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System Development and Responsibility of Coding Data

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UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AT CARBONDALE

THESIS/PROJECT

PSYCHOLOGY 391

UNDER THE DIRECTION AND GUIDANCE OF

DR. ANTHONY TINSLEY

RYAN MOORE

5-4-98

SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY OF CODING DATA

The skills and abilities that I gained this semester were under the supervision and leadership of Dr. Anthony Tinsley. The research and responsibilities were classified as an independent study or individual project, coordinated under the psychology department at SIUC. The research and responsibilities initially consisted of developing a system for coding a particular data collection. The data was a leisure questionnaire/survey that had been administered to students at the University of Minnesota in the 1950's and early 1960's.

Students at the University of Minnesota had answered questions that ranged from basic demographic inquiries, to ones that were highly open ended. It was my responsibility along with a team of other undergraduate students, two graduate students, and two professors to develop a process for transferring information in the booklets to scantrons that could be analyzed by machine.

The part of the book that our group was responsible for was approximately 10 pages of a 61 page booklet. This task was first refined by cooperatively creating a system for coding the various answers that would be marked in the booklet. Questions that allowed for more than one answer were accounted for by making each possible answer a separate number on the scantron. The scantron itself consisted of approximately 120 numbers, with each number having 9 choices. Each booklet was coded onto two separate scantrons. Designing a system free of error was no easy task, for many of the

questions were vague, thus allowing room for multiple answers. It was

necessary to allow many of the scantron numbers an "other" category.

The first couple of weeks into our coding were met with problems.

Through a trial and error like process in the initial weeks, we were

able to fine tune our system; thereafter, leaving room for only the

most complex of situations.

The development and "debugging" of this translation of data was

then put to full practice. Roughly 35 boxes of about 50 plus booklets

per box were left to translate. This data was especially interesting

because its objectives were measured over a large time span; thus

revealing conflicting feelings and statements that the individual may

have had over that time.

SUPERVISED DATA COLLECTION SESSIONS

The administration of questionnaires/surveys to undergraduates at

SIUC consisted of many duties. First, I had to assemble the students

and read to them the questionnaire's legitimacy. I read to them the

fact that their answers would be totally confidential, and that they

were under no obligation to partake in the study.

The study was a two part study, with each part lasting 45 minutes

to complete. Undergraduates were read the directions, given the

survey, and then monitored throughout the session. I was in charge of

fielding any questions concerning the particulars of the survey. I

scheduled participants for the second part after their completion of

the first, provided feedback sheets after the second part, and thanked

them for their participation. I kept a log of any problems, such as

students who finished early enough to create suspicion in the

thoroughness of their responses. In all, I gained experience working

with people in an experimental atmosphere, and learned the means or

process of gathering pertinent data that will more than likely be

published.

WORKSHOPS

Workshops that I was exposed to consisted of one on Power Point,

Access, Excel, using the world wide web, and developing one's own web

page. Brief in nature they may have been, I still gathered insight on

how information can be obtained, used, and manipulated more

efficiently and effectively. Modern technology has unlimited

functions through the invention of Power Point, Access, and the many

other computer programs. Spreadsheets, fliers, reports, and a vast

amount of other printed material can be enhanced through use of this

technology. The end results, or products, of these workshops were

simply the information they provided, and the applicability of that

information.

CONCLUSION

Psychology 391 provided me with the experience and know how to effectively communicate with other people in a psychology based program. I have, through hands on experience, learned how studies/ questionnaires are prepared, conducted, administered, and evaluated. I have gained skills that have prepared me for further studies in graduate programs and beyond. These skills are applicable to not only the psychology curriculum, but many other curriculums as well. This experience has reinforced and contributed to the leadership qualities that I posses, making me evermore qualified and prepared for higher learning and various workplace institutions.