Put it away for a later time and it got overlooked.

Quite honest, I couldn't be bothered. It was a time factor. It was quite long to do. But to be perfectly honest I couldn't be bothered. But if someone came around to the house you can either say come in or go away. Probably would have been more likely to do a survey if someone came around to do it. A lot of agree/disagree questions and sometimes I'm neither/or. Didn't really other me. When I was given a survey sometimes I did not really care – neither here nor there, but I am quite easy going so I probably didn't think about my answers. It's difficult having someone come around and you know they are going to be asking questions so you have to think about it. I could have tick, tick, tick, tick and sent it away and they would have been happy... but I would like to give my best shot.

I felt it would take too long, and I got to the stage, working 60-70 hours a week – didn't feel up to it.

Time constraints – heaps of other stuff; preoccupied, not that didn't want to.

The missus said she finished it, so it was out of my hands. We forgot to send it back.

Exercises in the army. Too busy to do it.

Filled out first copy eventually.

I wasn't sure about some of my answers. I find it hard to be general. There were some issues on abortion and stuff I wasn't sure what way I swayed. I wanted to give more details to the answers. The I wanted to have another look at what I write but then got sick. Also in the survey they sort of said if you work at home you are not working... but you are. You are just not getting paid. That is the only criticism I had about the survey.

For the last three months have been having open homes – mail goes into box; stays in study and trying to get clean.

Did complete – didn't post! It's waiting in a bag.

Never got around to it possibly too busy.

Survey Two

Question Seven: Can you please tell me why you did not...?

No Time!

Work commitments and stress has been the reason for the questionnaire not being returned. I was hoping I could complete the questionnaire, but it wasn't to be. I was away on holiday for ten days and arrived back in NZ with a terrible flu. Once again, my apologies.

I did not receive your questionnaire.

Am looking after Mum who has had two strokes and a heart attack (89 years old this year), and have been under the doctor myself, am sorry not to take part, to tell the truth there seemed to me

too many questions and have been not too well to answer them. All I can say am sorry that's all. Can be very stressful when you are a care-person as you can understand. Just didn't have the time to sit down and fill it in.

I do not wish to supply any information. Please stop wasting money on sending these missives.

I have been very unwell.

Too big and bulking. Looked too time consuming. Realised it would take too long! Gave up on it!

There's no clear explanation of the purpose of this survey in my view. I really don't know so much about what information will be given out and is it worth me attending or not.

I felt that this survey was a breach of my and my families privacy. I didn't feel confident disclosing the information and had no confidence that the information would be used correctly.

Mainly health problems. My lord, my protector.

Was moving house and possibly got lost in the move – new address is...

I am sorry for the delay, but I am not a ____ person, and have one going from _____. I don't want to fill in the questions.

Because I'm not interested. As far as I'm concerned I'm not understanding what the survey was for. The other way I'm so sorry about for not answer our letter. Sorry sorry sorry. Love you all. Thanks a lot.

Too busy to respond.

With all my other commitments I don't have the time. I have phoned and left you a message about a month ago.

No time.

Time constraints for completing university papers prior to going overseas, the, more time constraints following my return to complete assignments due. Sorry about that, this is on top of looking after a family of four plus a full time job.

After reading your final letter, your appeal for my help moved me to action. I love NZ. I am a patriotic Kiwi, but I hate how we are slipping backwards in the western world and I do not like the direction our political parties are taking us – thus I have filled out this survey and written a lot of my thoughts as well. I wanted to do this well, and I knew it would take time (2.5 hours) to reply to it and I am very busy with my own business, trying to make it grow (survive?) so it has taken this long to complete it !!! PS I hope you have read what I have written!!

Tired of being badgered by survey people. Do not wish to take part.

Shift worker and have no time!!!

Not interested. No further correspondence please.

The reason for not taking part in filling out the questionnaire, and I'm being honest, is that, I didn't make the time and I have a serious illness, and going through some recovery.

Was away from home 28th June to 24 October. When I reached home to a pile of mail and dealt with things it took a little time. However, I have filled in one copy and posted it back to you in the envelope provided yesterday. Perhaps you should have enquired as to why there was no reply. You would have saved two other copies of the survey!

When you are self employed time is money. You want me to do it – pay me for my time!

Haven't got the time.

I didn't have time, because of my work situation doing night shifts and partly day shifts, and helping looking after my brother who currently has a brain tumour. I apologise for not replying earlier with the questionnaires.

I apologise for not completing the survey, but I put it down and completely forgot about completing it, until I received the second questionnaire. I am at a very busy time of my life, with juggling three teenage kids, sport and work around finding spare time to read a good book, or even to do your questionnaire. My apologies, and yes, I do feel terribly guilty for not returning the questionnaire.

Not interested.

No interest as family crisis is more important.

Surprise surprise! Sorry for this delay. It has been my intention to answer your national identity survey questionnaire, but as one of my failures is not to attend to correspondence and it takes second stage and get pushed to one side, as in this case, and I carry on with work in hand. This failure can also be to my disadvantage at times, but that is the way it is. My intention is to answer your questionnaire at some stage. It has stopped raining and I am going back onto the orchard.

Lack of time.

I assumed they were pamphlets, I don't remember asking for any pamphlets from Massey University – that is why they are still unopened. That is my only answer.

Do not have the time and found some Q's assumed I was NZ born – which I'm not – sorry!

Too long and involved – do not have the time.

Too long.

I am regret that I have been such a dead loss when it came to completing your survey but I am extremely busy trying to make a living from a small business and the questions in the survey were very difficult & time consuming. Initially I whizzed through the form over lunch one day and then on checking my answers, decided that I really needed to do it again. I was not satisfied that the options available really allowed me to capture how I felt about things or to answer other questions accurately. Anyway the outcome was that I put the form aside and after a period decided I was so late in returning it, I through it out.

I did not feel happy giving out that information.

Couldn't be bothered. Too much junk mail to read and too many telemarketing surveys at night!

I am a shift worker and have three very young children. So usually tired and would rather put my energy into something else. Took longer than ten minutes. Don't know how and why you chose me by name.

Too busy with work and family pressures.

It was just another item of unsolicited mail, which, together with unsolicited phone calls, I just didn't have time to complete the survey, sorry :)

How do you know if I did it or not? I didn't think identity was attached.

I consider the questionnaire to be far too intrusive into my private life. I am NOT convinced that the information I provide will be confidential or destroyed. Also, my information will be kept on a data file which I do NOT approve of. I do NOT agree with surveys.

Did not have the time (PMT). No financial gain for me.

I did! (not received)

Survey Three

Question Seven: Can you please tell me why you did not...?

Don't watch a lot of TV, don't watch ads. Specific questions couldn't answer. Fortunate that I can switch off and not watch ads.

Mainly busy; did not have the time to sit down and do it.

Ran out of time. Been really busy, kept putting it off. Great intentions, but too busy.

In the middle of an opera; rehearsing and working at the same time. Didn't want to put other things aside. Felt I should do it though.

It seemed to be repeating itself, should be written in plain English.

Had moved within same area; so didn't get the survey! Otherwise would probably have answered.

Just time factors for me really.

Had already done two others from Massey University, figured they were all the same kind of thing and you guys were flooding me with them.

Just haven't had time – work seven days a week.

I don't mind filling it out, been in NZ for 14 years, wanted help from husband to make sure I have understood the questions correctly, but we both work shift work. He was going to check over it for me, but hasn't yet.

Don't really have enough time and I lost interest half way though so didn't finish.

Doesn't remember the survey – Have moved recently.

Put to one side – had planned to do it.

Things cropped up and just too busy. I'm farming and hours too much. Lots of things to do.

Too busy, nothing to do with you guys. Put it aside to do later.

Too busy, been moving house, doing a lot of unpacking.

Wasn't interested in doing it.

Too busy to fill surveys in.

Received it just before going away and didn't get around to it.

Didn't want to fill it out because it wasn't what she thought it was about. Read the whole thing.

Very old and didn't understand any of it.

Didn't receive it.

Didn't receive it!

Didn't receive it.

Too busy!

