Survey Research Methods and Applications
Fall 1999 M, W 10:40 – 12:10 PM
Room 10, Robertson Hall
Edward P. Freeland

Objectives:

- To provide students with an in-depth understanding of the survey research process as it is used in social science research and the analysis of public policy issues. This includes development of research questions and hypotheses, sampling, questionnaire design, survey administration, data processing, and analysis.

- To give students an opportunity to design a survey, learn basic interviewing skills, and analyze survey data.

- To provide students with the skills needed to assess the quality of survey research findings and their relevance to public policy issues.

Requirements

1. The course will be run as a seminar that includes a midterm examination (20% of course grade) and a final examination (30% of course grade). Students will conduct a class project in which we design a survey and conduct interviews by telephone or in-person. Students will also be graded on their performance as interviewers (10%), and on their work on two assignments in statistical analysis of survey data (30%). We plan to use STATA for WINDOWS software for analysis, but students may use SAS or SPSS if they prefer.

Required Texts


Optional Texts


Schedule

1. Introduction – Monday, September 20
   Discuss objectives of the course, the course schedule, readings.
   Propose ideas for the class survey.

2. Overview of Social Science Research Methods – September 22
   Quantitative Methods: Surveys, records abstraction, administrative data, structured observation.
   Qualitative Methods: Focus groups, in-depth interviews, case studies, participant-observation, content analysis.
   Choosing an appropriate research method; combining multiple methods.
Readings (Readings other than main texts will be on reserve at the WWS Library or on the Internet):

3. Use and Misuse of Surveys – September 27

Using research to address social problems and monitor economic and social well being; Examples of major surveys and how they are used; Examples of inappropriate use of surveys; Introduction to STATA for PC.

Readings:
The General Social Survey (http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/gss/homepage.htm)
An Overview of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (http://www.isr.umich.edu/src/psid/overview.html)

4. Framing Research Questions and Developing Hypotheses – September 29

Readings:

5. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing – October 4

Readings:

6. Univariate statistics, crosstabulation and the chi-square test of significance – October 6

Readings:
Wonnacott and Wonnacott, Pp. 549-563.

7. Questionnaire Design – October 11 and 13

Principles and techniques for developing valid and reliable survey instruments; Measurement issues; Sources of bias; Pretesting
Design questionnaire for class survey

Readings:
Czaja and Blair, Pp. 51-106.

8. Race and Ethnicity – October 18

First data analysis assignment due

Readings:

9. Introduction to Sampling Theory – October 20

Probability sampling
Dangers of nonprobability sampling

Readings:
Czaja and Blair, Pp. 107-169.

10. Midterm Examination – October 25

11. Sampling Theory (continued) – October 27, November 8

Determining sample size; Assigning sample weights

Readings:

12. Multivariate Analysis Techniques – November 10 and 15
Readings:
Wonnacott and Wonnacott, pp. 357-440.
Weisburg et al. 298-324.

13. Telephone Surveys – November 17

RDD surveys; Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI)

Readings:
Czaja and Blair, pp. 31-49, 171-214.

14. Designing and Administering Surveys by Mail and through the Internet – November 22

The Total Design Method (TDM)

Readings:
The Harris Poll Online (http://www.harrispollonline.com/).

15. In-person Interviewing – November 24

Readings:

16. Interviewing Techniques and Mode Effects – November 29

Structured vs. loosely structured questionnaire; Problems of interviewer bias; Probing

Conduct interviews for class project

Readings:
Dillman Don A. et al. 1996. “Understanding Differences in People’s Answers to Telephone and Mail Surveys.” Pp. 45-62 in Advances in Survey Research. MT Braverman and JK Slater (eds.).
17. Coding and Data Reduction – December 1

Readings:

18. Presenting the Findings– December 6

Presenting and describing tables and multivariate models; calculating and reporting response rates.

Second data analysis assignment due

Readings:
Babbie, Pp. 327-335.


Experimental and quasi-experimental designs; implementation studies; impact evaluations

Readings:


Understanding the world of contract research; Elements of proposals and requests for proposals. Survey budgets and costs.

Readings:


Protecting respondent confidentiality; Disclosure;

Readings:

22. Winter Recess – December 17- January 11 (Dean’s Date)

23. Final Examination Period – January 12-January 22