

Topics Appropriate for Survey Research

- Descriptive
- Exploratory
- Explanatory

Types of Surveys

- Self-administered, handed-out
- Self-administered, mail
- In-person interviewing
- Telephone interviewing

Self-administered, handed-out

- Time of survey
- Place for survey
- Using identification codes to help with follow-up of those not initially present
- Appearance of researcher

Self-administered, Mail

- **Drop off** and they mail back; mail and then pick it up; mail to and they **mail back**
- **Second and third follow-up mailing**—include another instrument and cover letter, two weeks between mailings
 - (40%, 20%, 10% response--1st, 2nd, 3rd mailings)
- Using **identification codes**
- **Cost of mailing**
 - first class (more certain) vs bulk mail (cheaper)
 - Business-reply permit—pay for only what is returned vs putting stamps on return envelopes

Self-administered, Mail

Keep track of returns and **date returned** questionnaires to guard against changes in environment

In-Person Interviewing

- **Dress** in a similar manner to the people who will be interviewed.
- Study and **become familiar** with the questionnaire.
- Help to maintain **validity and reliability** (see page 264 of text)
 - **Follow question wording exactly.**
 - **Record responses exactly.**
 - **Probe** for responses when necessary.

Telephone Surveys

- Use **Random Digit Dialing** to obtain sample
- **Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)**
- Gain **legitimacy** immediately
- Keep **brief**
- Remain **unbiased**

Telephone Surveys

Advantages:

- Money and time.
- Control over data collection (listen in on surveyors).

Disadvantages:

- Surveys that are really ad campaigns.
- Answering machines.
- Persons with no phones or multiple phones reduce randomness

Guidelines for Constructing a Questionnaire

- Choose appropriate **question forms** (Likert statements, open-ended vs closed-ended questions)
- Make **items clear** (don't use sophisticated words)
- Avoid **double-barreled** questions.
- Respondents **must be competent** to answer the particular question.

Guidelines for Constructing a Questionnaire

- Respondents must be willing to answer.
- Questions should be **relevant**.
- Short items are best.
- **Avoid negative** items.
- **Avoid biased items** and terms.

Guidelines for Constructing a Questionnaire

- One question per line.
- Use **contingency questions** when necessary but keep them very clear (if they answer yes then they answer one set of questions, if they answer no then they answer a different set).
- Format **matrix questions** so they are easily answered.
- Be aware of issues with **ordering items**.
- Include **instructions** for the questionnaire.
- **Pretest** all or part of the questionnaire.

Acceptable Response Rates

- 50% - adequate for analysis and reporting
- 60% - good
- 70% - very good

Strengths of Survey Research

- Useful in describing the characteristics of a large population.
- Makes large samples feasible.
- Flexible - many questions can be asked on a given topic.

Weaknesses of Survey Research

- Can seldom deal with the context of social life (**in-depth knowledge**).
- **Inflexible** in some ways.
- Subject to artificiality.
- Weak on **validity** (lack of in-depth).