

Asking Questions

A few pointers

Index questions

- Remember an *index* is made up of a series of questions that ask about dimensions of the same concept
- One way to create these questions is to ask yourselves, *what are some beliefs or practices that are **consistent** with my concept?*

Consistent practices/beliefs:

- "Trust in Government"
 - Care for people, Doing the right thing, Honesty, Collective Good
- "Good Student"
 - study habits, test scores,
- "Environmentalism"
 - Willingness to pay for it, Believe issue is important, Believe issue is a high priority (compared to other issues)

Example of an Index: Trust in government

Please state the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
Political officials don't care about people like me [Caring]	1	2	3	4	5
In general I believe political officials are honest [Honesty]	1	2	3	4	5
In general I trust political officials to do the right thing [Doing Right]	1	2	3	4	5
Overall I think that political officials are working for the benefit of all [Collective Good]	1	2	3	4	5

Environmentalism

For the following statements, please state whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, are Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree:

I would give part of my income if I were certain it would be used to prevent pollution.

[Willingness to Pay – Out of Pocket]

I would agree to an increase in taxes if the money was used to prevent environmental pollution.

[Willingness to Pay - Taxes]

Protecting the environment is less urgent than is often suggested. [Important issue]

If we want to combat unemployment, we will have to accept environmental problems. [High Priority]

“Measures” ≠ Independent Variables (1)

- It's the difference between saying:
 - I am against the war in Iraq *because* I am a Democrat [IV: party affiliation, DV: attitude about the war]
 - And agreeing with the statement: “The Republican leadership have mishandled the war in Iraq” [Concept dimension: partisan leadership]

“Measures” ≠ Independent Variables (2)

- It’s the difference between saying
 - I buy organic food *because* I can afford to pay for it
[IV: income level; DV: choosing to buy organic]
 - And agreeing with the statement “Organic food is generally affordable”
[Concept dimension: Affordability]

“Measures” ≠ Independent Variables (3)

- The first statement in the example represents a cause-effect relationship
- The second statement is a general belief or practice that you assume will be consistent with the larger attitude/behavior you want to study
- Cause-effect statements are bad survey questions because a respondent could agree/disagree with one part but not the other
 - I buy organic food *because* I can afford to pay for it
 - I am against the war in Iraq *because* I am a Democrat

Multiple-Choice (Likert) Format

Strongly Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	2	3	4	5

Match response to item

- Frequency (Never-All the time)
- Likert Scaling (Disagree-Agree)
- Quality (Poor-Excellent)
- Service (Not Well-Extremely Well)



Use Simple Sentences

- No double negatives
- Eliminate vagueness (poorly defined terms)
- Avoid objectionable\Irrelevant questions



Avoid Double Negatives

It is not the case that I have never cheated on my tax returns.

Never should one not help others.

***The likelihood of depression recurring after the discontinuation of psychotropic drug treatment is greater than if drug treatment is never used as part of therapy.**



Avoid Vague or Ambiguous Terms

How many times in the past year have you talked with a doctor about your health?

Is health care easily accessible for your family?

*Studying accounts for a majority of the activities I do at college.

*Tests are stressful.

*I relax by using drugs.



Avoid Objectionable or Irrelevant Questions



How old are you?

Have you ever tested positive for HIV virus?

Have you answered each question truthfully?

How many years of education were you able to complete?

*I believe crack is one of the four food groups.

Avoid Double-barrel Questions

Is your doctor friendly and reasonably priced?

Were your caregivers courteous and friendly?

*I am often fidgeting and on edge.

*I find that I am more attentive and remember more if I have eaten before a study session.



Balance questions\responses

How was the service at this hospital?
___ Excellent ___ Very Good ___ Great

Are you depressed frequently?
Sad is the best descriptor of me right now.
My depressed mood keeps me from doing fun things.



Reverse Score to Reduce Response Bias

I am often sad.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

I often feel happy.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

Exhaustive & mutually exclusive categories

What is your age?
under 10 10-20 20-30 30-40 40-50

How did you last travel to the supermarket?
car, bus, foot, walking, public transportation

What is your marital status?
single, married, divorced



Even vs. Odd categories

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree


