Your Attention Please! Careless Responding as a Threat to Data Quality

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Questions I’ll Address

• What is careless responding and how is it measured?
• Does careless responding occur in applied samples?
• What are the causes of careless responding?
• How can careless responding be prevented?
What is Careless Responding?

• Participants may respond to self-report questionnaires without closely reading the questionnaire content.

• Several labels have been used for this behavior:
  – “Careless responding” (Meade & Craig, 2012)
  – “Insufficient effort responding” (Huang et al., 2012)
  – “Participant inattention” (Maniaci & Rogge, 2014)
What are the Effects of Careless Responding?

- Careless responding has several undesirable effects:
  - It can attenuate observed correlations (McGrath, Mitchell, Kim, & Hough, 2010)
  - It can inflate observed correlations (Huang, Liu, & Bowling, 2015)
  - It can bias the results of factor analyses (Schmitt & Stults, 1985)
How is Careless Responding Measured?

• Several indices have been used to assess careless responding (see Curran, 2015; Meade & Craig, 2012):
  – Infrequency indices
  – Inconsistency indices
  – Longstring indices
  – Multivariate outlier analysis
  – Page time
  – Self-reported carelessness
Does Careless Responding Occur Often Enough to Matter?

• A small amount of careless responding (e.g., 10%) is sufficient to produce undesirable effects (Huang et al., 2015).

• Using a student sample, Meade and Craig (2012) estimated that 10% to 12% of participants responded carelessly.
Is Careless Responding Present within Applied Datasets?

- Berry et al. (1992) found that 53% of police recruits responded carelessly to at least some items in a personality test battery.
- Bowling et al. (2016, Study 1) found evidence of careless responding among job incumbents.
- Blackmore, Camus, Bowling, and Burns (2015, Study 3) found evidence of carless responding among job applicants.
What Causes Careless Responding?

• Meade and Craig (2012) speculated about four potential causes of careless responding:
  – Questionnaire length
  – Lack of researcher-participant social contact
  – Participant indifference
  – Environmental distractions
What can be done to Prevent Careless Responding?

• Incentives for responding carefully (Huang et al., 2012)
• Identified questionnaires (Meade & Craig, 2012)
• Real or simulated social contact (Ward & Pond, 2015)
Thank you for your attention!

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