

Asking the Right Questions: Designing Surveys that Work



Presented by:
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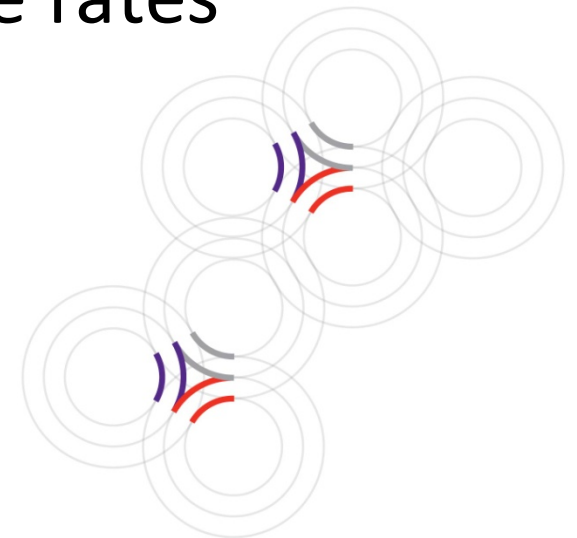
creating community
through the arts

Last Revised: January 29, 2013

Objectives

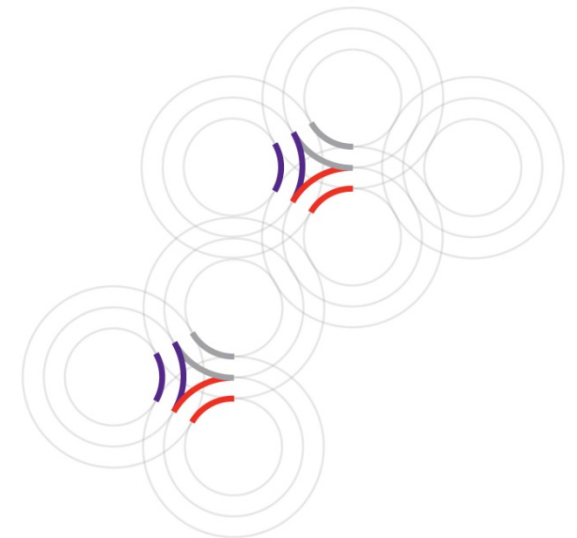
By the end of this workshop, you will possess:

- Procedures for high quality survey design
- Tips for writing questions and survey formatting
- Strategies for increasing response rates



Agenda

- To Survey or Not Survey
- Establishing Goals
- Sampling
- Designing Questions (a hands-on exercise)
- Response Rates
- Surveying Rules of Thumb
- Next Steps



First Question to Ask: Should I even be doing a survey?



Surveys



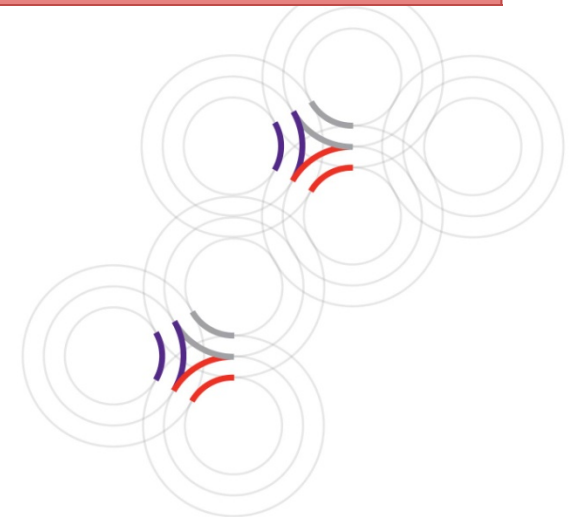
Good for measuring

- Attitudes
- Opinions
- Perceptions

Weak for measuring

- Behaviors*
- Skills

*depends on time between experience and survey



Designing a Survey that Works



Establish the goals.



Determine who you will survey.



Determine the questions.



Write the questions.



Format the survey.



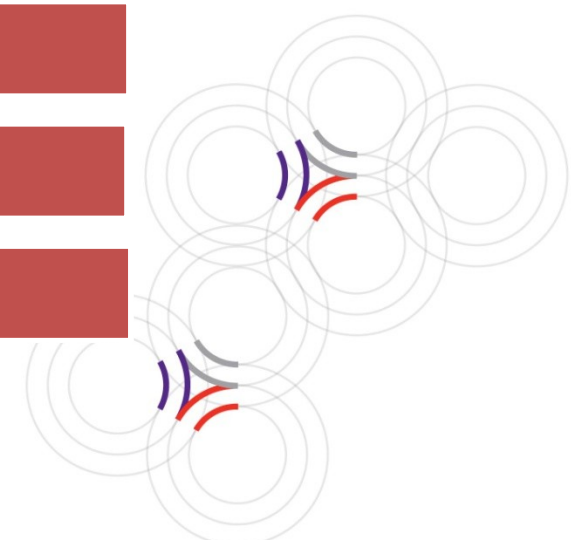
Pre-test the survey.



