

## Community NOT Supportive

And a look at the “Strategic Counsel” Survey...

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## Forms of Survey Bias

- 2 examples of bias in typical survey structure
  - Question Wording – *subtle* differences often have *large* effects on responses
  - Context effect – responses influenced by wording of other (mostly *preceding*) questions
    - Suggests answers (more blatant)
    - imposes a particular frame of analysis
  - Source: Palys, Ted. 2003. *Research Decisions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. (Toronto: Thomson Nelson) pp. 183-5.
    - see handout

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## Key Questions Asked

- **W – Wording bias**    **C – Context bias**    **FP – False Premise**
- Q#3 – Awareness of Issue:
  - “Have you heard *anything (!!!)* about the possible building of a new police station for 14 Division on the site of the former Heydon Park Secondary School on St. Anne’s Road, north of Dundas and west of Dovercourt (C)?”
  - “Anything” – low threshold - A good aspect! ☺
  - Context bias – TELLS person location of site – overstates awareness of site in #4
- Q#4 – Awareness of Site:
  - “Are you familiar with the site of the former Heydon Park Secondary School on St Anne’s Road?”
  - Awareness Overstated by wording of Q3

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## Survey Questions Cont'd

- Q#5 – How “Supportive?”: KEY QUESTION → MOST IMBALANCED
- “The Heydon Park Secondary School *has been closed since 2000* (C&W) and the City of Toronto has expressed interest in buying and *relocating* (C&W) 14 Division police station from the present site across from the former school to the school land *because it is larger site and would better meet police needs* (C&W). Overall would you say that you are very supportive, somewhat supportive, not too supportive (W) or not at all supportive of the Toronto District School Board, who own the land, selling it to the City of Toronto for use as the new 14 Division police station?”
- Context - Incorporates proponents arguments (and only theirs):
  - School is “closed” – No mention of its use by community – actual or potential
  - this is just a “relocator” - just moving “across the street”
  - “Larger site” – “better meet police needs”
- Wording - Strategic Counsel interprets (C) “*somewhat* supportive” as being “*generally* supportive” – optional responses don’t clearly straddle a “middle”
- Q#6,7 – various reasons supporting above responses

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## Survey Questions:

- Q#8 – Pick One of Two Distorted Views:
  - “In the discussion about the possible *relocation* (C&W) of 14 Division from its current location on St Anne’s Road *to across the road on the school site* (C&W) *some people* have said that they oppose the move because it will *create more noise and traffic in the area (FP)*. Other people have said that they support the move because it will give the police more needed space and provide better policing in the area. Thinking of these two points of view, which one is closest to your own?”
  - Incorporates police arguments again (i.e. in *addition* to describing proponents’ view):
    - just a “relocation” to “across the road”
  - Opposed View is Misrepresented :
    - Most common reason given under Q 6 was actually “*shouldn’t have a police station in a residential area*”

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## Let’s Look Anyways - Results

	Direct Community	Non-Direct	Total
Sample	37 (18.5%)	163 (81.5%)	200 (100%)
Aware of Issue? (“heard anything?”)	32 (87%)	44 (27%)	76 (38%)
Familiar with Site? (bias due to Q3)	36 (97%)	76 (47%)	112 (56%)
“generally” (!) supportive?	13 (35%)	123 (73%) BUT: 28 (21%) “neutral”	136 (68%)
Suppose: Supportive AND “heard anything”	11 (30%)	33 (20.2%)	44 (22%)

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## Survey Results

- Sample – “Immediate” v. “Total Community”
  - Huge impact of *weighting* given to non-directly affected – 4.4 non-direct residents to every 1 directly affected resident
- Revealed: *LACK of Awareness* amongst Non-Directly affected residents – impact of survey bias (context, wording, false premises) likely exacerbated due to lack of awareness at time questioned
- “Generally Supportive” – Inflated by:
  - Biased wording of question, poor structure and unfair interpretation of “somewhat supportive” responses
  - Lack of Awareness – *Exacerbates* Survey Bias effect
  - ALSO – 136 (68%) allegedly Supportive BUT in this subgroup 28 (21%) stated their reason for support is *“don’t know a lot/neutral”*. If don’t count this group as “favourable” then only 108 (54%) of “total community” “generally” supportive, subject to other biases
  - SO – even if you ignore arguments about bias and unfairness of 4.4 to 1 weighting – this survey provides extremely little evidence that the “total community” is actually in favour

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## Our Petition - Results

- Asked a Clear Question - People had a clear choice on balance about the sale – sign or not
- Included broader area but also identified 91 “Directly Affected” homes
- Visited 55 out of 91 homes (60%)
  - 47 homes (85%) – one or more opposed
  - 8 homes (15%) – ambivalent or in favour
- Total Signatures Opposed – 156 Citizens

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