

Southeast Evaluation Association

SEA

February 2010

Registration Opens for the 2010 SEA Workshop!

By Gary Walby

The SEA 2010 workshop promises to extend the streak of excellence that the Southeast community of evaluators has come to expect. The workshop committee would like to offer a heartfelt thank you to all the professionals that contributed proposals to the SEA workshop that will be held February 22nd and 23rd in Tallahassee. I am not sure if others feel inspired when reading workshop proposals but I am impressed with the diversity and pragmatism that the accepted proposals offer. We altered the event title from conference to workshop to better reflect the emphasis on skill development that seems to be a common thread across many of the proposals. Further contributing to skill improvement, Dr. Melinda Forthofer, Director of the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina, with expertise in mixed

methods research and evaluation, health disparity research, social determinants of health and prevention science will be providing an engaging and informative workshop on how best to structure mixed methods in evaluation work when dealing with a tight budget. The expectation of maintaining innovation in the face of reduced resources is something we are all facing.

Putting on the workshop this year has faced several new obstacles. First and most sobering is the economic downturn. We continue to hear from possible attendees, near and far, that their travel and education budgets have been slashed or eliminated. Yet, we also hear from many of the attendees that have registered for the workshop that this is the best value for their dollar, year after year. Few workshops provide the level of excellence with an intimate

atmosphere, and lunch is included!

Another obstacle, though it was also a huge benefit, is following on the heels of the American Evaluation Association Conference held in Orlando this year. We were unsure whether there would be sufficient interest in presenting at or registering for the SEA workshop following the ever grander AEA Conference. Would there be enough fuel left in the evaluation burners to power another evaluation based workshop so close to the big daddy conference? Turns out, the answer is yes. At least, it's yes from the standpoint of receiving a sufficient number of quality proposals. The registration process for the workshop itself has only started and we hope that all reading this newsletter will join us for a stimulating, cost efficient, and worthwhile experience at the 2010 SEA workshop.

Register today!



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Improving Impact: Using Innovative Methods and Partnerships to Enhance Programs Through Evaluation

February 22-23, 2010

Melinda Forthofer, Ph.D.

Keynote Speaker and Pre-Workshop Presenter

The Ties That Bind: Incorporating Social Network Approaches in Evaluation Design (Pre-Workshop: Monday, February 22, 8:30—11:30 a.m.)

Translating Evaluation Results in Effective Policies and Programs: The Value of Partnerships and System Approaches (Keynote Address: Monday, 12:45 p.m. —1:30 p.m.)

Workshop Break-Out Sessions: Monday, 1:45-5:00 p.m.; Tuesday 8:30-5:00 p.m.

To register go to <http://www.southeastevaluation.com/conference.php>

YOU'RE INVITED!!

Improving Impact: Using Innovative Methods and Partnerships to Enhance Programs Through Evaluation

Monday, February 22 - Tuesday, February 23, 2010

Pre-Workshop by Melinda Forthofer, Ph.D.

[The Ties That Bind: Incorporating Social Network Approaches in Evaluation Design](#)

As evidence builds that social ties may serve as a vehicle for the "spread" of behaviors and outcomes, understanding methods for studying social networks has emerged as an important competency for program evaluators. This workshop will provide an overview of conceptual approaches to studying social networks, and provide specific examples of how social network methodologies can be incorporated into evaluation design for program impact.

February 22, 2010, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Tallahassee Community College

Tallahassee, Florida

[Workshop Schedule](#)

Highlights include a keynote address entitled, "Translating Evaluation Results in Effective Policies and Programs: The Value of Partnerships and Systems Approaches," a variety of breakout sessions and an Emerging Issues Lunch to discuss current issues with your colleagues.

February 22, 2010, 11:45 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; February 23, 2010, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tallahassee Community College, Tallahassee, Florida

[Fees](#)

Very affordable during these lean times!

[Register](#)

Questions?

Call Gary Walby, Conference Committee chair, at (850) 921-4494 or send an email to Bernadette Howard at seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.com

Don't Miss It!

