

## DISCUSSION

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The paper by Zdep and Roshwalb on the effects of the Tylenol poisonings on consumer fears is an example of survey research designed to assess the impact of an emergency situation. The first thing to be noted is the timing of the survey effort. The critical events began in the last of week September, 1982. The decision to undertake the survey was made on October 8. Interviewing of 2004 adults took place in the 9-day period between October 15 and October 23. In other words, interviewing had been completed within one month of the initiation of the crisis.

Timely survey research on public reaction to emergency situations is necessary at two levels. First, there is the level of the public's reaction to the particular situation as this relates to immediate planning. Secondly, there is the need for this timely research in the search for general principles of public reactions to emergencies.

Contributing greatly to the timeliness factor, of course, was the development of the concepts and methods of telephone sampling.

The second thing to be noted in this project is that it had a conceptual basis- "the spread of fear". "Spreading fear" as used here had two dimensions-spread of fear geographically and spread of fear across products. This speaker has been plagued through the years with too many individuals who think that the essence of survey research lies in sampling designs and procedures and who are, at best, impatient with time spent on deriving a conceptual base for approaching the development of the questionnaire.

The ramifications of this particular type of research are well-stated by the authors-the reactions of the company immediately involved with the product in question; reactions of companies producing comparable products; legislative activity.

The research undertaken by Kirsch, Kirsch and Kirsch is noteworthy because of the preliminary or pilot activities that were employed in the development of the project. There was the coordination of the research with the top management of the bank. Although the authors do not make an explicit point about it, this very process of coordination must have served as interview situations that brought out critical aspects of the recreation system and the attitudes of top management to what had been developing. In addition, there was preparation of the employees by having the bank's newsletter carry a statement about the project. This matter of prior clearance and preparation of an internal research project is critical. In projects of this type in industry it is necessary to include prior clearance with unions.

This aspect of the preliminary activity reminds me of a traumatic experience I had with one of the major subdivision of HEW. They wanted to do a survey on an important problem among their own employees. Bases had been touched with the unions to which some employees belonged and with the personnel office of the subdivision involved. Contracts had been signed (I was the contractor) and the questionnaires had been printed.

At that point the personnel office at HEW headquarters first became aware of the project. Apparently someone assumed that clearance at the subdivision's personnel office was sufficient or that someone had checked with headquarters. In any event, at that stage of the project HEW headquarters forced cancellation of the research.

Another key aspect of the pilot activity was the informal interviewing of past and present members of the recreation association. This particular activity served to explain to the researchers how the recreational system functioned, indicated its strengths and weaknesses and brought forth many suggestions as to how it might be changed. The information gathered in this pilot activity influenced the development of the questionnaire.

This type of informal, or unstructured, pilot interviewing can be beneficial for many instances of survey research. It gives the researcher the opportunity of looking for aspects of the problem from the perspective of those who are to be the objects of the research.

Finally, the fact of the pilot study was transmitted through the organization's informal information network. This, in addition to notice in the newsletter, served to facilitate the formal interviewing stage of the project.

The project by Scherr, Jabine, Deutch and Kirchhauser gives demonstration of key aspects of the development of survey research projects. First, there is the situation analysis. The prior two projects had appropriate such analyses; the point here is that this third project is based upon so many factors and complications that a quite comprehensive and detailed situation analysis is absolutely necessary before one can go on to develop the details of the research procedures.

An integral part of their situation analysis is the specification of the problem. There are two dimensions in their specification: (1) types of programs, such as family assistance; retirement, survivors and disability and security income for the aged, blind and disabled; (2) types of process, such as selection, training of the **interviewers**; nature of questions asked; forms; questionnaires; question order; etc.

This stage in the research process of situation analysis and detailed specification of the facets of the problem is being stressed here because the quality of this step can make or break a survey research project. I made previous reference to those who think that the essence of a survey research project is the sample design. Here I must refer to those who approach survey research with the view that the first thing you do is start writing questions.

There is another feature of this last project that must be pointed out. Generally, survey research will be involved with the application of formal, structured questionnaires to rigorously designed samples. The present project is an illustration of a case where these two formal features have been relaxed. With respect to "sampling" the authors state that "offices were selected so that characteristics of program..could

be observed for their differential effects on the claims process." Also, rather than formal questionnaires the information was obtained by observations, individual discussions, and group discussions. I believe that these approaches are appropriate in complicated situations such as the one being studied. It needs judicious selection of the study units and highly skilled observers and inter-

viewers capable of handling unstructured situations. Some justification for this less rigorous approach, in this instance, is seen in the claim that the findings of the three contractors "had much in common."

These three papers, then, represent illustrations of different aspects on problems associated with survey research.