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RS292 Research Methods

Data Collection: Questionnaires & Surveys

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Textbook: Textbook: Gray, D. (2018). *Doing research in the real world* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage. (Chapter 14)

Questionnaire

- One of the most widely used primary data gathering techniques
- **Research tool** through which people are asked to respond to the same set of questions in a pre-determined order
- Use where the audience is relatively large and where standardized questions are needed





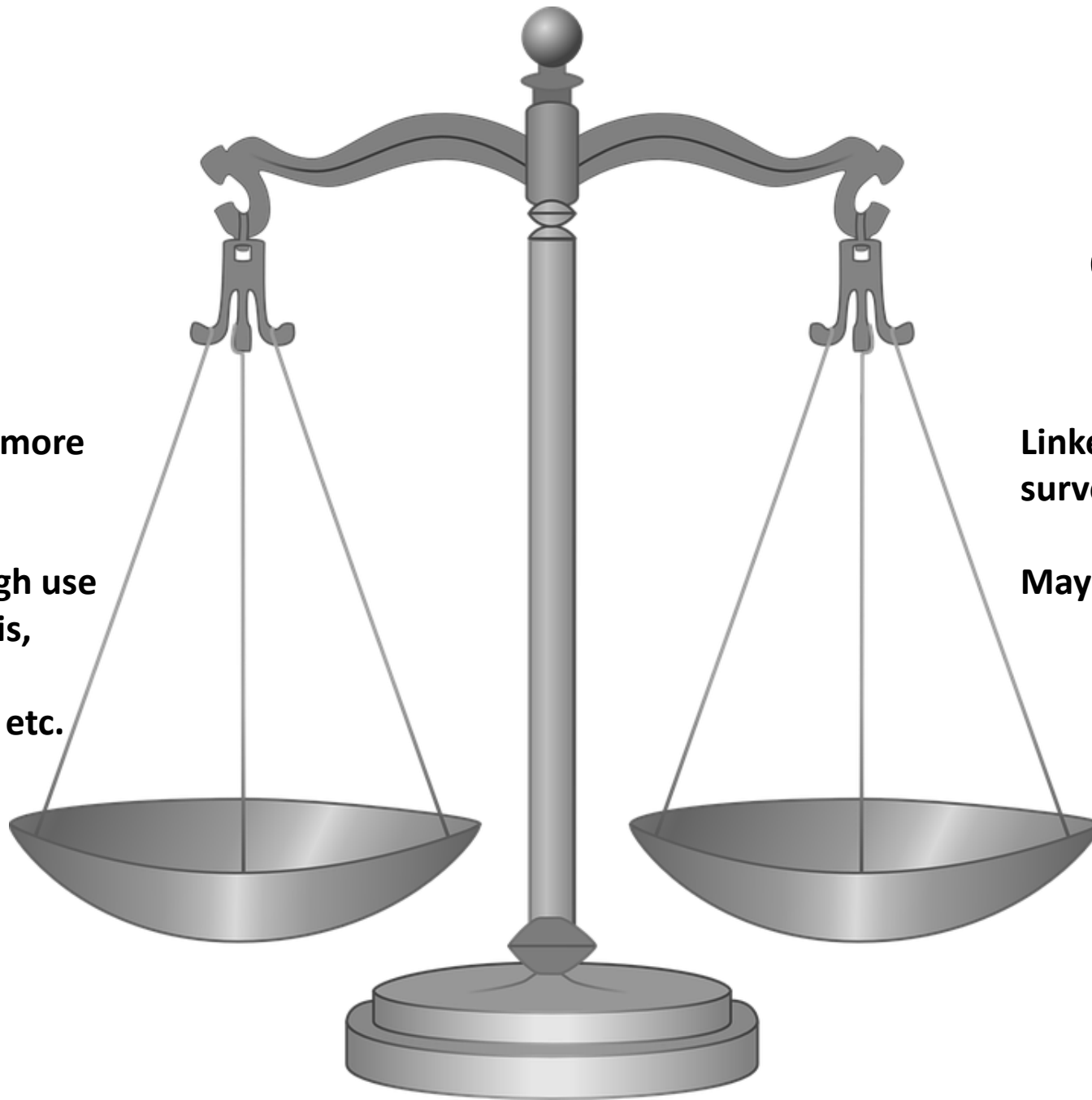
Important

- Questionnaire fit objectives of the research
- Valid, reliable, objective
- Good design

Surveys

Investigation into one or more variables in a population

May be conducted through use of secondary data analysis, unobtrusive measures, interviews, focus groups, etc.