Too busy to send and then just forgot.

Too busy to sit down and do it.

Just didn't get around to it.

Too complicated.

Didn't have time.

Didn't receive survey

Didn't receive it

I posted it back.

Didn't receive it. There are ten mail boxes at the end of the drive and the postie put mail in anyone's box.

Talked it through with the accountant and decided it was too time consuming.

Didn't receive it.

Hasn't opened it, have been busy.

Found the questions too hard. She did start answering them, but put it to the side.

Problem with mail, not receiving mail.

Just got snowed down with lots of paper work. Did have every intention of doing it, but just haven't yet.

Opened it and put it to one side.

Has changed jobs and have no time for surveys.

Recently shifted – mail not being forwarded.

Didn't receive it.

Bad time of year – everyone's getting one million things, so if I don't have to do it, I won't. Too much coming in, not enough time.

In the middle of shifting house. The survey's at home at Mums, might have misplaced it.

I sent back the National Identity, assumed it was the same one, a reminder so left reminder.

Too busy, couldn't be bothered.

Read all the info, but too busy – training at work.

It's a time thing. Been off work sick, at home yesterday so had time, otherwise wouldn't have got it done. Will post it back tomorrow.

Just started a business, so it's under all the papers. It is not the most important thing in my life right now, I have a family and business that come first.

Too busy! Tried to do it, but haven't got time - works very long hours. It's not slackness, interested, didn't biff it out, but haven't had a chance to do it.

Ran out of time, then it got chucked.

No time – work 65+ hours per week.

Not felt up to it. My daughter died recently and too traumatic to concentrate on a survey.

Do not even recall receiving it!

I dumped them all in the bin! Can't be bothered about people who ask questions about inanimate stupid bloody things! Waste of bloody time!

Not really me – not interested. Between that and the mail and people ringing every other night for phone interviews, too many surveys. Get sick of it all.

Honestly – time. I felt it was a waste of time; I had better things to do. Ten dollars would have helped!

English isn't good enough that she could understand it.

Appendix F

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview - Reaction to being asked to take part in a mail survey

Question Three: How do you feel about being asked to take part in surveys?

Probe as to: Did you have any issues in terms of...

Loss of control over private information

Confidentiality issues

Possibility of embarrassment

Mistrust of sponsor

Not a big fan, often say no. Intrusive on phone.

They're a bit of a pain, but realise they have to be done to get results.

Open to it (surveys). Don't mind.

Don't mind being asked. I am an honest person. I don't have anything to hide!

Doesn't worry me, depending on what it is.

Depends on topic, if a good enough reason, will help. This one to help in their education.

Like to help if I can. But really time constrained. People will phone when you have people here or are cooking. Just not much free time. Others may have more time though.

No problem.

Timing wrong half the time. Especially at night – busy doing dinner, looking after kids. And lunch time – last thing you want to do is do a survey on your break. The key thing is timing. Haven't done one embarrassing, not a problem. Phone surveys tell you their details instead of asking you if you want to do it.

With reluctance, no benefit to me.

Doesn't worry me. Not worried about confidentiality.

Depends on what they are. Some are garbage – no use. Telecom ones are trying to justify their charges. No problem with completing them.

Ok if you've got time. No issues with privacy. Topic matters – if its got an effect on NZ.

Don't mind, needs to be convenient though. Usually no other issues – depends on what they're asking me.

Don't mind, but don't do them – time. Not any other issues.

Hate it. Privacy invasion. Don't trust – especially on phone.

Feel an obligation. Usually interesting, like to support students.

Fine, no problems.

Don't mind, sometimes worry about confidentiality.

Doesn't worry, just a time thing. Appreciate need information, phone is life line to business.

Don't mind so long as they don't indulge too much time.

Not a problem.

Being approached is very often an invasion of my family time. The survey (telephone interview) normally takes place around mealtimes which I find incredibly annoying.

Requires explanation, okay to participate, but prefers to be understood (has a reading disability).

Don't bother me – if I'm free sweet as. Doesn't embarrass me.

Doesn't bother me, not worried about giving out info. Depends on the info they're asking for.

I feel ok, in past surveys over the phone I was unable to help as a lot of the time I had no information to give.

No, not really any issues – personal information – not enough room to express yourself. Yes/no answers – panels – not enough room to give decent response.

I don't mind, a bit embarrassing if I don't have the time, and I don't like telling people no. Giving out personal information really depends on what they want.

I don't mind, as long as they aren't too huge. Not too time consuming.

Interesting, don't mind doing it.

Time factor. Interest factor – lack of interest in topic.

Depends on what kind of survey. And their approach – if they are nice or in your face. Would do surveys that are interesting to me, not just telephone ones that aren't so interesting. Mistrust of sponsor – sometimes.

Appendix G

Frequency Table: Participant Attitudes to Surveys

(n=33)	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Surveys do not serve a useful purpose	0	1	10	19	3	0
Most survey research firms are honest and responsible	1	16	12	2	2	0
The term 'survey' is often used to disguise a sales pitch	1	18	9	4	1	0
Surveys give people an opportunity to express their views on important issues	5	19	5	4	0	0
Answering questions in surveys is usually an interesting experience	1	16	10	6	0	0
Surveys are a invasion of privacy	1	4	10	17	1	0
Surveys often take longer to answer than is claimed	1	13	8	11	0	0
Surveys are used to help manufacturers produce better products	4	20	8	1	0	0
Answering questions in surveys is usually a waste of time	0	2	12	19	0	0
Some survey research firms cannot be trusted to maintain the confidentiality of answers	0	8	9	10	2	4

Appendix H

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview - Reactions to Packaging

Question Nine: What was your reaction to receiving this survey envelope in the mail?

Probe as to: Did you know what it was?

Did you think it was junk mail? Why?/Why not?

Wondered what it was, Had been talking to Massey three days previously regarding finishing degree.

Didn't know what it was. Not junk mail, recognised it was from Massey.

Would open it.

Didn't know what it was. Didn't think junk mail. Possibly offering a scholarship.

Knew it was a survey, obviously being from Massey (looks like one).

He knew it was from Massey, so he knew it was quite credible and official. So he had a look at what was in it.

What is Massey sending me? Didn't know what it was, knew it wouldn't be junk mail cause of packaging.

Excited, no idea what it was coming from Massey wasn't junk mail, but ripped into straight away, knew what second one was.

Don't know, wouldn't know what it was – think it was assignment (I'm as Massey lecturer).

Interested in finding out what Massey was up to. No idea what it was, didn't think it was junk mail.

Just a letter from Massey – no big deal. Didn't know what it was.

Thought it was for my daughter – thought it was an information pack.

Mixed though subject was worth going into – valuable assessment of life society. When envelope seen – thought it was something fairly dry, because of the plain nature of the envelope.

Didn't know what it was until went through it. Found questions fascinating. If had time would have sat down and marked it. Did think it was official. Had logo, so didn't think it was junk mail.

No problems receiving these sorts of things. In army, have done papers at Massey in the past. So thought it might be something to do with a paper, but once I opened it, I saw it was a survey.

I thought it was something good. I put it to the side and I then had some tragic instances (illness) and then work started, etc and there was a lot on the brain. I said I would do it, but got lazy. I was intending to do the survey as it was going to be benefit person. Like m store – need to get info, find out what customers want to improve things, so see why doing survey. Because of where I work, I'm pretty familiar with surveys. Thought it would be a survey as soon as I saw it was form marketing. I knew it wasn't junk mail because of the logo. It looks a bit official.

I didn't think it was junk mail. Been a student before. I suspected it might be a survey – thought they had got my name through Massey – but found it was through the electoral roll.

Surprised, as I've had nothing to do with Massey. Presumed they got my name off the electoral roll. Knew that it wasn't going to be junk mail – being from Massey (I knew from the logo).

Thought it was exam results.

Not junk mail, something official, business information.

Wasn't junk mail coming from Massey. Because graduate student, could be some invitation , Massey Magazine.

I was interested initially, but other priorities just got in the way.

Massey course info. Being propositioned for entry to Massey.

