

The Translational Institute for Pain in Later Life (TRIPLL)

- NIA funded Edward R. Roybal center established in response to plight of millions of older adults experiencing persistent pain
- Mission: To improve the prevention and management of pain in later life; thereby increasing the health and well-being of older adults
- Supports translational research on aging and pain in greater NYC area



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Get Involved with TRIPLL

- Email Cara Kenien at cak2017@med.cornell.edu to join our email list and become an affiliate; joining gives you access to:
 - TRIPLL's monthly newsletter.
 - Information about upcoming Work-in-Progress Seminars, webinar and funding announcements and conference opportunities.
 - Networking opportunities.

Visit <http://tripll.org/> for more information.



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Survey Design Made Simple: Some Tips for Conducting a Local Survey

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Get Ready

- Careful planning is key for a successful survey
- Decide who needs to be involved in the planning
- Figure out time and resources available



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Define the Objectives

- Why do you want to do the survey?
 - Try to involve everyone in the association who will be using the knowledge gained from the survey
- Need to identify as precisely as possible what kind of information you want to obtain
- Be very specific.
 - NOT: “We want to know how satisfied consumers are with our programs”



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Specific Objectives

- To measure the level of satisfaction with three components of a pain management program, using no more than five questions per component
- To measure consumers' expectations for pain management programs, specifically what they hope to get out of each program
- To learn specific barriers to participating in these programs, including problems with scheduling and transportation
- Collect demographic information about participants (age, race, gender, marital status, number of children, educational level)



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Why do a survey?

- Assess the need for a program
- Assess community awareness of a problem or issue
- Evaluate a program
- Understand satisfaction of program participants
- Gather data for strategic planning purposes



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HOT TIPS

- Imagine the results
 - Create a “draft” of the future final report
 - Don’t ask questions if you are not sure you will use the information
- Make a time line for the survey
- Keep careful records throughout the planning process

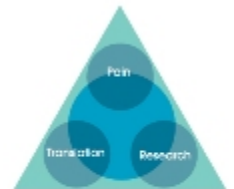


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CHOOSE THE SURVEY METHOD

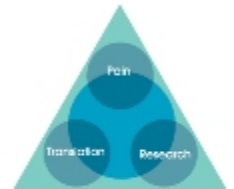
- In-person interview
- Telephone survey
- **Self-administered questionnaire**
 - In-person, mail, web-based



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Designing Questions

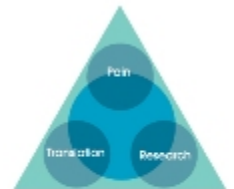


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Four Kinds of Questions

- Characteristics of people
- Knowledge
- Behavior
- Attitudes

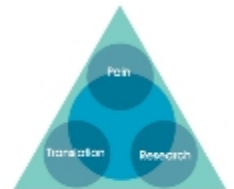


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General Guidelines for Questionnaire Design

- Make it easy for respondents. Keep it as simple as possible
- Don't bore respondents. Make it interesting
- Keep the individual questions as short as possible
- Use just enough questions to get the information you want



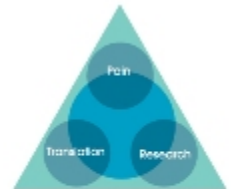
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Two Basic Types of Questions

- Open-ended
- Closed-ended



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Open-Ended Questions

- No answer categories
 - What did you like the most about this program?
 - What is the most important problem facing older people today?
- They do not restrict how respondents will answer

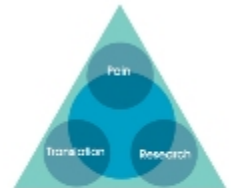


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Disadvantages of Open-Ended Questions

- A lot of work for respondents
- Require writing skills
- What do you do with the data afterwards?

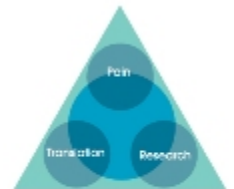


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Problem with Data from Open-Ended Questions

- Require coding or summarizing
- Open-ends often result in many responses, each of which has a small percentage of respondents. Coding is time consuming.



