

Survey Research Methods, RESCH-GE 2139, Fall 2013

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Prerequisites:

At least one year of applied statistics (including multiple linear regression) and familiarity with the use of one or more standard statistical software packages is strongly recommended.

Overview:

The social survey is an essential tool for researchers in the social, behavioral and policy sciences and in the applied professional fields, such as education, social work, public health, and marketing. The goal of this course is to provide a broad overview of the many aspects of survey research methodology including sampling, instrument design, the psychology of survey response, field testing, survey operations, nonresponse bias analysis and correction, and primary and secondary analysis of survey data. No prior experience in survey methods is expected and the course is designed primarily for those who intend to use surveys in their own research – whether designing original surveys or performing secondary analysis on survey data collected by others. Whenever possible, we will use examples and data from real surveys employed by academic researchers, professional survey firms, and Federal statistical agencies. Course assignments will require students to actively participate in every stage of the survey process, from initial design to final analysis.

Course Text:

“Survey Methodology,” by Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, Tourangeau, 3rd ed.

Accommodations:

NYU is committed to facilitating equal access for students with disabilities, including hearing and visual impairments, mobility impairments, learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders, chronic illness, and psychological impairments. If you are not comfortable discussing your needs with me, I encourage you to contact the Moses Center on 240 Greene Street, 2nd Floor, 212-998-4980, for assistance in ensuring that you receive any necessary accommodations.

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Evaluation:

Each week students are expected to bring in a reading summary of each of the readings. Length should be less than one page for each reading, and will be given either a check or a check minus. Each student will also be asked to present one of the readings during the semester. Problem sets will also be assigned. The final project involves writing and revising a survey (more detail below).

- Reading summaries, 15%
- In-class presentation and participation – 20%
- Problem sets – 25%
- Final Project– 40%

Schedule:

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction and overview.

2. Perspectives on Surveys,

Chapter 2

Tourangeau, R., G. Shapiro, A. Kearney, and L. Ernst. 1997. Who Lives Here? Survey Undercoverage and Household Roster Questions. *Journal of Official Statistics*, 13(1): 1-18. (<http://www.jos.nu/Articles/abstract.asp?article=1311>)

Martin, E. 1999. Who Knows Who Lives Here? Within-Household Disagreements as a Source of Survey Coverage Error. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 63: 220-236. (Bobcat or online at: <http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/63/2/220>)

SECTION 2: STATISTICAL METHODS FOR SURVEYS

3. Introduction to sampling: populations, sampling frames, and coverage error.

Groves, chapter 3, also 4.1-4.3

Lohr, S. 2007. Recent Developments in Multiple Frame Surveys. *Proceedings of the American Statistical Association, Section on Survey Research Methods*. (<http://www.amstat.org/sections/srms/Proceedings/y2007/Files/JSM2007-000580.pdf>)

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4. Sample design and sampling error.

Groves, sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.7

5. Weighting, imputation and estimation in complex surveys.

Groves, sections 10.5 to 10.7.

6. Putting it together in Stata.

SECTION 3: MODES OF DATA COLLECTION

7. Methods of data collection.

Groves, Chapter 5.

Jowell, R., et. al. 1993. "The 1992 British Election: The Failure of the Polls." *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 57(2). (Bobcat)

Cui, W. W. 2003. Reducing error in mail surveys. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation* 8 (18) online at <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=8&n=18>

Porter, S. R. and Whitcomb, M. E. 2007. Mixed-mode contacts in web surveys: paper is not necessarily better. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(4). (Bobcat).

Fricker, S., Galesci, M., Tourangeau, R., and Yan, T. 2005. An experimental comparison of web and telephone surveys. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(3). (Bobcat)

8. Methods of data collection continued.

Ehlen, J. and Ehlen, P. 2007. Cellular-only substitution in the United States as a lifestyle adoption: implications for telephone survey coverage. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 71(5). (Bobcat)

Couper, M.P. 2000. Web surveys: A review of issues and approaches. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 64(4). (Bobcat)

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SECTION 4: HUMAN FACTORS

9. Questions and answers in surveys.

Groves, Chapter 7

Pearson, Robert W., Ross, M., and Dawes, R.M. Personal Recall and the Limits of Retrospective Questions in Surveys. In Questions about Questions: Inquiries into the Cognitive Basis of Surveys. (emailed to class)

Zaller, J. and Feldman, S. 1992. A simple theory of the survey response. American Journal of Political Science 36: 579-616. (JSTOR).

Tourangeau, R. and Rasinski, K. A. 1988. Cognitive processes underlying context effects in attitude measurement. Psychological Bulletin, 103, 299-314. (Bobcat or online at http://business.illinois.edu/shavitt/ba_531/tourangeau.pdf)

10. Evaluating survey questions.

Groves, Chapter 8.