Thought it was for my partner, she works out at Massey.

Wondering why Massey was sending me stuff. Had stuff from Massey before and thought it was probably something like that.

I didn't know what it was, it could possibly be course information.

What the bloody hell did they want?

The missus gets the Massey stuff, so I gave it to her.

Interested – wondered what it was.

Just something form Massey. Thought it may have been course related stuff. Didn't think it was junk mail – it had a Massey logo.

Saw Massey University symbol, so did not think it was junk mail.

Thought it was teacher college stuff for course. Didn't know it was a survey.

Question Ten A: Would you be more likely to open the package if it was in the brown envelop?

**Probe as to: Would you be likely to open the envelope/package if it had looked like this?
Why? Why not? More likely than the white envelope?**

No, just the same. I think the white package is more course related, while the brown envelope looked more personal... more likely to contain student info from Massey.

No difference.

Doesn't make a difference.

Yes, makes no difference to me. I would have opened them regardless as I could see it was from Massey.

Yeah, no worries.

Not more likely. Probably the same. I don't think the colour makes a difference. Don't look at colours of envelopes to be honest – I look at the logo.

In some ways the manila looks more official. It looks more functional, whereas the white could look a little more promotional. I would have opened both.

Both pretty similar. Just the same. Doesn't make much difference. Hey contain the same contents. Same likelihood of opening/responding.

Wouldn't make any difference, colour doesn't matter.

Yes, any envelope would have been opened.

Envelope doesn't affect me.

Yes, will open anything.

Same; if it's something from Massey wouldn't expect – so would open out of interest. Open mind to most mail.

Similar, would think it was an assignment.

No, brown envelope – stodgy business.

No – the same; prefer white.

Doesn't look much like a survey; more course related.

Same likelihood to open. Same intrigue.

More likely to open, due to colour. Looks more official.

Yes, I would have still opened it. As an Alumni of Massey's MBA program I always open mail from them.

Reminds me of old assignment envelopes.

Doesn't matter.

No difference.

Yes, if it has my name on it. No preference one way or another.

Yes, if it has my name on it.

Yes, if it has my name on it I'll open it.

Yes, as there is some curiosity as to what it could be.

Curiosity would make me open it.

Yes, all the packages my partner gets are white, so the brown one is more likely for me.

Yes, I always open packages – interested in finding out what's inside – looking for a check!

Yes, maybe the colour – brown things are usually important. Probably about the same likelihood as white envelope. Although everything from Massey comes in white so brown could mean it is a bit different.

Thought it was teacher college stuff still – not very flash

No just the same as the white envelope – just as likely as white envelope.

Question Ten B: Would you be more likely to open the package if it was in the shrink wrapped package?

Probe as to: Would you be likely to open the envelope/package if it had looked like this? Why? Why not? More likely than the white envelope?

Won't get wet in the letter box. Still would open it.

Thought it would have come from the Extramural office. Wouldn't make more likely to open.

Same reaction to other. (i.e. Yes, makes no difference to me. I would have opened them regardless as I could see it was from Massey.)

Just the same, always open my mail. Maybe more likely, get all my good mail in this stuff... all my magazines, etc. It might catch my interest more. I would think "Ah, what's this?"

Not more likely. I would have probably chucked it out, purely because junk mail is packaged in plastic.

The shrink wrap I would probably open later. Magazines, etc. usually come in this sort of wrap, so wouldn't have been so inclined to open it urgently.

Same as what I have said. They are all the same (i.e. Both pretty similar. Just the same. Doesn't make much difference. Hey contain the same contents. Same likelihood of opening/responding).

No difference, just as likely to open it.

Yes, any envelope would have been opened.

Might have thought it was a mail order thing.

Yes, will open anything.

Same- wouldn't bother me, would still open.

Less likely, looks like advertising – into recycling.

Less likely to open; more someone who is trying to sell something.

Less likely; looks more like junk mail.

More likely to open. Looks nicer, more professional and important.

Same likelihood to open.

Would open – looks interesting.

As above (Yes, I would have still opened it. As an Alumni of Massey's MBA program I always open mail from them).

Reminds me of old assignment envelopes and course material.

Would open all of them.

No difference.

Yep, I'd open that too. Doesn't bother me what packaging it comes in.

Because shrink wrapped things are usually sales pitches (Ezi-buy, magazines, etc.).

As long as it has my name on it I'll open it.

Yes the same, however, the packaging does look a bit more interesting.

Yeah, I'd open this also!

Probably throw that one out. Ezi-buy and most magazines come in those shrink wrapped things.

No – the missus gets them in those Ezi-buy mail outs

Always open them – general interest expressed!

Less likely than brown or white. That's what junk mail comes in – all your magazines, etc. Probably would just chuck it out.

Prospectus rather than school work.

Reminded her of Ezi-buy, JK kids catalogues, so didn't immediately think it was a survey.

Question Eleven: Any other comments about the envelope or packaging mail surveys come in?

All the same likelihood because of Massey name.

The one was really good – interesting, didn't know what it was. Other would have assumed a catalogue to something.

If they are in plastic it is more like the junk mail that companies send.

More interested in content that look. Dependent on when it's delivered – if you have opportunity to respond. Captivating to see it was from Massey.

Importance does not show in envelope, but the plastic would seem to be a different type of information – commercial info.

Think because they all have Massey Uni on it then all look official and equal likelihood of opening.

All are pretty good. Does the job. Sometimes it does matter (the packaging). But this is a thing when all three things do the same job.

The clear packaging looks more important, while the other two could easily end up in my junk mail.

I rate the in this order 1 – plastic wrap (similar to offers from Ezi-buy), 2 – white, 3 – brown (could be news, e.g. Inland Revenue).

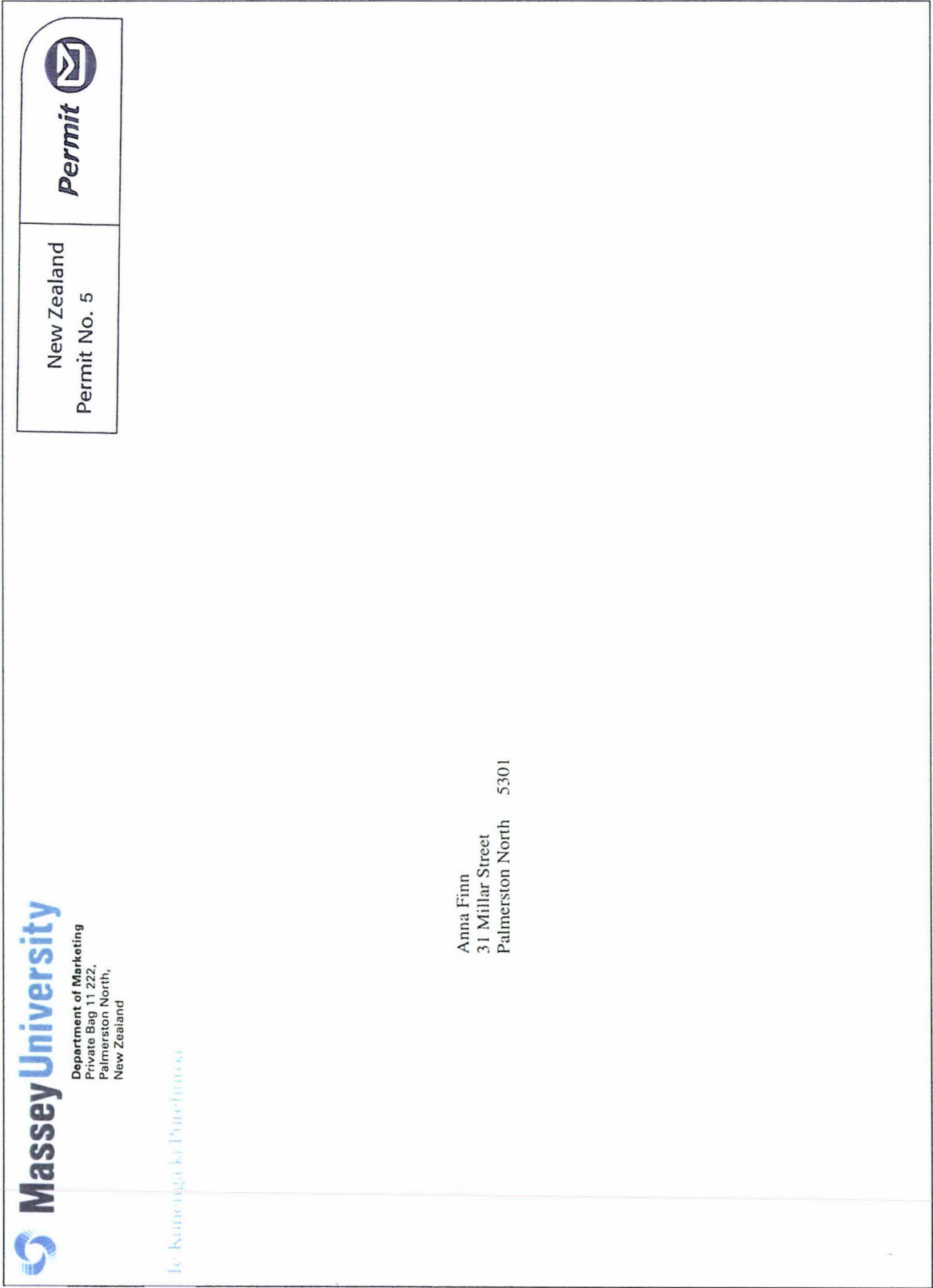
Would open all three of them to see what it was!