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Example

What did you most like about this pain management program?

- 10 % Interesting content
- 15% Liked the instructor
- 5 % Enjoyed the video
- 8 % The tips for dealing with doctors
- 17 % Opportunity to interact with other people
- 3 % Lunch provided during session

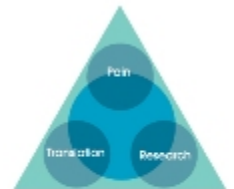


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When to Use Open-Ended Questions

- When we don't know much about a topic and we want a wide range of responses
- Catch-all question at the end of a survey
 - Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience in this program?
- If we want very precise information and there are too many categories to be listed in a close-ended question
 - In a Research Readiness Survey, we asked what Cornell web sites people use and the names of faculty they interact with.
- As a follow up to a closed-ended question



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HOT TIP:

- Avoid using open-ended questions in a self-administered survey

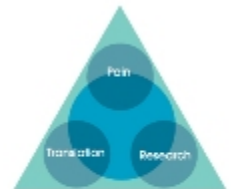


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Closed-Ended Questions

- Take longer to create, but are much easier to summarize and analyze
- Many close-ended questions have responses that are ordered in some way.



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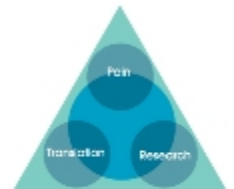
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Example:

How often people do something

How often do you use information from a Cornell University website in your work?

- 0 Never
- 1 Once a year or less
- 2 Several times a year
- 3 Once a month
- 4 Several times a month
- 5 Once a week or more



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Example:

Objective information

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- 0 Less than high school
- 1 High school diploma
- 2 Some college, no degree
- 3 Associates Degree
- 4 Bachelor's Degree
- 5 Some master's coursework
- 6 Master's degree
- 7 Some Ph.D. coursework
- 8 Ph.D.



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Example:

Opinion or attitude

More money should be spent on programming
and less money should be spent on research.

1 Strongly disagree

2 Disagree

3 Agree

4 Strongly agree



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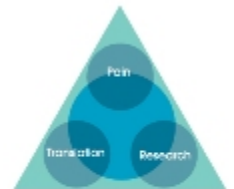
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Example:

Distinct categories

We are interested in which specific area(s) you work in within the more general area(s) you selected above. *Please look at the following list and check the areas you work in.*

- 1 Clinical Medicine
- 2 Social Work
- 3 Nursing
- 4 Physical Therapy
- 5 Chaplaincy



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Example: Ranking

Please rank the following sources of research information according to your preference for using each, where *1 is your most preferred, 2 is your next most preferred, up to 9 being your least preferred source.*

- Professional or scientific journals
- Conferences or workshops
- Peer or colleagues
- World Wide Web
- Newsletters with reports on current research
- Reference text or manual
- Research reports or fact sheets
- Cornell faculty
- Cornell staff *other than faculty*



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Combining Closed-Ended and Open-Ended Questions

Have you ever been involved in a research project?

0 No

1 Yes

IF YES: Overall, how was your experience with these projects?

1 Very negative

2 Somewhat negative

3 A little negative

4 A little positive

5 Somewhat positive

6 Very positive

Why was your experience negative or positive?



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Sample Responses

- It was exciting and I felt it was very worthwhile. The data helped inform programmatic modifications to better meet the needs of the population we were serving which then improved our overall program outcomes. There were challenges, but everything contributed to the learning process. If I were to participate in future research projects I'd bring this background with me. That could only improve the process.
- It was a project based on soil conservation and sustainable agriculture. Once results were shared with participants, it was viewed very favorably and participants were willing to continue the process.
- Mostly positive in that the research supported the revision, implementation, and evaluation of a worthwhile program that had been developed several years earlier. Negative experience involved the difficulties associated with collaboration and role identification.
- I was not pleased with the final write-up and presentation of the one of the projects. Cornell handled the dissemination of the information very poorly. I learned from that experience and I now request, in writing, a statement of explanation concerning how the final product will be utilized.



