

Questionnaire Construction

“Common sense” rules

Each Question is a Variable

- In Qt RD the idea is always to formulate your hypotheses BEFORE carrying out the collection of data
- Anything other than stipulation of hypotheses ahead of time is “cheating” (like betting on “heads” AFTER the coin has been tossed!)
- Nevertheless, many researchers do cheat and look at the data set *a posteriori* in order to see if they can find any correlations (or associations) that “seem to make sense”.

Think through the Final Results ahead of time (before collecting data)

- If you ask about “sex” (male v. female) then that should be a potential variable in your final study; if you are not asking about sex to use it in your results then do not ask! There is a cost to each question!
- If you operationalize “cultural gender” as more than a nominal level of measurement then you must also measure more than just “sex”. For example, you must indicate a Likert scale:
- (e.g. “very maculine”, “masculine”, “neutral” “feminine”, “very feminine” – as in Kinsey’s work)
- The precise meaning must be “operational”

Double-Barreled Questions

- Neuman (2003: Table 10.1) indicates you should not ask double-barreled questions.
- Bakker feels that some of his other examples are double-barreled! Also, one example contains a leading question!
- Do you have a girlfriend now? = not a good question to begin with, since operational definition of “girlfriend” can vary enormously!
- Leading & double-barreled: “Have you ever slapped your girlfriend/boyfriend?” (That is a *different* question from “Have you ever punched your girlfriend/boyfriend?”)

Conjectural Questions

- Bakker is also critical of the questions used by Neuman (2003: Table 10.1) which ask the respondent to make a conjecture!
- e.g. “In a typical week ...”?
- e.g. “Do you agree or disagree with ...?” (That is conjecture, & may also be a leading question since respondent may not know anything about the proposal!)
- e.g. “overall rating”? It is hard to say how one feels about something “overall”?

Student Evaluations of Professors: Help us to construct better questions!

- In the Department of Sociology and Anthropology we have asked students to fill in evaluations of teaching performance.
- But we have never really operationalized teaching performance very well.
- As a class exercise, divide up into small groups of 3-5 people and make up five questions you think would be useful. (Group spokesperson?)
- Try to avoid any mistakes that you are aware of.
- We will take 5 minutes to do this and another 5-10 minutes to discuss the answers.