

# Research methods conclusion flashcard



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**INFERENCEAL STATISTICS** mathematical tools for estimating how likely it is that a statistical result based on data from a random sample is representative of the population from which the sample is assumed to have been selected.

Make inferences from data to more general conditions-estimate the degree of confidence that can be placed in generalizations from a sample to the population from which the sample was drawn. (generalize your sample to a larger population)-judgments of the probability that an observed difference between groups is a dependable one or that might have happened by chance in this study. (the difference you see in the DV are not by chance or natural error – or is it the thing of interest (independent variable))With inferential statistics, you are trying to reach conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data alone. For instance, we use inferential statistics to try to infer from the sample data what the population might think. Or, we use inferential statistics to make judgments of the probability that an observed difference between groups is a dependable one or one that might have happened by chance in this study. Thus, we use inferential statistics to make inferences from our data to more general conditions; we use descriptive statistics simply to describe what's going on in our data.

ALSO SEE EXTRA SHEET

**DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS** Research in which social phenomena are defined and described.

Describe the distribution of variables.

-Quantitatively describing the main features of a collection of data.

-Are distinguished from INFERENCE STATISTICS in that it aims to summarize a sample, rather than use data to learn about the population that the sample of data is thought to represent.

-DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS unlike INFERENCE are not developed on the basis of probability theory

-Are a set of brief descriptive coefficients that summarize a given data set – the measures used to describe a data set are MEASURES OF CENTRAL TENDENCY & MEASURES OF VARIABILITY

-DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS provide simple summaries about the sample and about the observations that have been made. They can be either: 1. Qualitative (summary statistics) 2. Visual Graphs

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO PREPARING DATA FOR ANALYSIS? 1. ASSIGN A UNIQUE IDENTIFYING NUMBER 2. REVIEW THE FORMS 3. CODE OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS 4. CREATE A CODEBOOK 5. ENTER THE DATA 6. CLEANING THE DATA-data cleaning-check coding

ASSIGN A UNIQUE IDENTIFYING NUMBER • This number should be assigned to each form, questionnaire, survey or transcript • It should appear on the form • It should include the identifier as a variable in the data • Having an identifier enables you to go back to the original form if you find data entry errors or decide to enter additional information • If you collect data from the same people at different points in time, the identifier helps you link their responses

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REVIEW THE FORMS • There may be mistakes or unanticipated problems. You need to establish rules that you will follow when you encounter such mistakes. • Here are some problems you may encounter:

- Responses that are not clearly indicated. For example, circles crossing more than one category or an X or check mark falling between responses

- Respondents misreading instructions. Sometimes respondents do not follow instructions about how to respond to a question. They might check responses when they are asked to rank different responses. Or may circle multiple answers when asked to choose the best answer.

- Incomplete questionnaires. Some respondents may decide not to complete the entire instrument or may end the interview before it is completed. You have to decide whether to include the Responses you have obtained and treat the rest as missing or consider the entire instrument as missing

- Unexpected responses. You may get responses that you had not anticipated, for example, you might ask age and get a response like 30 ½ decide how you will treat such responses.

CODE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS • There are two types of open ended questions:

- When the entire question is left open ended
- Where you have other (specify) as a potential response in a list or responses.

• You will have to develop categories for each type; although the process is similar it is easier to develop response categories for “ other” because the responses are likely to be fewer in number and most common responses or at least most anticipated responses already appear in the questionnaire.

CREATE A CODE BOOK A codebook contains the setoff instructions used to link a number to a category for a particular variable. This is a record for you to know the values assigned to the response categories for each variable.

You may define each variable as you build a data set in a statistical program, or you may create a paper version of your codebook. You should also use the codebook to keep track of any new variables you create as you analyze the data.

ENTER THE DATA • There are several methods of data entry

- Research using computer-assisted telephone interviews are designed so that as responses are given, the data are immediately entered into a computer program.

- Another method is to use optical scan sheets. • A third method is to directly enter the data by hand into a spreadsheet such as Excel or Lotus or into a statistical package such as SPSS or SAS.

CLEAN THE DATA • After the data are entered, check carefully for errors – a process called DATA CLEANING • When using CHECK CODING, a second person recodes a sample of the forms and then the percentage of agreement on all the items on the forms is computed; if the percentage falls below a pre-established criterion for accuracy, then all forms should be recoded and reevaluated a second time.

- You should also examine the frequency distribution for every variable to see if there are cases with values that fall outside the range of allowable values for a given variable.

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- When contingency questions are used, you should compute a crosstabulation whereby you compare responses to two variables. . This helps you identify instances in which a respondent should have skipped a question but a response was actually coded.

- Any mistakes you find can be corrected by going back to the original questionnaire with the corresponding identification number.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT SURVEY METHODS? 1. TELEPHONE 2. FACE -TO-FACE 3. WEB 4. MAIL 5. GROUP (NOTES)( SEE BOOK NOTES AS WELL)

TELEPHONE SURVEYS •In a phone survey, interviewers question respondents over the phone and then record their answers. (are generally used with short surveys)

WHAT TO MATTERS UNDERMINE THE VALIDITY OF A PHONE SURVEY? 1. Not reaching the proper sampling units 2. Not getting enough complete response to make the results generalizable.

