

Better Results for Smarter Decisions:

Practical Research &
Evaluation Tips and Techniques

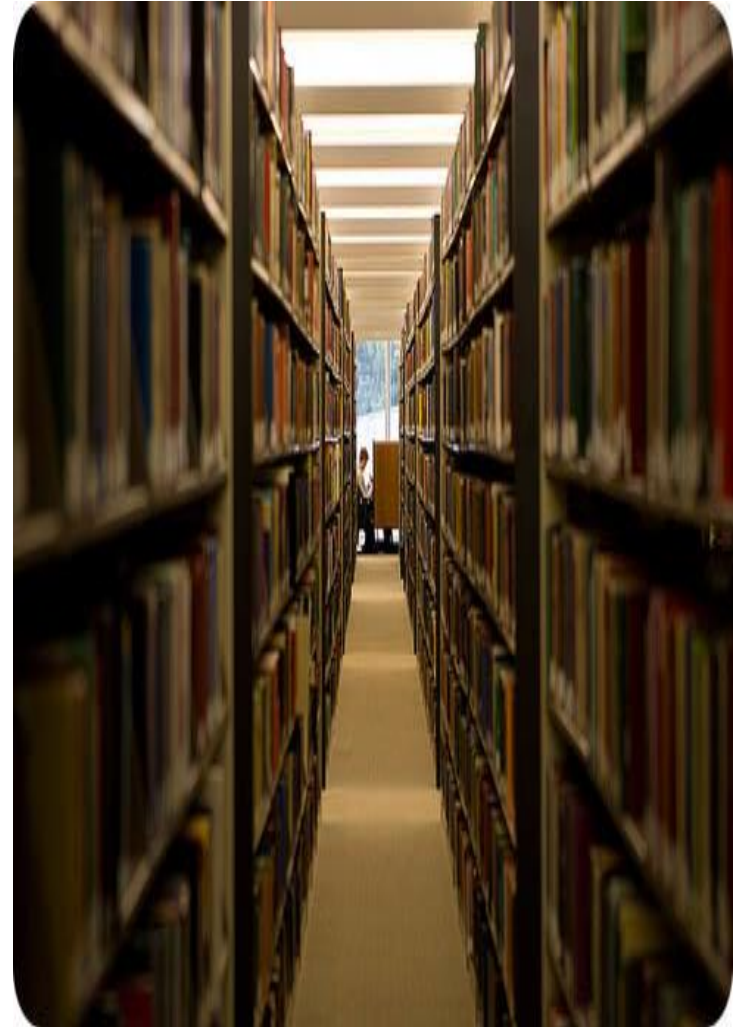
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WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