Conduct the survey.



Analyze the data.

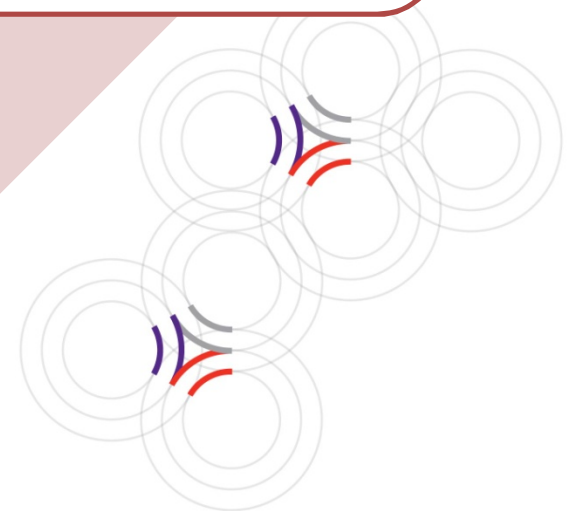


Establishing Goals

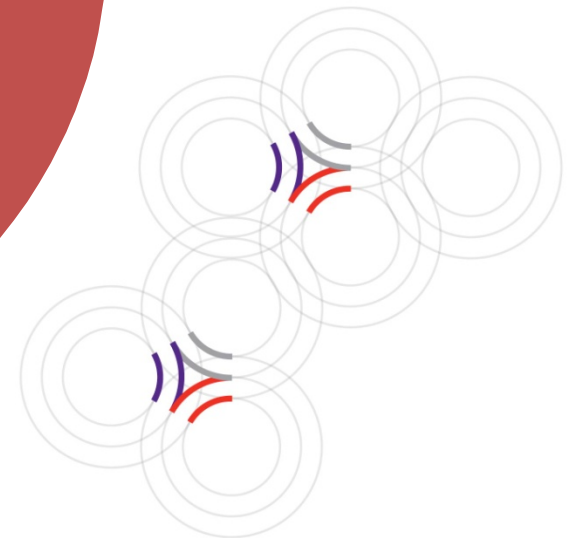
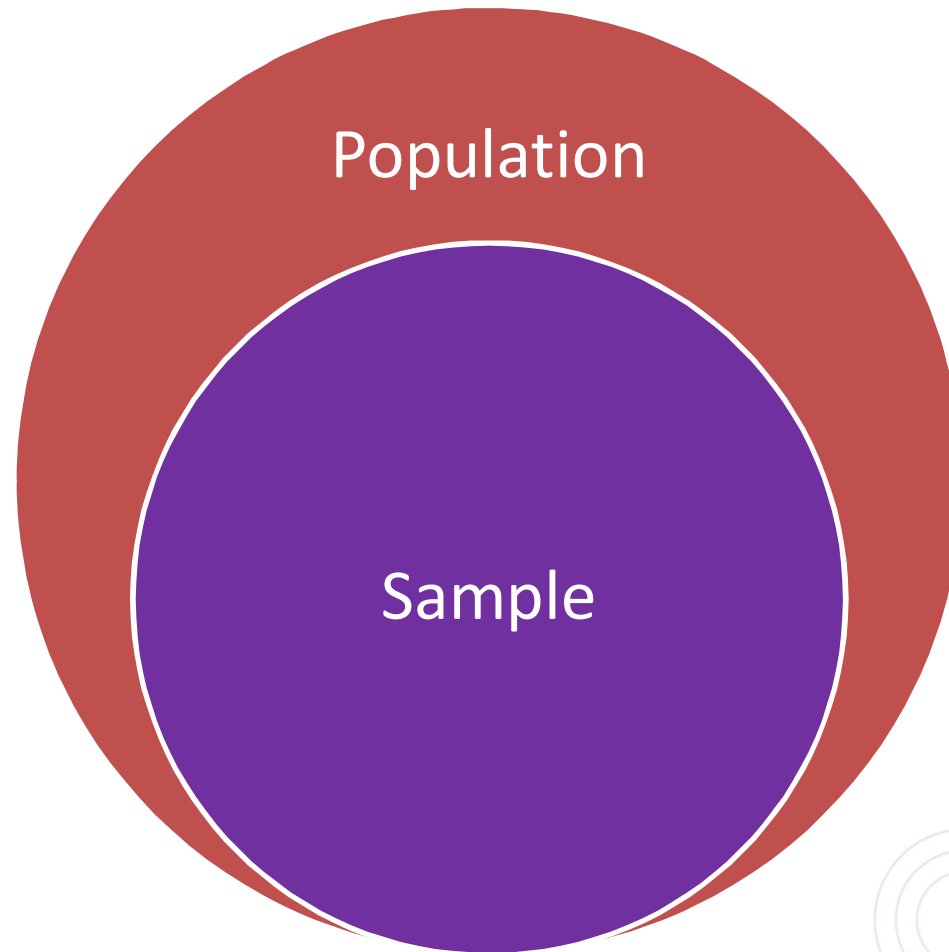
What do
you want to
learn?

