

Coding Your Questionnaire Data

1. Give every variable a name

1. Must begin by a letter
2. 6-12 characters is best
3. MEANINGFUL: it will remind you of the question
4. Helpful to put the question number on the end

2. Closed-ended DV (Index) questions

- Make sure you know which closed-ended questions are part of your DV measure
- Define the "positive" end of your scale and make sure all questions are coded so that bigger numbers are assigned to the positive end, smaller numbers to the negative end, and that "neutral" cases get a middle value
- Give missing answers on the closed ended DV questions a "neutral" value

Reverse Score DV questions as needed

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

****Best to mark up surveys AFTER they are completed

3. Index

Your measure of the DV will be the DV index:

$$Dvindex = dvq1 + dvq2 + dvq3 + dvq4 \text{ etc}$$

- The computer will calculate this for you but you should hand calculate a couple of people & compare to computer to be sure you understand what is happening
- Calculate the range of your index:
 - Largest value = sum if a person is at the positive end of all questions, i.e. $5 \times 6 = 30$ if 5 is the highest score and there are 6 items
 - Smallest value = sum if a person is at the negative end of all questions, i.e. $1 \times 6 = 6$ if 1 is the lowest score and there are 6 items

4. Open-ended question

- Sort responses into meaningful groups, responses that are similar to each other and different from other groups
- These MAY be positive – neutral – negative BUT there may instead be other groupings
- If you can, assign a number to each group.
 - Helpful if possible to give bigger numbers to the groups that represent the "positive" end of your dependent variable, if the categories are ordinal
- Or assign thematic codes to answers

5. Independent variables

- Assign numbers to categories.
 - If independent variable is nominal (e.g. male/female) the numbers are arbitrary.
 - If independent variable is ordinal (e.g. political attitude very liberal to very conservative) assign numbers in order, but direction does not matter
 - If independent variable is numerical (e.g. age in years, number of times something is done) use the numbers
- Ask for help if you have questions

Coding data into a data sheet

- Use an Excel spreadsheet
- Each variable will be put into a column
- Remember to include columns to identify
 1. Who administered the questionnaire
 2. The individual respondent code
- You may want to color-code your index questions versus your independent variable questions
- All team members' data must be in ONE spreadsheet!

Final details – preface statement

- All surveys should include a preface statement explaining that this questionnaire is for a class project and the data collected will not be used for any other purpose.
- Include wording assuring the respondent
 - that participation is entirely voluntary
 - that his/her answers will be kept anonymous
 - that s/he can choose not to answer any particular question
- If survey is about illegal behavior, include statement "Please DO NOT put any identifying information on the sheet."

Final details: question order

- Put Open-ended question FIRST; otherwise you will bias your answers
 - Eg. What is your attitude about using drugs?
 - If it comes AFTER a series of Agree/Disagree items about using drugs, the answer to the open-ended question will be biased to the items you listed
- Put demographic questions LAST

Final details to clarify BEFORE leaving today:

- Do you have a plan for how to sample?
 - The goal is **VARIATION** in answers
- Do you have a plan for what to do if the respondent has any questions about how to answer?
- Do you & your teammates understand how to code each question?
- Do you & your teammates understand how to put your data into a spreadsheet?
