



Source: Floyd J. ("Jack") Fowler Jr.

CAREERS AND RESEARCH

Floyd J. ("Jack") Fowler Jr., PhD, Founder and Director of the Center for Survey Research

Jack Fowler "wrote the book" on survey research—two books, actually, with SAGE Publications: *Improving Survey Questions* (1995) and *Survey Research Methods* (1988). This career focus crept up on Fowler while he was in school. As an undergraduate major in English at Wesleyan University, Fowler found himself fascinated by social science and went on to earn his PhD in social psychology at the University of Michigan. In graduate school, he got hooked on survey research.

Fowler was asked to serve as a research assistant in a series of studies designed to identify the sources of error in the National Health Interview Survey, a major source of health data in the United States. This was an opportunity to relate research methodology to real-life problems and improve the way the world works, and Fowler seized it. He went on to found the Center for Survey Research at the University of Massachusetts Boston and to serve as its director for more than two decades. Fowler describes his professional life as "essentially a series of projects" that have made a difference by helping address important problems in areas ranging from health care, crime, and housing to medical decision making and views of local government.

His advice for students interested in a similar career:

Methods, methods, methods. Make sure you are firmly grounded in the methods of collecting and analyzing data. The research priorities will change, society and the nature of the problems change so fast. However, if you know how to collect and analyze data, you will always be relevant. . . . To enjoy work most days and to feel confident it is making a positive difference is about as good as one can ask for.