RANDOM DIGIT DIALING •A machine calls random phone numbers within the designated exchanges regardless of whether the numbers are published. •When the machine reaches an inappropriate household. (Such as business) the phone number is simply replaced with another. •When the households are contacted, the interviewers must ask a series of questions at the start of the survey to ensure that they are speaking to the appropriate member of the household.

ISSUES: 1. Since people often are not home, multiple callbacks are needed for many sample members. Survey research organizations may call back

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households as many as 20 times. 2. Interviewers must be prepared to deal with distractions as the respondent is interrupted by other household members. 3. Sprinkling interesting questions throughout the questionnaire may help to maintain respondent interest. Rapport between the interviewer and respondent is likely to be lower with phone surveys than with in-person surveys than with in-person interviews and so respondents may tire and refuse to answer all the questions.

FACE-TO-FACE SURVEYS • IN-PERSON interviews range from highly structured including both closed-ended and open-ended questions, to the relatively unstructured in which the interviewer covers the same topics but varies questions according to the respondent's answers to previous questions.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF IN-PERSON INTERVIEWING. • The in-person interviewing has several advantages: o Response rates are higher than with any other design o Questionnaires can be much longer than with mailed or phone surveys; o The survey can be complex, with both open ended and close ended questions and controlled by the interviewer o The physical and social circumstances of the interview can be monitored; o The respondents' interpretations of questions can be probed and clarified.

WEB SURVEYS WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF WEB SURVEYS? • When they are appropriate for a particular population, web surveys have some unique advantages: o Surveys completed on the web can select more honest reports of illicit behavior and of victimization as compared with phone interviews. o They are easy to complete as respondents simply check on response boxes, and the survey can be programmed to move respondents easily through sets

of questions, not presenting questions that do not apply to the respondent.

- o Pictures, sounds and animations can be used as a focus of particular questions and graphic variation can be used to enhance visual survey appeal.
- o Definitions of terms can “pop up” when respondents scroll over them.

**MAIL SURVEYS** • Mail survey is conducted by mailing a questionnaire to respondents, who then administer the survey.

- The central concern in a mail survey is maximizing the response rate.
- o Even an attractive questionnaire full of clear questions requires additional efforts to maximize the response rate.
- o A response rate of 70% or higher is desirable.
- o Lower response rates call into question the representativeness of the sample.

**WHAT IS THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT FOR OBTAINING AN ADEQUATE RESPONSE RATE FOR A MAIL SURVEY?** • Sending follow up mailings to nonrespondents is the single most important requirement for obtaining an adequate response rate to a mail survey. • Follow-up mailings explicitly encourage initial nonrespondents to return a completed questionnaire and convey the importance of the efforts.

**QUALITATIVE RESEARCH** • **QUALITATIVE METHODS** refer to several distinctive research designs including: o **PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION** o **INTENSIVE INTERVIEWING** o **FOCUS GROUPS**.

- **A COLLECTION OF QUALITATIVE RATHER THAN QUANTITATIVE DATA** o Qualitative designs methods emphasize observations about natural



behavior and artifacts that capture social life as it is experienced by the participants rather than in categories predetermined by the researcher.

- **EXPLORATORY RESEARCH QUESTIONS, WITH A COMMITMENT TO INDUCTIVE REASONING** Qualitative researchers typically begin their projects seeking not to test hypotheses but to discover what people think and how and why they act in some social setting. Only after many observations do qualitative researchers try to develop general principles to account for their observations.

- **A FOCUS ON PREVIOUSLY UNSTUDIED PROCESSES AND UNANTICIPATED PHENOMENA** Previously unstudied attitudes and actions cannot adequately be understood with a structured set of questions or within highly controlled experiment. Therefore, qualitative methods have their greatest appeal when we need to explore new issues, investigate hard-to-study groups, or determine the meaning people give to their lives and actions.
- **AN ORIENTATION TO SOCIAL CONTEXT, TO THE INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN SOCIAL PHENOMENA RATHER THAN TO THEIR DISCRETE FEATURES.** The context of concern may be a program or organization, a case, or a broader social context.

- **A FOCUS ON HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY ON THE MEANINGS THAT PARTICIPANTS ATTACH TO EVENTS AND THAT PEOPLE GIVE TO THEIR LIVES.** Through life stories people account for their lives – the themes people create are the means by which they interpret and evaluate their life experiences and attempt to integrate these experiences to form a self-concept

- A FOCUS ON THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO A PARTICULAR EVENT OR OUTCOME INSTEAD OF GENERAL CAUSAL EXPLANATIONS. oWith its focus on particular sectors and situation and the processes that connect them, qualitative research tends to identify causes as particular events embedded within an unfolding, interconnected action sequence. The language of variables and hypotheses appears only rarely in the qualitative literature.

- REFLEXIVE RESEARCH DESIGN oThe design develops as the research progresses. oEach component of the design may need to be reconsidered or modified in response to new developments or to changes in some other component.