Who will
you survey?

What will
you ask
them?



Who will you survey?: An Introduction to Sampling



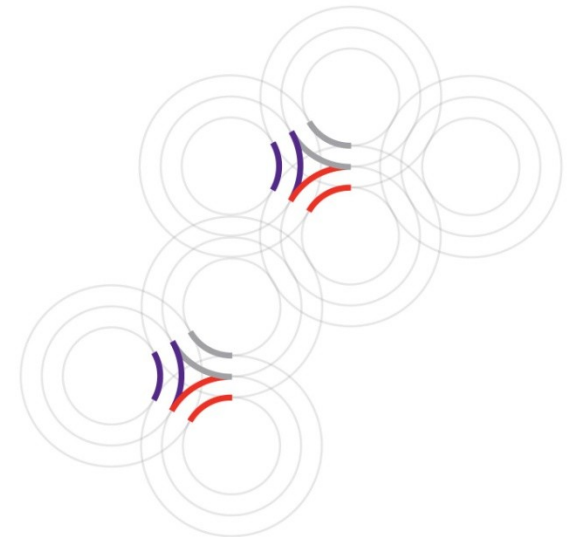
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Benefits of Sampling

- Reduced costs 

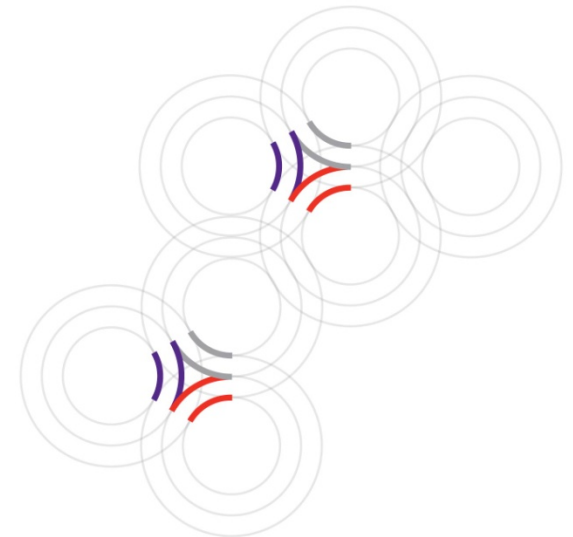
- Faster results 

- Increased precision 



Sampling: Potential for Bias

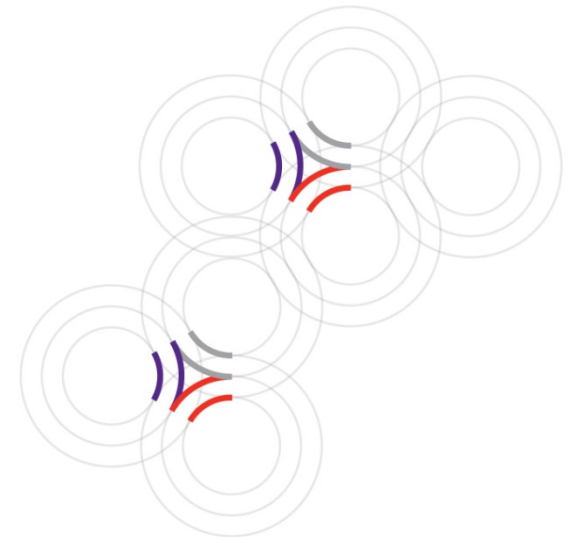
- Sampling error
- Coverage error
- Non-response error



Sampling Methodologies: Simple Random Sampling



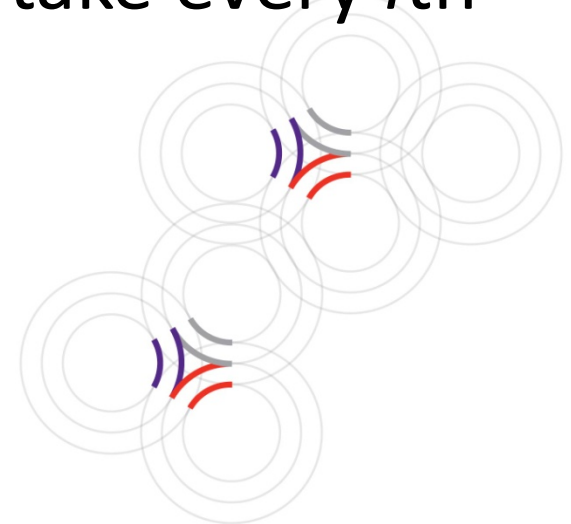
- Every person in the population has the same probability of selection
- Yields most representative survey
- Depends on access to a sampling frame



