

The Faculty of Psychology
University of Bergen
Module in the training programme for researchers

Elective PhD Methodology Course offered by the Graduate School of
Human Interaction and Growth (GHIG)

Quantitative methods, topic 1:
Survey construction and measurement

10-12 March 2014

Course leaders:

Gisela Böhm (UiB), Torbjørn Torsheim (UiB)
Ann Bostrom (University of Washington, USA)

Overview:

Conducting a survey consists of many steps and requires many decisions on the part of the researcher. This course will provide an introduction to survey research and different forms of surveys, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of survey approaches. The main focus of the course will be on the question of how to construct a good questionnaire. The questionnaire is the heart of survey research; the questionnaire serves to measure the constructs in which the researcher is interested. By its very nature, the questionnaire is verbal communication between the researcher and the respondent. The main challenge for the researcher is to translate his or her scientific research question into everyday language in such a way that the respondents understand the questions as intended and provide responses that actually reflect what the researcher wants to measure. Many pitfalls await the researcher in this process, ranging from the order of questionnaire items to the phrasing of questions and the choice of response options. The course will explore the psychology of asking questions and of questionnaire responses; for example, which cognitive processes take place when respondents answer questions, and which are implications of these for designing questionnaire items and response options? Other topics are how to anticipate data analysis when constructing items and survey documentation. The course will emphasize hands-on experience in constructing and implementing a survey and give students practical skills in survey methods.

The assignment consists of a small survey project that students will develop in groups. This project can be on a topic of students' own choice or selected from topics provided by the instructors. The project is composed of a short questionnaire (app. 6 items) which students present in the course. Apart from the questionnaire itself, the presentation should focus on the reasoning for the questionnaire. The structure of the presentation is to follow that of a

proposal to TESS (Time Sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences; <http://www.tessexperiments.org/>), an organization that allows researchers to apply for survey space. Students will have the opportunity to develop their projects into a real TESS application under our supervision if they so wish.

Objectives:

This course seeks to promote and facilitate the use of rigorous survey methodology; in addition, the course demonstrates and guides the process of survey construction.

Learning activities:

The various steps and topics that are important in survey construction will be presented in lectures and seminar-style discussions complemented with group work, hands-on exercises, and independent work. The project assignment requires students to work in small groups and present their project in plenary on the last day of the course.

Prerequisites:

1. Participants must answer a brief questionnaire when signing up for the course, in order to provide information that allows the course leaders to adjust the breadth and depth of the course topics.
2. Participants must be prepared to present parts of their PhD project that relate to survey research.
3. Participants must bring their laptop computers.
4. Participants should have some basic knowledge in quantitative methods and statistics; for example, they should be familiar with correlation, regression, and other basic statistical tools.

Course literature:

Key Readings (preliminary)

Dillman, D. A. (2008). The logic and psychology of construction questionnaires. In E. D. De Leeuw, J. J. Hox, & D. A. Dillman (ed.), *International handbook of survey methodology* (pp. 161-175). New York: Erlbaum.

Fowler, J., F. J., & Cosenza, C. (2008). Writing effective questions. In E. D. De Leeuw, J. J. Hox, & D. A. Dillman (ed.), *International handbook of survey methodology* (pp. 136-160). New York: Erlbaum.

Groves, R. M., Fowler, Jr., F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowsky, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2004). *Survey methodology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. (Chapter 7)

Schwarz, N., Knäuper, B., Oyserman, D., & Stich, C. (2008). The psychology of asking questions. In E. D. De Leeuw, J. J. Hox, & D. A. Dillman (ed.), *International handbook of survey methodology* (pp. 18-34). New York: Erlbaum.

Additional required and recommended literature will be announced after registration. To the extent possible, copies will be placed on the MySpace site for the course. Participants will be expected to have read most of the assigned readings before the course starts.

Time schedule:

January 20, 2014 – registration deadline with brief questionnaire

February 10, 2014 – course literature available on My Space

10th -of March, 2014 – seminar with focus on how to construct individual items

11th of March, 2014 – seminar with focus on how to design an entire questionnaire

12th of March, 2014 – seminar with focus on participants' survey project presentations

Language of instruction: English

Registration: Participants must register for the course by January 20, 2014. Maximum number of participants: 20.

Assessment format: Oral presentation and discussion of survey project.

ECT: 1

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Eligibility: PhD students enrolled at the Faculty of Psychology (UiB) have priority, other participants are welcome as space permits. Places will be filled on a first-come-first-serve basis.

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