

## Survey Methods

COU511: Research Methods in Counseling  
Graduate Studies in Counseling  
Heidelberg College

Daniel R. Cruikshanks, Ph.D., PCC-S

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## The Survey

- A means of observing a given population by asking a series of standard questions
  - Enables large amounts of data to be collected about a given population quickly and efficiently.
  - Provides a kind of "snap-shot" of that population with regard to thoughts, feelings and/or behaviors
    - Snap-shot: A picture of a given population at a given moment in time.
      - Attitudes, beliefs, opinions, habits/actions, etc.
      - Demographics
        - Gender, income, occupation, ethnicity, education, etc.
- Two primary means
  - Interview/telephone
  - Self-administered questionnaire (Paper/pencil or Web based)

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## A Brief History

- The Survey has been utilized in some form virtually since the beginning of recorded human history.
  - References to Census surveys have been found in Biblical text, and the census has been a common practice among nation states for eons.
- More recently, social scientists have utilized survey methods to understand and predict human behavior.
  - Political scientists use survey methods to predict elections and assist in formation of public policy.

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## Scientific Survey vs. Poll

- Polls are a form of survey
  - Tend to use simple techniques quickly to “take the pulse” of a given population about a particular question at a particular time.
  - When Americans were asked in a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll in September whether a doctor should be allowed to prescribe an overdose to help someone “end his or her life,” 54% said yes.
    - When the question used the words “help the patient commit suicide,” 46% said yes.
  - A poll simply seeks to measure responses to a given question, typically with a dichotomous scale.
  - A scientific survey is generally a more sensitive measure of phenomena and involves statistical manipulation and analysis of the data to determine relationships between variables.

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## Survey Sampling

- Identify the Population to be studied
- Determine a means reach the population
- Determine sampling methods
  - Random selection
  - Convenience

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## Survey Methods: Interview vs. Self-administered questionnaire

- Interview
  - Telephone
  - Canvas
  - Trolling
- Self-Administered Questionnaire
  - Researcher designed instruments
  - Standardized Measure
  - Web based
- Delivery

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## Survey Methods: Anonymity and confidentiality

### Confidentiality

- The participant's identity is known or knowable, but the research utilized procedures to protect their privacy
  - Requires use of informed consent

### Anonymity

- The researcher utilizes procedures to ensure that the participant's identity is not traceable or identifiable
  - Cover letter may serve as informed consent

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## Instrument Design

### Item design

- Use the simplest, closed questions possible
  - Avoid multiple questions within one item
  - Open questions invite qualitative data and are not effective in surveys
- Likert rated items should be statements that can be rated and the chosen rating is logical.
- Likert scales
  - Avoid odd numbered scale unless a "neutral" choice is desired

### Examples of [Good Design](#) and [Bad Design](#)

- [Research question and hypothesis](#)

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