

Collecting Survey Data with Special Populations

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The University of Illinois Survey Research Laboratory

- **Who We Are**
- **Where We Are**
- **What We Do**

Introduction and Overview

CMOR RESPONDENT
COOPERATION WORKSHOP

Methods of data collection from respondents

- Quantitative

- Survey Questionnaires

- Polling

- Qualitative

- Ethnographic Research/Ethnography

- Focus Groups

- Cognitive Interviews

Definitions

- **Special Populations**
 - **In general population surveys**
 - **In other surveys**

SRL Studies Since 1998

- Homeless Adults
- Substance Abusers
- Public Housing Residents
- Foster Children
- DHS Caseworkers
- Incarcerated Juveniles
- Cancer Patients
- Gang involved youth
- Foster Parents
- Senior Citizens



Reasons for Interviewing SPs

- **As part of a general population survey (inclusion)**
- **As part of a program evaluation to measure impact of programs or services**
- **To determine service needs**
- **To capture attitudes or opinions**

Targeting vs. Including

- *Targeting*
 - **Specifically looking for population of interest**
 - **Generally as part of program evaluation or determination of service needs of population**
- *Including*
 - **In general population, when a selected respondent is found to have limitations in activity as compared to the general population due to mental or physical limitation.**
 - **Generally refers to adults, though older youth are sometimes included as respondents in general population surveys.**

Study Planning

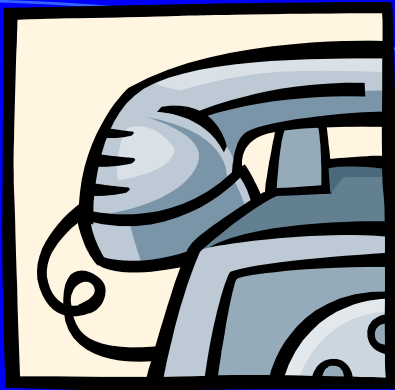
Considerations: Action Plan

- **Consider Questionnaire Mode**
 - CATI, CAPI, Audio-CASI, Mail, or Web
- **Self- or interviewer-administered**
- **Questionnaire administration**
- **Review complexity of external concerns (IRB, consent, gatekeepers)**

Mail



- **Mail questionnaires are discouraged when targeting a special population, since there is no way to gauge the need for assistive technology; however, you might consider an option to offer an additional mode.**



Telephone Surveys

- **Telephone surveys are generally not advised for respondents who might require special assistance.**
- **If a respondent identifies him/her self as unable to complete due to a limitation, additional response options might be considered.**

Self-Administered Surveys

- **Self-administered surveys can be completed on paper or on computer.**
- **Usually used in conjunction with an interviewer-administered survey.**
- **Are thought to increase candor in response.**
- **Have to take literacy level/ability to use technology into consideration.**

Interviewer-Administered Personal Interviewing

- **Can be conducted on computer or on paper.**
- **This is the most optimal form of interviewing special populations**
- **Can use tools like show cards as interviewer can pick on on cues that might warrant additional assistance in answering questions.**

Audio-Casi

- Has been shown to increase candor on surveys of youth.
- Benefits vary with length of questionnaire
- Illinois Well Being study example

Staffing Considerations- Personal Interviewing

- **Interviewer selection is a critical part of the process.**
- **Consider experience with the specific population.**
- **May need to pay higher than average rate to attract interviewers with specialized experience.**
- **Reliability and consistency**

Questionnaire Considerations

- **Length**
- **Employing special aids or tools like show cards**
- **Using a ‘short’ form option**

Data Considerations

- **Avoid collecting quantitative data that can be better determined from things like medical charts**
- **Consider using proxies**
- **Consider using instruments that have been fielded with similar populations in the past**

External Considerations

- **IRB**
- **Internal consent issues**
- **“Red tape”**
- **Space and time**
- **Risk protocol (avoid surprises)**

Interviewing Children

- **Age**
- **Questionnaire length**
- **Instrument choice**
- **Environment of interview**
- **Institutional concerns (DCFS, schools)**
- **Incentives**
- **DCFS/harm reporting**

Mental Illness

- **Very generic term**
- **Never assume that a respondent is not competent to participate solely because he or she has a diagnosis**
- **In general population, “bizarre” responses may at times occur among those with a severe psychosis**

Mental Illness *cont'd*

- **If R is clearly unable to participate, do not abruptly terminate.**
- **Asking for specific dates and times may be challenging; refer to holidays.**
- **When possible, validate information from a variety of sources, including medical charts or caregivers.**
- **Use a controlled interviewing environment.**

Other General Considerations

- **Always ensure that the research in action meets agreed-upon IRB protocol; changes require an amendment.**
- **Constantly monitor field procedures if you yourself are not doing the interviewing.**
- **Never wait until the end to review collected data.**

A Note About Physical Limitations

- **Research on surveys with physically disabled**
- **Whenever possible, adaptations should be made to include all selected respondents**
- **Offer alternative modes of data collection**
- **Contribute to knowledge of growing body of literature by including questions in research about physical limitations.**

For Further Information...

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