- SENSITIVITY TO THE SUBJECTIVE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER oLittle pretense is made of achieving an objective perspective on social phenomena.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES

- Qualitative research allows researchers to obtain a richer and more intimate view of the social world than more structured methods.
- Qualitative methods provide a greater, voice to the people being studied than do the rigid structures imposed by quantitative methods.
- Qualitative methods are therefore useful for research with diverse population groups as they focus on the meaning and interpretations ascribed to behavior and not just the behavior alone.
- Qualitative methods are useful in shedding light on what is the most appropriate practice for a particular client, given a particular situation and given the context in which it is used.
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- The emphases in

qualitative research on inductive reasoning and incremental understanding help to stimulate and inform other research approaches. Exploratory researches of the subjective meanings that motivate individual action are particularly well served by the techniques of participant observation, intensive interviewing and focus groups.

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WHAT ARE THE 6 PATTERNS THAT MIGHT BE IN YOUR QUALITATIVE DATA?

Six Patterns that might be in your qualitative data

1. Frequencies – How often does a behavior, phenomenon or interaction occur?

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4. Processes – How do the structures or categories identified as part of the observed behavior, phenomenon or interaction work together?

5. Causes – Why does a behavior, phenomenon or interaction occur?

6. Consequences – What are the impacts or outcomes of a behavior, phenomenon or interaction?

What are Logical Pitfalls to Drawing Conclusions Based on Qualitative RESEARCH? PITFALLS:

1. Provincialism

2. Going Native

3. Emotional Reactions

4. Hasty Conclusions

5. Questionable Cause

6. Suppressed Evidence

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INDUCTION & DEDUCTION?

INDUCTION is creation of theory from empirical data-Empirical Observation = every crow ever seen is black-Induced Theory – all crows are black-There is no certainty that a white crow won't be found tomorrow, although past experience would make such an occurrence seem unlikely.

DEDUCTION is a logical process in which conclusions are drawn from a set of general principles (i. e. theory)-Theory = Alcoholism is a genetically based

disease.-Hypothesis = Successful treatment of alcoholism will focus on biologically based interventions-Testing/Observation = setting up a pre-experimental, quasi-experimental or experimental design to test the success of biologically based interventions.

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Chi-Squared nonparametric statistic used to determine if a distribution of observed frequencies differs from theoretical expected frequencies

Fisher Exact Test for 2x2 tables - results in the exact probability of the occurrence of the observed frequencies given the marginal totals

Phi Coefficient ( $\phi$ ) can be used to express the degree of association between two normal variables in a 2x2 table

Contingency coefficient  $C$  - measure of association that is used with tables larger than 2x2 but the number of rows columns must be equal

Cramer's  $V$  coefficient alternative to contingency coefficient and is used when the tables are asymmetrical

Gamma similar to Kendall's but ignores ties

Qualitative Data (Categorical) describe qualities or categories:-Eye color- Handedness-Class Rank-Bar/Pie Chart-Proportion (fraction or percent)

Quantitative Data represent numbers:-Height-Credits completed-Brother Cameron's age-Histogram-Mean, Median, Standard Deviation

Graphical Summary chart or graph that visually summaries the data collected-Histogram-Bar/Pie Chart

Numerical Summary a number that summaries the data:-Mean, Median, Standard Deviation-Proportion (Fraction or percent)

Bar Chart bars for frequency or relative frequency of each category

Pie Chart use wedges of a pie to represent the relative frequency of each category

Histogram a bar graph for quantitative data categories-Horizontal axis: shows the values of the quantitative data in numerical order-Bars height: represent the frequency of each range or bin of data

Distribution of a Variable (or data set) describes the values taken on by the variable and the frequency (or relative frequency) of these values Important characteristics:-Shape-Center-Spread

Shapes of Distributions Single Peaked – unimodal Double Peaked – bimodal

Symmetric Distribution if its left half is a mirror image of its right half – same on both sides

Left-Skewed values are more spread out on the left side – mean is on the left (Outliers-low values, Mean, Median, Mode)

Right-Skewed values are more spread out on the right side – mean is on the right (Mode, Median, Mean, Outliers-high values)

Variation how widely data values are spread out about the center of a distribution (skinny-low, middle-moderate, fat-high)

variable anything that can take on more than one value ex. age, SAT score, gender, color of hair

measurement labeling an outcome or variable ex. how fast someone run

level of measurement how much information is being provided by the outcome measure

nominal-difference in quality rather than quantity-categorical variable ex. names

ordinal can be ordered along a continuum, rank order ex. faster and slower, stronger and weaker

interval-assign a value to an outcome-no natural zero-continuum of equal intervals ex. 1-2, temperature, time

ratio an absolute zero, magnitude ex. heart rate, percentage

questions about measurement-can you assign a name?-can you assign order? (moreness)-can you assign underlying continuum-can you assign an absolute zero

WRITING QUESTIONS:\*\*The centerpiece of survey research is asking people questions. – Questions can be a straightforward and efficient means to

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measure demographic characteristics, levels of knowledge, opinions and attitude, feelings and symptoms and behaviors. – But survey questions may result in misleading or inappropriate answers\*\*

\*\*All questions proposed for a survey must be screened carefully for their adherence to basic guidelines and then tested and revised until the researcher feels some confidence that they will be clear to the intended respondents. \*\*

WHY SHOULD RESEARCHERS WRITE CLEAR QUESTIONS? • All hope for achieving MEASUREMENT VALIDITY is lost unless the questions in a survey are clear and convey the intended meaning to respondents.

