Do Humor and Relatability Predict Interviewer Performance?

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Background & Motivation

- Being relatable and easy to talk to contribute to interviewer success

- Humor is part of what makes people relatable

- Extensive research exists on interviewer rapport[1, 2]

- But… little research on humor and relatability in particular[3]

[1]Beatty, P. (2001). Standardization in survey research: How did it get here and how far should it go? ISI - International Statistical Institute. https://2001.isiproceedings.org/pdf/713.PDF
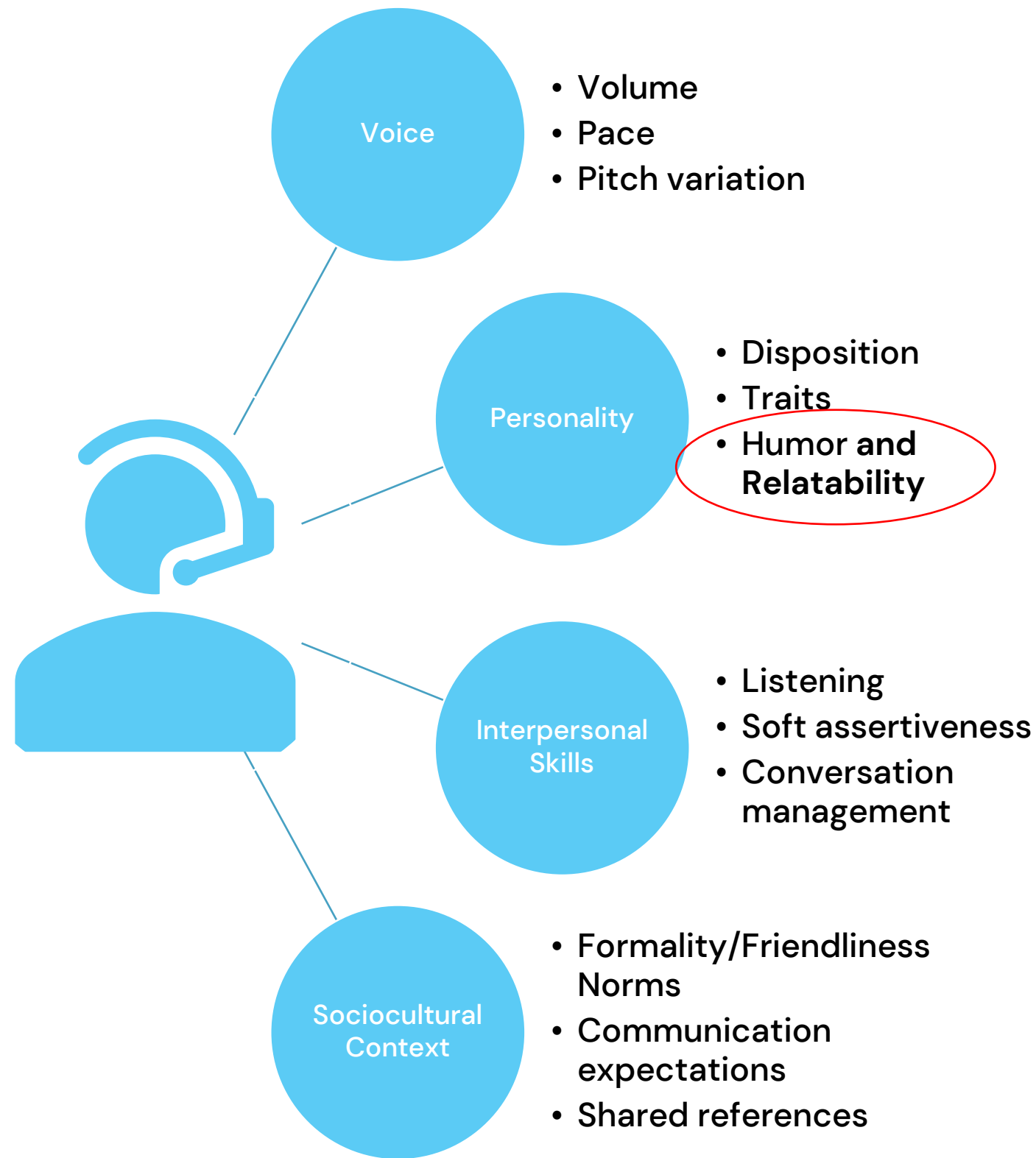
[2]Likert, R. (1947). The sample interview survey: A fundamental research tool of the social sciences. In Current trends in psychology (pp. 196–225). University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/10.1037/13989-008

[3]Lavin, D., & Maynard, D. W. (2001). Standardization vs. Rapport: Respondent Laughter and Interviewer Reaction during Telephone Surveys. American Sociological Review, 66(3), 453–479. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088888

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Factors Contributing to Interviewer Success

Voice
- Volume
- Pace
- Pitch variation

Personality
- Disposition
- Traits
- Humor **and Relatability**

Interpersonal Skills
- Listening
- Soft assertiveness
- Conversation management

Sociocultural Context
- Formality/Friendliness Norms
- Communication expectations
- Shared references

Research Question

- Are subjective assessments of interviewers' relatability and sense of humor (i.e., how funny they are perceived to be) correlated with important performance metrics?
  - Contact
  - Refusals
  - Refusal conversions
  - Cooperation

Methods

- Quality Assurance (QA) monitors nominate interviewers into two overlapping groups:

  - Best sense of humor

  - Most relatable

  - *"Among all the current interviewers you've observed or interacted with, including formal and informal interactions, and QA monitoring sessions, who do you think has the* <u>best sense of humor</u>*? Who makes you laugh? You can list as many interviewers as you can think of."*

  - *"Thinking about the same interviewer interactions, who do you think is the* <u>most relatable</u>*? Please list interviewers again here if they are also in your answer above (i.e., if you find them funny and relatable)."*

Methods – Why QA Staff?

- ## Supervisors and team leads have more direct and varied interactions with interviewers
  - But…issue of "picking favorites" arises

- ## QA staff hear interviewers across more interactions with respondents
  - Focus on their professional role alone

Resulting Data

- Nominations create four groups of interviewers:

  1) neither funny nor relatable

  2) funny, not relatable

  3) relatable, not funny

  4) funny and relatable

- Dimension strength: Number of nominations each interviewer receives across QA monitors

Analysis Plan

- ## Compare differences in key performance indicators between groups
  - Contact
  - Refusals
  - Refusal conversions
  - Cooperation

- ## Using interviewer performance data over a one-month (at least) period

Expectations and Hypotheses

- Expect sizes of groups to differ
  - Largest group: "neither funny nor relatable"
  - Smallest: "funny and relatable"

- Being funny or relatable reduces refusals, and increases refusal conversion and cooperation rates
  - Strongest effect for "funny and relatable" group

- Include performance metrics we don't expect to be affected as cross-check/triangulation

Current Status and Next Steps

- Work in progress, so <u>very</u> open to your ideas

- We have….
  - …reached out to QA team for input (3 bilingual QA monitors)
  - …identified data sources for performance metrics

- Next steps…
  - …assemble data
  - …analyze data

Extrapolations to Other Modes

- ## Face-to-face
  - Brings smiles and other nonverbals
  - Other ways to communicate humor and relatability
    - E.g., "Do you look like me?"

- ## Avatars?
  - Can an animated character tell a joke?
  - Can it empathize?

- ## Self-administration
  - If humor works, why not employ it in writing
  - Can be more difficult to convey
  - Humor v. light-heartedness

Thank you!

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