

Survey Research

- Surveys provide a methodology for finding out what people think at a particular time.
- They provide a source of data that can complement data from experimental research.
- It is assumed that people are able and willing answer survey questions truthfully and accurately.

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Survey Response Errors

- A **response set** is when a participant answers all questions on a survey from a particular perspective rather than honestly.
 - Social Desirability (faking good)
 - Answering the questions in such a way as to make their answers like "most people"
 - "Yea-saying" or "Nay-saying"
 - Answering all questions as either yes/agree or no/disagree regardless of the content.
- Researchers can reduce response set biases by being open and honest with the participants, provide feedback on the results and assure confidentiality.

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Constructing Survey Questions

- Survey questions should be based on the research objective (what is it that the researchers want to know) and usually include questions about
 - Attitudes and beliefs
 - Facts and demographics
 - Specific behaviors (past & future)
- Question wording needs to be easy to understand and neutral (non-leading)

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Wording for Questions

- Avoid questions that ask for two things at once (double-barreled)
 - "Should students pay less for tuition and have fewer classes offered each semester?"
- Avoid loaded questions
 - "Do you support the thoughtless ways our city officials waste public funds?"
- Avoid negative wording
 - "Parents who don't abuse their children don't have low self-esteem"
- Change wording to reduce "yea and nay-saying"

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Responses to Questions

- Closed- versus open-ended questions
 - Closed-ended questions are more structured and easier to score but can be misleading.
 - Open-ended questions can produce insightful information not predicted by the researcher
- Closed-ended questions include a variety of methods for quantifying response alternatives.

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Questionnaires

- Advantages
 - Are less costly to administer than interviews in terms of researcher time.
 - Allow the responses to be completely anonymous.
- Disadvantages
 - Respondents must be able to read and understand the questions.
 - Could be boring and respondents won't finish them or be motivated to answer the questions completely.

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Interviews

■ Advantages

- Higher response rates because people are more likely to answer questions from a real person as opposed to a mailed questionnaire.
- Rapport with interviewer motivates more complete answers and answering all the questions.
- Interviewer can clarify the questions and ask follow-up questions.

■ Disadvantages

- Interviewer bias (expectations, approval/disapproval)