- The following must be considered: - Survey questions must be asked of many people, not just one person. - The same survey question must be used with each person, not tailored to the specifics of a given conversation. - Survey questions must be understood in the same way by people who differ in many ways. - You will not be able to rephrase a survey question if someone does not understand it, because that would result in a different question for that person. - Survey respondents do not know you and so cannot be expected to share the nuances of expression that help you and your friends communicate.

\*Every question considered must be reviewed carefully for clarity and ability to convey the intended meaning. – Question clear to a population may not be clear to another – you cannot assume questions used in a previous study were carefully evaluated.

WHAT BASIC PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE USED TOWARD DEVELOPING CLEAR AND MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS: 1. Avoid Confusing Phrasing

2. Avoid Vagueness

3. Provide a Frame of Reference

4. Avoid Vague Words

5. Avoid Negative Words and Double Negatives

6. Avoid Double Barreled Questions

7. Avoid Jargon

8. Reduce The Risk Of Bias

9. Memory Questions

HOW CAN YOU AVOID CONFUSING PHRASING? •A simple direct approach to asking a question minimizes confusion.

- Use shorter rather than longer words: (brave rather than courages)
- Use shorter sentences when you can
- A lengthy question often forces the respondent to have to “ work hard” that is, to have to read and reread the entire question. – Lengthy questions can go unanswered or can be given only a cursory reading without much thought.



HOW CAN YOU AVOID VAGUENESS? • Questions should avoid vagueness or abbreviation in a way that results in confusion.

• For Example: Residential Location \_\_\_\_\_? - Does not provide sufficient focus; it is a general question when a specific kind of answer is desired. - Someone could answer squirrel hill (their neighborhood) or their city or just their street.

HOW CAN SOMEONE PROVIDE A FRAME OF REFERENCE IN A QUESTIONNAIRE? • Frame of reference provides specificity about how respondents should answer the question.

• For Example: “ overall, the performance of this caseworker is – excellent; good; average; or poor?” - This lacks a “ Frame of Reference” – the researcher does not know the basis of comparison the respondent is using. - Some may compare the case worker to other caseworkers; some may use a personal “ absolute scale” - Therefore the basis of comparison should be specifically stated: “ compared with other caseworkers you have had, the performance of this caseworker is...”

HOW DO YOU AVOID USING VAGUE WORDS IN A QUESTIONNAIRE? • It is important to avoid vague language; there are words whose meaning may differ from respondent to respondent. • For Example: “ do you usually or occasionally attend program at the community center?” o This will not provide useful information... for the meaning of usually or occasionally can differ for each respondent. o A better way of defining usually (2 or 3 times a week) and occasionally ( 2 or 3 times a month) o OR: as the respondent “

How many times they attended programs at the community center in the last month” – the researcher can then classify the responses into categories.

WHY SHOULD YOU AVOID NEGATIVE WORDS OR DOUBLE NEGATIVES IN A SURVEY? • Example: “ Do you disagree that juveniles should not be tried as adults if they commit murder? - Respondents of this question will have a hard time trying to figure out which response matches their sentiments because the statement is written as a double negative.

- Such errors can be easily avoided with minor word changes.

WHY SHOULD YOU AVOID DOUBLE BARRELED QUESTIONS? • Double-barreled questions produce uninterpretable results because they actually ask two questions but allow for only one answer.

- A respondent may support one part of the questions and not the other.

WHY SHOULD YOU AVOID JARGON? • Avoid using jargon or technical language related to a profession or academic discipline.

Words like social justice, empowering and strengths may appear in social work literature but they do not necessarily have a shared meaning in other professions, or the broader community.

- Using initials to abbreviate phrases is also a form of professional jargon and should be avoided.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO REDUCE THE RISK OF BIAS? • Specific words in a survey should not trigger biases unless that is the researcher’s intent. - These

types of questions are referred to as LEADING QUESTIONS – because they lead the respondent to a particular answer.

- Biases or Loaded Phrases tend to produce misleading answers as certain responses become less attractive.
- Responses can also be biased when response categories do not reflect the full range of possible alternatives. - SEE EXAMPLE PAGE 184-A similar bias occurs when some but not all possible responses are included in the question.
- Example: “ what do you like about your community such as the parks and schools? – Focuses the respondent on those categories, and other answers may be ignored.
- It is best left to the respondent to answer the question without such response cues.

WHAT ARE MEMORY QUESTIONS? Some questions require respondents to try to remember an event. – Remembering an event is affected by the length of time since the event occurred and how important the event was to the respondent.

WHAT TWO THINGS CAN OCCUR WHEN A RESPONDENT TRIES TO REMEMBER AN EVENT? • RECALL LOSS: occurs when a respondent does not remember an event or behavior or can remember only some aspects of the event

- Events important to the respondent are likely to be remembered even if they happened long ago. – Whereas events unimportant, even if they happened recently are likely to be forgotten.

- A second issue – TELESCOPING EFFECT – in which an event is thought to have happened during a particular time period, although it actually happened before that time period. – Sometimes we remember an event “ just like it happened yesterday” because it was so meaningful or important. Unfortunately the event can be reported that way too.

