

Marketing Research Project:
Using an Altruistic Appeal
Survey Method Experiment

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Summary

With multiple treatments available for market researchers, our group wanted to pick one that would not require us to use our money, yet be a strong influence to help us get our surveys filled out. As a result, our group chose an **altruistic appeal**. This means we would use an introductory statement that would induce guilt, causing the subjects to act selflessly and accept filling out our survey. Our objective for the true experiment is to test whether saying “so I don’t fail my class” (see *Appendix A*) when asking a student will have an effect the overall **response rate**, **response bias**, and **item omissions** of our self-administered survey. With plenty of past research on altruistic approaches revealing people’s motives to help each other in empathetic situations, we assume that our altruistic approach will have a higher **response rate** than without the **treatment**.

Our survey took place at CSUN and Cal Lutheran campus’. We made 256 attempts, and applied our treatment to every other person we made an attempt on. When we approached an individual, we used the same statement, saying, “Hi, my name is **insert name here**, would you be willing to fill out our survey on religious beliefs?” if they were the control or “Hi, my name is **insert name here**. I need people to fill out our survey on religious beliefs so I don’t fail my class. Would you mind filling one out?” if they were the **treatment**. Overall, we collected 111 usable surveys.

Our results from the surveys did not support our **hypothesis** that using the statement “so I don’t fail my class” would significantly increase the **response rate** compared to the control group. In conclusion, we fail to reject our hypothesis. Therefore, there is no relationship between using an altruistic appeal and the **response rate**.

Introduction and Literature Review

We decided to experiment with this **treatment** method to see if there would actually be a higher **response rate** with the people who received the **treatment**. Our **hypothesis** questions if there is a relationship between the **response rate** and using an altruistic approach as the **treatment**. Our goal was to determine whether stating “I need people to fill out this survey so I don’t fail my class” will increase the **response rate**. This is based on the idea that the students receiving the **treatment** will be empathetic and want to do the survey. They will feel more inclined to participate to help prevent the surveyor from failing their class.

One article speaks against the empathy-altruism **hypothesis** by saying that people are actually acting off of self-benefit, or egotistical motives. The author originally intended to show that people are not altruistic, but findings from this study showed that when people show empathetic concern, they are altruistically motivated (Baston). In addition, an experiment was conducted in a different article to test how well people react to an altruistic appeal. The results of the experiment showed that the Favor and No Favor condition did not show a significant difference under the direct request; however, there was a clear increase with both conditions under the Altruism request compared to the direct request and control group. They found that an altruistic appeal did encourage the compliance rate (Boster). This is something we took in consideration for our experiment. The findings from both Baston and Boster gave us further reason to expect an altruistic appeal would be effective.

Comparing the effectiveness of altruism over egoism was explained in the article by Chang, Chingching. The author notes that naturally, individuals try to avoid pain so when social disapproval or guilt is experienced, an individual will become more willing to help others to

relieve those feelings. This caused us to assumed that the people we approached would react to our pain of potentially failing a class. Moreover, Alfie Kohn gave insight about human nature's need to behave prosocially, meaning that it is human instinct to want to help others (Kohn). This further lead us to think that there would be more responses from the **treatment** group. Finally, the last article we came across showed that women would be more affected by an altruistic appeal compared to men (Rand). From this, we could believe that our **response rate** for women would be higher than men. However, as explained in our data analysis section, this was not the case. The information we gathered from our literature reviews gave us a lot of insight for what we could expect from our results. Yet, the data we gathered did not support any of these presumptions.

Objectives and Methodology

For our **survey method** experiment, we are investigating whether or not an altruistic approach would increase overall **response rate**. We wanted to see if using a guilt inducing statement would inspire the urge to help us as the surveyors. As seen in *Appendix A*, We approached students alternating between saying, “Hi, my name is **insert name here** would you be willing to fill out our survey on religious beliefs?” if they were the control or “Hi, my name is **insert name here**. I need people to fill out our survey on religious beliefs so I don’t fail my class. Would you mind filling one out?” if they were the **treatment**.