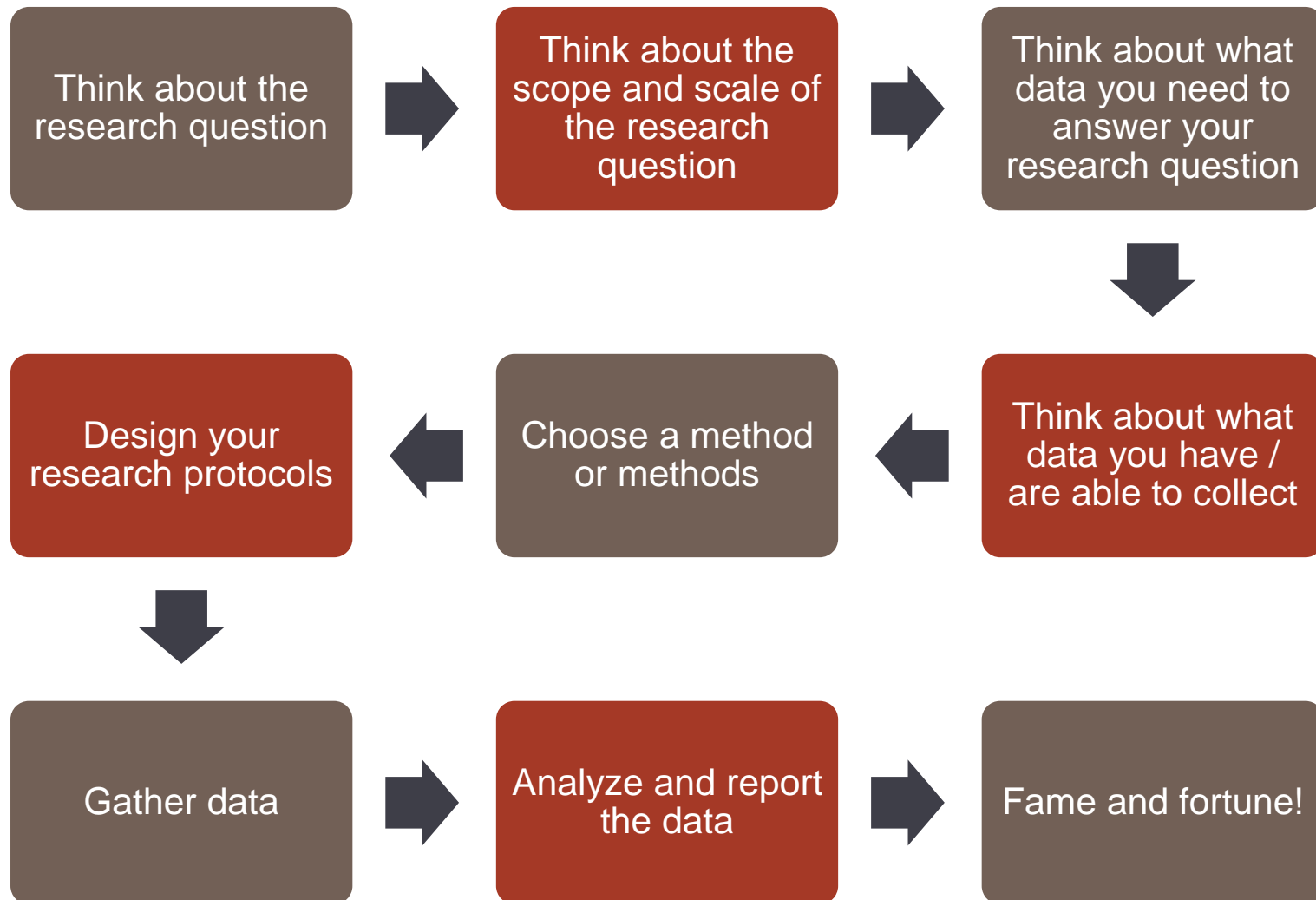
SCENARIO

RESEARCH SCENARIO?
AUDIENCE INVOLVEMENT?
Dunno' yet---maybe cut this?