- Researchers may choose to use a life history calendar with which respondents sequence the timing of personal events by using standardized visual cues including years (or months) and other vents like births, job changes or moves.

WHAT IS A CLOSE ENDED QUESTION? • Questions can be designed with or without explicit response choices. When explicit response categories are offered, the type of question is a CLOSED ENDED QUESTION.

- SEE EXAMPLE PAGE 185

- CLOSE ENDED QUESTIONS response choices should be mutually exclusive and exhaustive so that every respondent can find one and only one choice that applies to him or her. (Unless the question is one that is “ check all that apply”) – To make the choices exhaustive, researchers may need to offer at least one option with room for ambiguity. – SEE EXAMPLE PAGE 185

WHAT ARE THE PROS OF CLOSE ENDED QUESTIONS? PROS – Most surveys of a large number of people contain primarily closed-ended questions, because they are easier to process with computers and analyze with statistics. – Including the response choices reduces ambiguity, and respondents are

more likely to answer the question that the researcher really wants them to answer.

WHAT ARE OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS: • Are questions without explicit response choices so that the respondents provide their own answers in their own words?

- This is usually used when there is little knowledge about a particular topic, and you want to learn as much as possible without limiting the responses.

- The Responses in these types of questions can be used for response categories for future close-ended questions.

- Open Ended Questions may also be used to explain what a particular concept means to a respondent. -EXAMPLE: a questionnaire dealing with psychiatric conditions, respondents were asked “ yes-No” question “ in the last 2 weeks, have you had thoughts that you would be better off dead or hurting yourself in some way?” they were then asked: “ can you tell me about it” the purpose of the second question was to expand on the first question and help the analyst to determine whether there was a threat of suicide.

WHAT ARE SOME PROBLEMS WITH OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS? • Although OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS provide a wealth of information, they also require careful consideration

- Administering, analyzing and summarizing open-ended questions can be time consuming and difficult.

- People do not like writing a log and may find open-ended question taxing.
- The amount of information provided by a person may depend on the person's personality – some people may provide short answers whereas others may provide extensive answers with a great deal of relevant and irrelevant information.

WHAT GUIDELINES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN WRITING RESPONSE CATEGORIES FOR CLOSE ENDED QUESTIONS?

- When writing response categories for closed ended questions there are several guidelines that might help improve the questions.

- It is important the questions are mutually exclusive and that the list is exhaustive. Others include: 1. AVOID MAKING AGREEMENT AGREEABLE (Agreement Bias) 2. MINIMIZE FENCE-SITTING AND FLOATING 3. FILTER QUESTIONS 4. UTILIZE LIKERT-TYPE CATEGORIES

WHAT IS AGREEMENT BIAS?

- The tendency for some respondents to agree with a statement just to avoid seeming disagreeable.
- To reduce the likelihood of agreement bias, you should present both sides of attitude scales in the question.
- In general, do you believe that individuals or social conditions are more to blame for poverty in the United States? Should be phrased to make each one seem socially acceptable.
- You should also consider replacing a range of response alternatives with other alternatives that focus on the word agree.

- EXAMPLE: the question "to what extent do you support or oppose the new health care plan?" (Response choices range from strongly support to strongly oppose) is probably a better approach than the question "to what extent do you support or oppose the new health care plan?"

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extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: the new health care plan is worth of support”? (Response choices range from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

WHAT IS SOCIAL DESIRABILITY? • Is the tendency for individuals to respond in ways that make them appear in the best light to the interviewer.

- The error is that respondents are not providing their true opinions or answers.

- Social Desirability effects are likely to occur when people are discussing issues that are controversial or expressing views that are not popular.

DESCRIBE FENCE SITTERS & FLOATERS. \*Two related problems in question writing stem from people’s desire to choose an acceptable answer, even if they do not know or have no opinion\* • FENCE SITTERS: o See themselves as being neutral and whose responses may skew the results if you force the m to choose between opposites.

- o Adding an explicit neutral response option is appropriate when you want to find out who is a fence-sitter. o But adding a neutral response may provide an easy escape for respondents who do not want to reveal their true feelings.

- FLOATERS o Are respondents who choose a substantive answer when they really do not know?

- o Because there are so many floaters in the typical survey sample, the typical survey sample, the decision to include an explicit “ Don’t Know” option for a question is important.

o“Don’t Know” responses are offered more often by those with less education – except for questions that are really impossible to decipher, to which more educated persons are likely to say they do not know

oUnfortunately, the inclusion of the “ Don’t know” response choice leads some people who do have a preference to take the easy way out and choose “ Don’ t know”

WHAT ARE FILTER QUESTIONS/SKIP PATTERNS/CONTINGENCY QUESTIONS?

- FILTER QUESTIONS: are important to ensure that questions are asked only of relevant respondents.
- If you ask questions about work – you first need to know who is working and who is not working.-These filter questions create —> SKIP PATTERNS:•Based on the response to a filter question, respondents will be asked to either skip one or more questions or to answer those questions. oThe questions asked of the more limited group are referred to as —> CONTINGENCY QUESTIONS
- Skip patterns should be indicated clearly with arrows or other direction in the questionnaire as demonstrated in (EXHIBIT 7. 2 PAGE 188)

WHAT ARE LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSES?•LIKERT-TYPE RESPONSES generally ask respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with statements.