Sampling Methodologies: Systematic Sampling



- Use when the population is too large or the sampling frame is not computerized
- Calculate the sampling interval
 - Sampling interval(i) = population/sample
- Pick a random starting point and take every i th case

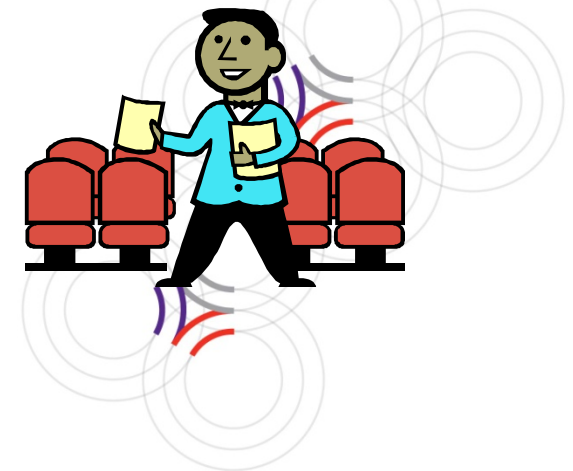


Examples of Systematic Sampling

- Visual Arts: On any given day, hand a survey to every 50th visitor.



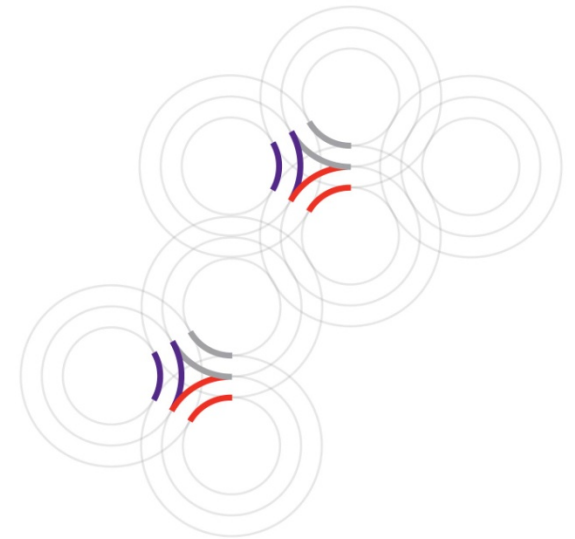
- Performing Arts: Put a survey in every 20th program or on every 20th seat.



Sampling Methodologies: Convenience Sampling

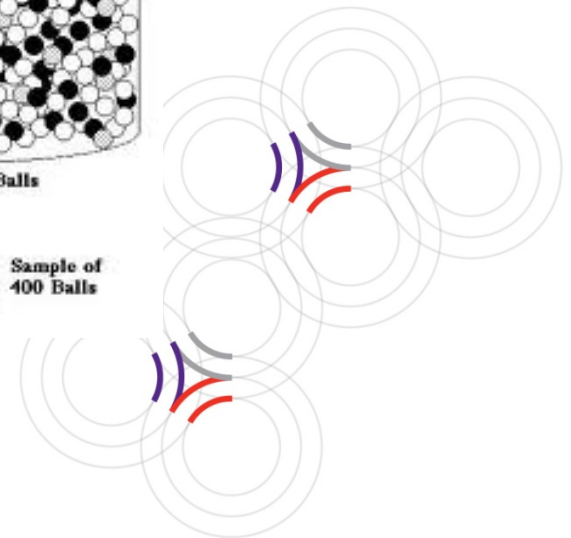
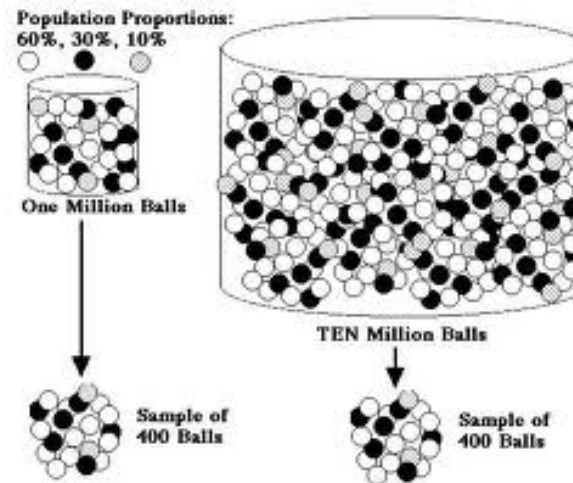


