

Questionnaire Design
Political Science 8160 (ITV course), Fall, 2006

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Course Website

Course Description

This course offers a review of some of the major theoretical and empirical issues associated with survey questionnaire design and prepares students in the fundamental skill areas necessary to design questionnaires.

Course Requirements

Course requirements include regular attendance and participation in the weekly seminars, preparation for seminars by completing the readings, and two paper assignments. The course is designed so that anyone who concentrates on the work at hand can do well. Falling behind is not a good idea, as each class session builds on what you have learned before. It is particularly important to stay on top of the weekly readings.

Grading

Questionnaire Design Assignment	50% (DUE: November 13)
Questionnaire Critique Assignment	50% (DUE: December 1)

Readings

Schuman & Presser. 1996. Questions and Answers in Attitude Surveys. (QA)

Selected reading listed below. Readings that can be obtained electronically (through JSTOR) are so noted. Readings that cannot be obtained electronically can be obtained from the course website.

Weekly Topics and Reading Assignments

Sept. 29

Introduction to Survey Errors

Groves, et al. 2004. Survey Methodology, NJ: Wiley, chapter 2

Theories of Attitude Formation and the Survey Response

Tourangeau, R., L. J. Rips, & K. Rasinski. 2000. The Psychology of Survey Response. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1

Krosnick, J. A. 1991. "Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys." Applied Cognitive Psychology, 5: 213-236.

Zaller, J. & S. Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." American Journal of Political Science, 36: 579-615. ELECTRONIC

Lodge, M. 1995. "Toward a Procedural Model of Candidate Evaluation." In Political Judgment: Structure and Process, ed. M. Lodge & K. M. McGraw. MI: Michigan University Press.

Oct. 6

Overview: General Questionnaire Design Issues

Babbie, E. 1990. Survey Research Methods. CA: Wadsworth, chapter 7

Fowler, F. J. 1993. Survey Research Methods. CA: Sage, chapter 5

QA, chapter 1

Crano & M. B. Brewer. 2002. Principles and Methods of Social Research. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, chapter 3

Oct. 13

Observational Errors - Instrument

Open vs. Closed Questions

QA, chapter 3

Converse, J. M. 1984. "Strong Arguments and Weak Evidence: The Open/Closed Questioning Controversy of the 1940s." Public Opinion Quarterly, 48: 276-282. ELECTRONIC

Schuman, Howard, Jacob Ludwig, and Jon A. Krosnick. 1986. "The Perceived Threat of Nuclear War, Salience, and Open Questions." Public Opinion Quarterly, 50: 519-536. ELECTRONIC

Geer, John G. 1988. "What Do Open-Ended Questions Measure?" Public Opinion Quarterly, 52: 365-371. ELECTRONIC

Ratings vs. Rankings

Alwin, D. F. & J. A. Krosnick. 1985. "The Measurement of Values in Surveys: A Comparison of Ratings and Rankings." Public Opinion Quarterly, 49: 535-552. ELECTRONIC

Krosnick, J. A. & D. F. Alwin. 1988. "A Test of the Form-Resistant Correlation Hypothesis: Ratings, Rankings, and the Measurement of Values." Public Opinion Quarterly, 52: 526-538. ELECTRONIC

Oct. 20

Observational Errors - Instrument

Number of Scale Points

Tourangeau, R., L. J. Rips, & K. Rasinski. 2000. The Psychology of Survey Response. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, chapter 8

Komorita, S. S. & W. K. Graham. 1965. "Number of Scale Points and the Reliability of Scales." Educational and Psychological Measurement, 25: 987-995.

Bendig, A. W. 1953. "The Reliability of Self-Ratings as a Function of the Amount of Verbal Anchoring and the Number of Categories on the Scale." Journal of Applied Psychology, 37: 38-41.

Cox, E. P. 1980. "The Optimal Number of Response Alternatives for a Scale: A Review." Journal of Marketing Research, 17: 407-422.

Verbal Labels

Bradburn, N. M. & C. Miles. 1979. "Vague Qualifiers." Public Opinion Quarterly, 43: 92-101. ELECTRONIC

Wallsten, T., D. V. Dudesco, A. Rapoport, R. Zwick, & B. Forsyth. 1986. "Measuring the Vague Meanings of Probability Terms." Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 115: 348-365.

Oct. 27

Observational Errors - Instrument

Don't Know and Middle Alternatives

QA, chapters 4-6

Bishop, G. F. 1987. "Experiments with the Middle Response Alternative in Survey Questions." Public Opinion Quarterly, 51: 220-232. ELECTRONIC

Response Order

Krosnick, J. A. & D. F. Alwin. 1987. "An Evaluation of a Cognitive Theory of Response-Order Effects in Survey Measurement." Public Opinion Quarterly, 51: 201-219. ELECTRONIC

Bishop, G. F., R. W. Oldendick, & A. Tuchfarber. 1982. "Political Information Processing: question Order and Context Effects." Political Behavior, 4: 177-200. ELECTRONIC

Miller, J. M. & J. A. Krosnick. 1998. "The Impact of Candidate Name Order on Election Outcomes." Public Opinion Quarterly, 62: 291-330. ELECTRONIC

Schuman, H. & J. Ludwig. 1983. "The Norm of Even-Handedness in Surveys as in Life." American Sociological Review, 48: 112-120. ELECTRONIC

Nov. 3

Observational Errors – Instrument/Respondent

Acquiescence

QA, chapter 8

McClendon, M. J. 1991. "Acquiescence and Recency Response-Order Effects in Interview Surveys." Sociological Methods and Research, 20: 60-103.

