

Background

Careless responding is content non-responsive behavior

- Participants disregard item content when answering survey questions.
- Arises due to a lack of motivation to respond thoughtfully.

To date, research on careless responding is researcher-centric

- Researchers ask participants how/why they are careless using close-ended response formats.
- Induce careless behavior then observe what responses look like.
- Finds that participants respond in overly consistent or patterned ways or overly inconsistent or random ways when careless.
- Motivating factors for careless behavior are understudied.

The current study asks how and why people are careless using open-ended responses to see if past research has missed anything.

Methods

- An online survey was administered to college students in exchange for research participation credit.
- Participants were given a description of carelessness and asked if they had ever responded to a survey in this way.
- If the respondent had participated in this behavior, they were given a series of 3 questions
 - 1) Please describe how you responded to questions (e.g., randomly, with some strategy or pattern, etc.)
 - 2) Why did you respond carelessly (e.g., I was bored, in a hurry, etc.)?
 - 3) Did you use any strategy in your responses to try to make it seem like you weren't responding carelessly? If so, describe them.
 - In study 2 the e.g., was removed from questions 1 and 2.
- The first 100 responses were read to form initial categories for coding and definitions for these categories.
- Responses were then coded by two coders (98% agreement in study 1, 95% agreement in study 2). All disagreements were resolved via discussion.

