

Course 7 Understanding and Modelling Measurement Error in Social Surveys

Exercises Monday

Before starting: in the compulsory reading for today there is the following book chapter:

Revilla, M., Zavala Rojas, D., and W.E. Saris (forthcoming). "Creating a good question: How to use cumulative experience". In Christof Wolf, Dominique Joye, Tom W. Smith and Yang-Chih Fu (editors), *The SAGE-Handbook of Survey Methodology*. SAGE.

It is necessary to read this chapter before doing the exercise: the chapter gives the background necessary to understand several of the exercises (of today and next days).

I) Discussing questions that have been used or proposed to be part of questionnaires [together]

1) Tell what is wrong with the following requests for answers.

- Request for Income equality?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The government should provide a job for everyone who wants to.

- Request for Governmental intervention?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Private enterprise is the best way to solve our economic problems

- Work of European Parliament and commission?

How do you evaluate the work of the European Parliament and the Commission?

- Best book you read?

What is the best book you read last year?

- Measurement of Racism?

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: If immigrants had worked harder they would have been as well off as our people.

- Measurement of power?

Please indicate how much this person is or is not like you:

"It is important to him to get respect from others. He wants people to do what he says".

2) Improve the requests for answers for each of the previous examples.

II) Operationalization of complex concepts **[together]**

1) Operationalize **Political interest**:

- As a concept by intuition
- As a concept by postulation
 - With formative indicators
 - With reflective indicators

2) Do the same with **Job satisfaction**. Which operationalization is the best?

III) Features of questions

1) What are the features of the following question: “*How satisfied are you with your job?*”

- Balanced or unbalanced?
- Absolute or relative?

2) This is a very common question:

How satisfied are you with your life?

1. Not at all satisfied 2. Satisfied 3. Very satisfied

Is this scale:

- Unipolar or bipolar?
- Symmetric?
- Does it have fixed reference points?

3) This is a common scale:

Never

Always

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What are the characteristics of this scale?

IV) Making questions

1) Specify assertions that with certainty represent an evaluation of income equality.

2) The right of abortion has been a topic of many surveys. The question is what one would like to know. Specify assertions and requests for answers for:

- An evaluation
- A policy

3) Below is a typical item of an agree/disagree (A/D) battery:
"I am satisfied with my job"

Transform this item in a request of the following forms:

- Direct question with or without a WH word
- Direct Instruction with or without a WH word
- An indirect question
- An indirect declarative form
- An indirect instruction

4) Specify alternative items for this A/D battery:

Do you strongly agree, agree, agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statements:

"It is generally bad for our country's economy that people come to live here from other countries"

"Cultural life is generally undermined by people coming to live here from other countries"

"Our country is made a worse place to live by people coming to live there from other countries"

5) Transform this same battery in a set of questions with item specific scales.

V) Check-all-that apply versus forced choice

We want to know if the respondents have different items in their possession.

These items are: bicycle, motorcycle, car, cell phone, laptop, desktop, television, stereo, DVD player, Mp3 player, VCR, microwave, Palm pilot

1) Formulate a question using:

- Forced-choice form
- Check-all-that apply form

2) Which differences can we expect in the answers and why?

VI) Formulate questions for single items related to your own research

- 1) Formulate questions for at least 5 variables. Make an argument for the formulation you choose.

- 2) Switch questions with another student. Make comments on the questions of the other student. Suggest improvements.
- 3) Switch again and look at the comments and suggestions from the other student on your own questions. Decide of the "final" (for today) formulation you want to use for your variables of interest.