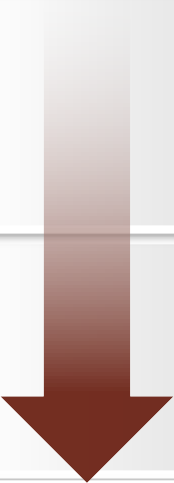



PRAGMATIC SCOPING

Life of a Research Project

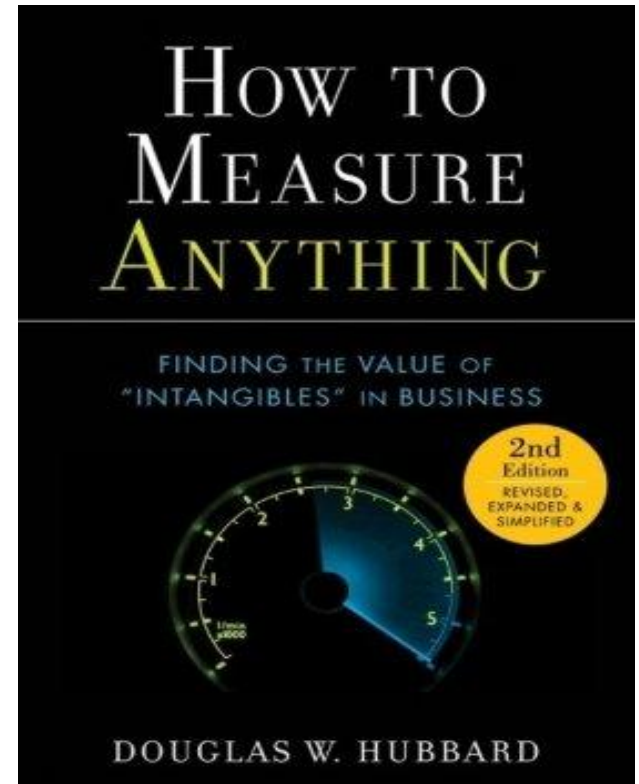


Project Scope Matrix

	<i>Audience</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Rigor/Effort</i>	<i>Data Source(s)</i>
Deluxe	Publications or Grants	Probaby Extensive	<i>Totally "Bulletproof"</i>	More extensive test
Good	Institutional presentation			Limited Test/ Limited data collection
Basic +	Department planning			Examination of data you already have
Basic	Internal / Limited Audience	Limited and Few – <i>maybe just you.</i>	<i>"Which way is the wind blowin?"</i>	Literature/ Document Search

Pragmatic Research Maxims

- Your problem is not as unique as you think
- You have more data than you think
- You need less data than you think
- An adequate amount of new data is more accessible than you think
- Time spent scoping and planning will pay dividends later.



INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP

Focus Groups vs. Interviews

INTERVIEWS

Takes **MORE TIME**---
talking to several
individuals rather
than one group

Great for **DEEP
EXPLORATION
and
CLARIFICATION**

Somewhat **EASIER TO
IMPLEMENT** (You are
having a chat rather
than “facilitating”)



FOCUS GROUPS

EFFICIENT --- You
can talk to a group
of people all at
once

Great for **CREATION/
INNOVATION** ----
Less effective for
deep **EXPLORATION**

Must manage
GROUP DYNAMICS
(speaking
apprehension,
conformity, etc.)

**Interviews
-vs-
Focus Groups**

Who Should You Talk To?

- A set of interviews or focus groups do not necessarily need to be representative. Think about your goals. You need a group that will produce some information you can use.
- Sometimes focusing who you talk to can provide a much clearer interpretation of what was said.



- While interviews and focus groups need not be representative---make sure you have thought through the implications of who you DO talk with. (i.e Regular Library Users vs. Non-Users)

OBSERVATIONS

Why do Observations?

- Self-reporting
- Awareness
- Certain kinds of data



Two Kinds of Observation

1. Direct
2. Indirect

Advantages and Challenges

ADVANTAGES

Can get to **ACTUAL** behavior rather than self report

CAN make identifying participants **EASIER**

CAN be **COST EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT**



OBSERVATIONS



CHALLENGES

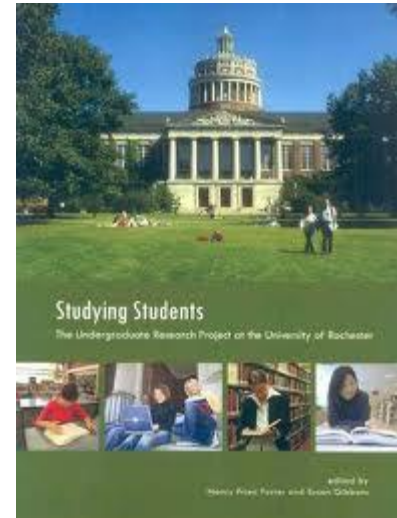
Can be **TIME CONSUMING**

Can produce **GIANT** amounts of data – **DIFFICULT** to analyze

Needs a **CAREFUL RESEARCH PLAN**

Participatory Design

an approach to the assessment, design, and development of ... systems that places a premium on the active involvement of users of the system) in design



- Process
- Content analysis
- What to do with the data?

