

**SURVEY RESEARCH [OUTLINE ONLY]**

- I. Definition: *survey research* — the quantitative study of large human populations using these basic research operations:
  - A. define the *population* to be studied (e.g., ANES studies the “voting age population” [VAP] vs. BNES studies “all enrolled voters”), other populations of interest are “all eligible voters,” “all registered voters,” “all likely voters” [tracking polls], “all actual voters” [in a given election]; relevance to calculation of *voting turnout*)
  - B. select a *representative sample* [by “lottery”] from the population of interest (or a more inclusive population)
  - C. *measure* (by means of interview questions) characteristics of the respondents in the sample (and/or narrow sample down to represent the [less inclusive] population of interest)
  - D. *tabulate, crosstabulate*, and otherwise *analyze* the sample data (using SPSS, etc.) to produce various *sample statistics*
  - E. make *inferences* from sample statistics to *population parameters* of interest
- II. Alternative (to Survey Research) Methods of Data Collection
  - A. *documentary* [library/web] *research*
    - 1. *primary* vs. *secondary* sources
    - 2. library (books, journals, newspapers) [or web] research
    - 3. legal/legislative/regulatory analysis
    - 4. legislative *roll call* votes and *interest-group ratings*
    - 5. census data/electoral records, eg., Presidential vote by state since 1828
      - a. the *counting unit*: e.g., the precinct/polling place (US) or the constituency (UK)
      - b. the *ecological inference* problem
  - B. *elite and specialized interviewing*
    - 1. elite interviewing (Lewis Anthony Dexter)
    - 2. non-elite interviewing (Robert Lane)
  - C. *focus groups* and *deliberative polling* (Weisberg, pp. 20-23)
  - D. *participant observation* (qualitative — Richard Fenno, “soaking and poking”; internship placements)
  - E. *experimental methods*
    - 1. *survey experiments* (e.g., Party ID variants, NES Pilot Studies)
    - 2. *laboratory experiments*
      - a. social psychology
      - b. experimental (clinical) trials
      - c. *simulation* and *gaming*

3. *field experiments*
  - a. classic voting turnout experiment (Harold Gosnell, 1924; Donald Green et al.)
  - b. income maintenance experiments
4. *quasi-experimental research* (states/localities as “laboratories of democracy,” policy change/interventions [welfare/school vouchers, etc.] evaluation)

### III. Types of Surveys

- A. fake/spurious polls and surveys
  1. straw polls (return postcard, call-in, web-based, etc.)
  2. “propaganda” or “push” polls
  3. political persuasion disguised as polling
  4. selling disguised as polling
- B. commercial surveys
  1. producing public information
    - a. syndicated polls (Gallup, Roper, Harris, etc., starting in late 1930s)
    - b. media polls (starting in 1960s)
      - (1) *tracking polls* (Gallup)
      - (2) *exit polls* (news media, Voter News Service, National Election Pool)
  2. contract research (producing proprietary information)
    - a. *market research* for businesses (starting in 1920s)
    - b. political consulting/polling for candidates/parties/interest groups (starting in 1950s)
- C. non-commercial surveys (by government agencies and academic research centers)
  1. government “statistical” survey research
    - a. U.S. Census (no sampling; undercount, possible statistical adjustments)
    - b. Current Population Survey (CPS — Census and BLS): rotating *panel survey*
      - (1) unemployment rate
      - (2) voter registration and turnout (but not vote choice and opinions)
  2. academic/scholarly/scientific surveys
    - a. voting behavior (replacing ecological inference)
      - (1) the “Columbia” (sociological) studies (especially 1940 and 1948)
        - (a) local samples
        - (b) extended *panel surveys*
        - (c) group affiliations
        - (d) Index of Political Disposition (IPP)
      - (2) the “Michigan” (political/social psychological) studies (SRC/CPS)
        - (a) national sample
        - (b) limited (pre- and post-election) panel survey
        - (c) attitudes and orientations

- (d) Party Identification
- (3) National Election Studies (NES)
  - (a) organization
    - i) National Science Foundation (NSF) funding
    - ii) Board of Overseers
    - iii) solicitation of research topics and instruments
  - (b) data collections
    - i) election studies
    - ii) panel studies
    - iii) pilot (and piggyback) studies (survey experiments)
    - iv) cumulative data file
    - v) Senate study
  - (c) other national election studies
- b. other major (ongoing) surveys
  - (1) Citizen Participation surveys (Sidney Verba and others)
  - (2) Long-Term Political Socialization Panel Study
  - (3) General Social Survey (GSS), NORC (University of Chicago)
  - (4) Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), Michigan SRC
  - (5) National Crime Victimization Survey (USDJ) (vs. FBI Uniform Crime Reports)
- c. social science data archives
  - (1) Interuniversity Consortium for Social and Political Research (ICPSR)