- The response categories list choices for respondents to select their level of agreement with a statement from strongly agree to strongly disagree. •EXHIBIT 7. 3 PAGE 188



WHAT ARE MATRIX QUESTIONS? • MATRIX QUESTIONS – are actually a series of questions that concern a common theme and that have the same response choices.

- The questions are written so that a common initial phrase applies to each one (EXHIBIT 7. 3)
- This format shortens the questionnaire by reducing the number of words that must be used for each question.
- It also emphasizes the common theme among the questions and so invites answering each question in relation to other questions in the matrix.
- It is important to provide explicit instructions to “ circle one response on each line” in a matrix question, since some respondents will think they have completed the entire matrix after they have responded to just a few of the specific questions.

WHAT TYPE OF ERROR ARE MATRIX QUESTIONS SUSCEPTIBLE TO? MATRIX QUESTIONS – are susceptible to another form of error:-RESPONSE SET – when scales are used with the same set of response categories, there is a possibility that, rather than reading and answering each question, the respondent simply circles the same response down the entire set of questions.-To avoid this problem, researchers often phrase some questions in the opposite direction; if the questions are worded using positive language, they will ask some questions in negative language. – The assumption that if the respondent then answers all the questions with the same response, it is clear he or she was just circling them without thinking.

What is a QUESTIONNAIRE? INTERVIEW SCHEDULE? • Questionnaire – The survey instrument containing the questions in a self-administered survey.

• Interview Schedule – the survey instrument containing the questions asked by the interviewer in an in-person or phone survey

THE CONTEXT CREATED BY THE QUESTIONNAIRE The context created by the questionnaire has a major impact on how individual questions are interpreted and answered. As a result, survey researchers must carefully design the questionnaire, as well as individual questions. There is no precise formula for a well-designed questionnaire. Nonetheless, some key principles should guide the design of any questionnaire, and some systematic procedures should be considered for refining it.

WHAT THREE COMPONENTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN DESIGNING A QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Maintain Consistent Focus

2. Build on Existing Instruments

3. Order the Questions.

MAINTAIN CONSISTENT FOCUS • The contents of the survey should be guided by a clear conception of the research problem. Under investigation and the population to be sampled.

• Throughout the process of the questionnaire design – the research objective should be the primary basis for making decisions about what to include and exclude and what to emphasize or treat in a cursory fashion.

- The questionnaire should be viewed as an integrated whole in which each section and every question serves a clear purpose related to the study's objective and each section complements other sections.

**BUILD ON EXISTING INSTRUMENTS**•If another researcher already has designed a set of questions to measure a key concept and this measure is reliable and valid, then use that instrument.

- Although: questions used previously may not concern quite the right concept or may not be appropriate in some ways to your population.

- Scales developed much earlier may no longer be appropriate for your population as times change

**ORDER THE QUESTIONS**•The order the questions are presented will influence how respondents will react to the questionnaire as a whole and how they may answer some questions.

- The 1st step: questions should be sorted into broad thematic categories, which then become separate sections in the questionnaire.-Both the sections and the questions within the sections must then be organized in logical order that would make sense in a conversation.-The first question deserves special attention, particularly if the questionnaire is to be self-administered. – This question signals to the respondent what the survey is all about, if it will be interesting and how easy it will be to complete.

- It is not the time to ask sensitive questions as this might turn off a potential respondent.

- The first question should also apply to everyone in the sample.
- Question order can lead to CONTEXT EFFECTS: when one or more questions influence how subsequent questions are interpreted.
- The potential for context effects is greatest when two or more questions concern the same issue or closely related issues.

WHAT ARE TWO TYPES OF ERRORS IN SURVEYS? For a survey to succeed it must minimize the risk of two types of error: poor measurement of cases that are surveyed -ERRORS OF OBSERVATION — and omission of cases that should be surveyed -ERRORS OF NONOBSERVATION.

WHAT CAN LEAD TO ERRORS IN NONOBSERVATION? •Potential problems that can lead to ERRORS OF OBSERVATION: 1. Stem from the ways the questions are written

2. The characteristics of the respondents who answer the questions

3. The way questions are presented in questionnaires

4. The interviewers used to ask the questions SEE EXHIBIT 7. 1 PAGE 179

WHAT ARE THE 3 SOURCES OF ERRORS OF NONOBSERVATION? •Coverage of the population can be inadequate due to poor sampling frame.

- The process of random sampling can result in sampling error – differences between the characteristics of the sample members and the population that arise due to chance.

- Nonresponse can distort the sample when individuals refuse to respond or cannot be contacted. Nonresponse to specific questions can distort the generalizability of the responses to those questions.\*\* A well-designed survey will maximize the social rewards, minimize the costs for participating in the survey, and establish trust that the rewards will outweigh the costs. \*\*

WHAT IS SURVEY RESEARCH? SURVEY RESEARCH involves the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions.

WHY IS SURVEY RESEARCH SO POPULAR? WHAT ARE THE PROS? Survey research is popular because of its versatility, efficiency and generalizability.

VERSATILITY-Can be used to investigate almost every field of social work, such as child welfare, gerontology, health, mental health, income maintenance, community building and community development.