Oksenberg, L., Cannell, C., and Kalton, G. 1991. New strategies for pretesting survey questions. Journal of Official Statistics 7(3). Online at <http://www.jos.nu/Articles/abstract.asp?article=73349>

11. Survey interviewing.

Groves, Chapter 9.

Anderson, B. A., Silver, B. D., and Abramson, P. R. 1988. The effects of the race of interviewer on race-related attitudes of black respondents in SRC/CPS National Election Studies. Public Opinion Quarterly, 52(3). (Bobcat)

12. Survey nonresponse

Groves, Chapter 6.

Groves, R. et al. 2006. Experiments in producing nonresponse bias. Public Opinion Quarterly, 70(5) Special issue. (Bobcat)

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13. Postcollection survey processing; imputing missing data.

Groves, Chapter 10.

14. Survey ethics.

Groves, Chapter 11

AAPOR statement at <http://www.aapor.org/ethics/intro.html>.

Wallman, K. 2003. Privacy and confidentiality—a new era (the 11th Morris Hansen lecture). *Journal of Official Statistics* 19(4). Online at <http://www.jos.nu/Articles/abstract.asp?article=194315>

Warner, S. L. 1975. Randomized response: a survey technique for eliminating evasive answer bias. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 60. (JSTOR)

Abernathy, J. R., Greenberg, B. G., and Horvitz, D. G. 1970. Estimates of induced abortion in urban North Carolina. *Demography* 7. (JSTOR)

15. Advanced topics: getting answers to hard questions; comparing cross-cultural survey response. (If there is time)

King, G., Murray, C. J. L., Salomon, J. A., and Tandon, A. 2003. Enhancing the validity and cross-cultural comparability of measurement in survey research," *American Political Science Review* 97(4). (JSTOR)

Baumgartner, H. and J-B. Steenkamp. 2001. Response styles in marketing research: A cross-national Investigation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 38(2): 143-156. (Bob-cat)

Rossi, P, Allenby, G., and Gilula, Z. 2001. Overcoming scale usage heterogeneity: a bayesian hierarchical approach. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 96. (JSTOR)

Final Project:

For the final project you will write, field test and revise a survey and plan a sampling strategy. You will then describe how why you wrote the questions you did and how the field testing improved the survey. Think of the report as a memo you would write in a work setting to explain to your colleagues how you constructed and revised the survey and how you plan to field it.

The report should include two sections. The first is a narrative history of how you chose each question, why you included it, how the field testing went, how you revised it and how you plan to field the survey. This may include annotated versions of the old and revised survey items. The

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second section will include the final survey. The project should be no more than 15 pages in length.

If you are already involved in ongoing survey research with an original instrument or with a publicly-available data collection and you wish to tailor the assignment to your specific needs, please contact me in advance.

Project steps:

1. Identify a survey topic that interests you, preferably one that relates to your own research. Example: the relationship between student anxiety and grades.
2. Write an appropriate survey introduction that allows the survey taker to naturally segue in to the survey. To make the script appropriate you will have to determine what mode of data collection you will use. For example, if it is to be read aloud by a survey taker, the script will be different than if it is to be collected online. The script should also include any instructions to the interviewer (or the survey programmer for web surveys) that will instruct them on proper presentation. The introduction should also provide respondents with all the information required by the NYU human subjects committee. (Look this up online if don't get to this in class before you start the project.)
3. Draft 10 to 20 survey items designed to cover your chosen topic. You do not need to write a complete survey. You may modify existing items or write completely new ones. If you use existing questions, explain why you chose them and describe any items you ruled out.
4. For each question indicate whether it elicits factual information, attitudes psychological constructs or some combination thereof.
5. Describe any existing publically available surveys that have attempted to address similar topics and compare your questions to those.
6. Revision 1: Rewrite each question after completing filling out a standardized survey checklist, which we will cover in class, for each.
7. Revision 2: Elicit feedback on the survey items from an area expert. (This could be a fellow student who knows something about the subject.)
8. Revision 3: Field test your questionnaire with a convenience sample of classmates, friends, or others. Conduct at five test interviews using one or more of the field testing techniques described in Groves and describe which one(s) you used.
9. For each survey item, describe the specific problems you identified in each revision and how you addressed those problems in the revisions.
10. In concluding, summarize how you think the survey improved over iterations and which techniques you found most helpful in this case.
11. Indicate how you will field this study, including mode of data collection, proposed sample size and sampling method. Consider how you will deal with nonresponse or other fielding challenges.
12. Provide a full list of the final survey items in a separate section. **START THIS SECTION ON A NEW PAGE IN YOUR REPORT** (so that I can easily separate the sections while grading).
13. Submit the project online through NYU Classes.