#### IV. What Do (Political) Surveys (Purport to) Measure?

- A. voting *intentions* (and likelihood of voting) [election forecasting]
- B. attitudes/opinions/preferences
  - 1. specific issues
  - 2. general orientations
    - a. party identification
    - b. ideological self-placement
    - c. religiosity, political cynicism, political efficacy, tolerance, etc.
- C. beliefs/perceptions/predictions/salience (“most important issue”)
- D. information/knowledge
- E. reported behavior (political and nonpolitical)
  - 1. voting choices
  - 2. other political activities (contributions, demonstrations, campaign activity, etc.)
  - 3. memberships, etc.
  - 4. job seeking activity (CPS)

- 5. TV watching (Arbitron, Nielsen, etc., rating services)
    - a. recall questions
    - b. tracking poll
    - c. log keeping
    - d. device on TV
    - e. problem of *obtrusive measurement*)
  - 6. crime victimization
  - F. demographics
- V. Questionnaire Design (Weisberg et al, Chapter 4)
- A. preview of data collection methods
    - 1. self-administered questionnaires
    - 2. telephone interviews
    - 3. personal interviews
  - B. *closed-form* questions
    - 1. multiple-choice format
    - 2. agree / disagree (*Likert scale*, forced choice vs. DK etc. )
    - 3. rating scale (SCEQ scan sheets) / feeling thermometer
    - 4. indices (composite measures)
    - 5. produces *precoded* data
  - C. *open-ended* questions (SCEQ “blue sheets”)
    - 1. most important issue
    - 2. likes / dislikes
    - 3. data must be *coded* for quantitative analysis
  - D. *coding*
    - 1. defining response categories (“codes”) [e.g., “most important problem?”]
    - 2. assigning responses to categories
    - 3. creating numerical codes for quantitative analysis
  - E. question design (wording)
    - 1. agree or not
    - 2. balanced format
    - 3. social desirability
    - 4. closed-form *option order* (cf. ballot order)
    - 5. *response acquiescence*
    - 6. filter questions
    - 7. don’t know / no opinion response / probes [different types of *missing data*]
  - F. questionnaire design (question order)
  - G. pretesting/survey experiments/NES pilot studies [advantage of using standard questions]

## VI. Data Collection and Interviewing (Weisberg et. al., Chapter 5)

- A. *self-administered questionnaires* (written [or web-based])
  - 1. setting
    - a. controlled setting (e.g., Student Survey, SCEQ)
    - b. distributed and returned later
    - c. mailed and collected / returned
  - 2. characteristics
    - a. cheap (costs mostly placed on respondent)
    - b. low *response / completion rate* if mailed or returned later
    - c. mostly closed-form questions
    - d. short questionnaire only
    - e. bias with respect to literacy
- B. *telephone surveys* (entirely oral)
  - 1. increasingly common, especially in pre-election and tracking polls
  - 2. characteristics
    - a. fast and cheap
    - b. unclustered
    - c. computerized sampling (*random digit dialing*)
    - d. computerized data recording (*computer-assisted interviewing*)
    - e. interviews are monitored
    - f. limited to simple questions and short questionnaires
    - g. imperfect coverage
      - (1) diffusion of telephones
      - (2) call-back procedures
    - h. multiple phones
- C. *personal interviewing* (face-to-face and mostly oral)
  - 1. setting
    - a. usually in respondent's home at a convenient time
  - 2. characteristics
    - a. expensive (especially for national surveys, reduced by "cluster sampling")
      - (1) labor intensive
      - (2) semi-professional work
      - (3) interviewing is unmonitored
    - b. flexible
      - (1) allows open-ended questions
      - (2) allows complicated questions
      - (3) allows long questionnaire
    - c. clustered
    - d. the "gold standard" in scientific survey research
      - (1) used in NES (and SETUPS), GSS, CPS, etc.

## VII. Data Tabulation and Analysis

- A. coding questionnaire responses (open vs. closed questions)
- B. data entry and verification (keypunch, spread sheet program)
- C. cross-sectional analysis
  - 1. tabulation/frequency distributions
  - 2. subgroup differences (select subsets of respondents)
  - 3. other relationships (crosstabulations)
  - 4. causal relationships (control variables)
- D. longitudinal analysis
  - 1. *cumulated surveys* (“pooled cross-sections,” e.g. NES/SETUPS): aggregate change over time (e.g., party ID, Presidential popularity)
  - 2. *panel surveys*: individual change over time (stability of party ID, income status)
- E. primary vs. secondary analysis of survey data

## VIII. Sampling Methods

- A. paradox of getting a representative sample [some demographic checks]
- B. self-selected/voluntary samples (call-ins, write-ins [Ann Landers column])
- C. haphazard/convenience (POLI 300 survey/*Literary Digest*)
- D. interviewer-selected samples
  - 1. selection bias
    - a. availability bias
    - b. interviewer bias
  - 2. quota sampling
- E. random/probability sampling
  - 1. sampling frame/list
  - 2. random selection
  - 3. completion/response rate