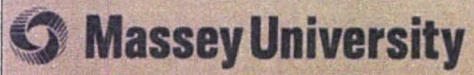
I mostly open the paper ones before the plastic ones. Mainly because of the hassle getting into them and generally you find more junk comes in plastic! Reminds me of Ezi-buy types sales stuff!

Appendix I

Differing Survey Packaging


Actual packaging – White foolscap envelope





Department of Marketing
Massey University
Private Bag 11 555
Palmerston North
New Zealand



Permit Post 
New Zealand
Permit No. 8

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Anna Finn
31 Millar Street
Palmerston North 5301



Alternative packaging - Brown envelope


Clear cellophane shrink-wrap



Department of Marketing
Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
232644

Te Kōwhiri ki Pūwhiriā

Mr Peter Smyth-Kirk
Cullen Road
WAIPU 0254

Permit Post 
New Zealand
Permit No. 142544



Appendix J

Differing Cover Address Inserts for Survey Two

Cover A – Statement



Massey University

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Kuapapa Whai Pakihi

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North
New Zealand
7611

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa



Mrs Heather Davis
86 Bowman Road
Whatawhata 2050

"IMPORTANT SURVEY ON NEW ZEALAND'S NATIONAL IDENTITY ENCLOSED"



Massey University

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
Kūapapa Whai Pākihi

DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING
Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North
New Zealand
1348

Te Kūnenga ki Pūrehuroa

New Zealand
Permit No. 5

Permit 

Ms Jean Maclean
25 Kettle Avenue
Palmerston North 5301

Cover B – No Statement

Appendix K

Cover Letter for ISSP Roles of Men and Women in Society



Department of Marketing
Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 6 350 5593
Facsimile: 64 6 350 2260

July 2003

Dear

THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN SOCIETY

Massey University is a member of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Each year the 38 countries in the ISSP carry out a survey on a topic of interest, using a common questionnaire. The countries share the information collected and use it to compare the attitudes and values of people in different parts of the world. This year the topic is the roles of men and women in society.

I am writing to you to ask for your help in this international programme. Enclosed is a copy of this year's ISSP questionnaire, which I would be grateful if you would answer and return in the envelope provided (there is no need to put a stamp on it).

You may be wondering how you were chosen for the survey. I took a random sample of names from the electoral rolls and your name was one of those selected. However, all your answers will be completely confidential. The number on the questionnaire is to allow me to cross your name off once you have returned your questionnaire and ensure that I don't send you a reminder.

Thanks you for your help. I look forward to receiving your completed questionnaire as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

PJ Gendall
Professor of Marketing

PS If you have any questions about the survey or would like to talk about it, please phone me on (06) 3505582 or email me at P.Gendall@massey.ac.nz

Appendix L

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview - Reactions to Covering letter

Question Twelve: This is a copy of the cover letter that was posted to you (show cover letter).

a) Did you feel the purpose of the letter is clearly explained?

Yes, but don't read properly.

Good that it had contact details on survey.

Yes, it is clearly explained and easy to understand. Had all the info I needed.

Yes, probably why I opened the booklet. If it wasn't clear, then I would have ripped it up. Wording fine, also said envelope was there so no stamp required.

Yes, it was clear, it was easy to understand. Had all the info I wanted. Told my daughter to come out and read it, and we talked about it. It explained it well.

Purpose was clearly explained – easy to read and understand.

Think it was. Could see what they were after.

Yeah, I think It was quite straight forwards. Was good to have contact number.

Yes. Everything – the covering paragraph made it clear by telling me what it's about. That's important – otherwise you don't know what you are doing it for. Better on top that in the middle to explain purpose.

Yes it is clearly explained – easy to read.

Yes, this info can get good idea and then can give other people different ideas they hadn't thought of.

Better explanation required.

Yes, only one thing it didn't have was a date. Instead it said ASAP. May have made me more likely to respond if it had a date.

Yes. Thought it was straight forward. Saw straight at top and could see what it was about. Knew that Massey was doing it so I felt safe answering questions. And it was quite friendly. And had clear contacts as well.

b) Was it easy to read and understand?

Should get to the point

Yes. Set out in good paragraph and it's pretty clear and not too long. Straight to the point. If it was longer then I would be less likely to read it – get bored and put it down.

Yes, all very clear the way it was set out. All nice and tidy.

Yep, easy to read and understand. They had the topic and what it was all about, everything that was needed.

Easy to read – didn't understand – a bit ambiguous.

Yes, it is short and to the point. And it doesn't waffle. Set out clearly – beginning explains purpose, middle explained who was sending it, and how they got my name. That's important. The letter answered any questions I would have had.

Yes, explains purpose, what is being asked and how you were chosen. Could have put where and when the results would have been presented/published.

A bit complicated to understand.

Yes. Layout was good and like things that say if I have any problems there is a contact number. Don't like it if doesn't have contact number if have queries.

Yes, worded nicely, understandable.

c) Was there any information that you'd like that wasn't included?

Use was vague, what the end product would support.

No info that wasn't there that I wanted to see. All good.

Not really – didn't really read it in full.

No, it told me how they got my name.

Would like to hear a result of survey.

No, not recently. It's talked about Massey University talked about survey, thank-you, contact details, email address. It has most things.

How I was chosen for the survey.

Survey questions were black and white. Life is more complicated. Is it bad for children if mothers work? But there is a much bigger picture. But thought questions were very simplified.

Covered that was asked in survey.

d) Any unnecessary information?

No, if I had of participated, I would say it is probably all there.

No kept to that size is good; shouldn't be any longer.

All good, no unnecessary.

All there, nothing redundant.

Yes, need to get straight to the point.

Maybe one of the issues why I didn't fill it out. Got frustrated. Had to really think about it. Questions don't match how I think, so I put it to one side.

No, not really. Nothing there that I went 'Oh God' why did they put that in.

Question Thirteen: What in a covering letter would persuade you or other respondents to respond?

Probe as to: What would you like a cover letter to tell you... what about...

a) How we got your name and contact details

Should state how contact details obtained.

Yes.

It's always good to know how you got their name. Some surveys you know because you are a customer.

Yes, only cause I want to know. If I get something from Massey University i don't know anyone there – how did they get my details?

Should clearly say how and why you were chosen.

Name important – how it was got.

Contact details, confidentiality.

Doesn't worry me how they picked me.

Might have liked to know how my name came up – how I was chosen for the survey.

Name and contact details, confidentiality is very important.

Don't mind how name and details.

That would be good . Just curiosity I suppose.

It would need to have that as I would like to know. I would be less likely to do it if it didn't explain.