- Take what you can get
- Generally viewed as less representative
- Higher likelihood for non-response bias



Determining your Sample Size

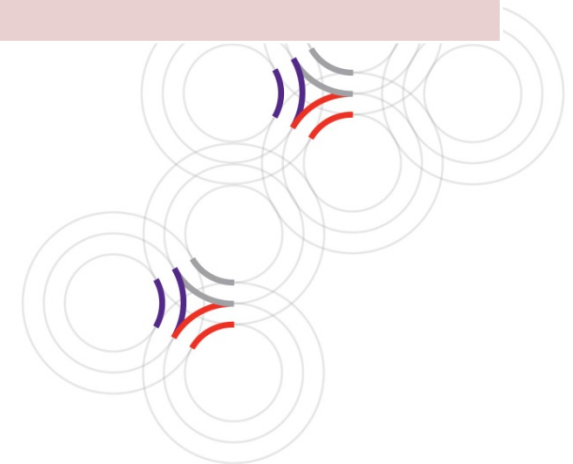
- Bigger is not better.
- Sample needs to be representative.
- Smaller populations require larger samples to be representative.



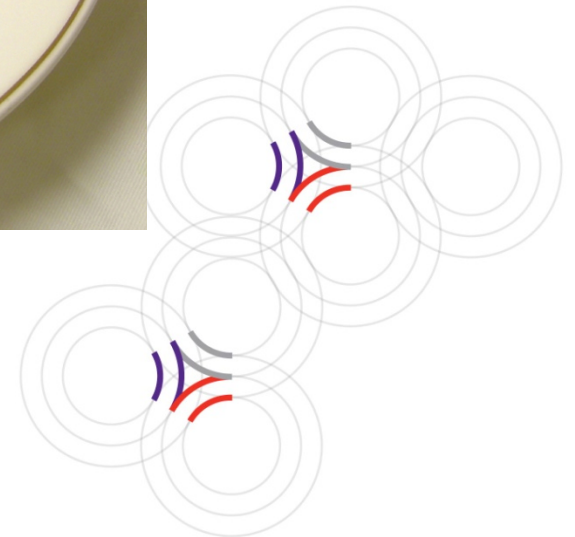
Determining your Sample Size



Condition	Recommended Sample
No previous experience at doing surveys. No existing survey data	100 to 200
Some previous experience or some previous data. Want to divide the sample into two groups for analysis.	200 to 400
Have previous experience and previous data. Want to divide the sample into up to 4 groups. Want to compare with previous survey data.	400 to 600



Determining your Sample Size: A Common Misconception

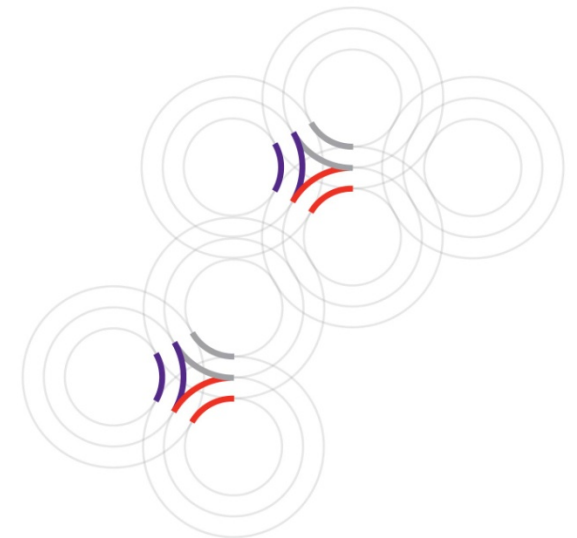


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Writing Survey Questions

Pillars of Question Construction:

- Brevity
- Objectivity
- Simplicity
- Specificity

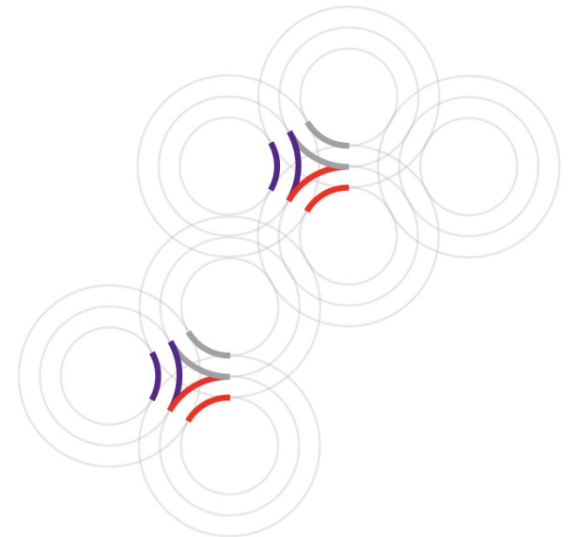


Writing Survey Questions: Potential for Bias



Measurement error

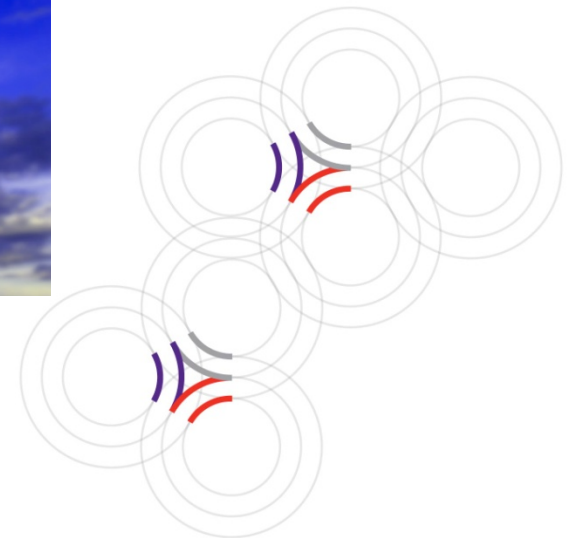
- Poor question design
- Faulty assumptions
- Imperfect scales



What's wrong with this survey?

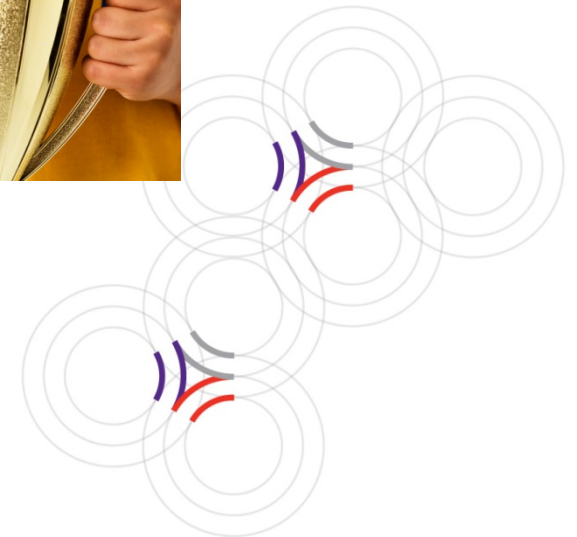


A hands-on exercise to introduce concepts related to survey question design



Survey Introduction

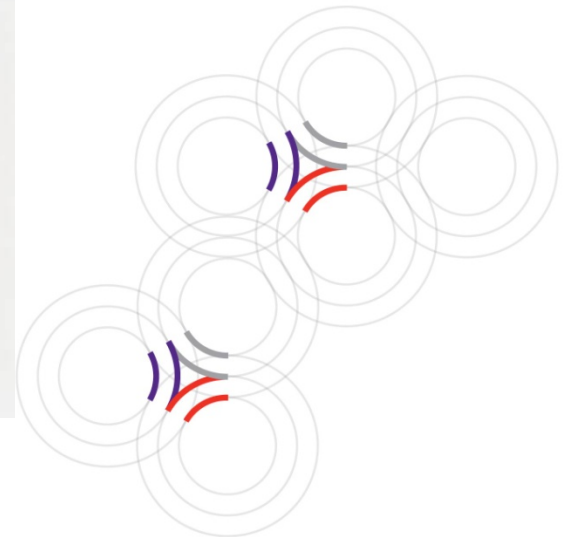
- Explain the purpose of the survey
- Provide an estimate of how long the survey will take
- Offer an incentive or prize



Demographic/Sensitive Questions



- Position toward the end of the survey
- Age – Ask for year of birth or age range
- Race/Ethnicity - Use the same wording as the Census so that you can compare your data to regional data

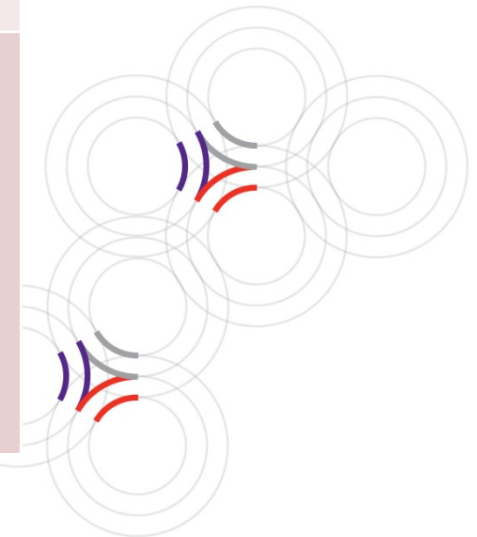


Question Types: Open-Ended versus Close-Ended

Open-Ended Questions allow respondents to answer in their own words	Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow collection of more detailed information • Reduced likelihood of response bias
	Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time and effort by respondent • More time and effort to analyze
Close-Ended Questions have pre-written responses for the respondent to select	Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy and quick to answer • More easily analyzed
	Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer choices must cover all possible answers • Must pay careful attention to wording of each choice, number of choices, and order of choices

