

# Questionnaire Design II

Department of Political Science and Government  
Aarhus University

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- 1 Construct Validity
- 2 Recall-type Questions
- 3 Sensitive Topics
- 4 Preview of Next Time

# 1 Construct Validity

2 Recall-type Questions

3 Sensitive Topics

4 Preview of Next Time

# Construct Validity

- Definition?

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- Definition?
- How do we know if a survey response is “true”?

# Validation studies

- 1 Some survey responses can be *validated*
- 2 Easy for some behavioral constructs
- 3 Direct observation, registry data, etc.

# Questions about construct validity?

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# Recall-type Questions

- Knowledge
- Behavior
- Events

# Recalling Knowledge

- Factual items with “true” responses
- Examples
  - Political knowledge
  - Knowledge about products/services
  - General knowledge
- Knowledge varies widely across individuals

# Recalling Knowledge

- How do we deal with “don’t know” responses?
  - Genuine expression of lack of knowledge?
  - Insufficient time to think?
  - Question was unclear/ambiguous?

# Recalling Knowledge

- How do we deal with “don’t know” responses?
  - Genuine expression of lack of knowledge?
  - Insufficient time to think?
  - Question was unclear/ambiguous?
  
- Huge debate about this

# Recalling Behaviors

- Things respondent did in the past
- Examples
  - Media use
  - Eating/dietary habits
  - Past voting
- Challenging to measure accurately
- Can be easily validated

# Measuring Behaviors

- Provide counts for a given *reference period*
- Provide a rate within a reference period
- List specific behavioral events
  - Allows follow-up questioning

# Recalling Events

- Things that happened as specific points in time
  
- Examples
  - Events in the news
  - Crime victimization
  - Time when you felt angry
  
- Same problems as with other types of recall

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- Question misunderstanding
  - Vague concepts
  - Confusing or long wording

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- Question misunderstanding
  - Vague concepts
  - Confusing or long wording
- Forgetting
- Recency/primacy biases among responses
- Motivated misreporting
- Reference period ambiguity
- Rare events
- True “don’t know” responses

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  - Applies to recall and evaluative questions

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- Examples?
  
- Several common biases
  - Social desirability bias
  - Positivity bias
  - Acquiescence bias
  - Demand characteristics

# Questions about recall questions?

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# Sensitive Questions

- Definition: Topics “seen as intrusive or embarrassing”
- Examples?

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- Examples?
  
- Factors affecting topic sensitivity
  - Individual differences
  - Mode
  - Interviewer
  - Survey context
  - Survey sponsorship
  - Perceived privacy

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- Definition: Topics “seen as intrusive or embarrassing”
  
- Examples?
  
- Factors affecting topic sensitivity
  - Individual differences
  - Mode
  - Interviewer
  - Survey context
  - Survey sponsorship
  - Perceived privacy
  
- Why do we care?

# Activity: Answering Sensitive Questions

## 1 Pair Activity

- “Role play” interviewer and respondent
- Do NOT answer the questions
- Record your thoughts/feelings/reactions to each question

## 2 Individual Activity

- Complete questionnaire on your own
- Do NOT answer the questions
- Record your thoughts/feelings/reactions to each question

## 3 Then we will discuss together

# Questions about sensitive topics?

# Eliciting Answers to Sensitive Questions

- Ensure privacy, anonymity, or confidentiality
- Change modes
- Indirect measures
  - “List experiment”
- Provide population rates
- Placement in survey instrument

# Activity: Writing Sensitive Questions

- 1 Work in groups
- 2 Select a potentially sensitive topic
- 3 Write 2–3 survey questions on that topic
- 4 Present to the class how your approach eases sensitivity

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# Agenda for next class

- **No meeting next week (Week 42)**
- Mode of interview
- Budgets
- Mode comparisons

# Assignment for next week

- Draft of your questionnaire!
- With remaining time:
  - Discuss this week's assignment
  - Discuss strategies for question writing

