Chapter 7
Afghan Refugee Camp Surveys in Pakistan, 2002

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Abstract  Both as professionals and as citizens, the events of the last years have brought about many changes to our view of the world and our engagement in it. This survey was one response to those changes. Its main goal was measuring attitudes on a variety of social, economic, and political issues of the Afghan refugees that were returning to their homeland from Pakistan. Particularly important was learning about their perceptions regarding current circumstances as well as future expectations. From a methodological perspective, trying to obtain a good sample of adult males in the refugee camps posed many challenges and most of the discussion will be focused on those challenges.

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides initial findings from a survey conducted in the spring of 2002 in a sample of Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan.

The survey is an unusual but very important and timely example from the overseas research program that has been mounted historically by the US government, initially by the U.S. Information Agency and now by the Office of Research, Department of State. That Office is the official pollster for the US government abroad.

To orient the reader, we have provided a map (see Figure 7.1) showing the spatial distribution of Afghan refugee camps within Pakistan in 2002. Notice there is a high concentration of camps in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) bordering eastern Afghanistan.

From the standpoint of its organization, this chapter is divided into ten brief sections, including this introduction. In Section 7.2 the main purposes of the research and the consequent analytic focus are detailed. Next (in Section 7.3) the sample design is described, including how we used the camp lists provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the limitations imposed by such a frame. The rapid development we had to do of the questionnaire in two languages, Pashto and Dari, is covered in Section 7.4 along with some initial results. Because this population does not have a high literacy rate and is generally unfamiliar with polling procedures, our questions were greatly simplified; consequently, some of the results from this survey probably reflect some acquiescence
bias (see, for example, Javeline 1999). Section 7.5 describes how we handled various contract survey management issues, some successfully, some less so. Information on the severe design effects that we encountered is presented in Section 7.6. Further analyses are touched on in the next section, Section 7.7, entitled “Next Steps.” Section 7.8 through 7.10 include an afterward and the results from the survey.

7.2 Research Purposes and Consequent Analytic Focus

Because Afghan refugees will eventually take part in deciding Afghanistan’s political and economic future, we wanted, in the survey discussed here, to gauge Afghan refugee attitudes on a variety of social, economic, and political issues. In addition, because we expected that their current circumstances as well as their future expectations might influence their desires to repatriate to Afghanistan, we wanted to get perceptions of their current situations, as well as their expectations regarding their future in Afghanistan.

Those purposes pushed us in the direction of a comprehensive attitudinal survey (see Section 7.4). The design called for coverage of Afghan refugee males as well as females—located in camps as well as in urban areas throughout Pakistan. However, because we anticipated that, for social and cultural reasons, males would