Spot Sampling

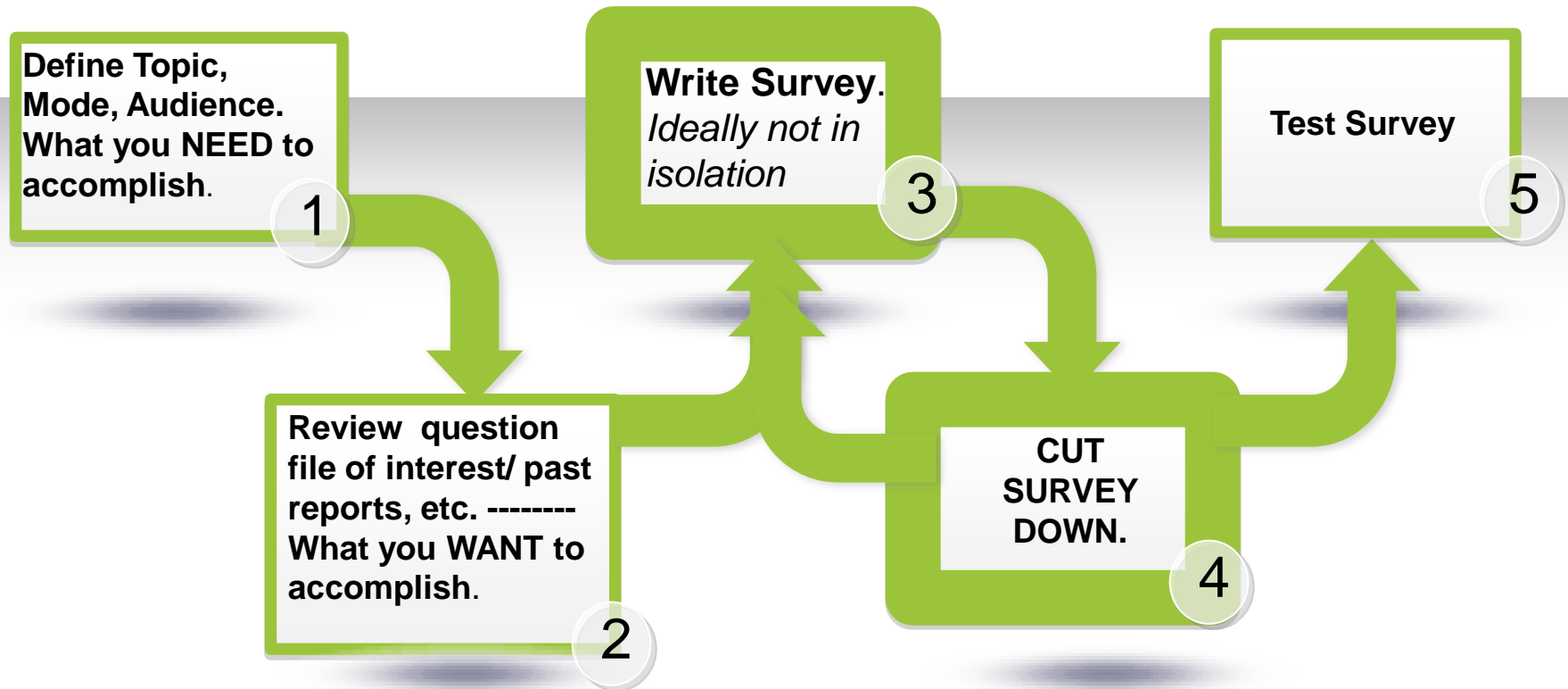
Researchers appear at a random selection of places at a random election of times and record what people are doing



- Useful for physical spaces
- Need a research design and schedule
- Recording protocol

