

# Survey/Questionnaire Design: Obstacles and Challenges

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# How does survey research fit into Policy?

- ◆ Survey data & conclusions often used in policy analysis (e.g. to observe of a policy's effectiveness, to guage the popularity of a potential new policy)

## What is it like to design a survey?

- ◆ Designing and implementing a survey can be a very rewarding experience, but it also involves many challenges.

## My project:

Examining the role of mediation (an approach to conflict resolution) in countries across the globe, both at the community level as well as at the government level

**Worked with:**

**Dr. John Barkat**

**Ombuds Director, Pace University &  
Co-founder, Institute for Collaborative Engagement**



## Key Question:

What is the research question you are looking to have answered?

# Method of Survey Administration

- ◆ Increased # of options over 30 years ago: Mail, telephone, in-person, internet

- ◆ Each has distinct advantages and disadvantages –

**Response rate, speedier response, lower cost, bias reduction (e.g. Presence of nonverbal cues more apparent in in-person and phone)**

# Other input Questions

- ◆ Who is your target audience?
  - Impacts Question Design

- ◆ How to obtain contacts??
  - Lists, Directories, etc.

**(Challenges abound: Old phone numbers, outdated lists, etc.)**

# Question Design

- ◆ Wording of questions depends on audience (e.g. whether can use technical jargon or not)
- ◆ Question types: Good mix of types ensures quality and breadth of data

**Yes/No, Open-ended,  
Closed-ended, “Not sure” option**

# Question Design (cont.)

- ◆ Key points to keep in mind when designing questions:

- i) Clarity of question wording

- Will affect validity (i.e. Are you measuring what you are hoping to measure?)

- ii) Question order

- Helps flow of survey, and decreases likelihood of any misunderstood questions

- iii) Length of survey

- Will affect response rate

**Pre-test is important!**

# Sampling Design

- ◆ Probability vs. Non-probability sampling methods
- ◆ Random sampling (probability) quite common and most scientific
  - Probably best option if significant numerical data
- ◆ Other options: Convenience sampling, Systematic sampling (both non-probability options)

# Conclusion/Things I learned:

- ◆ Be patient!!
- ◆ Think things through (and do thorough research) as much as possible before beginning each step of the process
- ◆ Even with good planning, be prepared for unexpected surprises, both good and bad!