The **survey method** used was a self-administered survey. Our **target market** is students who attend CSUN and CAL LU. Our **sampling frame** is the students walking near the library of each campus on Monday from 10am-1pm. Due to the specified time frame, this is a non-random convenience survey. Our **sampling procedure** was to distribute surveys at CSUN on Monday, October 16 and 23 from 10am-1pm around the library. On Monday, November 6, we went to CAL LU and distributed surveys there also around 10am-1pm near the library. At both locations, every other person was approached by the surveyors, who were alternating between using the **control condition** or **treatment condition**. We had 256 attempts, and 114 completed surveys. We made half of these attempts in front of the library at CAL LU and the other half in front of the library at CSUN. The only special procedures that we made to separate our groups was to look at two different locations.

Our **experimental design** is shown below:

Control group:	(R)		O ₁
Experimental Group:	(R)	X	O ₂

We followed the “After-Only with Control Group Design” structure. The “R” in this design indicates that the groups were randomized. The distribution of our survey was under the time restraints of Mondays between 10am-1pm; however, we alternated our introductory statement for every other person, therefore, making the respondents for each group random. The “X” represents the **treatment**, the altruistic introductory statement. The “O” represents the observation of the respondents from each group. The “X” is placed before the “O” to show that the observation was take after being exposed to the **treatment**. The Rs, Xs, and Os are set up vertically to demonstrate the two different groups between the control and **treatment**.

Presentation of SPSS Data Analysis

TABLE A: COMPARING THE TREATMENT AND CONTROL GROUPS

	Control	Treatment	Stat. Test Result
Response Rate	42%	44%	Chi-Square Not Significant (See B)
Item Omision Rate	Mean = 0.09	Mean = 0.07	T-test Not Significant (See C)

TABLE B: ANALYZING RESPONSE BIAS

Questionnaire Variable	Control (n=56)	Treatment (n=55)	Stat. Test Results
COLLEGE: CSUN OR CAL LU	66% CSUN 34% CAL LU	64% CSUN 36% CAL LU	Chi-Square Not Significant
Q1. SEX: Male or Female	53% Male 46% Female	46% Male 55% Female	Chi-Square Not Significant
Q2. Academic Level	> Median = 26 ≤ Median = 30	> Median = 19 ≤ Median = 36	Median Test Not Significant

Q6. Age	Mean = 21.71	Mean = 21.27	T-test Not Significant
Q7. Ethnicity	5% African American 29% White 2% American Indian 14% Asian American 36% Latino/a 14% Other	0% African American 38% White 0% American Indian 15% Asian American 36% Latino/a 11% Other	Chi-Square Not Significant
Q1. What do you currently consider yourself? (Theist, Atheist, Agnostic)	77% Theist 4% Atheist 20% Agnostic	71% Theist 4% Atheist 26% Agnostic	Chi-Square Not Significant

As seen in the charts above, there is no significant difference between the control and the **treatment**. The Chi-square table depicting the **response rate** under *Appendix B* reports the following information: Out of 256 attempts, 142 attempts were rejected. 76 rejected surveys came from the control group while 69 came from the **treatment**. In terms of the successful attempts, 111 were usable, 56 from the control, and 55 from the **treatment**.

Our research **hypothesis** was to investigate the effect of an altruistic appeal. Based on prior research, we assumed that the **response rate** for the **treatment** group would be significantly higher than the control; however, our results **suggest** otherwise. There is also no significant **response bias** reported as seen in Table B shown above. Based on article found in the literature review, it was noted that females often act more altruistically than males. We also thought that religious affiliation could also be a factor to how people could respond to the **treatment** based on the idea of moral practices. Both these assumptions were again was not supported based on our results. The data shown in *Appendix C* also revealed that the **item omission rate** is not significant either, thus the two groups, **control** and **treatment**, have identical mean scores. This means that not many questions that needed to be answered were left unanswered. It suggest that there were minimal errors in our questionnaire in terms of questions.

