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Surveys!

"Surveys show that surveys never lie."

- Natalie Angier

Introduction

Surveys are important tools that can be used to collect information for writing journalism articles. In this module, students will learn more about the effectiveness of surveys and how to write meaningful, unbiased survey questions.

Objectives

1. Students will learn how to properly incorporate and include data into their article.
2. Students will be shown how to write surveys.
3. To give students examples of possible data visualizations that will be seen in the future

Agenda

1. Intro to Google Forms
2. Trump Survey
3. Writing Effective Survey Questions
4. Incorporating Data into Journalism
5. Specialization Form

Facilitation Notes

- For the Introduction to Google Forms activity, make sure to also explain why surveys are important and useful. Segue into survey bias and the Trump Survey activity.
- After the Trump Survey activity, explain question bias and the Cardinal sin: Never Put In Opinions In A Survey.
- Also, talk about making sure to keep answer choices balanced, and give examples of good questions.
- After the Survey Guidelines activity, transition into data and explain how data can be integrated into journalism.

Activities

Intro to Google Forms (10 minutes)

Purpose:

Provide students with the opportunity to learn how to create surveys using Google Forms.

Materials:

[Intro to Google Forms Presentation](#)

Directions:

- Open the presentation about making surveys using Google Forms and review each slide with the students.
- Emphasize how this process can be relatively simple with some practice.
- Begin a discussion about why surveys are important to journalism.

Discussion:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of conducting surveys?
2. Are interviews more effective than surveys? Why or why not?
3. Why can journalists use surveys as reliable sources of data?
4. How can surveys cause data to become skewed and inaccurate?

Trump Survey (20 minutes)

Purpose:

Allow students to formulate ideas on survey bias and the effects of this on journalism.

Materials:

Computer/projector

Directions:

1. Open the [Trump survey](#) and go through the questions.
2. On each question, ask the class if the question is biased or encouraging the person being surveyed to answer a certain way.
3. Make sure not to let people dominate with anti-Trump or pro-Trump comments, keep the discussion away from politics and more on the survey itself.
4. After asking if the question is biased, ask how to change the question (if the class agrees that it is biased).
5. Focus on the use of strong vocabulary in the questions:
 - a. On which issues does the mainstream media do the worst job of representing Republicans?
 - b. Do you believe that the mainstream media does not do their due diligence fact-checking before publishing stories on the Trump administration?
6. After the discussion, mention how the answer choices in a survey should be large in scope and account for a diverse set of opinions.

Discussion:

1. Can the use of strong vocabulary lead to bias in the survey questions? Why or why not?
2. How can questions with strong words be modified?
3. What is the best way to write answer choices for multiple-choice questions?

Writing Effective Survey Questions (15 minutes)

Purpose:

Help students learn more about the characteristics of effective, unbiased survey questions.

Materials:

[SurveyMonkey Article](#)

Directions:

1. Show students the SurveyMonkey article about writing survey questions.
2. Ask them to take approximately 5 minutes to read the article.
3. After the students have read the article, describe a few qualities of well-written survey questions:
 - a. **Use close-ended questions often:** Answers would be easier to consider, and open-ended questions may scare an audience away.
 - b. **Try to ask one specific question:** Conciseness is important in surveys.
 - c. **Don't include questions with similar styles:** Check for consistency – people may become apathetic if they see redundancy.
 - d. **Include general questions at the beginning:** The tone of the survey should go from general to specific (deductive reasoning).
 - e. **Don't feel obligated to ask challenging questions.**
 - f. **Allow for some middle ground:** Try not to always associate the audience's opinions with the extremes.

Discussion:

1. Would adding open-ended questions have any benefits?
2. How would you ask a challenging survey question? What format would you use to make the question more approachable to answer?

Incorporating Data into Journalism (10 minutes)

Purpose:

Create a connection between data and journalism to promote understanding.

Materials:

Gun Violence [Visual/Article](#)

Directions:

1. Show students the visualization and article about gun violence (linked above).
2. Ask students about **why** the visualization and article are effective.
3. Emphasize how it is important to **humanize** your data in data journalism, discuss affected audiences, and stimulate emotion through writing.
 - a. You need to explain the important trends from your data.
 - b. You should allow the readers of your article to have a takeaway after reading your article.

Discussion:

1. What aspects of the visualization and article make them effective and powerful?
2. How has your understanding of data journalism changed since the beginning of the semester?

Specialization Form (5 minutes)

Purpose:

Help students choose their preferred specialization (data analysis, data visualization/graphic design, and journalism) for the next two modules.

Materials:

[Specialization Google Form](#)

Directions:

1. Ask students to complete the specialization form before they leave the module.
2. Inform the students that they will go to their specializations for the next two modules.

3. Tell the students that the IMPACT team will send an email to them with their chosen specializations before the next module.