

Research Methods in Psychology

Survey Research



What We Will Cover in This Section

- Overview
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Summary



What Do You Think of These Questions?

Do you support President Bush's initiatives to promote the safety and security of all Americans?	Yes	No	Undecided
Do you support reforms proposed by the Bush Administration to improve curriculum, invest more in training teachers and create safer schools for our children?	Yes	No	Undecided
Do you support the use of air strikes against any country that offers safe harbor or aid to individuals committed to attacks on America?	Yes	No	Undecided

Survey: Definition

Research in which the participant is asked to respond to oral and/or written questions. The questions and responses can be either structured or unstructured.

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Key Concepts

- Surveys should be considered to be in the same category as a test.
 - Each question represents a test item.
 - Administering the survey should be standardized.
 - The researcher has to consider reliability issues.
 - The researcher has to consider validity issues.

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Bottom Line

Effective surveys depend on asking the right questions right.

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Interviews



A conversation
with a purpose.

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Unstructured Interview

Questions are unplanned. The interviewer can ask questions at his/her discretion.

- Benefits
 - Cover a wide range of issues.
 - Flexibility.
- Issues
 - Reliability
 - Validity

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Structured Interview

Questions are pre-planned in advance to elicit responses in a specific area.

- Benefits.
 - Consistency.
 - Even coverage.
 - Content validity.
- Issues.
 - Limits coverage.

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Questionnaire and Interview Design



Step 1. Determine the purpose

- What do you need to know?
- What can you do with the responses?
- What decisions can be made from the responses?
- What will you do with the responses once you have them? How will the responses be analyzed?
- How will you report the responses?



Step 2. Target Population

- To whom do you want to generalize your results?
- What is your target population?
- What is your sample frame?



Step 3. How Will the Survey Be Evaluated?

- Will the responses be content analyzed?
- Will the responses be computer analyzed?
- What kinds of analyses will be required?
- What statistical decisions will be made from the survey?

Step 4. How will the survey be administered?

- Interview?
 - Face to face?
 - Group?
 - Telephone?
- Questionnaire
 - Controlled group?
 - Pencil & paper vs. computer?

Step 5. Determine the question format.

- Open ended questions.
- Closed ended questions.

Open-ended Questions

Questions where the respondent is free to answer in his/her own words.

- Benefits.
 - Complete answers.
 - Person's reasons.
 - Find unanticipated ideas and responses.
- Issues.
 - Coding.

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Closed-ended Questions

Questions where the respondents are limited to a fixed set of alternatives in their answers.

- Benefits.
 - Easy to code.
 - Rater reliability.
- Issues.
 - Limits responses.
 - Some alternatives may not apply.

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Step 6. Question Construction

- Characteristics of a good item.
 - Single issue.
 - Simple wording.
 - Can the respondent answer this?
 - Is it relevant to the survey purpose?
 - Is the question neutral (leading or loaded)?
 - Are there issues of social desirability inherent in the question?
- Number of items.

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Step 7. Develop Response Scale(s)

- Keys to good response scales.
 - Relevant to the question.
 - Mutually exclusive.
Categories defined so that membership in one rules out membership in another.
 - Mutually exhaustive.
Categories are defined so that all possible answers fall into one of them.

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Step 8. Pilot Test

- Use members of the target population.
- Examine readability and interpretation.
- Examine adequacy of the responses.
- Examine consistency of the interviewers.

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Step 9. Distribute the Survey.

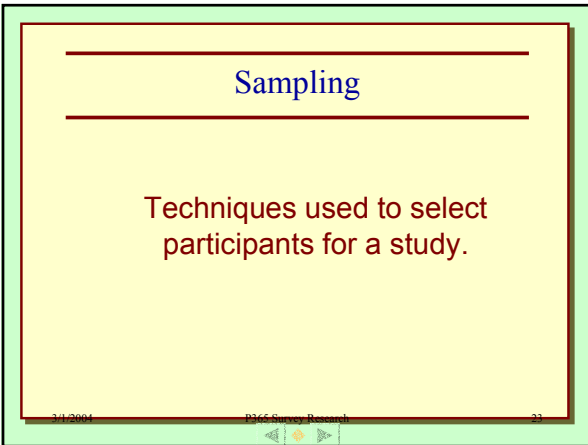
- How to deliver?
- How to recover?

