Survey Design
Glossary of Terms

**Acquiescence** – the tendency to endorse any assertion made in a question, regardless of its content (this is really a type of satisficing)

**Construct** – a hypothesized concept, model, idea, or theory (something constructed) that we think exists but that we cannot directly observe

**Items/Indicators** (observable items, empirical indicators) – the actual items that make up a survey (or a particular survey scale)

**Optimizing** – the extent to which a respondent performs the necessary cognitive tasks to answer a survey item in a thorough and unbiased manner (these cognitive tasks may include: (1) interpreting a survey item (figuring out its intent), (2) searching memory for relevant information, (3) forming a judgment, and (4) translating the judgment into an answer by summarizing or selecting one of the alternatives offered; these are the tasks we want respondents to do)

**Order effects** – the notion that the order of response alternatives affects the extent to which respondents select those items (primary and recency effects are two types of order effects)

**Primacy effects** – the tendency to remember (and select) answers that appear first (or early) in a list of alternatives (likely because those items were cognitively processes and now reside in long-term member); this effect is more prominent when items are presented visually

**Recency effects** – the tendency to remember (and select) answers that appear last (or later) in a list of alternatives (likely because they still reside in working memory and so are more accessible); this effect is more prominent when items are presented orally

**Response anchors** – the end points in a response scale (e.g., strongly disagree – strongly agree; not at all true of me – completely true of me; never – almost all the time)

**Satisficing** – the extent to which respondents compromise their standards and expend less energy (i.e., they don’t fully optimize)

**Scale** – two or more items (indicators) intended to measure a construct

**Social desirability bias** – the tendency to over-report admirable attitudes/behaviors and under-report those that are not socially respected

**Weak satisficing** – when respondents are less thorough in comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response selection (e.g., they may be less thoughtful about a question’s meaning; they may search their memories less comprehensively; they may integrate retrieved information carelessly; they may select a response imprecisely)

**Strong satisficing** – a more dramatic form of satisficing where respondents skip entire cognitive tasks (i.e., comprehension, retrieval, judgment, or response selection) and arbitrarily select an answer (e.g., they may select the first reasonable response; they may accept any assertions made that seem reasonable; they may select “don’t know” or “no opinion” to avoid expending effort; they may randomly select a response from those offered)