Yes, Just want to know – how did a random person get my name? This might affect my response. May not take it as a professional sort of thing if it didn't say how they got my name.

Good idea, would have liked to see this (how got names and contact details.).

b) The importance of the research?

Depends on target audience, if they understand importance of research - Importance may help.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes, just to be able to help someone. Even if not important, then would still like. Don't want to not help them.

Yes, have to put in the importance of the research... what's coming out of it?

Helpfulness if you respond – show importance.

Importance of survey – if it was going to be beneficial – not a waste of time.

Information being used for (ISSP), show importance of survey.

I would like to know what the research is for – importance of the data.

Purpose and reason behind the survey – what it will achieve.

It must be important for them to do it in the first place.

Not really.

That's quite important... but I still didn't send it back! I did intend to do it.

Yes, wouldn't bother doing it if it's not important.

c) Assurance of the validity of their response

Assurance of value of response.

Assurance of value of response.

No, I figure if you interview 100 people you can expect 2 percent not to answer. So I figure I can fit into that category.

I guess so, we have got to have surveys and if you are giving part of yourself that should be acknowledged.

Yes, Just to see if I was of any help. Or if I can help them in the future.

Not necessarily. Jus tot say it's important to get info by important time. Shows that it's important for you guys to get the information.

No.

Yes, if I thought if it was going to 50,000 people then I wouldn't worry. But if they said they would really appreciate it, then more likely. If they say they want my help, then I feel appreciated. If I was on the street, I would be more likely to response. I try to avoid surveys, but if one was mailed to me, it feels more important.

No, doesn't matter.

d) The time demands of the survey

Time demands may put people off.

No. If someone said I had a week or a month it wouldn't really matter. Give the same priority.

Good to get an idea of the time you need.

Not a worry as long as I am free and have the time.

Yes, These are not questions that you just tick. You have to think about questions to give accurate answers. If they specify a time you get an idea of how long it will take.

Time demands might encourage.

No. If there was a date when it had to mailed it would have made a difference. Some people have time to do it, but I have to make time to do it.

Yes, if have time to get in then will. But if it was to be mailed within two weeks for example, I would be less likely. I don't forget things, I just need time. By not putting a time frame on it then you could still think you had time. It could be interpreted differently. Maybe instead of saying ASAP say within three weeks.

Yes, probably. If it said it took an hour you probably wouldn't bother, but if it was a quick one, then you would be more likely to respond.

e) Assurance of confidentiality

Already assume confidentiality.

No, because you are not hiding anything or secret. IF you are doing things right, there is no problem.

It would impact – if it was not mentioned, I would be less likely to answer.

Depends on the survey really. Some surveys ask age, income bracket, household income – do you want that sort of information disseminated? Whether you have security systems, etc. If it's just a company's product to service it would be no problem.

Not a biggie. Depends on what it is. Anything to do with money, financial well being – if you gave out how much money you earn, then I would be ticked off!

Confidentiality/name not such a big deal, but dependent on what's being asked. I would be annoyed if, as a result, I started receiving other mail.

Confidentiality doesn't bother me.

No issues about confidentiality, just to include the reasons behind the survey itself. Keep the survey brief, to the point.

Confidentiality is available to everyone (no need to state).

That wouldn't have bothered me. It depends on what it was about. If it was that confidential, I just wouldn't answer the question.

Yes, I would want it to be confidential.

That's important. Just so you know everything you write isn't going to be given to other people.

f) Final use of the data

Yes. It's the scale on how it would be used. If it was going to be used for Massey research it is smaller, but if it is national survey it may have a bigger influence, more impact.

Whether it would improve customer service or the product. The City Council survey asked a lot of questions about leisure, sport and cultural activities and that would be used to determine where money will be spent. Important to have input into that process.

Not really worried about that. As long as it's useful, and it's being used, that's all I need to know.

Yes, if you are doing something, must be getting something out of it. I would like to know what the final data is used for.

Personally, nothing else as I used to work in market research. But others may want to know where all the information is going and who is using it. They bias their answers to what they think you want to hear.

I would like to know where the research is going. I enjoyed reading up on social issues and crap.

Make sure the purpose is clearly laid out. What the final outcome/use will be for.

Final use of data is important.

It would be useful. Could influence me responding.

I would like to know what it is used for. If didn't know, I possibly wouldn't answer, because I would worry that I would end up with sales pitches or door knockers. I need to know it is genuine.

Maybe. May not affect my response – more for interest sake really.

Other comments

Date needed by, filled out fast, then.

If someone had a vested interest in the survey. If it was relevant to me and my lifestyle.

I think more inclined to answer a survey if it had a practical use, if the results can be applied rather than simply comparing them. The 'role of men and women in society' – didn't have a tangible outcome on how it would improve the lives of people.

I am always helping people, so how you got my name is not a problem. It would only be a problem for someone who has got something to hide, done something wrong. I am easy going.

Having a deadline. I got another one sent to me and it needed to say of this could be forwarded by a certain date. Getting a second survey seems pushy – it should have a date.

The title and subject of the survey –no other things.

Something that interested me. The use would influence me. Time doesn't matter. Clearly define the topic and final use (outcome).

It's a Massey thing, and that it was part of an international thing.

Didn't say whether both men and women were being surveyed.

Nothing written – if too busy, wouldn't fill it out. It served its purpose – aware of intention of exercise.

Follow up was useful, who you are. It should be very clear where it is from.

Hard to say; glancing at the survey it looked interesting; if the letter could reflect what the survey are trying to get – want to look further.

Topic of interest to me rather than generic, e.g. rugby, army, etc.

Nothing.

Nothing.

Simple easy to understand, better explanations of key ideas.

Should tell me everything about it.

Hard to say, money incentive maybe?

Nothing really – it comes down to the individual.

Everyone likes to express their opinion. To be asked to participate in a survey is pretty flattering really.

Would be encouraged by the actual content of the survey.

It is not about the covering letter. It is more about priorities given. The busy work and family lifestyles we lead.

If it was clearly set out, clearly stated and pretty straight forward.

Cover letter doesn't make that much difference.

Cover letter was good – easy to understand.

Just be clear on why you are doing it. I'm only too happy to help out, as I attended Massey and know how much this sort of stuff helps.

Question Fourteen: Any other comments about survey covering letters?

Very appreciative of Phil's contact details.

Should go to an individual who likes answering them – what a waste of paper! Too many surveys, does anyone else think the way I do.

Appendix M

Survey One Cover Designs

Actual Cover

CONFIDENTIAL

ID:

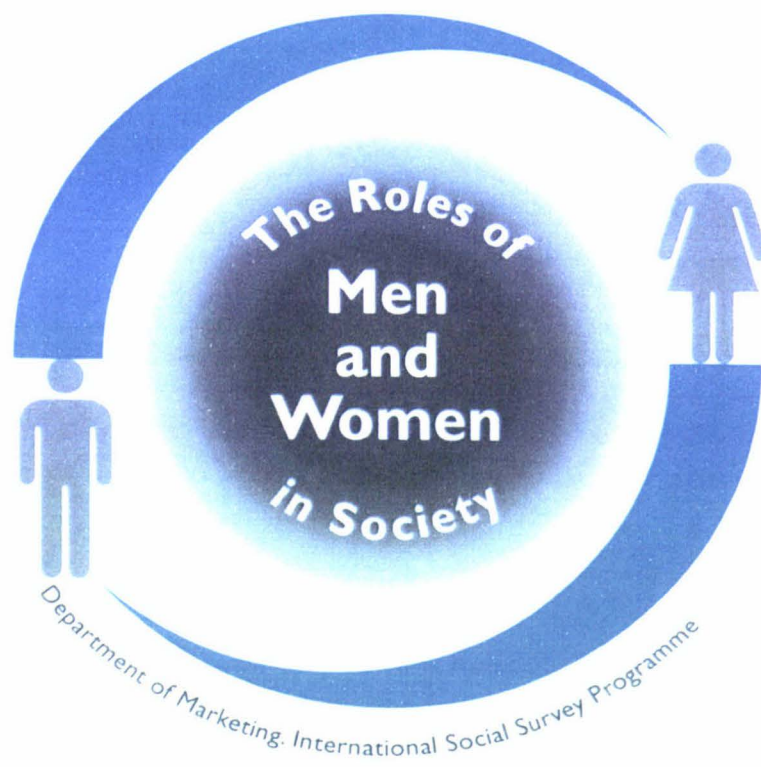
The Roles of Men and Women in Society

Department of Marketing
International Social
Survey Programme
2003

Alternative Cover

CONFIDENTIAL

ID:



Appendix N

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview - Reactions to Cover Design

Question Fifteen: What do you think of the survey cover design (original cover)?

