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MAT 115H

Class Discussion/Survey Paper

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During the in class discussion held last Friday we covered the different ways we can improve and format our survey before we actually take it to the residents of Newport. The points we discussed that stood out to me include:

* If a small group of people from each the East and West sides are surveyed and the results have what seems to be a big difference (10%-15% difference), that doesn’t necessarily show a difference. If you were to survey 2 more small groups from the East and West sides, their results would be different than the first groups as well.
* It would be wise to survey in a large, populated area such as a football game or a local event in Newport where people from both sides would be in attendance.
* The ways questions are perceived cannot be controlled, so we should try our best to make the questions as specific and straight forward as possible. To avoid random variability we should lean toward a larger sample size.
* Think about changing the questions into statements. Putting statements on the survey instead of questions will make the completion quicker for participants, make the data you collect more concrete and usable, and make it easier for us to compile the data. Possibly use a Likert Scale.
* Think of ways to be completely unbiased, for example: survey every 10th person that walks by.
* Have people in the class direct participants to where the survey is being given. Possibly have a table with chairs so the participants have a comfortable place to fill out their surveys.
* Collect initial demographics about the survey participants. (“How long have you lived in Newport?”, “What age range do you fall under?”

I believe these points would be very wise to keep in mind while we are in the process of creating the survey and strategizing how to administer it because they have been given by and discussed with individuals who deal with this on a professional level.

The recommendations I have for our survey and the process of actually taking the survey to the public to have people participate are:

* Along with the suggestion by our guest speakers to use statements instead of questions in the form of a Likert scale, I recommend we keep the way we scale the statements consistent throughout the survey. For example use an odd numbered scale such as:

[disagree – neutral – agree] (3 options)

or

[strongly disagree – disagree – neutral – agree – strongly agree] (5 options)

We should also make sure that the high and low values stay the same, for example if we use a number scale with 1 being disagree/strongly disagree and 3 or 5 being agree/strongly agree, we should keep it like that throughout the entire survey.

* We should also consider logical ordering while making the survey. Which means we should begin with broader questions and focus on more specific questions as the survey progresses. I also thought about ways we could ask for more personal information in our survey since obtaining demographics on participants was brought up in our discussion in class, and I think if we put these questions at the end of the survey and keep them broad (for example: instead of asking a specific age, put age ranges as answers) our participants will be more willing to answer them.
* Also in our discussion in class we talked about possibly offering an incentive for people that are participating in our survey. I looked on SurveyMonkey.com (a website that specializes in online surveying) and a study they conducted shows that people are 50% more likely to participate in an activity if there is something in it for them.
* And finally I recommend we test our survey before having the residents of Newport take it. We could have 1 peer or colleague per 2 or 3 class members to take it and see how they react to the questions and format of the survey, so we can get a general idea of how our target participants may act.

We should really consider the ideas we discussed in class and tie in our own perspectives/tactics in to make a well formatted and easily understood survey that will get a lot of people to participate. We should also keep in mind the data we are trying to obtain about Newport from this survey and our overall goal.