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Assessing Knowledge

- Test knowledge before and after a program to see if there are increases in knowledge
- Example: Yale Climate Change knowledge assessment

The earth's climate has changed naturally in the past, therefore humans are not the cause of global warming

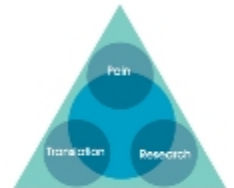
True

False

Global warming will cause temperatures to increase by roughly the same amount in all countries

True

False



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Writing Good Questions



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HOT TIP:

- Whenever possible, use survey items that have already been developed and tested
 - No need to create survey questions if they already exist
 - Find them using Google Scholar and other search engines
 - Often available on the Web

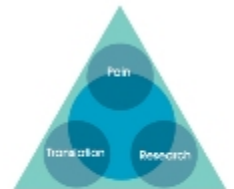


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Rationale

- Making up questions can be difficult and time-consuming
 - Does the question really measure what you want it to measure?
- Most of us lack the expertise to be sure our questions are valid
- Comparison to larger populations is possible



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Example: Physical Health (RAND-36)

1. In general, would you say your health is:	
Excellent	1
Very good	2
Good	3
Fair	4
Poor	5



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Example: Physical Health (RAND-36)

2. Compared to one year ago, how would you rate your health in general now?	
Much better now than one year ago	1
Somewhat better now than one year ago	2
About the same	3
Somewhat worse now than one year ago	4
Much worse now than one year ago	5

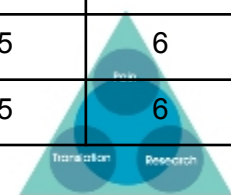


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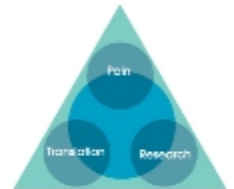
Example: Mental Health (RAND-36)

How much of the time during the past 4 weeks . .	All of the Time	Most of the Time	A Good Bit of the Time	Some of the Time	A little of the time	None of the Time
23. Did you feel full of pep?	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Have you been a very nervous person?	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up?	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Have you felt calm and peaceful?	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Did you have a lot of energy?	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. Have you felt downhearted and blue?	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. Did you feel worn out?	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Have you been a happy person?	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Did you feel tired?	1	2	3	4	5	6



Designing Your Own Questions

- Some common mistakes to avoid

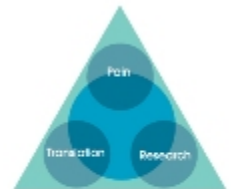


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Avoid Jargon and Specialized Terms

- **Wrong:** What do you think of the NIA priorities in work done at WCMC?
- **Right:** The National Institute on Aging, or NIA, has a number of priorities for academic researchers. Thinking about work done in the Weill Cornell Medical College, how would you rate each of these NIA priorities?

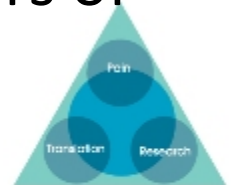


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Avoid “Double-barreled “ Questions

- Every question must be about a single idea or topic
- **Wrong:** Do you think that pain management programs benefit patients and their caregivers?
- **Right:**
 1. Do you think pain management programs benefit patients?
 2. What about family caregivers? Do you think that pain management programs benefit caregivers of people with chronic pain?