Probe: If like or dislike elements mentioned, and why?

Doesn't concern him, Looks official.

Thought it was good, showed everything he wanted to know.

Looks nice, simple design.

Neither like/dislike – too plain.

Like, crisp and clean – not cluttered.

Appealing, it's just a cover.

Fine; quite like it. Like the blue rather than black/white. Like the name on the right hand side.

Yeah, it's pretty plain, straight forward, tells you what it is about and who it's from. No thrills!

Pretty clear; probably would have centred wording. Too much white space. Maybe say "confidential survey". And Massey address – very important.

Formal bureaucratic look. It's there to serve a purpose – just a cover.

Basic, simple, straight to the point. No flowery stuff on it.

Nice clear and crisp, not cluttered.

Cover is uninteresting. Use of colours is nice, but I expect to see a bit of art work.

That caught my eye – wording caught my eye. Even though no other wording it was fine. Turned page as there is not much on it, and wording is bold you can see straight away what it is about.

Ok. Colour is good – a lot of white.

I think it's fine. Lots of clear space but think it's appropriate. It is a functional product. It needs to look clean, clear, straightforward and uncluttered.

I like the colour. The layout is pretty simple. Not lots of crap. Easy to read – I prefer a less cluttered cover.

Totally neutral. Doesn't matter. Once you open it and read the cover letter, then you know it's a survey and didn't affect me. As long as it looks professional. It doesn't need graphics, etc.

It's ok. I don't dislike anything about it. It's set out nicely. Nice and clear. Easy to read. As long as I can read it.

The design looks very professional.

Fine, nice and clear. Says it well.

Alright. Plain and simple, doesn't elaborate.

Clear, simple, tells you what you need to know. Confidentiality is clear and important.

It's ok. Just reminds me of the standard Massey cover page that comes with anything they send out.

Good. Uncluttered and simple, which is good. All it needs is to do the trick, no smiling child pulling faces. It doesn't need to be a bank commercial.

It's alright – what's exceptional about it. That's fine.

Ok, but it doesn't look like something you'd get from a university. Not very eye catching; they may want to talk to a designer and come up with something more appealing.

Pretty standard. It's alright.

It's too plain – I prefer pictures and visual stuff – it's straight-up boring.

Alright, quite nice. Good colour, bit plain maybe.

Not really anything I like or dislike. Tells you everything you need to know. It's bold enough. Not too small or anything.

Quite boring, don't really like it.

Good, clear, simple, not too fancy.

Question Sixteen: What do you think of this alternative survey cover design?

Probe as to: If like or dislike elements mentioned, and why? Would you have been more likely to respond?

I prefer this one – more details, better explanation. I would be more likely to respond to this.

Much better. Ones plain, this one looks like a bit of work has gone into it.

Flash compared to the other one. Probably wouldn't be more likely to respond, but still an improvement – it looks better.

Yes, this is what I was talking about above (Ok, but it doesn't look like something you'd get from a university. Not very eye catching, they may want to talk to a designer and come up with something more appealing.).

It's better – a bit more visual, descriptive. Both have about the same appeal.

Yeah, it's not as clear as the other one I don't believe, more glossy, not as formal. I still would respond because of the covering letter.

It looks like it's from social welfare. I would still read it – Mainly because I would have spotted the Massey logo. Without that I probably wouldn't have bothered.

Does appeal to me. I don't think it would have swayed me one way or the other.

I don't like it, doesn't look professional. It looks more like it's from a kindergarten than a university. I would be less likely to respond.

Prefer this one. Depicts men and women better.

No stronger feeling.

Better probably. It provides a more visual representation.

The second one catches my eye more. It's a bit more bolder. I prefer the second one. The second one just filled in more, more in your face than the first one.

Wouldn't make any difference to me, wouldn't be more likely to respond to either or.

I like second one better, because of its visual and proportional layout. No influence on responding.

Probably would respond to both, but first cover looks more official.

The first one looks more professional. This one looks like it is pitching for Christians or something. It's nice, but I personally like the other if I was going to fill it out. The second one wants me to make a donation. You think cancer society or something.

It's aesthetically pleasing – an attractive design on the cover. But I think the first one looks more like something for the collection of information. I think the second cover is more appropriate for a cover of a report, or for reporting the results of survey. I don't know if it would make a difference. My decision wasn't based on the cover design. It just came down to bad timing for me.

I think this one is better presented. I like the way it is designed. You have the man and women there and the roles of society thing in the middle. I like the graphics. It's the same thing on each cover. Even though I like the design better on the second cover, I would have equal probability of responding to both.

Having less on the page is better for me. Don't like the clutter on the second one – simple good for me. Having man and female on second cover I like, and the words 'men and women' are a bit bolder than the rest of the writing. But I don't like the wording under the graphic – like it straight across.

Better than the other one. Prefer to see real men and women rather than pictorial representations. I don't know if I'd have been more likely to respond. Looking at the questionnaire itself was the reason I didn't respond, due to time.

Too busy – could have better picture – could have had more of the globe on it. Wouldn't have been more likely to respond.

Draws you to it – more impact. No change in response.

First is better, because the second you have to analyse the picture. Would have been more likely to respond, but didn't like it as much.

Doesn't tell you it's a survey! Should have words 'confidential survey'; looks like could be a discussion paper. Likes centering – helps, but similar response.

Ok, not that fussed, prefer first one – a bit too much. Would make a difference.

Less appealing; black circle killed it; don't know if more likely to respond.

Prefer first cover.

More likely to respond – like picture.

Less likely – it doesn't look as professional. Pictures distract – that's why I don't like picture, takes the attention away from the survey. It looks like something a student would do rather than a professional.

Too fancy – doesn't need logo. Would be less likely to respond.

Like second one heaps better – more likely, like the logo.

More likely to respond. Used pictures to explain ideas better.

Question Eighteen: Any other comments about survey cover design?

Probe as to: The professionalism of the cover options, Impression of survey cover

Needs to be big and bold, has to have something that grabs your attention. Some pictures, artwork, whatever.

A flash cover wouldn't necessarily make me want to participate.

The cover was nice, but I'm more interested in what's inside.

A bit of colour maybe – something that grabs your attention, interesting – nothing scribbled, something professional.

Cover should reflect where it comes from. Think cover B looks as though it relates to children. Also, depends on individual perception, want to read informational/educational surveys.

Plain and to the point. If it looks professional I'd be inclined to look at it.

Nah, it's not the cover that's important.

I think the second survey cover looked more professional. It was just the design, it catches my eye more.

Both are professional and official. I guess the second has a bit more thought put into it. Someone has taken the time to put a graphic on it. Actually on the second cover the design on the middle I would read/look at, while the 1st cover I didn't actually read the whole thing. It looks more like a cover for a Massey paper to me.

They need to look professional, having a gloss to them is good.

B stands out more, but A more professional.

Keep is simple.

I think the first cover is an appropriate cover. It is appropriate for the document. With the second survey I would have expected to read something.

The second one could have a brighter colour – where black writing is so it stands out.

Should be clear and to the point. Professionalism should be there.

The writing should be on the left. First is more professional, second is a waste of money.

Needs to be clear that content is a survey.

Doesn't make too much difference.

Needs to be catchy – colourful – bright/bold.

No, liked cover B much more.

Quite liked both, but A is more appropriate for a survey.

