

## Chapter 10

### Testing Survey Questions

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#### Summary of the Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Question Testing Methods

	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
The Traditional Field Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Can be an aid to identify</li> <li>— <i>Troublesome questions</i></li> <li>— <i>Difficult concepts</i></li> <li>— <i>Respondent reactions to new data collection techniques</i></li> <li>— <i>Etc.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Yet, many problems can go by unnoticed</li> <li>· Respondents may</li> <li>— <i>Misunderstand questions</i></li> <li>— <i>Use inappropriate judgment strategies</i></li> <li>— <i>Provide socially desirable answers</i></li> <li>— <i>Etc.</i></li> </ul> <p>without giving off any signals that these error sources are occurring</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on next page...</i></p>

Expert Review/Systematic Reviews of Questionnaires	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Quick</li> <li>· Cost effective</li> <li>· Can uncover a wide range of potential problems from typos and skip pattern logic errors to problems in how concepts have been operationalized, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Covers cognitive aspects for respondent</i></li> <li>— <i>Can uncover possible difficulties for the interviewer</i></li> <li>— <i>Can uncover possible problems for analysis</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>· Can generate hypotheses for testing with other methods</li> <li>· If a specific appraisal form is used, the method yields quantitative data</li> </ul>	<p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Depends on abilities of the experts</li> <li>· No respondents involved, so less convincing</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on next page...</i></p>
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Respondent Debriefing	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Comments are received directly from the respondent</li> <li>· Question-specific comments can be used to fix the survey question</li> <li>· Field setting</li> <li>· Larger sample sizes permit greater confidence in the results</li> <li>· Can be used to diagnose problems in continuous surveys. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· In continuous survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Large N facilitates statistical analysis</i></li> <li>— <i>Rare groups can be debriefed</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Potential main survey problems have to be identified in advance</li> <li>· Subject to its own sources of response error</li> <li>· Difficult to write good debriefing questions</li> </ul>
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Behavior Coding	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Direct observation of the question-answering process</li> <li>· Quantitative indicator</li> <li>· Standard codes enhances comparability</li> <li>· Replicable</li> <li>· Flexible, codes can be tailored to the specific needs of the study</li> </ul>	<p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Standard method is time consuming</li> <li>· Coders must be well-trained and use the codes consistently</li> <li>· Gives no information about why problem occurs</li> <li>· Additional investigation is needed to follow up on those questions that receive many problem codes</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>continued on next page...</i></p>
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Cognitive Interviewing	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Studies have found that “many problems that were identified in the first field pretest were pinpointed in the laboratory in less time, with fewer respondents, with less professional effort, and at lower cost. The laboratory setting can also be used to gain greater insight into the source of respondent difficulties” (NCHS, 1989, p. 29)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· How to generalize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Small sample size</i></li> <li>— <i>Often a convenience sample</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Often non-field setting</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>· Need highly trained interviewers</li> <li>· Full analysis can be very time consuming</li> </ul>
Focus Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· The approach is flexible enough that unexpected information can be immediately followed up on by the moderator</li> <li>· Information is obtained directly from the types of individuals who will participate in the study eventually</li> <li>· Speed and cost saving as compared to one-on-one interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Small group dynamics must be appropriately controlled or results will have limited value</li> <li>· Preparing the data for analysis and analyzing the results can be time-consuming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Qualitative review of the transcript</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— <i>Information is not as detailed or as systematic as from a one-on-one interview</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>· Results from a small number of subjects must be interpreted with care</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">End summary table.</p>