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Don't Be Vague

- **Wrong:** Do you regularly buy products with salt in them?
- **Right:** When you are making decisions about what food to purchase at the grocery store or restaurant, how often do you consider the amount of salt in the items you are considering to purchase?
 - 1 Almost never
 - 2 Rarely
 - 3 Sometimes
 - 4 Often
 - 5 Almost Always

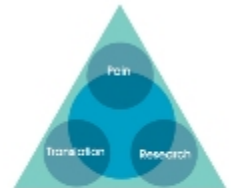


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Don't Use Leading Questions

- **Wrong:** Excessive salt consumption is a concern for many people. How often to you consider the amount of salt in the items you purchase?

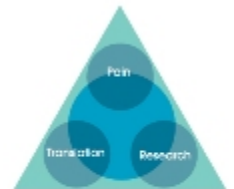


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Ask Questions People Are Capable of Answering

- **Wrong:** How many calories does your spouse consume in an average week?
- **Wrong:** What do you think about changes since 2008 in U. S. tax policy?

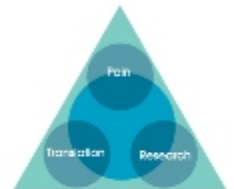


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Think Carefully about Recall

- Limit recall to the recent past
 - Most people can't recall well beyond the past year
- Define the time period very clearly
 - Over the past day, week, month
 - Since a specific date (e.g., since January 1, 2012)



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Think Carefully about Recall

- If people need to recall a lot of events, use closed ended questions
- **WRONG:** How often did you go to the doctor in the past year? _____
- **RIGHT:** How many times have you seen a doctor during the past 12 months:
 - 0 times
 - Once
 - 2-5 times
 - 6-10 times
 - 11 or more times



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Make Sure Answer Categories are Mutually Exclusive

How many times have you seen a doctor during the past 12 months:

0 times

Once

2-5 times

5-10 times

10 or more times



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Make Sure Answer Categories are Mutually Exclusive

What is the main source you consult for parenting advice?

Friends

Neighbors

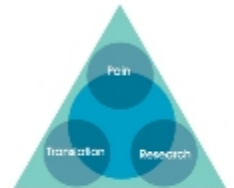
Co-workers

Relatives

Professionals

TV/Radio

Members of my church

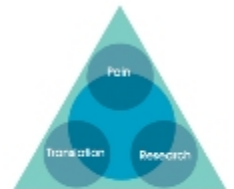


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Don't Use Too Many Categories

- People tend to get bored and only look at the first few categories
- This is particularly a problem with long lists to be ranked

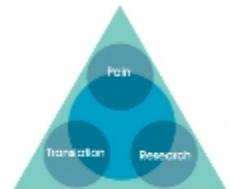


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Think of Alternatives to “Yes” and “No”

- Do you believe it is important for a parent to be present when a child returns from school?
Yes
No
- How important do believe it is for a parent to be present when a child returns from school?
 - 4 Very important
 - 3 Somewhat important
 - 2 A little important
 - 1 Not very important



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Beware of Skips

Are you currently employed?

0 No

1 Yes

IF NO: Are you currently looking for work?

0 No

1 Yes

IF YES: How likely do you think it is you will find a job in the next four weeks?

- 4 Very likely
- 3 Somewhat likely
- 2 Somewhat unlikely
- 1 Very unlikely



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Don't Ask People to Make Complicated Calculations

- **WRONG:** On days when your children are not in school, how many miles do you drive on average to and from retail stores?



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“Don’t Know” and “Not Applicable”

- Avoid “don’t know” as a response category
 - Reduces number of valid answers
- Use “not applicable” (where applicable!)
 - If a category of respondents can’t answer a question, reduces frustration
 - How often do you use child care?
 - Not applicable if you don’t have children



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Common Response Categories

- Opinions:
 - Very important/Somewhat important/Not too important/Not at all important
 - Completely satisfied/Mostly satisfied/Somewhat satisfied/Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied
 - Strongly Agree/Agree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree
- Knowledge
 - Very familiar/Somewhat familiar/Not too familiar/Not at all familiar
 - True/False
 - A lot/Some/A little/Nothing
- Frequency of behaviors or events
 - Often/Sometimes/Rarely/Never
 - Times per day/Per week/Per month/Per year
- Ratings
 - Gotten better/Gotten worse/Stayed about the same
 - Excellent/Good/Fair/Poor
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, where **1** means not at all serious and **10** means very serious, how serious a problem is _____?