Attitude Strength

QA, chapters 9-10

Petty, R. E. & J. A. Krosnick. 1995. Attitude Strength: Antecedents and Consequences. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, chapters 1 & 18.

Nov. 17

Question Wording

QA, chapters 7 & 11

Rasinski, Kenneth A. 1989. "The Effect of Question Wording on Public Support for Government Spending." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 53: 388-394. ELECTRONIC

Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, October 3, 2005 press release, "Abortion, the Court, and the Public." <http://people-press.org/commentary/display.php3?AnalysisID=119>

Moore, David. March 21, 2006. "Public Opposes Foreign Companies Owning U.S. Seaport Operations." The Gallup Poll.

Mystery Pollster. April 21, 2006. "The Question that Answers Itself."
http://www.mysterypollster.com/main/2006/04/the_question_th.html

Online Gambling Myths and Facts. Polls. <http://www.onlinegamblingmythsandfacts.com/polls.htm>

Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, November 11, 2004 press release, "Moral Values: How Important?" <http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/233.pdf>

sections about moral values most important for class, can skim the rest

Harris Poll. December 22, 2004. "What Did Voters Really Mean When They Said "Moral Values" Were Important in Deciding Who to Vote for in the U.S. Presidential Election?"
http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=529

Schuman, Howard. "The Morals Choice." Public Opinion Pros.
http://www.publicopinionpros.com/op_ed/2004/nov/schuman.htm

A public interest group, Americans for Gun Control (AGC), is planning to implement a nationwide campaign to persuade Americans to support new legislation aimed at curbing the availability of handguns. In order to develop themes and messages for this campaign, the AGC hires you to conduct a nationwide public opinion survey. The following are the objectives of the survey:

1. How important is the issue of hand gun control in the minds of Americans? How important is this issue relative to other important issues on the American agenda?
2. How much do Americans feel that availability and access to hand guns contributes to the problem of crime in America?
3. What are American attitudes and preferences with respect to the current ease of access to purchasing a handgun? Do people think it is too easy or too difficult to buy a handgun?
4. AGC is planning to convince Congress that the new legislation on handguns 1) should not allow anyone who has been previously convicted of a crime that involved the use of a gun or a criminal assault to be eligible to buy a handgun; 2) should require a 30-day waiting period from application to purchase in order to allow time to do a criminal background check on handgun applicants; 3) should state that anyone who is in the possession of a handgun without a proper license loses the right to own a handgun and is fined \$500; 4) should mandate that those who commit crimes with a handgun must serve a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years in prison; and 5) should allow handgun crime victims the right to sue a gun retailer for monetary damages for the illegal sale of a handgun.

AGC wants to know the degree to which Americans support or oppose each of these provisions of the potential new legislation. Also, they are interested in determining which of the provisions make people most likely to endorse the gun control legislation, and which make people most likely to oppose it.

5. AGC also wants to identify the potential impact of various themes to engage Americans in support of handgun control legislation. The themes they are considering are: 1) there is a need to place more restrictions on handguns in order to make the nation's schools safer; 2) many people who currently own handguns are criminals who pose a threat to the public safety; 3) too many people are killed by accidental shootings with handguns; and 4) the leading cause of death among the nation's youth is handgun fatalities.

Which of these themes makes people more supportive of restrictive gun control laws?

6. To what extent do Americans agree with the interpretation of the 2nd Amendment's "right to bear arms" clause that it is a fundamental right of Americans to own a handgun? Do Americans think that the new potential legislation (identified in #4 above) violates the 2nd Amendment?
7. How many people in America currently own or have previously owned a handgun? How do handgun owners differ from non-owners in 1-6 above?
8. Also, AGC would like to examine differences in responses by the following demographic data: level of education, family income level, and political ideology (liberal, conservative, or moderate).

Your assignment is to develop a questionnaire, to be administered by telephone, to address the objectives outlined above. Assume that the questionnaire will be administered to a random sample of 1,000 Americans. Along with the questionnaire, you should include a memo outlining how the questions address the objectives (you should cross-reference the memo with the questions in the questionnaire), why you chose to write the questions the way you did, and how your questions will maximize validity and reliability.

Be sure to account for the following:

1. The questionnaire should include all notes and instructions (including the introduction to the survey) so that it may be administered by an interviewer as written.
2. The maximum number of items you may include is 30, up to two of which may be open-ended.
3. The first 5 branching questions will be counted such that the set equals 1 question. After 5, each component of branched questions will count as separate questions.
4. All of the objectives outlined above must be addressed.

You will be graded on 1) the technical competence and integrity of the items; 2) a consideration of item ordering; 3) the extent to which you achieve the objectives outlined above; and 4) the clarity of the items to respondents and the clarity of how interviewers are to administer the questionnaire.

The assignment is due by 5pm on Monday, November 13. Email your paper to me at jomiller@umn.edu