Chapter 9

Survey Research

Guidelines for Asking Questions

- Choose Appropriate Question Forms
- Open-Ended Questions -- the respondent is to provide his/her own answer to the question
- Closed-Ended Questions -- respondent is asked to select an answer from among a list provided by the researcher

Requirements of Closed-Ended Questions

- Mutually exclusive and exhaustive
- Example : What do you think is the most important issue facing the U.S.?
 - List possible responses, still you would need:
 - Other (please specify)_

Make Items Clear

 Items must be precise so the respondent knows exactly what the researcher is asking

• Example: What do you think of the proposed peace plan? What proposed peace plan?

Avoid Double-Barreled Questions

Asking two questions in one

 Example: Do you agree or disagree with the statement "The United States should abandon its space program and spend the money on domestic programs."

Respondents Must be Competent to Answer

- Example: Asking teens "How many miles have you driven since you got your license?"
- They would probably way over guess.

Questions Should Be Relevant

 If questions are about things people haven't thought about, don't know about or really care about, their answers are not likely to be useful.

Short Items Are Best

 Respondent should be able to read an item quickly, understand its intent and select or provide an answer without difficulty

Avoid Negative Items

- Example: Do you agree or disagree: The United States should not recognize Cuba.
- Many people will read over NOT

Avoid Biased Items and Terms

- Bias: refers to any property of questions that encourages respondents to answer in a particular way
- Examples:
 - assistance to the poor vs. welfare
 - dealing with drug addiction vs. drug rehabilitation

Questionnaire Construction

- Properly laid out, spread out
- Clear instructions
- Uncluttered
- Clear formats for respondents to answer
 - 1. create boxes for answers, ask them to check the box
 - 2. or ask them to circle answers

Did you happen to vote in the last presidential election?



2. No

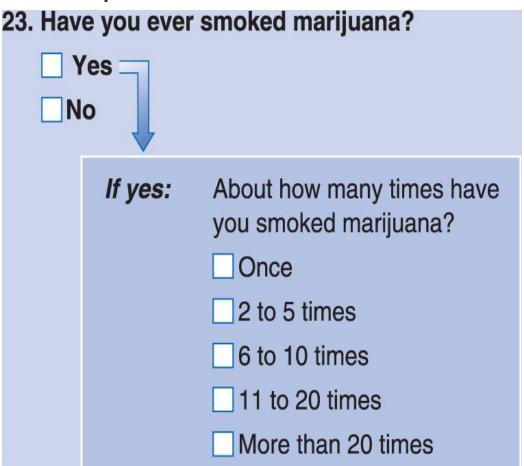
3. Don't know

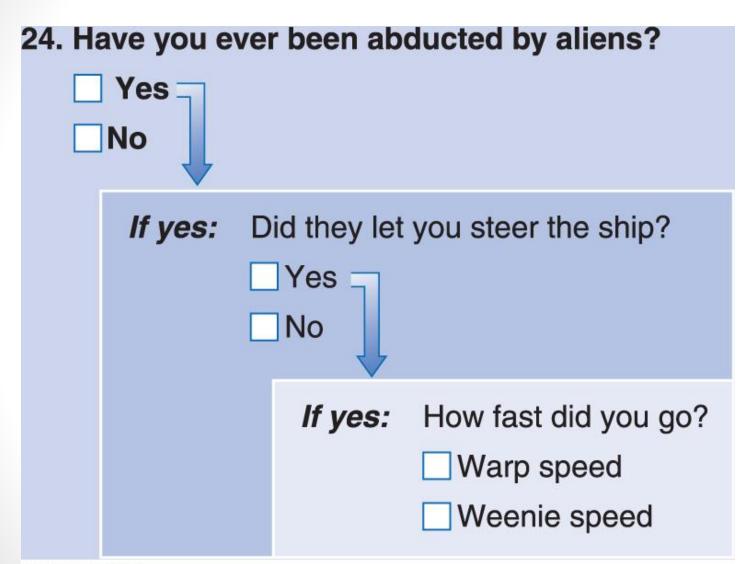
Have you ever felt you were the victim of sexual discrimination?



Contingency Questions

 A survey question intended for only some respondents, determined by their responses to some other question





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Matrix Questions

 Beside each of the statements presented below, please indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD), or are Undecided (U).

a. What this country needs	SA	Α	D	SD	U
is more law and order					
b. The police should be disarmed in America					
c. During riots, looters should be shot on sight					

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etc

Questionnaire Construction

- Ordering Items in a Questionnaire
 - How questions are ordered affects responses

Pre-testing the Questionnaire

Self-Administered Questionnaires

- Respondents complete the questionnaire by themselves
- Advantage: handle sensitive issues well (if anonymity ensured)
- Response Rate the number of people participating in a survey divided by the number selected in the sample.
 - Ideal = higher than 70%

Strengths and Weaknesses of Survey Research

- Strengths
 - Describes large populations well
 - Flexibility
 - Standardized questions

Weaknesses

- Round pegs in square holes
- Seldom deal with context of social life
- Artificial
- Weak on validity