Appendix N

Likeability Ratings for Survey One and Three Covers

Table 24 Likeability Ratings: Alternative Covers for Survey One

Individual likeability rating	Cover A Original Cover		Cover B Alternative Cover	
	n	%	n	%
Don't like it at all	1	1	0	0.0
	2	5	2	6.1
	3	3	6	18.2
	4	8	7	21.2
	5	9	8	24.2
	6	7	6	18.2
Like it very much	7	0	4	12.1
Total	33	100.0	33	100.0
Mean	4.2		4.7	
Mode	5		5	

Table 25 Likeability Ratings: Alternative Covers for Survey Three

Individual likeability rating	Cover A Graphic		Cover B No Graphic	
	n	%	n	%
Don't like it at all	1	1	3	7.5
	2	4	7	17.5
	3	3	11	27.5
	4	6	7	17.5
	5	12	5	12.5
	6	12	6	15.0
Like it very much	7	2	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0
Mean	4.7		3.7	
Mode	5		3	

Appendix O

Survey Three Cover Designs

Cover A - Graphic

ID 454
Type: 1

Advertising Regulation And Consumers

Department of Marketing

2003



 **Massey University**

College of **Business**

Cover B – No graphic

ID _____
Type: 2

Advertising Regulation And Consumers

Department of Marketing

2003



College of **Business**

Appendix P

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview – Reactions to Survey Topic

Question Nineteen A: What do you think about the topic of this particular survey?

Interesting, good survey.

Very interesting, lots of good questions.

A good topic. Attitudes are always changing. An often talked about topic.

I suppose it would be useful. Not really relevant or interesting to me.

Interesting without being compelling.

Pretty, doesn't do much for me.

I found the questions quite interesting. I answered them and then I gave them to my partner to answer them, just to see how different we were. It's a topic that needs to be looked at, insofar as global issues and needs big changes in those areas.

Crucial to know, otherwise society will fall apart, regarding laws and things like that.

Interesting.

Seems ok. Quite interesting. If I had received the questionnaire I would have filled it out, but I probably would not have gone out of the way to find out the results.

Interesting. Good opportunity to discuss with the missus about what was asked - content of the questions.

Interesting enough, as the roles are changing and evolving.

Good idea to see how things have changed over time.

Not really interested in it.

Valid, but very general. Some questions looked easy, some were too general.

Topic interesting. A difference from the old days.

Subject was interesting, just skimmed through a lot of it.

Interesting. Just how people perceive men and women. Other cultural views.

Interesting.

Good topic.

Interesting topic. Social interest.

Big range; too much of a discussion question; answer depends on mood.

Quite interesting.

Pretty important.

Don't have a problem.

Don't know what results they were trying to achieve.

Interesting and timely – a lot of women are head of their business, but they are burning themselves out doing business and family.

Interesting.

Very interesting. The roles of men and women – that's what I found interesting about it.

It is very important to any survey, people are ones who make all the difference. Men and women play almost the same role. E.g. Army, bus driving. They are very similar. Men and women are needed in every society. They are the ones that are doing everything.

Good topic. Was interested in it. It affects in every aspect of our lives. Work, home. Society is changing, slowly. It's interesting to step back and see how things are, see the bigger picture. It may not be the same for all families. Probably huge changes recently with child care, etc. For instance, my mum worked and for me that was quite normal. But my mum could have been quite liberal, it may have not been the same for other families.

I think it's been thrashed and I can't see a lot of benefit out of it. It's an ongoing topic - roles were clear 20/30 years ago, but not so much now. Analysing it now, to me it doesn't seem that beneficial.

Question Nineteen B – Was this a subject you were interested in? How interested?

Yes really got into it once filling it out. Highly intrigued.

Very interested.

Was interested – pretty interested. Me and my husband have talks on gender issues. I was actually interested in the final results actually. It actually concerned me with women working full time and having little kids. The fact that people feels it's necessary, but what do women feel?

Wasn't very interesting to me.

Yes interested, but only somewhat.

Not so interesting.

Yeah, I could get interested in it. I've been single for a while, so I feel independent, and I'm doing quite well. It was a good topic for me – Individuals, men/women, it's all the same.

Not in particular.

Yes, quite interested.

Quite interested.

I'm interested – probably less than modern history but still a good topic.

Yes, moderately – topical subject.

Yeah, I could be interested in this subject.

Not really interested in it.

Not of particular interest, but did read through a couple of time, and discussed with husband.

Subject was interesting, popular with subject – would like more discussion.

Semi-interested.

Interesting.

Not particularly interested.

Not too interested, don't really care.

Only just interested – mediocre.

Pretty interested, wife has a career, also almost daily topic.

Was interested, but not enough to read it at the time.

Some questions interesting. Topic was alright, and worth looking into, but not interesting.

Quite interested.

Not specifically – but could see that it would be interesting.

Very interesting.

I was very interested in this topic.

Question Twenty-One: Are there any comments you'd like to make about mail survey topics?

Probe as to: Level of privacy/invasion of privacy.

Don't really mind what survey topic in, no invasion of privacy.

Have views on the issues on the issues, it's not one thing or the other – it does get me thinking about things.

Non personal nature is more likely.

Loss of privacy depends on the topic. Just personal sorts of things I suppose.

I just think they have to be clear on what they are about. Certainly personal stuff is harder to divulge.

Yes and no. Cereals lowest priority – not really important.

Doesn't feel that privacy is an issue, responds according to interest.

No, not really. Even the one you sent me I didn't do. I am worried about privacy levels. I am worried about where the information is going and who will see/use it.

Depends what's in it that relate to me. How it impacts me.

Not really. More likely to do face to face surveys. People are more likely to put mail surveys to the side and forget about them. Phone tends to be more convenient, more yes/no.

Haven't done many, so the topic doesn't really matter. I often wonder what the info is being used for.

I'll answer most, it doesn't really bother me what they ask.

Depends on length and interest in the topic.

Depends on how interesting they are to me.

Would answer depending on personal interest and how private she thought the survey was.

Sensitive topic depends on who sends it (e.g. medical).

Some privacy issues – personal finance/medical history. Some not interested.

Some are ridiculous – personal finance/medical – too personal; privacy issues – you couldn't trust them to keep confidential.

Need to be conducted carefully depending on subject – privacy; don't want a feeling there is going to be a follow up – commercial. E.g. rating vacuum cleaners – get someone knocking on the door.

Exposure with advertising, etc. make it easy to be junk mail. No problems about privacy. If topic was directly affecting me – it would be treated differently, e.g. life threatening.

No, people go with what they know about and are comfortable with. Stats isn't always that easy (e.g. income).

Table 26 Frequency Details for Individual Juster Ratings for Survey Topics

	Breakfast cereals	Home appliances	Your medical history	Your personal finances	A second bridge for Palmerston North	The 'City Heart' project	Immigration	The environment
Juster rating	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n
Certain, practically certain	0	1	1	1	7	3	1	2
Almost sure	1	0	4	1	5	3	4	7
Very probable	3	3	2	3	5	6	2	5
Probable	1	2	3	3	4	3	4	5
Good possibility	2	2	4	1	2	2	0	3
Fairly good possibility	6	2	3	3	0	3	5	5
Fair possibility	3	4	3	3	0	3	7	0
Some possibility	4	8	1	6	2	2	4	3
Slight possibility	3	3	5	4	4	1	1	1
Very slight possibility	4	2	1	2	2	2	2	1
No chance, almost no chance	6	6	6	6	2	5	3	1
Mean	3.5	3.6	4.5	3.8	6.4	5.3	4.8	6.5

Appendix Q

Individual Comments to Follow-up Interview –Reactions to Survey Sponsor

Question Twenty-Two A: Does the fact that a university is conducting the survey mean you would be more or less likely to be involved?

More likely.

More likely, responsibility, useful and has meaning.

More likely, reputable, helping students.

More likely to be involved.

More likely if a university is involved.

I would be more likely as I am keen on education issues.

More likely, as it would be conducted in a proper and professional manner. Information will be researched and constructed well. Good access to results for respondents. Researchers are better trained, will conduct intellectual analysis.

More likely.

More inclined – because I'm an ex-student.

