

## CONJOINT ANALYSIS: SPRING 2007

BUS895/BUS898: Graduate Thesis at San Francisco State University, College of Business  
Dr. Michael Meeks

All student theses supervised by Dr. Meeks during the Spring 2007 semester will have a conjoint analysis research design. This document is designed to provide an introductory overview of conjoint analysis.

**What is Conjoint Analysis?** Conjoint Analysis is a statistical technique (multivariate technique) that allows a subset of possible combinations of decision choices (such as attributes of product features for a consumer decision) to be used to determine the relative importance of each feature in making the choice/decision. In other words, CA reveals “why” a choice is made – the “reasons” behind a decision – the decision cues driving a choice. This is important because when asked “why” they made a particular choice, a respondent provides their espoused reasons – why they THINK they made the choice. Unfortunately, many times people’s actual and espoused decision cues are quite different. In a conjoint analysis, respondents are asked to choose between or among choices – each choice is described by its attributes.

**How is Conjoint Analysis used?** To date, Conjoint Analysis has been used primarily in the fields of Marketing (to reveal buying choices), and Public Policy (referred to as Policy Capturing, to determine how policy is determined). CA is fairly new to the field of management, and shows great promise. Conjoint Analysis appears to be well suited for research questions such as:

- Why do people start new business ventures (become entrepreneurs)?
- Why do people select a particular career or field of study?
- Why do people change careers?
- Why do people choose a particular company or job?

**Is Conjoint Analysis Difficult to Learn, or Difficult to Use?** In the past, Conjoint Analysis was time consuming. Scenario’s were created on cards, and respondents were asked to choose among the cards (e.g. a 12” laptop for \$2000 or a 14” laptop for \$2200). To accurately reveal decision cues, the number of choices can sometimes be quite high, often taking considerable time (and can introduce respondent fatigue). The number of choices increases dramatically when the number of attributes increases. But with computers, and sophisticated algorithms, the latest conjoint software eliminates unneeded choices, greatly reducing time and effort. Dr. Meeks will teach you how to use the software and analyze the data.

**Do I Need to Meet the Respondents Face to Face?** No, Dr. Meeks has the software to place all respondent decisions on the Internet. You will be trained in how to build a web page for your study (the process typically takes one afternoon). Respondents use a password (which you provide) to enter the web page (which resides on Dr. Meeks’ server) where they make their choices. Their data is automatically uploaded to a database. If, on the other hand, you would prefer lengthy manual choice cards, or the computer interface loaded on your laptop so you may ask respondents to complete the computer-based choices in your presence (like at a mall), then we can arrange that for you.

**Do I Need to Buy Expensive Software?** No, Dr. Meeks and the College of Business have purchased the software. At a recent Conjoint Software Conference Dr. Meeks received the most current upgrade. The license allows Dr. Meeks’ students to use the software for research purposes.