Questionnaires

Linked to, not synonymous with, surveys

May be used to conduct surveys

Why Use Questionnaires?

- Low cost in terms of time and money
- Inflow of data is quick and from many people
- Respondents can complete the questionnaire at a time and place that suits them
- Data analysis of closed questions is relatively simple, and questions can be coded quickly
- Respondents' anonymity can be assured
- A lack of interviewer bias



Why Not Use Questionnaires?

- Response rates can be depressingly low
- Can't use long questionnaires or response rate will be adversely affected
- Demand a certain level of literacy
- No opportunity to ask questions
- Might get flippant, inaccurate or misleading answers





Designing Questionnaires

No matter how objective a researcher tries to be, both choice of research subject and questionnaires reflect the **designer's view of the world**.

→ Aim to capture values, perceptions and interest of the respondent, and to be objective



Avoiding Poor Questions

Pilot questions: phrase in ways that are clear, concise and unambiguous and free from jargon and abbreviations

Things to avoid:

- Prejudicial language
- Imprecision
- Leading questions
- Double questions
- Assumptive questions
- Hypothetical questions
- Knowledge
- Memory recall

Developing Questions to Measure a Construct

Use the Q-Sort methodology:

- Stage 1: Create construct **definitions**
- Stage 2: Create sets of **statements** that are designed to represent the definition
- Stage 3: **Test the statements against the definitions** by getting participants to combine the statements with the definitions on a 'free sort' basis, with the option 'don't know' or 'no opinion'.

Read Case Study 14.1, pp. 346-347



Using Classification or Demographic Questions

Questions dealing with things like the name, sex, age, socio-economic status, income, nationality, or location of the respondent.

Important to:

- Monitor the characteristics of the study sample once the survey is completed
- Check the study sample against the research population to ensure validity
- Compare and contrast the views of one group of respondents against those of another



Drafting the Question Content

- The researcher must be clear about information required and **encode** this accurately into a question
- The respondent must **interpret** the question in a way that the researcher intended
- The respondent must **construct an answer** that contains info the researcher has requested
- The researcher must **interpret** the answer as the had intended it to be interpreted



Drafting the Answer

- Consistency: decided on how you want people to respond and stick with it (e. gif by ticking boxes, avoid introducing circling or underlining)
- Clear instructions

Types of Questions

Type	What It Asks	Examples
Open Questions	No definitive response 'How', 'Why', 'What', etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What aspects of the government's healthy living campaign do you find the most useful?• How do you feel about the new operational procedures?
Closed Questions	Respondent is offered a set of pre-designed replies Several types: List Category Ranking Scale (ordinal (e.g. strongly agree → strongly disagree; Likert scale) and continuum (e.g. 1 → 10) see pp. 356-357	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How often in an average week do you use our e-banking facilities? Please tick one response.• Please indicate in the boxes provided which features you believe are the most important when visiting our superstore.



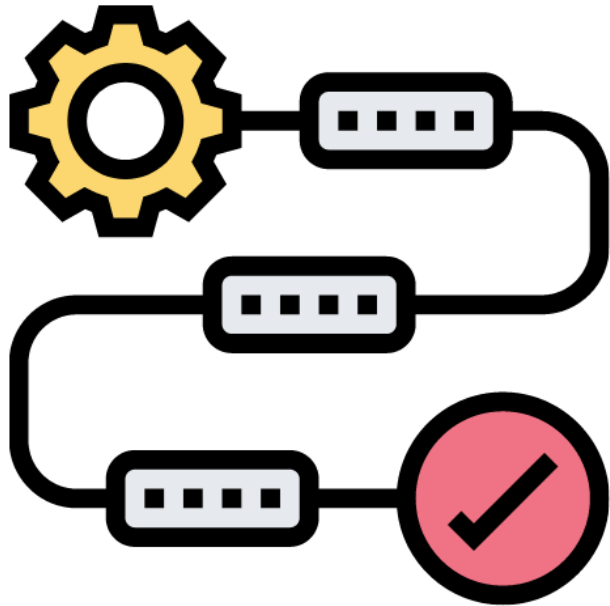
Advantages	Disadvantages
Open questions	
Freedom and spontaneity of the answers	Time-consuming
Opportunity to probe	In interviews: costly of interviewer time
Useful for testing hypotheses about ideas or awareness	Demand more effort from respondents
Closed questions	
Require little time	Loss of spontaneous response
No extended writing	Bias in answer categories
Low cost	Sometimes too crude
Easy to process	May irritate respondents
Make group comparison easy	
Useful for testing specific hypotheses	

Sequencing Questions

Logical flow to the sequence of questions, use of flow-charts
(Fig 14.4, p.358)

From easy to more difficult questions, from concrete to abstract

- Is the answer to the question likely to be influenced by the content of preceding questions?
- Is the question led up to in a natural way?
- Is it in correct psychological order?
- Does the question come too early or too late from the point of view of arousing interest and receiving sufficient attention, avoiding resistance, etc.?