The President's Message

By Kathy McGuire

SEA President

I hope you all had wonderful holidays and a good start to the new year. We are gearing up for the SEA pre-workshop and workshop, February 22-23, at Tallahassee Community College. Several great topics have been selected for panels, and Dr. Melinda Forthofer will lead the workshop and join us as keynote speaker. Her theme is "Improving Impact: Using Innovative Methods and Partnerships to Enhance Programs Through Evaluation." We had excellent geographic and background diversity at our last conference, which always makes discussions livelier, so please plan to attend this year. If you haven't registered, please do so very soon; at \$100 for SEA members, it is a great training value for the dollar.

It has been a rewarding year, meeting with SEA members at a roundtable on criminal justice, another one on health issues, and at numerous other interesting events, including An Insider's Look at Running Your Own Evaluation Consulting Firm, Pandemic Planning, Cost Analysis, How to Get Your Message Out, Positive Psychology, and presentations by Florida's chief economic forecaster, Amy Baker. While we have not yet met our goal to expand our monthly professional development opportunities beyond Tallahassee, we will keep working on it in the coming year.

We are still developing locations to broadcast to and from, so PLEASE let us know if you are interested.

In February Dr. Gary Walby,



Photograph courtesy of Kathy McGuire

of Ounce of Prevention, will become our new President. I would like to thank Gary; our board members; Bernadette Howard, our coordinator; and Sean Little, our newsletter editor for the many hours they have volunteered this year for SEA.

It is a pleasure to work and learn with all of you.

Best Regards,

Kathy McGuire

Congratulations to Jaime Purvis, Winner of a Complimentary SEA Membership for 2010!

The SEA Board set-up a display table at the American Evaluation Association's Annual Conference in Orlando in November 2009. On top of that table we set up a big blue box to encourage conference attendees to throw their business cards into the box for the grand prize of a complimentary SEA membership. Who knew that contact information written on a napkin would win? Our thanks to all who entered!

Time to Renew your Membership

DON'T FORGET!

It's time to join or renew your membership with SEA! Remember—it's an annual membership, January—December each calendar year. If you haven't renewed yet, it's not too late! Please see our [website](#) for more information!

Best Practices for Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys

By the Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (SMART), 2009

a multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional collaboration, , 46-pages.

Downloadable at http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/pdf/SMART_FINAL_Nov09.pdf

Reviewed by Sean Little

“Asking questions on sexual orientation is not only necessary for scientific, practical, and policy purposes, but the recent research documented in this report demonstrates that it is also possible to include such questions on surveys without sacrificing data integrity or respondent retention.”

Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (2009), page i

This downloadable and free report provides clear guidance on collecting and analyzing sexual minority data. The authors identify three dimensions of the construct ‘sexual orientation’: attraction, behavior, and identification. Attraction may not always lead to behavior or identity. Behavior may not be related to attraction or to identify. The objectives of each survey should determine the dimensions examined.

The authors advocate that questions should be worded simply and clearly. For example they recommend the following question to capture the dimension of sexual identity: “Do you consider yourself? a) heterosexual or straight, b) gay or lesbian, or c) bisexual”. As there are significant differences within sexual minorities, the authors stress distinguishing bisexuals from gays or lesbians and distinguishing gay men from lesbians.

The report recommends using the term ‘sex’ or ‘sexual experience’ for the behavior dimension rather than ‘sexual intercourse’, as many people interpret this narrowly to mean vaginal intercourse. This, however, creates a broad definition of the term sex or sexual experience. If the survey objectives concern sexual be-

havior risk, the authors recommend asking about specific behaviors.

The dimension of attraction may be most critical for adolescents, according to the authors. While adolescent sexuality appears politically explosive, researchers have asked adolescents questions relating to sexual minority issues since the mid-80s. Researchers know more about surveying adolescents on these issues than they do about surveying older people.

The great social fault line of race effects sexual minority data. The authors report that Euro-American sexual minorities have supplied most of what we know about this population, but that conceptions of sexuality and sexual values differ across cultures. Good and creative question design can solve many of these problems. Researches have found that socialization patterns differ between some sexual minorities of color and Euro-American sexual minorities, requiring researchers to use different sampling strategies (modified chain referral, venue-based and time-space sampling and some qualitative purposeful sampling strategies).

