

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?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

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

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know


Contingency Questions

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

23. Have you ever smoked marijuana?

Yes

No



If yes: About how many times have you smoked marijuana?

Once

2 to 5 times

6 to 10 times

11 to 20 times

More than 20 times

24. Have you ever been abducted by aliens?

Yes

No



If yes: Did they let you steer the ship?

Yes

No



If yes: How fast did you go?

Warp speed

Weenie speed

Matrix Questions

17. 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**).

	SA	A	D	SD	U
a. What this country needs is more law and order.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. The police should be disarmed in America.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. During riots, looters should be shot on sight.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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