-Surveys are used in agencies to assess the impact of policy changes, assess community needs, track changes in community characteristics, monitor and evaluate program effectiveness, and assess client satisfaction with programs.

EFFICIENCY•Surveys are efficient in that many variables can be measured without substantially increasing the time or cost.

- It can be collected from many people at relatively low cost and depending on the survey design, relatively quickly

**GENERALIZABILITY** • Survey methods lend themselves to probability sampling from large populations. Thus it is appealing when sample generalizability is a central research goal.

- Survey research is often the only means available for developing a representative picture of the attitudes and characteristics of a large population.
- They are also the method of choice when cross-population generalizability is a key concern because they allow a range of social contexts and subgroups to be sampled. – The consistency of the findings can be examined across various sampled subgroups

**WHAT ARE FOCUS GROUPS** • Focus groups are groups (usually 7-10 people) of unrelated (do not know each other) individuals that are formed by a researcher and then led in-group discussion of a topic for 1-2 hours.

- Researchers ask specific questions and guides the discussion to ensure that group members address these questions, but the resulting information is qualitative and relatively unstructured.
- Focus groups do not involve representative samples; instead a few individuals who have the time to participate, have some knowledge pertinent to the focus group topic, and share key characteristics with the target population are recruited for the group.
- The characteristics of individuals that determine their inclusion are based on the researcher's conception of the target population for the study.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF FOCUS GROUPS? • FOCUS GROUP methods

share with other field research an emphasis on discovering unanticipated findings and exploring hidden meanings.

- Although they do not provide a means for developing reliable, generalizable results (traditional strengths of survey research) focus groups can be an indispensable aid for research studies, such as to develop hypotheses and test survey questions, or for social work practice, such as for needs assessment or to quickly assess the range of opinion about an issue.

## WHAT IS PHOTOVOICE? • For years people have been creating a record of the social world with photographs. This creates the possibility of observing the social world through photographs and interpreting the resulting images as “text”.

- Photovoice builds on this history, but like other qualitative methods, it is designed to preserve the voice of respondents.
- Photovoice allows the participants to construct their social reality.
- Photovoice is a method to enable people to identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique.
- Photovoice is a form of participatory research that can be used for community needs assessment.

## WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF PHOTOVOICE? 1. Enable people to record and reflect on their community's strength and concerns

2. Promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through large and small group discussions of photographs

3. Reach policy makers

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF PHOTOVOICE? • Photovoice includes the visual images provided by photographs and is accompanied by narratives provided by the participants.

- Cameras are distributed to participants who share something in common, such as a social condition like homelessness or living in a particular community.

- There is a group facilitator who trains the group members in using the cameras, serves as a resource for information and enables the group to work together.

- Their participants engage in the analysis of the photographs, choosing representative pictures, discussing their meaning and developing themes and patterns.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF PHOTOVOICE Photovoice can be a way to see and hear the voice of people. It is consistent with the empowerment tradition in social work because it brings groups together and enables them to move to social action through their participation in the process.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES • Qualitative research allows researchers to obtain a richer and more intimate view of the social world than more structured methods.



- Qualitative methods provide a greater voice to the people being studied than do the rigid structures imposed by quantitative methods.
- Qualitative methods are therefore useful for research with diverse population groups as they focus on the meaning and interpretations ascribed to behavior and not just the behavior alone.
- Qualitative methods are useful in shedding light on what is the most appropriate practice for a particular client, given a particular situation and given the context in which it is used.
- Qualitative research allows the careful investigator to obtain a richer and more intimate view of the social world than would be possible with more structured methods.
- The emphases in qualitative research on inductive reasoning and incremental understanding help to stimulate and inform other research approaches. Exploratory researches of the subjective meanings that motivate individual action are particularly well served by the techniques of participant observation, intensive interviewing and focus groups.

WHAT ARE KEY POINTS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

- Qualitative research involves a mode of thinking and investigating different from that used in experimental and survey research both approaches can help social scientists learn about the social world; the researcher must be ready to use either.

- Qualitative data are often supplemented with counts of characteristics or activities.

- Quantitative data are often enriched with written comments and observations, and focus groups have become a common tool of survey researchers seeking to develop their questionnaires. Thus the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research techniques is to always clear-cut and combining methods is often a good idea.

IN WHAT WAYS DO QUALITATIVE METHODS INFORM PRACTICE<sup>1</sup>. Qualitative methods can be used to assess the design and delivery of services.

2. Qualitative methods are useful in uncovering the process and nature of service delivery
3. Qualitative methods can clarify clients' perceptions of interventions
4. These methods can help social workers understand why people in need of services do not seek help. EXAMPLES PAGE 232-233

WHAT IS INTENSIVE INTERVIEWING? • Intensive interviewing relies on open ended questions (unlike the more structured interviewing used in survey research)

- Qualitative researchers do not presume to know the range of answers that respondents might give and seek to hear these answers in the respondents' own words.

- Rather than asking standard questions in a fixed order, intensive interviewers allow the specific content and order of questions to vary from one interviewee to another.

