Figure 3.8. SAMPLE SURVEY DESIGN/EXECUTION: Bibliography

The lists of references on questionnaire design and on focus groups in this Figure 3.8 has been adapted from materials provided through the courtesy of Statistics Canada; it is reproduced here by authority of the Minister of Industry, 1996, Statistics Canada.

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(*continued*)

Figure 3.8. SAMPLE SURVEY DESIGN/EXECUTION: Bibliography (continued 1)

APPENDIX – Asking Sensitive Questions

Taken from: *Questionnaire Design News*, No. 4, Statistics Canada, March 1990.

DID YOU KILL YOUR BOSS?
WAYS OF ASKING THREATENING QUESTIONS

Various techniques have been developed to ask embarrassing or sensitive questions in non-threatening ways. The following are examples of several such techniques as applied to the question: "*Did you kill your boss?*"

1. The Casual Approach:
   "*Do you happen to have murdered your boss?*"

2. The Numbered Card:
   "*Would you please read off the number on this card which corresponds with what became of your boss?*"
   (HAND CARD TO RESPONDENT)
   1. Natural death.
   2. I killed him/her.
   3. Other (please specify).

3. The "Everybody's Doing It" Approach:
   Use words that suggest that the sensitive behaviour is not uncommon.
   "*As you may be aware, many people have been killing their bosses these days. Would you happen to have killed yours?*"

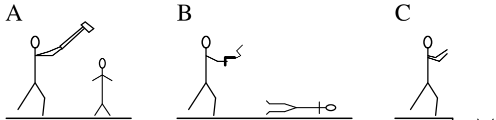
4. The "Sandwich" Method:
   Try putting the sensitive topic in the middle of a list of more threatening ones, thereby reducing its perceived threat.
   "*Have you ever done any of the following?*"
   1. Fire-bombed the Parliament Buildings.
   2. Murdered your boss.
   3. Detonated a nuclear device.

5. The Assumption Method:
   Assume the behaviour; ask about frequencies and other details.
   "*How many of your bosses have you killed in your last 10 years of work?*"

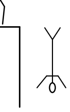
6. The "Other People" Approach:
   (a) "*Do you know any people who have murdered their bosses?*"
   (b) "*How about yourself?*"

7. The Illustrative Technique:
   "*What thoughts come to mind when you look at the following pictures?*"

A B C



8. Putting the question at the end of the interview.



[Adapted from: Barton, A.J. (1958), "Asking the Embarrassing Question", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 22, pp. 67-68.]

Example of a series of questions to overcome the sensitive nature of a question. This example is based on a telephone interview.

- **Have you ever shoplifted anything?**
  ○ Yes
  ○ No.

REVISION:

1. As you may know, there is now a great deal of discussion about shoplifting in this community, and questions about how it should be handled. Some people feel it is a serious problem about which something should be done, others feel it is not a serious problem. How about yourself? Do you consider shoplifting to be a serious, moderate, slight, or no problem at all in our community?
   ○ Serious
   ○ Moderate
   ○ Slight
   ○ No problem at all.

2. During the past few years do you think the frequency of shoplifting has increased, stayed about the same, or decreased in this community?
   ○ Increased
   ○ Stayed about the same
   ○ Decreased
   ○ Don't know.

3. Please try to recall the time when you were a teenager. Do you recall personally knowing anyone who took something from a store without paying for it?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Don't recall.

4. How about yourself? Did you ever consider taking anything from a store without paying for it?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No.

5. Did you actually take it?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No.

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Continued from page 3.60: Fifth (and last) side of Figure 3.9 (pages 3.57 to 3.60)

Figure 3.9. SAMPLE SURVEY DESIGN/EXECUTION: Introduction to Interv... (continued 2)

4 Summarize, in point form, the advantages and *dis*advantages given in Figure 3.9 for *telephone* interviewing over personal (or face-to-face) interviewing.

5 List, in point form, actions discussed in Figure 3.9 that an interviewer should *avoid* so as not to influence a respondent's answers to the questionnaire.

6 In the last paragraph of the sixth column (on the third side, page 3.59, of Figure 3.9), it is stated that *If interviewers allow their own values and attitudes to enter the interview, the respondents' answers could well reflect these rather than their own, thus introducing a bias into the survey results.* Explain briefly why this problem is one of *bias*.

- Explain briefly how this bias fits into *our* categorization of bias.

7 Discuss critically, from a *statistical* perspective, the statement in the second-last paragraph of the seventh column (on the fourth side, page 3.60, of Figure 3.9): *One of the principal factors which affects the accuracy and "representativeness" of the survey results is the response rate.*