The authors recommend placing questions regarding sexual orientation

with other demographic sections to increase item response by ‘normalizing’ them and reducing stigma. They reject introductory or explanatory remarks prior to sexual orientation questions as this “de-normalizes them”. Interestingly, questions about income have higher non-response rates than do questions about sexual orientation.

The report correctly places Gender Identity/ Transgender data in a separate section because the constructs, questions, and knowledge bases differ. As less empirical research exists in this area, clear recommendations cannot be provided at this point in time, but the report does discuss various methodological approaches for the transgender population. As evidence suggests that serious health disparities exist between transgender people and (for lack of a better term) non-transgender people, this forms a fruitful area for research.

This report contributes greatly to the sub-sub-field of psychometrics, measuring sexual minority data and has a good bibliography which can become the nucleus for further learning. A person could increase their cultural competency for sexual minority cultures by studying this report.

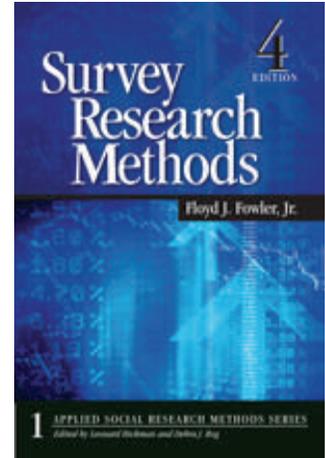
Survey Research Methods (4th edition)

By Floyd J. Fowler, Jr, 2009

Applied Social Research Methods Series

Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore, Washington DC: SAGE. 216 pages. \$46.95

Reviewed by Sean Little



This 4th edition of Fowler's classic text on survey research methods differs from the 3rd edition in two major ways. Fowler now devotes a chapter to the various types of survey error and discusses controlling for nonresponse in the section on data analysis.

Fowler adheres to the principle of total survey design – an iterative process of survey development that considers all aspects of surveys simultaneously and of equal importance. Researchers frequently overemphasize one of these elements at the expense of the other elements. The weakest part of a survey will define the limits of its usefulness.

The chapter on sampling was clearly written and accessible. The section on multi-stage sampling was excellent, consistent with the author's contention that most population samples involve a type of clustering that effects sampling error.

Fowler emphasizes non-response and strategies to minimize it. When the survey involves screening for eligibility, the calculation of response rate differs and that formula is provided. For factual information the use of proxy respondents can help to minimize nonresponse error.

A survey involves people answering questions. Fowler argues that good question design can mini-

mizes potential errors. Question development begins with a focus group to clarify how potential respondents understand the phenomena of interest. Fowler provides maximal numbers for cognitive interviewing (<10) and pre-testing (20-30). He provides a cut point of 15% for identifying problems in the pre-testing phase.

Fowler argues against placing open ended questions on self-administered surveys because without an interviewer to probe for clarity, coding answers becomes difficult. He suggests that researchers treat them as anecdotes rather than measures. It appeared to me, however, that Fowler was thinking about these open ended questions quantitatively, rather than as mixed methods. In a mixed methods framework, the researcher would not generalize these open-ended responses to the population but would examine them for richness of detail and for factors of which the researcher was unaware.

Fowler also argues against constructing questions in the ubiquitous 'agree/disagree' style ('My health is excellent – Disagree strongly, disagree, neutral, agree, agree strongly'). He contrasts that format with a direct rating format ('I would describe my health as – Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor'). Disagreeing strongly with 'my

health is excellent' does not indicate the respondent's actual perception of their health. In order to disagree with a statement about one's own health, one has to appraise one's health, the statement about one's health, the degree of agreement, and the available response options. This constitutes more of a cognitive burden than directly appraising one's own health status and the available response options.

This book emphasizes both practicality and rigor. Fowler continually reminds

the reader of the decisions that the researcher must make regarding the correlation between the value of a particular technique to improve the survey and its fiscal cost. It is these decisions that create high quality work within a tight budget.

Brown Bag Lunch Methods and Measurement Series Volunteers Needed!