OBSERVATIONS

Giving Life to a Survey



2 This point is constricted a bit by length. But it is still good to flesh out what you want---then cut back later.

3 The loop between 3 & 4 is often constrained by time. **This process will always take longer than you think it will.**

5 Soft Test vs. Hard Test. The most important thing is to do some kind of test before going live.

Survey Modes

Up and Comers – Facebook and Cell Optimized Surveys



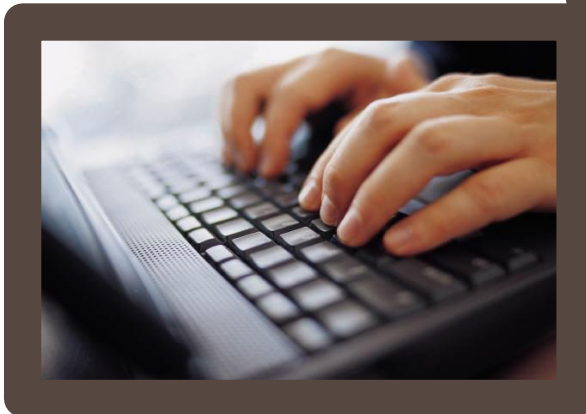
Second Choice –
Mail/ Paper Surveys



Third Choice - Telephone



First Choice – Web Surveys



Surveys are at their best- when results can be contrasted or compared

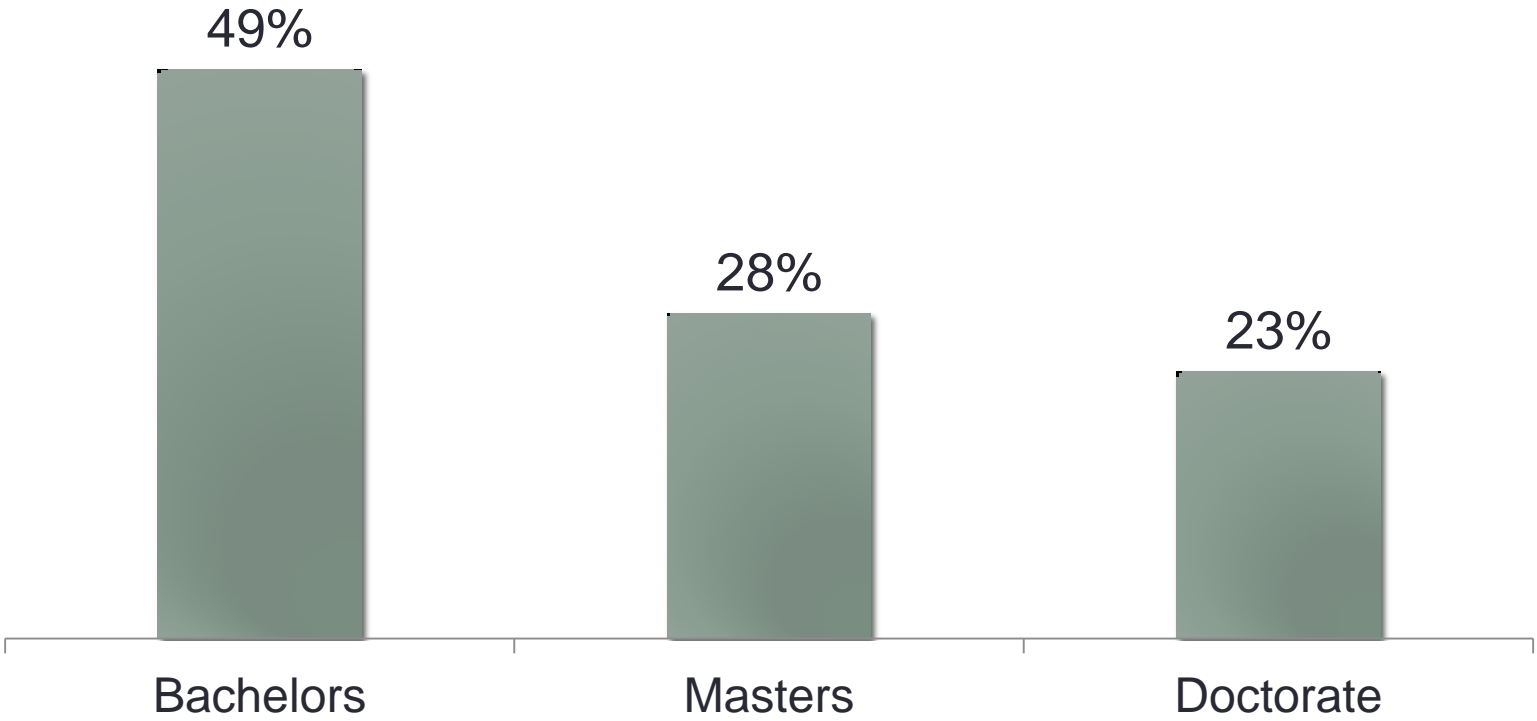
- Look for groups within your data to contrast with each other. Resist “un-tethered” reporting!
- Borrow / steal then assimilate questions from other sources into what you are examining.
- Look for new, unexpected sources for data/ questions (PEW, MacArthur Foundation reports, etc.). Create an interesting question file.