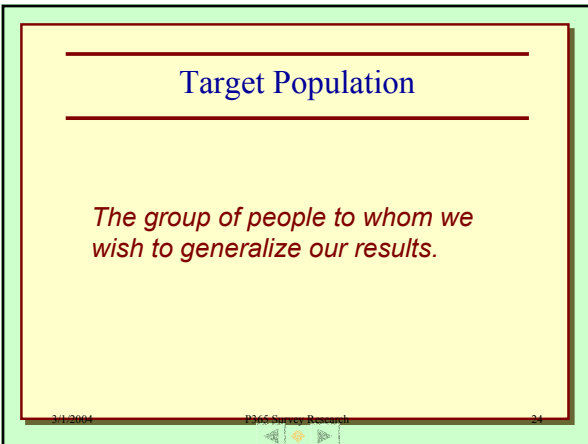
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Sample Frame (Study Population)

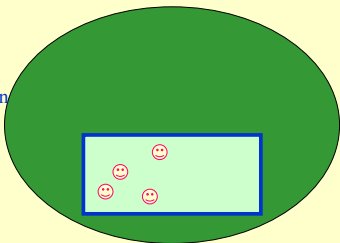
The individuals or clusters of individuals who might be actually be selected for inclusion in the study.

Research Sample


The group of people who are actually selected from whom we collect our data.

Model

-  Target Population
-  Study Population (Sample Frame)
-  Research Sample



SAMPLING



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Probability Sampling

Techniques in which every member of the population has a known probability of being selected for the research sample.

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Simple Random Selection

Technique for choosing people from the sample frame in which each person has an equal probability of being selected.

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Stratified Random Sampling

A technique in which the sample population is divided into strata followed by random sampling within each stratum.

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Cluster Sampling

Existing groups or clusters of potential participants are identified. Then random samples are taken from within each cluster.

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Probability Sampling

- Benefits.
 - Generalize from the sample to the target population.
- Issues.
 - Difficult to get full participation from the 'selected' people.
 - Difficult with large, geographically diverse population.

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Nonprobability Sampling

Type of sampling in which it is impossible to specify the probability that any member of the study population will be included in the sample.

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Haphazard (Convenience) Sample

Selecting subjects in a non-random manner, usually on the basis of availability.

Usually done without regard to having a representative sample of the population.

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Purposive Sampling

The researcher uses his/her own judgment to select the membership of the sample.

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Snowball Sampling

People who are selected using convenience/haphazard techniques nominate additional participants.



Key Learning Point

- It is easy to criticize research on the basis of its sample. The key is to determine the impact of the sample on the inferences being made.





Errors and Response Biases



Interviewing Errors

- Confirmation Bias

An error in which the interviewer unconsciously seeks to gather information to support an established opinion or point of view.

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Scale Ambiguity

Errors caused as a result of having response scales that are not clear.

How much fun are you having in class right now?

Nice	Cool	Lots	Tons
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Category Anchors

Errors caused as a result of having response scales that indicate a cue for what is an appropriate response.

How great is your excellent instructor?

Pretty Cool	Wonderful	Marvy	Superb
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Social Desirability

A characteristic of certain items or responses that causes people to choose that response even if it does not represent their true tendency or opinion.

Do you think that it is OK to hit your spouse?

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Acquiescence Response Set

Tendency of respondents to either systematically agree or disagree with items on a scale.

Can be influenced by the way a question is worded.

The problems at the University are caused more by students than the faculty.

The problems at the University are caused more by the faculty than the students.

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Extreme Response Bias

Tendency of respondents to endorse extreme responses.

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Halo Error

Tendency of a rater to let one positive or negative characteristic of an individual to affect an overall evaluation.

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Leniency/Central Tendency/Severity Error

Tendency of rater to give either all high, moderate, or low evaluations to everyone being evaluated.

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The End

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