As alumni, more likely than if another organisation was conducting the survey.

More likely. It seems important. I feel I can trust the privacy of the survey.

More likely. It is interesting to do surveys and respond when people ask you to. University has education. People come from all over to Massey, so it's good to help.

More likely... if have time!! Because they are learning, that's why they are there. You go to Massey, you want to better your education. If we can help, we will.

More likely. They are a reputable organisation. They are a university... it is not just anybody doing it. You know who it is.

More likely. It strikes me as being more in pursuit of knowledge. Conducted professionally. I don't know... seems more scientific. There is more knowledge on research methods. Although just because it is a university, doesn't mean it can be employed to do commercial surveys for a firm. A couple of surveys lately have looked at peoples views on euthanasia, are important as it can change government policy. Maybe. That was Phil's research, and Janet's research on advertising. The results tend to hit the media so can be public and probably raise the awareness on certain issues and creates debate.

More likely, due to prior experience at Massey. May not be as willing but probably would as University is reputable.

More. Reputable institution.

More likely; at least it's an institution that is learning, and you gain something out of it. But if it was a breakfast cereal, they probably do it to sell more cereal, so nothing is gained.

More likely – because I know that they have a marketing section and we should support the people there. There are many things happening that Massey could do that other companies get paid to do (surveys).

More likely because they would have a good reason for doing it and would be more professional.

More likely.

More likely, because I know Phil.

More likely. Compared to just a student conducting it – it's more professional. Plus I know Massey so they will be alright. And cause it's Massey it can be used for research and not just selling stuff for a business.

Yes, support local.

More likely; big institution and have heard of them, educational, worthwhile.

More inclined, due to being a student herself. Reputable organisation, not out to sell anything. Ethical procedures well done.

No difference to me.

Just the same. I wouldn't do it if I questioned the motives of the company. The person has to carry ID to prove they are bona fide.

Don't think it would matter – it all depends on the contents and how I feel about them.

It doesn't make much difference who funds the survey.

Neither.

Less likely than StatsNZ. As StatsNZ is a governing body, Massey is doing it for other reasons. I trust the government to authorise those sorts of areas – Massey doesn't rate as a governing body.

No.

Question Twenty-Two B: What if this information was being collected by a commercial research company?

Slightly less; still would probably look at it, fill it out if I had time.

Wouldn't make much difference – not really interested.

Depends on who the company was. If well known, may be more likely if they have a good reputation.

Just the same. I wouldn't do it if I questioned the motives of the company. The person has to carry ID to prove they are bona fide.

That wouldn't worry me. I would respond to it equally with the university (more likely), As long as it was a proper company, above board company. If you came knocking on the door and you could back it up, then I would be more likely to respond than if you came up and said you belonged to such and such company and could not back it up.

I would feel fine about completing it. I would probably be more inclined with Uni as it is an educational thing, rather than a commercial firm making money. As long as the company was a company I was aware of. Wouldn't bother me.

Mediocre – dollars involved.

No difference.

Depends who it is. If from commercial store, such as Farmers, probably wouldn't do it.

Doesn't matter.

Less Likely, especially if hadn't heard of them.

Less likely, depends on who they were.

Less likely that if Massey did it. It all depends really.

Less likely.

Less likely.

Less likely.

Less likely.

Less likely.

Less likely. They are money orientated – that is how I perceive them.

Probably less likely. It's straight commercial activity, although probably does benefit society in some way. I would rather help students than a commercial firm.

Less likely than Uni. I am very interested in education side, not the commercial side. By commercial, I mean business. Commercial research companies just create their own ideas. They won't listen.

Less likely – because not interested in people, only self interested.

Less likely. Because they become boring and pushy – can't understand more (telephone). Not done professionally. But I have had good experiences.

Less respect; not many companies around that do that sort of research. Unless you know of the company yourself, you would treat it with a little unease, e.g. TV polls.

Less likely; cause want to make money.

Less likely.

Less likely – want to know intentions.

Wouldn't respond, especially if hadn't heard of them.

Depends on what their purpose it. I mean if it's a money driven... maybe not. Less likely than a Uni. Only if it's going to benefit community, religion, depends on purpose.

Don't know.

Depends on how they conducted themselves. It does depend on their reputation too!

Question Twenty-Two C: What if the same information was being collected by a government department?

Most likely, more than the others.

Reasonably likely, 'big brother' feeling, feel like you have to answer.

More likely, as find the research interesting. Also like to see how the government interprets the results.

Just the same as the other two (more likely), it's a government department, so it's kosher.

Just as likely. I think it's a chance to be listened to. It would be the same likelihood as the Uni, in terms of responding to it. But I would be slightly less trusting if a government survey as they may only take info out of it that suits them, while Uni is more neutral, third party.

Probably would – About the same as a university, but more than a commercial research company. It's the national scale. They will be collecting it on a national scale, and my response may have a larger impact or influence.

It would be a similar level to Massey Uni. You raise your voice that this is what you want. May go back to parliament and something better may happen to this country. More likely to respond to government than commercial research company. No one hears you. At least if you go through government, someone might hear you; to help the country is good.

Probably the same as Uni for government (more likely). Like Helen Clarke.

More likely – because it is probably going to effect the situation later.

Would respond – I've got a lot to say – they could do something about (though probably wouldn't).

More likely, help for providing NZ government.

About the same as Massey (more inclined), depends on which government department (not financial, yes policy).

For myself, it doesn't really bother me. In the army we are always getting asked stuff.

Depending on what it was. If genuinely wanted peoples opinions, I would do it. Get a sense of purpose from covering letter/questions.

No, wouldn't bother me either.

Depending on info being gathered, and what department it's for.

The census is another survey – but it's the law isn't it? You have to answer it.

50/50.

No difference.

More likely.

Maybe.

Even less than that (less likely than other two).

Probably the same as if it were by a commercial agency (less likely).

Ahh, no I wouldn't be keen at all.

Probably less likely than Massey.

Not interested.

Less likely. Government wants something.

Depends on the topic.

Depends on what they were collecting. Because of what you know and can relate to.

Most government departments are good.

Depends on which government department. Just one that I was interested in I suppose. More likely to respond to Uni overall, then government, then research company.

Depends on what it was. Obviously census is necessary, But if it is to do with vaccination for example, it can be just the state intervening. Politicians often have their own agendas so there is a little bit of mistrust.

Table 27 Frequency Details for Individual Juster Ratings for Survey Sponsors

	The Department of Internal Affairs	Ministry of Women's Affairs	University of Otago	AC Nielsen Research	Statistics New Zealand	Men's Health Collective
Juster rating	n	n	n	n	n	n
Certain, practically certain	1	1	2	0	1	0
Almost sure	4	1	5	1	4	3
Very probable	1	2	4	1	2	3
Probable	2	6	6	3	6	5
Good possibility	3	8	4	3	6	3
Fairly good possibility	6	3	1	7	4	5
Fair possibility	5	3	5	3	2	1
Some possibility	4	3	2	6	2	3
Slight possibility	1	0	1	2	3	1
Very slight possibility	3	2	0	3	0	4
No chance, almost no chance	2	3	2	3	2	4
Mean	4.8	5.1	6.1	4.0	5.6	4.6

Appendix R

Traditional and Alternative Response Rate Formulae Equation Workings

Survey One Calculations

$$R1 = \frac{181}{181 + 7 + 157} = 52.5\%$$

$$R2 = \frac{181}{181 + 7 + 157 - \frac{45}{400} * 157} = \frac{181}{345 - 18} = 55.4\%$$

Survey Two Calculations

$$R1 = \frac{981}{981 + 55 + 940} = 49.6\%$$

$$R2 = \frac{981}{981 + 55 + 940 - \frac{171}{2200} * 940} = \frac{981}{1976 - 73} = 51.6\%$$

Survey Three Calculations

$$R1 = \frac{402}{402 + 276 + 15} = 58.0\%$$

$$R2 = \frac{402}{402 + 276 + 15 - \frac{107}{804} * 276} = \frac{402}{693 - 37} = 61.3\%$$