Source: Ronald Czaja and Johnny Blair, *Designing Surveys*, 2005



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HOT TIP:

- Always pretest a survey!
 - Experts
 - You and others you work with
 - People like the eventual respondents
 - Focus group
- Critique the survey

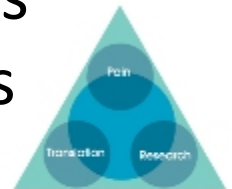


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Things to Look for in the Pretest

- Items left unanswered
- Takes people too long to fill it out
- People not following the instructions
- People not understanding questions
- Only a few different answers to an open-ended question (consider a closed-ended question instead)
- Little variation on closed-ended questions (everyone says yes or strongly agree)
- People missing skip patterns
- Too little space to answer open-ended questions
- Too many “not applicable” or “other” responses

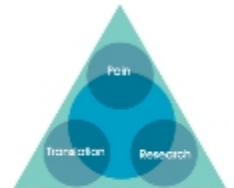


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HOT TIPS:

- Conduct two pretests
 - Good draft of the survey
 - Nearly final version after revision
- Pretest early

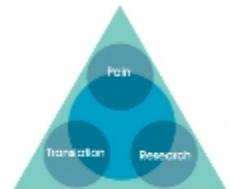


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Organizing the Questionnaire

- Pay attention to question order
- The questionnaire should have an easy, natural flow
- Example: Elder care
 - Begin with basic information about the family
 - Move to caregiving activities
 - Move to problems in the caregiving situation
- Logical order (don't jump around)

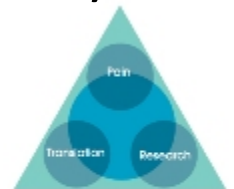


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HOT TIPS:

- Use section titles
- Group questions according to topic
- Don't begin with an open-ended question
- Do begin with more interesting, easy-to-answer questions.
- Avoid too many questions that are exactly alike
- Demographic questions always at the end! (Unless have to be earlier; e.g., if you are asking about married couples, you need to ask marital status at the start)
- Sensitive questions toward the end



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Designing the Questionnaire

- Simple and Clear!
- Spend enough time on the physical design
- Leave white space around items
- Use reader-friendly type (Arial)
- Look on the web for formats you like

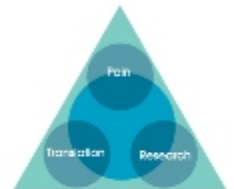


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Designing the Questionnaire

- Give the purpose of the questionnaire on the first page.
 - Make sure it sounds interesting
 - Motivate the person to fill it out
 - Say what the benefits are of filling it out
 - Ask yourself if you would want to fill out the questionnaire
- Provide very clear instructions. Make sure respondents know whether to check a box, circle an number, etc.
- Graphically indicate instructions, like capitalizing.
 - CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY
 - CHECK THE BOX THAT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OPINION



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HOT TIPS:

- Do not break a question over two pages
- Try a nice graphic on the cover
- Multi-color type is not particularly important
- Use white paper
- Use both sides of the paper, so the questionnaire will not seem so long



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GO FOR IT!

- Have fun pushing back the frontiers of knowledge!



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Some Resources

- Ron Czaja and Johnny Blair. *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures, Second Edition*. Sage Publications, 2005
- Shelley Strowman, *Best Practices in Survey Design*.
http://my.simmons.edu/services/technology/ptrc/pdf/survey_design.pdf
- Floyd J. Fowler. *Survey Research Methods*. Sage Publications, 2008.
- Arlene G. Fink. *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Sage Publications, 2008.
- American Sociological Association. *What Is A Survey?*
<http://www.whatisasurvey.info/>



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