“I have been an unabashed fan of NPR for many years, and have stolen untold excellent ideas from its programming” - Ted Koppel

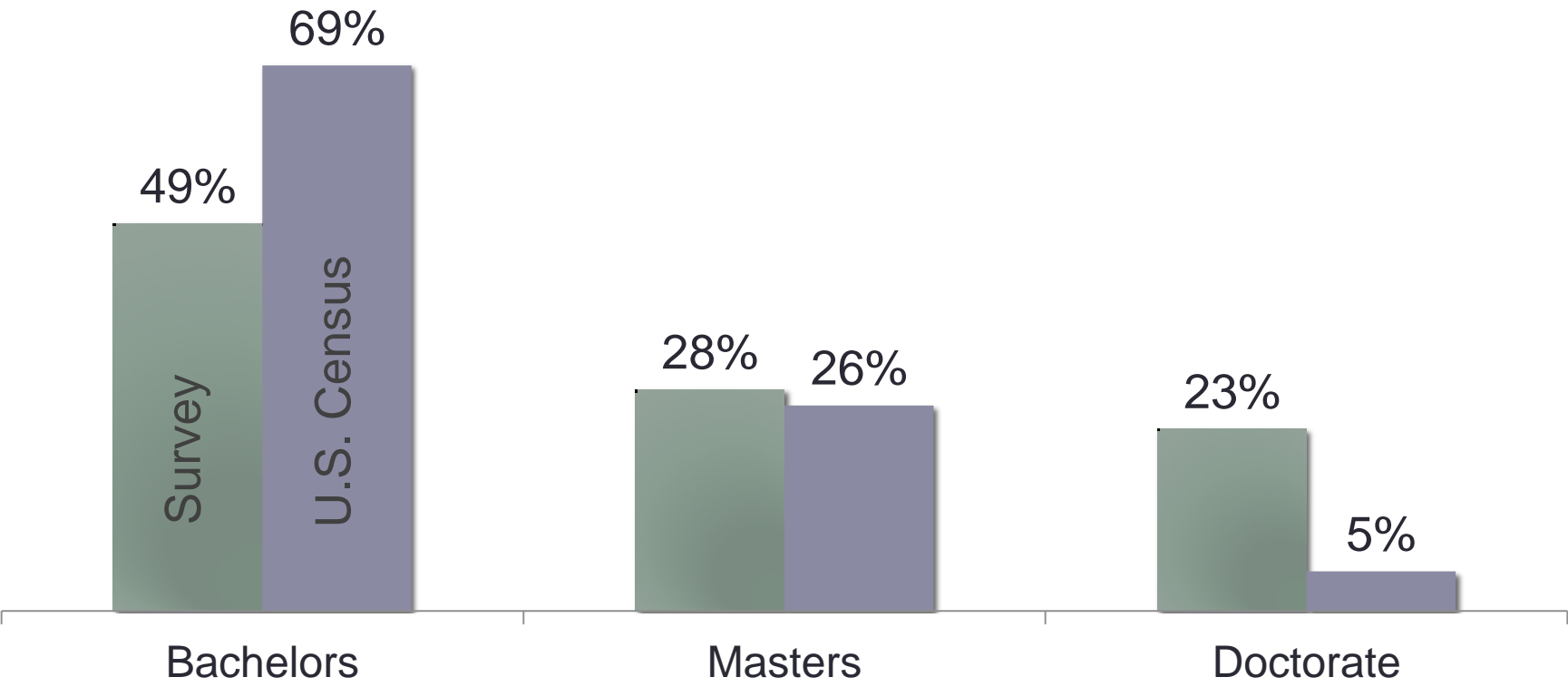
Surveys are At Their Best When Results Can be Contrasted or compared

Educational Attainment – No Comparison



Surveys are At Their Best When Results Can be Contrasted or compared

Educational Attainment – Comparison to U.S. Census Data



Individual behavior

- Conflict & crisis
- Value of individuals
- Cultural ambassadors

Parsimony

par·si·mo·ny /'pārsə,mōnē/

The idea that the simplest explanation of a phenomenon is the best one

Making a point with simple research can be infinitely more powerful than the same conclusion reached through more complicated means.

No need to crack a walnut with a jackhammer!