Types of Questions to Avoid

Question Type	Examples
Loaded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should Americans buy imported automobiles that take away American jobs? • Have you stopped beating your wife?
Double-Barreled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe that crime is a problem and the administration should be working diligently on a solution? Yes/No • How satisfied are you with your pay and job conditions?
Leading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most rational people agree that the Pittsburgh Steelers are the best football team in NFL history - do you agree? • This agency was recently ranked as number one in customer satisfaction in the federal government. How satisfied are you with your experience today?

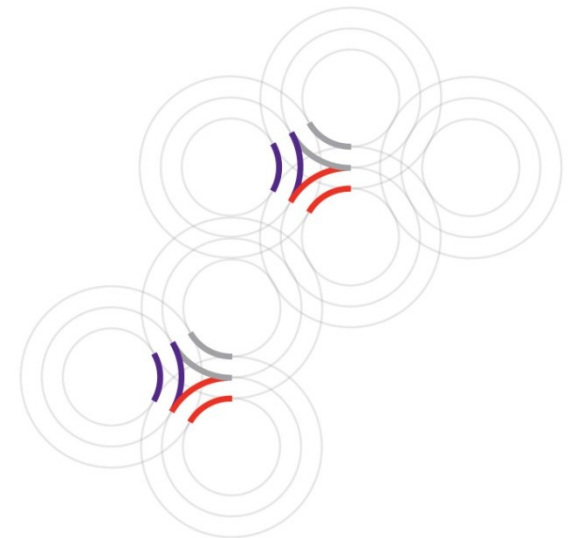


Question Types: Rating Scale Questions

Characteristic	Definition
Unipolar scale	Measures the presence or absence of a quality or attribute - only one extreme is anchored
Bipolar scale	Measures either positive or negative responses to a statement - anchored on both extremes
Balanced scale	Equal amounts of positive and negative positions
Unbalanced scale	Unequal number of favorable and unfavorable response options
Forced choice method	Neutral option has been removed from scale

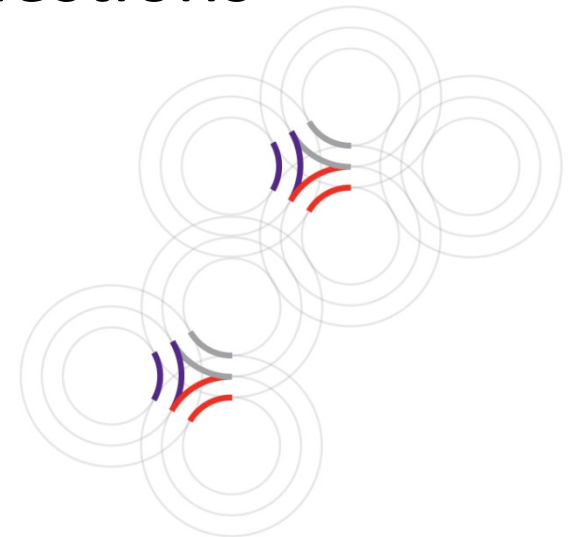
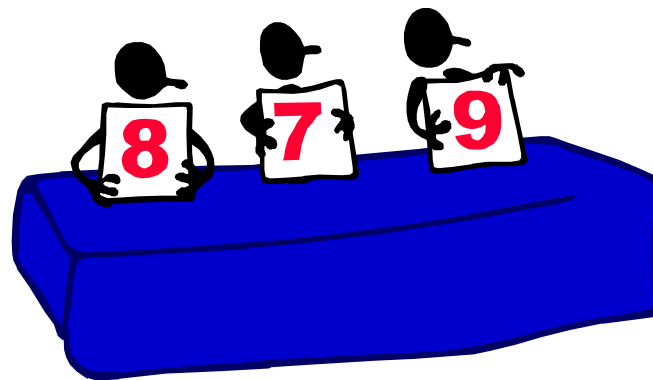
Potential Biases with Rating Scales

