Sociology 336H5S   Data Collection Using the Internet (Web Polling)

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This course uses the CCNET learning management system. Locate this with Google.

Internet based surveys are an important part of processes of research, consultation and decision-making in modern societies. Used in combination with more traditional data collection approaches they are increasingly important in market research, government surveys and academic studies. Classical survey research paradigms include the face-to – face interview, the mail survey and the telephone survey. This course is about using the internet for collecting high quality social science data. Topics include: defining the population of interest; framing questions and response modes; combining internet surveys with other data collection approaches; ethical and security issues; optimizing Web page design for data capture; Web polling; panel surveys; evaluating Web surveys. We will review basic topics in survey research including: "the art of asking questions", principles of attitude measurement and the elements of sampling and ethical review procedures; "sensitive topics", "how to avoid asking leading questions"; "how to collect and manage textual data from open-ended questions", and "what is an adequate response rate?"

Class Project

We will devise, pilot and implement an internet survey through which respondents will make judgments about the health, safety, social cohesiveness and general desirability of their home neighbourhoods, as indicated by postcodes. Ethical review will be an important part of the process. This "Neighbourhood Report Card" project promises to generate interesting sociological data on Canadian neighbourhoods. Preliminary Reading: Caughy, Margaret O., Patricia O'Campo and Jacqueline Patterson (2001). "A brief observational measure for urban neighbourhoods". *Health and Place*, 7 (2002): 225-36.

Assessment Scheme (Grading)

Participation in class project. 20%. Students will be graded on their oral and written participation, including postings to the CCNET course forum.
Brief in-class quiz (5%) to be held in weeks 3, 5, 8 and 10. 20%. Format: short answers.
Essay project: draft due on February 24th: 10%. Length: around ten pages double spaced.
Essay project: final version due on March 31st. 20%. Length: between 20 and 30 pages.
The essay project (both draft and final version) should be submitted in hard copy and also in electronic form via the UTM web site at www.utm.utoronto.ca/submit
Final examination. 30%.: Format: one essay chosen from several alternatives and two short answers chosen from several alternatives.

Non-Credit Activities. See the course bulletin board on CCNET

Use Google to locate existing web surveys, as well as materials on measuring social aspects of neighbourhoods. Write up brief reports that evaluate those surveys.

<u>Required Text</u>

Best, Samuel J. and Brian S. Krueger. *Internet Data Collection*. Sage University Paper Series no. 141. Sage. 2004. This is not expected to be at the UTM bookstore until around Jan. 20th. Students should consider ordering it from indigo.ca or amazon.com.

<u>Schedule week by week</u>. Journal articles can be obtained electronically through the U of T Library system (under e-resources). Let me know if you would like to purchase a bound set of these articles. Otherwise I assume that you will obtain them via the internet.

Week 1. January 6, 2005
What is a survey and how might the internet be relevant? Some examples of current internet surveys. Research ethics are important: introduction to ethical review.
Basic Reading
Best and Krueger, pp. 1-10
Gunn, Holly. "Web-based surveys: changing the survey process. *First Monday* (an Open source journal): http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_12/gunn/

Week 2. January 13
Review of basic concepts including: cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys; defining the population of interest; samples, sampling frames and populations; volunteer samples, convenience samples, snowball samples, quota samples and random ("probability") samples; point estimates, standard errors and confidence intervals.
Basic Reading
Best and Krueger, pp. 13-22.
Bainbridge, William S. "Cyberspace: Sociology's natural domain". *Contemporary Sociology*, 28 (6): 664-67.
Couper, Mick P. 2004. "Web Surveys: a review of issues and approaches". *Public Opinion Quarterly* Volume 64:464–494. 2004

Week 3. January 20. Brief Quiz.
Enormous sample sizes may impress but do not necessarily produce useful estimates. Are high response rates essential to valid surveys? Traditional criteria for evaluating the quality of a survey. Sudman's "credibility scale".
Procedures for contacting potential respondents. More on the ethical review process.
Basic Reading
Best and Krueger, pp.22-36.
Sudman, *Applied Sampling*. The credibility scale.
Classical failure of polling: Bryson, M.C. (1976). "The *Literary Digest* Poll: making of a statistical myth". *The American Statistician*, 30 (4) November: 184-9.

Week 4. January 27
Administering Instruments on the internet. Modes of collecting data in traditional surveys and on the internet. Framing questions and response modes. "The art of asking questions". Use of an open source toolbox: introduction to the PHP-Nuke web portal
Basic Reading

Best and Krueger, pp. 36-43

Tourangeau, Roger, Mick Couper and Frederick Conrad (2004). "Spacing, position and order: interpretive heuristics for visual features of survey questions". *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 68 (2004): 368-93.

Week 5. February 3. Brief Quiz.
Administering Instruments on the internet.
Basic Reading
Porter, Stephen R. and Michael Whitcomb (2003). "The impact of contact type on web survey response rates". *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 67 (2003): 579-88.
Best and Krueger, pp. 43-65.
Couper, Mick P., Roger Tourangeau and Kristin Kenyon (2004) "Picture this! Exploring visual effects in web surveys". *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 68 (2004): 255-66

Week 6. February 10
Laboratory session on using of the open source toolbox from the PHP-Nuke web portal in aid of the class project on a report card for neighbourhoods.
Couper, Mick P., Michael W. Traugott and Mark J. Lamias (2001). "Web survey design and administration." *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 65 (2001): 230-53.
Gosling, Samuel D., Simine Vazire, Sanjay Srivastava and Oliver P. John. (2004) "Should We Trust Web-Based Studies? A Comparative Analysis of Six Preconceptions about Internet Questionnaires." *American Psychologist* Vol. 59, No. 2, 93–104. 2004.