We are asking members of SEA for assistance in continuing the Methods and Measurement Series (Brown Bag Lunch Discussions) by choosing a topic, leading the discussion and identifying a preferred location. The methods and measurement topics can relate to a project at your place of employment or a topic of interest you would just like to share and discuss with others. SEA will announce the topic, the facilitator, and the location at least 2 weeks prior to each session. There might be a short technical reference shared prior to the session and follow-up among those who have a heightened interest after the session. If you have a suggestion or would like to volunteer for one of these brown-bag sessions, please e-mail your name, the topic, and the preferred location of the session to SEA Program Co-Chairs Dr. Connie Bergquist (esdi@talstar.com) and Dr. Tamara Bertrand Jones (TBertrand@admin.fsu.edu).

Thank you!

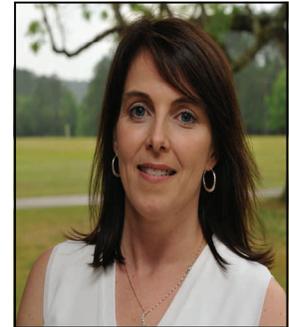
The Nominations are In for Your 2010 SEA Board— Vote Today!
(Look for a ballot from seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.com)

Jennifer Johnson, President-Elect

Jennifer Johnson has served as Treasurer for SEA for the last 2 years. She is a Chief Legislative Analyst with the Florida Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA). Since

1999, she has conducted and led evaluations and policy analyses in health and human services. Jennifer received a Master of Public Health from the University of South Florida, College of Public

Health and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Florida and is currently enrolled in the doctoral program in Askew School of Public Administration and Policy at Florida State University.



Photograph courtesy of Jennifer Johnson

John Austin, Secretary



Photograph courtesy of John Austin

John Austin served on the 2009 SEA Board as the State Sector Representative. He has spent the last nine years serving public and nonprofit organizations as an analyst and planner. His primary focus is in increasing productivity and effectiveness of programs. He currently works for the Florida Department of Environmental

Protection (DEP) as an internal consultant to the Director of the Division of Law Enforcement. In his prior employment, he has worked as a program evaluator for the DEP Office of Inspector General and for a not-for-profit consulting firm, Well-Florida Council, Inc., where he conducted program evaluations, needs

assessments, and market plans. He has also held responsibility for strategic planning for the University of Florida Health Science Center, and has served as a commissioner on the Florida Transportation Disadvantaged Commission representing the Agency for Health Care Administration.

Barbara Gill, Ph.D., Treasurer

Dr. Barbara Gill served on the 2009 SEA Board as the Local Sector Representative. She is the Director of Educational Research at Tallahassee Community College (TCC). In that role, she assists instructional and non-instructional divisions of the College in assessing

and evaluating their programs and services. She is a member of the College's Institutional Effectiveness and Planning Committee, and she serves as TCC's accreditation liaison to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Prior to joining TCC, Barbara was a Research Asso-

ciate at the Learning Systems Institute at Florida State University. She holds a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instructional Systems from the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems from Florida State University.



Photograph courtesy of Dr. Barbara Gill

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We're on the web!
www.southeastevaluation.com

The **Southeast Evaluation Association (SEA)** is a regional affiliate of the American Evaluation Association. We represent evaluators and evaluation-related professionals from the state, university, school system (local) and private sectors. Our members come from a variety of backgrounds: policy analysis, program auditing, teaching, program evaluation, and performance measurement. SEA's annual conference attracts nationally recognized speakers and participants from the entire southeast region. Several agencies use our programs and workshops as low cost training and networking opportunities for their employees.

Annual membership (\$30; \$10 for full-time students)

SEA offers reduced registration fees for the yearly Workshop, Pre-Workshop, Essential Skills Workshop, and the various training sessions held throughout the year. Members also receive this newsletter throughout the year. The newsletter is a great way to keep up with the SEA activities and innovative research in the field of evaluation. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to **email** us.

Suggestions

SEA welcomes all ideas for topics for future trainings, brown bag lunches, and workshop sessions. Please contact Bernadette Howard (seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.com) with your ideas!

Thank You

Many thanks for getting this newsletter out are due to the diligent work of the Newsletter Production Crew:

Sean Little, Editor

Kathy McGuire, Bernadette Howard, Sean Little, and Gary Walby, Contributing Authors

Bernadette Howard and Sean Little, Desktop Publishing