Discussion of Results

Our results from the collected surveys did not support our **hypothesis** that using the statement "...so I don't fail my class" would significantly increase the **response rate** compared to the control group. Perhaps the **treatment** was not such a big factor because we were asking students to fill our survey out. Most students know that college courses sometimes require students to ask for other people's time to do an activity. If a student has had to do this before, they may feel more obliged to give some of their time to another student's request. All of our external research that supported our **hypothesis** was done outside of a campus, or with complete random strangers that were not students. Therefore, students may have been more considering to take some of their time to complete one of our surveys.

We determined that our **Survey Method** Experiment has high **internal validity** since we used after only with control group design and a low **external validity**. The **external validity** was potentially high since it was a field study. However, anything that makes the experiment artificial or unnatural will lower the **external validity**. The **sampling frame** restricts the groups to only contain those who are around the library on Mondays between 10am-1pm, thus lowering the **external validity**.

It is possible that our statement did not create enough guilt to properly induce an altruistic action. Our delivery of the introductory statement could have diminished the effectiveness of an altruistic appeal, thus giving no real significance between the control and **treatment response rate**. For future studies, we **suggest** more of an emphasis and exaggeration of the dire need to get surveys completed. Doing such could reinforce the altruistic appeal. Additionally, we would **suggest** to expand the reach of respondents; therefore, not limiting the surveys to just students

inside the campus or to those only around the library at a specific time. Asking college students may have been a factor for our research not **justifying our hypothesis**. Expanding the range of the location to the community surrounding the campus, collecting more surveys before running tests, and asking other random adults about their religious experiences throughout their college careers could have positively influenced our results.. If the sample frame was also expanded, the willingness to participate in a survey may have increased. Those who are around the library on Mondays between 10am-1pm are often headed to class or to study, so they did not have time to take our survey.

References

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Appendices

Appendix A **Treatment and Control: Introductory Statement**

We will approach students alternating between saying, “Hi, my name is **insert name here** would you be willing to fill out our survey on religious beliefs?” if they were the control or “Hi, my name is **insert name here**. I need people to fill out our survey on religious beliefs so I don’t fail my class. Would you mind filling one out?” if they were the **treatment**.

Appendix B
Response Rate Analysis

Statement (IV) Result (DV)	“Please fill out this survey” (Control)	“...So I won’t fail my class” (Treatment)	TOTAL
Usable surveys (90% Complete)	56 (42%)	55 (44%)	111
Unusable or Rejected	76 (58%)	69 (56%)	145
TOTAL	132	124	256

For a 2 x 2 cross tabulation, the appropriate formula for a Chi-Square test would be:

$$\Sigma \{(|f_o - f_e| - 1/2)^2 / f_e\}$$

f_o	f_e	$ f_o - f_e $	$ f_o - f_e - 1/2$	$(f_o - f_e - 1/2)^2$	$(f_o - f_e - 1/2)^2 / f_e$
56	57.2	1.2	0.7	0.49	0.009
55	53.8	1.2	0.7	0.49	0.009
76	74.8	1.2	0.7	0.49	0.007
69	70.2	1.2	0.7	0.49	0.007
					0.032 = X²_{CAL}

For a 2x2 table, if $X^2_{CAL} \geq 2.71$, the results are statistically significant at the .10 alpha level.

That is, if $X^2_{CAL} \geq 2.71$, reject the H_o : No relationship between Response Rate and Treatment

$$X^2_{CAL} = 0.032, \text{ therefore, } 0.01 \leq 2.71$$

Since $0.032 \leq 2.71$, we must accept H_o

Conclusion: There is No relationship between Response Rate and Treatment

Appendix C
Item Omission rate Analysis

H₀: The two groups have identical mean scores

H_a: The two groups do not have identical mean scores

Group Statistics

	TREATMENT	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Questions left unanswered	Control	58	.09	.283	.037
	Treatment	56	.07	.260	.035

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means
		F	Sig.	t
Questions left unanswered	Equal variances assumed	.338	.562	.290
	Equal variances not assumed			.291

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Questions left unanswered	Equal variances assumed	112	.772	.015
	Equal variances not assumed	111.719	.772	.015

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
			Lower	Upper
Questions left unanswered	Equal variances assumed	.051	-.086	.116
	Equal variances not assumed	.051	-.086	.116