Week 7. February 17. Reading Week

Week 8. February 24. Brief Quiz and Draft Essay Due Date.
Administering Instruments on the internet. Issues of respondent non-cooperation and item non-response. American Association of Public Opinion Research guidelines on standard modes of reporting response rates.
Basic Reading
Hayslett, Michele M. and Barbara M. Wildemuith. (2004) "Pixels or pencil? The relative effectiveness of Web-based versus paper surveys." *Library and Information Science Research*, 26 (2004): 73-93.
Best and Krueger, pp. 65-73

Week 9. March 3.
Inducing people to participate and controlling who participates. Effectiveness of incentives and the value of checking on IP addresses of those who respond.
Basic Reading
Singer, Eleanor, John van Hoewyk and Mary P. Maher. (2000). "Experiments with incentives in telephone surveys". *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 64 (2000): 171-88.
Umbach, Paul D. (2004). Web Surveys: best practices". *New Directions for Institutional Research*, no. 121, Spring 2004, chapter 2.
Best and Krueger, pp. 74-84.

Week 10. March 10. Brief Quiz.
This will be a catch-up session. We will review our progress on the class project (the "Neighbourhood Report Card"). We will also discuss the correction of data from a biased sample: use of post-stratification by Statistics Canada and other organizations.

Week 11. March 17
Combining internet data collection with other approaches to social surveys including the use of Census summaries. Application to longitudinal (panel) surveys and to surveys of elite populations.
Basic Reading: Best and Krueger, pp. 84 onwards.

Week 12. March 24
Other Web-based systems for estimating probabilities through the pooling of many independent "guesstimates" or on-line market exchanges. Examples: the Iowa Electronic Market or online exchanges such as www.tradesports.com and www.betfair.com

Week 13. March 31
More on on the class project (the "Neighbourhood Report Card"). Web-based access to archival sources and qualitative data.

Week 14. April 7
Student group presentations and demonstrations

Examples for Study (Use Google to find more)

University of Toronto Provost's Web page

Hitachi Survey Research Centre: survey of constitutional lawyers' views of the Constitution

Globe and Mail University Report Card

Sexuality in the 1990s Web Page
http://mypage.uniserve.ca/~lowman/ICSS/icss.htm
Men Who Buy Sex, Phase 2: Internet and British Columbia Survey Methodology and Preliminary Results from the Internet Survey. John Lowman, Chris Atchison, and Laura Fraser A Study Funded by the British Columbia Ministry of the Attorney General March 31, 1997. This can be compared with the first (1954) Kinsey report.

Web sources (Use Google to find more)

AOIR (Association of Internet Researchers). http://www.aoir.org/
http://www.aoir.org/

American Association of Public Opinion Research. http://www.aapor.org/

WebSM: everything about Web Surveys. http://www.websm.org/

Use Perseus ExpressPoll to create a free instant web poll! By asking a few simple questions, you can create a poll for your use immediately.
http://www.expresspoll.com/mac.html

PHP-NUKE: the open source professional portal system. http://www.phpnuke.org/

Survey Tracker (a commercial product). http://www.surveytracker.com. See also.
http://www.surveyssay.com/

<u>Books for Reference (Library Sources)</u>

Cochrane, William G. (Ed.) *Statistical Problems of the Kinsey Report on Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male. A report of the American Statistical Association committee to advise the National Research Council committee for research in problems of sex*. Robarts. Stacks HQ18 .U5K523 1954. You might also want to view the recent film on the life of Alfred Kinsey.

De Vaus, David. *Social Surveys*. (in four volumes). 2002. Sage Benchmarks Social Research Methods. UTM library. Stacks HN 29.S646 2002

Dillman, Don A. *Mail and Internet surveys : the tailored design method*. 2nd edition. 2000. HM 538 .D55 2000 ERIN. Also 300.72 .D578M2 OISE/UT and HM 538 .D55 2000X ROBA

Goyder, John. *The Silent Minority: nonrespondents in sample surveys*. Cambridge MA: Polity Press. 1987.

Kinsey, Alfred C., Wardell B. Pomeroy and Clyde E. Martin. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*. W.B. Saunders. 1963 edition. (Orig. pub. 1954). UTM library. Stacks HQ18 .U5 K5.

Lange, Serge. (Ed.) *The File: a case study in correction (1977-1979)*. Springer Verlag. 1981

Lynch, P.J. and S. Horton. *Web Style Guide: Basic design principles for creating web sites*. New Haven CT: Yale University Press. 2002. Second Edition.

Rossi, Peter, J. Wright and Andy Anderson. (Eds.) *Handbook of Survey Research*. 1983.

Schonlau, Matthias et al. *Conducting Research Surveys via E-Mail and the Web*. Rand McNally. 2002.

Surowiecki, James *The Wisdom of Crowds*. New York: Doubleday. 2004.