Providing Response Categories



List of categories for a standardized set or responses

- For knowledge: very familiar → not at all familiar
- For opinion: very important → not at all important
- For frequency: always → never
- For ratings: excellent → poor



Questionnaire Layout

- Make it as attractive as possible → improved response rate
- Think about general layout, grouping questions, numbering, font, line spacing, direction of answering, colors...
help respondents in completing the questionnaire.

Include Instructions

General instructions, dealing with the purpose of the questionnaire, assurances of confidentiality, how and when to return the questionnaire

Section introductions when the questionnaire is divided into subsections

Question instructions (e.g. tick only one response)

'Go to' instructions

Make Use of Validated Scales

- See Case Study 14.2



Email and Web Questionnaires

- SurveyMonkey
(<https://www.surveymonkey.com/>)
- Qualtrics
(<https://www.qualtrics.com/au/>)

Piloting Questionnaires

- Pilot at least 50 per cent more questions than you need so that confusing or unreliable questions can be thrown
- Pilot also additional material (e.g. instructions)
- Trial (and re-trial) your initial list of questions with a couple of people who are not part of your target group; note their engagement with the questionnaire & ask for improvements, deletions, additions



Quality

Validity: Must cover the research issues both in terms of content and detail

Reliability: consistent (e.g. stability over time)

Delivering Questionnaires

Post: account for a longer return time

Delivery and collection (e.g. complete at the end of a meeting)

Online

Interviewer-administered



Assessment 2: Methodology Report

- Format: Written Report
- Length: 1,000 words
- Weighting: 15%
- Due date: 5pm Friday the 5th of November
- You are required to produce a written report detailing your methodology employed in your research project thus far. This report must include discussion on: participants, sampling, ethical considerations and data collection instruments. Also discuss any problems encountered in your research thus far and the problem-solving strategies employed to overcome these challenges.

Methodology Report Rubric

Criteria /Grade	High Distinction (80-100%)	Distinction (70-79%)	Credit (60-69%)	Pass (50-59%)	Fail (0-49%)
Explanation and justification of chosen methodology	Demonstrates a pronounced ability to clearly explain and justify chosen research methodology	Demonstrates ability to clearly explain and justify chosen research methodology	Demonstrates ability to explain and justify chosen research methodology	Demonstrates ability to explain or justify chosen research methodology	Limited or no evidence of ability to explain and justify chosen research methodology
Understanding of Issues/Problems	Fully grasps all concepts addressed	Exhibits a sound grasp of all concepts addressed	Exhibits a sound grasp of most concepts addressed	Has begun to grasp the concepts addressed	Has not grasped the concepts addressed
Connection to Practice/Personal Experience	Demonstrates a pronounced ability to connect theory to personal research experiences	Demonstrates a ability to connect theory to personal research experiences	Shows promise in task of connecting theory to personal research experiences	Evidences engagement of theory with personal research experiences	Limited or no evidence of ability to connect theory to personal research experiences
Ethical Behaviour	Strong evidence of ability to model ethical behaviour, personal integrity and respect for others in a research environment; demonstrates profound insight into consequences of potential unethical behaviour	Strong evidence of ability to model ethical behaviour, personal integrity and respect for others in a research environment; recognising the consequences of unethical behaviour	Sound evidence of ability to model ethical behaviour, personal integrity and respect for others in a research environment	Some evidence of ability to model ethical behaviour, personal integrity and respect for others in a research environment	Limited evidence of ethical behaviour, personal integrity and respect for others in a research environment
Language Conventions	Excellent vocabulary, free of language errors (spelling, grammar and referencing)	Consistently uses correct spelling, grammar and referencing	Few errors evidenced (spelling, grammar and referencing)	Some errors evidenced (spelling, grammar and referencing)	Many errors evidenced (spelling, grammar and referencing)

Homework



READ CHAPTER 15 (GRAY)



WORK ON YOUR
QUESTIONNAIRE



TOPIC WEEK 7:
INTERVIEWS