- Central tendency bias
- Acquiescence bias
- Social desirability bias



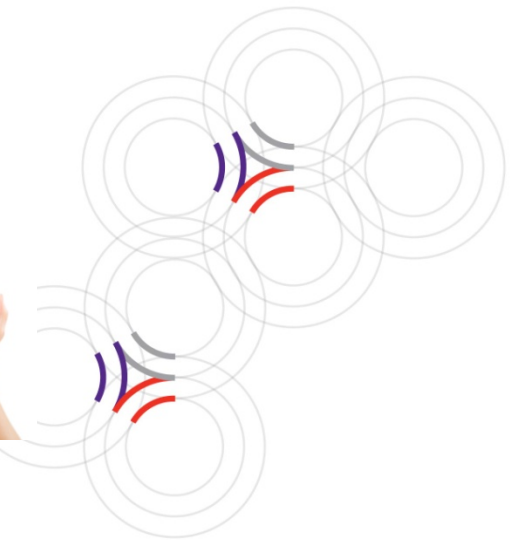
Question Types: Ranking Questions

- Used to rank items along a dimension such as level of importance
- Force respondents to differentiate between items
- Cannot be analyzed like rating questions



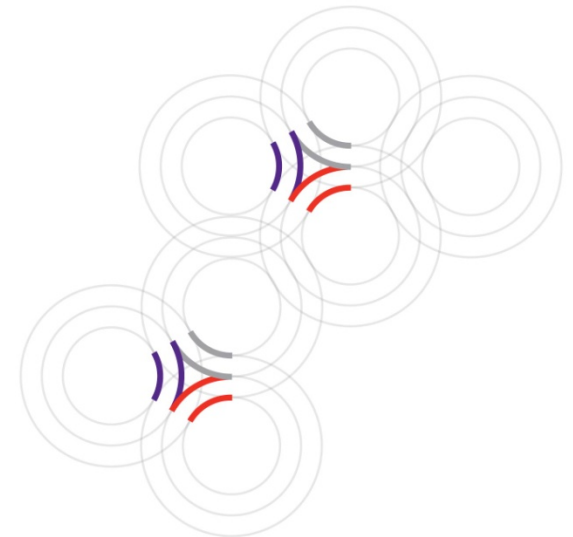
Tips for Maximizing Response Rates

- Request participation in advance
- State the purpose of the survey
- Allow enough time to complete the survey
- Design an easy to follow survey
- Offer an incentive



Survey Fatigue

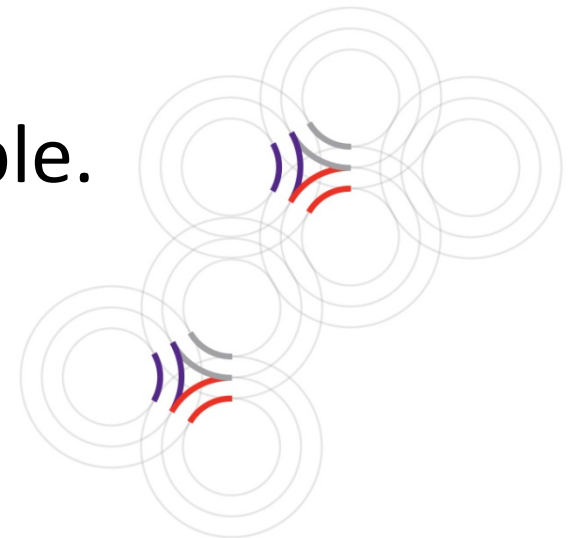
- Survey fatigue leads to lower response rates.
- Don't send a survey invitation to everyone, every time.
- Tragedy of the Commons



Survey unto others as you would have them survey unto you.



- Keep it short.
- Make it attractive.
- Build a rapport.
- Design questions carefully.
- Allow for additional comments.
- Don't over survey the same people.

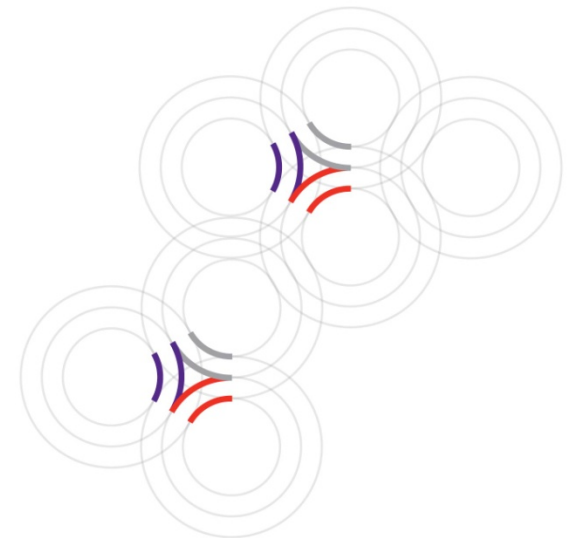




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