Takeaways

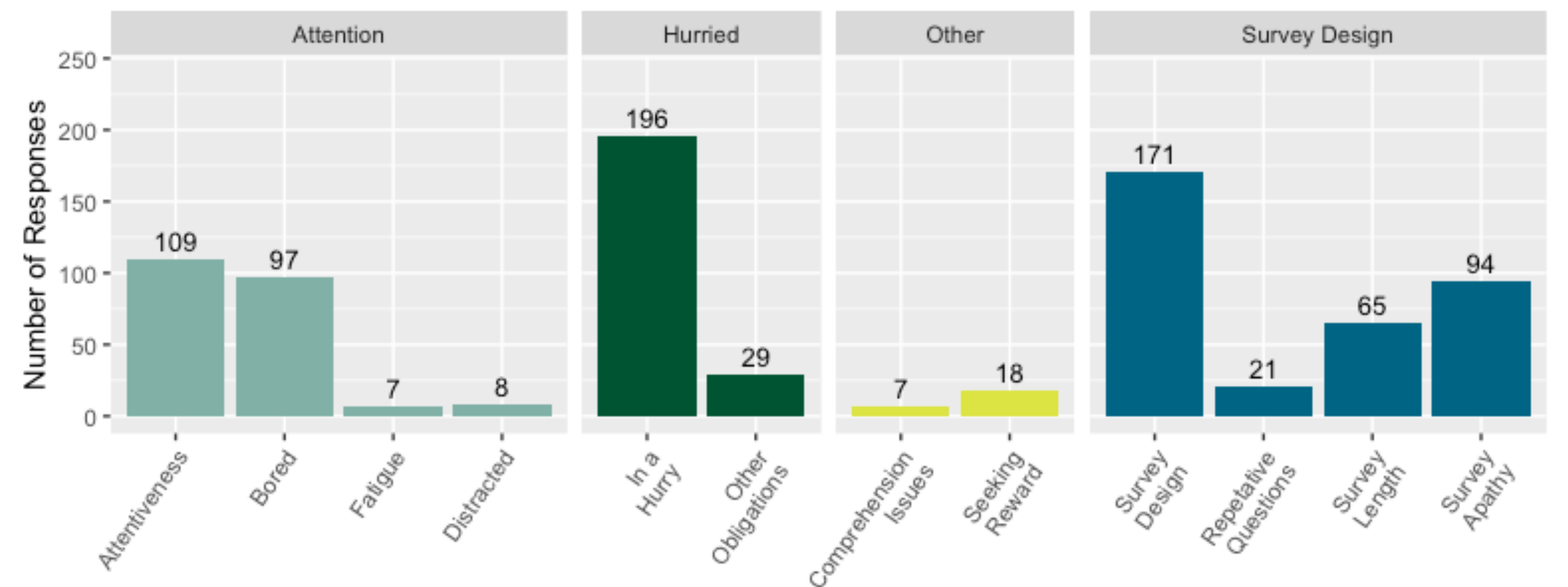
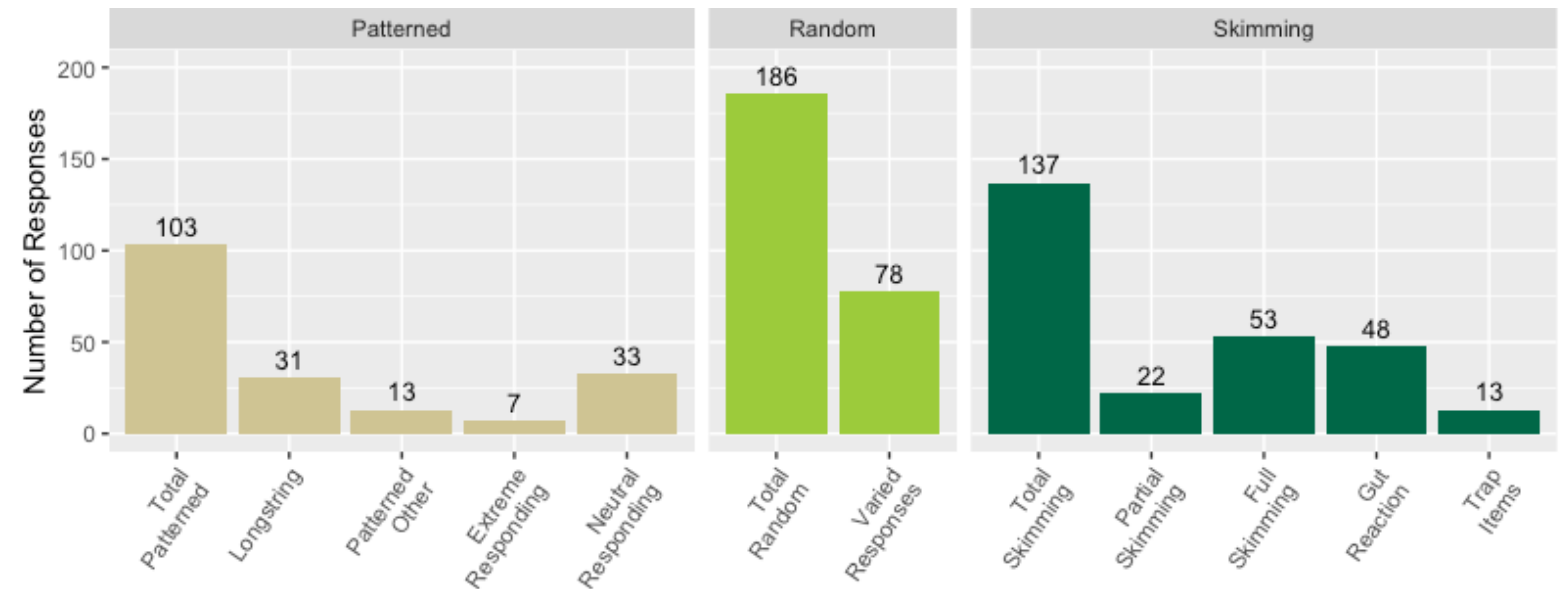
- Majority of participants use either random or patterned behaviors when responding carelessly.
- Skimming is a new area of study because it does not fit into previous conceptualizations of carelessness but was identified by participants as careless behavior.
- Suggests there may be varying levels of content-nonresponsiveness.
- Participants identified a variety of personal factors such as boredom, fatigue, and being rushed while taking the survey that may be beyond the control of researchers.
- However, survey design factors were a common reason for careless behavior.
 - Survey length was one primary factor, suggesting shorter surveys may have fewer issues with carelessness.
 - Survey apathy was a broad category that captured participants' disinterest in the survey topic or perception that the survey was unimportant.
 - Suggests participants are not motivated to give thoughtful responses simply for science.
 - Researchers should attempt to make surveys engaging or make the survey content important to participants in some way.

What is Careless Responding? A Qualitative Study

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Study 1



Study 2

