**Week 2**

**Questionnaire Development**

The goal for this week’s lab is for the students to develop questionnaire items for a personality survey.

*Context*. This is the first step in a multi-lab project. The goal is for the students to create brief questionnaire that they can use to assess individual differences in attitudes, traits, or attributes that they find interesting. They will eventually collect and analyze data, so they should think carefully about what they want to measure and how to do so. They will design the items this week. Next week, they will transform their questionnaire into an Internet survey so that they can collect data using their questionnaire. They will do this as groups/pairs; one questionnaire per group.

Part 1. [This week] The objective for this session is for the students to generate a list of potential questionnaire items, winnow that list down, and then finalize it.

Part 2. [Next week] They will create a web-based version of their questionnaire.

*Part 1*

1. Break the students into groups of 2. Feel free to draw from the same group structures used last week. It is okay if some groups are larger. But, the smaller the groups are, the more hands on experience each person will get.

2. Each group should begin by identifying a personality trait that they would like to assess. This is a group project, so each member should agree that the trait is something they find interesting and would like to measure.

Please note that I’m using the term “personality trait” in a loose fashion here. I don’t care whether the trait is something that Costa and McCrae would define as a personality trait. It can be a measure of attitudes, attraction, or any number of things. The most important part, however, is that the construct be something for which *we might expect there to be individual differences*. It would also be helpful if the construct is not of narrow interest (e.g., student attitudes about closing a historical dormitory on the UIUC campus).

3. Once groups have identified a construct of interest, they should brainstorm **20 questionnaire items** that can be used to assess that construct.

Because they completed a personality rating survey last week, they should have a good mental model for how a questionnaire works. That is, typically a modern personality survey has statements that people can agree with or disagree with, to various degrees.

To create some degree of uniformity, encourage the students to use an agree/disagree rating format. In short, the items will be *statements* and respondents will indicate the extent to which they *agree or disagree* with the item on a 4-point scale.

Example item for *Love of Coffee*:

I drink coffee on a daily basis.

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Agree

4 = Strongly Agree

4. After generating the items, the group members should discuss the items and refine them. They should also debate the pros and cons of specific items. At the end of their discussion, they should **eliminate** what they think will be the **5** most problematic items (i.e., items that might be unclear, open to ambiguous interpretations). Do not warn them of this elimination process before they get to Step 4; they should be prepared to create 20 great items in earnest at Step 3.

*Two Rules You Should Teach Them*

In prepping them for Step 4, you might want to brainstorm some examples of bad items for the coffee example (or any example of your choosing) to help illustrate what can make an item bad.

Example: “I do not dislike coffee” is a weak item because it involves a **double negative**, which is hard for people to process. (*Rule # 1: Avoid double negatives when writing questionnaire items.*)

This would also be a good opportunity to discuss the problems with double-barreled items. In short, a **double barreled item** is one that implicitly assesses two dimensions of agreement/disagreement simultaneously. For example, in order for someone to strongly endorse the item “I sometimes get sick when I drink too much coffee,” the person must be a coffee drinker. Thus, the item confounds “coffee drinker” with “coffee-related problems.” (*Rule # 2: Avoid double barreled items.*)

5. Each group should create a clean copy of the remaining 15 items and simplify list the items themselves (without a rating scale) on a sheet of paper. (Handwritten is okay.) The various groups should trade papers and groups should evaluate the items for clarity. Each group should select an additional 5 items to cut (from another group’s item pool) and place an X next to those items. When they are done, they should return the list to the original group. The original group then should decide whether those 5 items should be cut and, if not, which 5 items should be cut.

It might be best to use a timer and allow each pair to spend two minutes editing another pair’s questionnaire items. People can then pass the form on to the next group. A few iterations of this should be sufficient.

The goal is to have no more than 10 items after this cutting step. These should be the best, clearest items from the original pool of 20. **The students should keep this for next week and bring it back to lab**. You should cycle around the room and give people advice and feedback and record whether, in fact, they finished the exercise that day.

**END OF LAB**