## WHAT DISTINGUISHES INTENSIVE INTERVIEWING FROM LESS STRUCTURED FORMS OF QUESTIONING? • Consistency & thoroughness

- The goal is to develop a comprehensive picture of the interviewee's background, attitudes and actions in his or her own terms; listen to people as they describe how they understand the worlds in which they live and work
- Intensive interview studies do not reveal as directly as does participant observation the social context in which action is taken and opinions are formed.
- Like participants observation studies, intensive interviewing engages researchers actively with subjects.
- The researchers must listen to lengthy explanations, ask follow-up questions tailored to the preceding answers and seek to learn about interrelated belief systems or personal approaches to things, rather than measure a limited set of variables.
- As a result interviews are much longer than standardized interviews – the intensive interview is more like a conversation between partners than between a researcher and a subject.
- Intensive interviewers actively try to probe understandings and engage interviewees in a dialogue about what they mean by their comments.

DESCRIBE THE SELECTION PROCESS OF INTENSIVE INTERVIEWS • Random selection is rarely used to select respondents for intensive interviews, but the selection method still must be carefully considered.

- Researchers try to select interviewees who are knowledgeable about the subject of the interview, who are open to talking and who represent the range of perspectives.
- Selection of the interviewees should continue if possible, at least until the SATURATION POINT is reached, the point when new interviews seem to yield little additional information.

WHAT IS PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION • PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION – is a method in which natural social processes are studied as they happen in their natural setting and are left relatively undisturbed.

- It is a means for seeing the social world as the research subjects see it. – in its totality – and for understanding subject's interpretations of that world.
- By observing people in interacting with them in the course of their normal activities, participant observers seek to avoid the artificiality of experimental designs and the unnatural structured questioning of survey research.
- This method encourages consideration of the context in which social interaction occurs of the complex and interconnected nature of social relations and of the sequencing of events.
- Participant Observer represents a continuum of roles ranging from being a COMPLETE OBSERVER to a COVERT PARTICIPANT

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COMPLETE OBSERVER AND COVERT PARTICIPANT? • COMPLETE OBSERVER – who does not participate in group activities and is publicly defined as a researcher

- COVERT PARTICIPANT – who acts just like other group members and does not disclose his or her research role. Many field researchers develop a role between those extremes, publicly acknowledging being a researcher, but nonetheless participating in group activities.

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE COMPLETE OBSERVER? COMPLETE OBSERVATION  
– researchers try to see things as they happen without actively participating.

WHAT CAN EFFECTS CAN HAPPEN WITH COMPLETE OBSERVATION? • Of course, the researchers very presence as an observer alters the social situation being observed – This is called: REACTIVE EFFECTS • It is not “natural” in most social situations for someone to record observations for research, so individuals may alter their behavior.

- In social settings involving many people, the complete observer is unlikely to have much effect on social processes.

- When the social setting involves few people and observing is unlike the usual activities in the setting, or when the observer differs in obvious respects from the participants, the COMPLETE OBSERVER is more likely to have an impact.

- Many field researchers adopt a role that involves some active participation in the setting. Usually they inform at least some group members of their research interests, but then participate in enough group activities to develop rapport with members and to gain a direct sense of what group members experience.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF COVERT PARTICIPATION? • To lessen the potential for reactive effects and to gain entry to otherwise inaccessible settings, some field researchers have adopted the role of COVERT PARTICIPATION – keeping their research secret and trying their best to act like other participants in a social setting or group.

- Some problems include:- Covert participants cannot ask questions that will arouse suspicion, so they often have trouble clarifying the meaning of other participants attitudes or actions.-The role is difficult to play and researchers' spontaneous reactions to every event are unlikely to be consistent with those of the regular participants and raising suspicion that the researcher is not “ one of us”

DESCRIBE THE SAMPLING METHOD OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION • Sampling decisions are guided by the need to intensively study people, places or phenomena of interest

- Most qualitative researchers limit their focus to just one or a few sites, programs, or specific types of people so they can focus all their attention on the social dynamics of those settings or the activities or attitudes of these people.

- The sample must be appropriate and adequate for the study, even if it is not representative.

- The qualitative researcher may select one or more “ critical cases” precisely because they are judged to be typical or “ deviant cases” that provide a useful contrast. Within a research site, plans may be made to

sample different settings, people, events and artifacts. (EXHIBIT 8. 2 PG 222).

- Studying one case for setting almost always strengthens the causal conclusions and makes the findings more generalizable.

WHAT ARE SOME SYSTEMATIC APPROACHES TO SAMPLING IN PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION? -PURPOSIVE SAMPLING-SNOWBALL SAMPLING-QUOTA SAMPLING-THEORETICAL SAMPLING

PURPOSIVE SAMPLING can be used to identify opinion leaders and representatives of different roles.

SNOWBALL SAMPLING field researchers learn from participants about who represents different subgroups in a setting.

QUOTA SAMPLING may be employed to ensure the representation of particular categories of participants.

THEORETICAL SAMPLING is a systematic approach used when field researchers focus on particular processes that seem to be important and select new settings or individuals that permit comparisons to check their perceptions.

HOW CAN SAMPLING IN QUALITATIVE STUDIES BE BIASED? Sampling in qualitative studies can lead to bias. • Example: a nonrandom sample of elderly persons in institutional settings can be biased by staff motivation to suggest