

Political Communication: Research Methods  
POLS 418  
MWF 10:00-10:50

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February 2, 2011

## Goals

- ▶ Science
- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Content Analysis
- ▶ Network Analysis
- ▶ Experiments

## Qualitative vs Quantitative

- ▶ Qualitative research involves collecting non-numerical data to search for patterns.
- ▶ Quantitative involves collecting numerical data or assigning numerical values to data so that statistical relationships can be explored.
- ▶ What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- ▶ What do we mean by level of analysis?

## The Science of Politics

- ▶ What does it mean to be scientific?
- ▶ What is the hallmark of scientific research?
- ▶ Why is replication so important?

## Sources of Data

- ▶ Archives-ICPSR
- ▶ Archives-ANES
- ▶ Archives-NAES
- ▶ Archives-Pew
- ▶ Lexus Nexus

## Surveys

- ▶ Why are CASIs so useful?
- ▶ What are some of the problems of using CASIs?
- ▶ How else have computers helped with surveys?
- ▶ Knowledge Networks

## Problems with Surveys

- ▶ How has new technology affected sampling?
- ▶ Why are people more comfortable providing sensitive information on internet surveys than paper surveys?
- ▶ Why might respondents answers to questions not be reliable?
- ▶ Which is better, closed-ended or open-ended questions?

## Depth Interviews

- ▶ What are some of the methods used in “depth interviews”?
- ▶ Why are “depth interviews” so useful?
- ▶ Talking about Politics (Walsh)

## Content Analysis

- ▶ Why would a researcher use content analysis?
- ▶ What types of content could we examine?
- ▶ Do Women Candidates Play to Gender Stereotypes? Do Men Candidates Play to Women? Candidate Sex and Issues Priorities on Campaign Websites (Dolan, 2005)
- ▶ Is this qualitative or quantitative research?
- ▶ What are the advantages and disadvantages of human and computer coders?
- ▶ What are some of the problems with content analysis?
- ▶ Do human coders and computer coders run into the same problems?
- ▶ Will discuss (probably Monday) how content analysis works in detail using your research project as an example.

## Network Analysis

- ▶ Why would a researcher use network analysis?
- ▶ What are we looking for in network analysis?
- ▶ What are some of the problems researcher face with network analysis?
- ▶ Scott McClurg- Do our networks affect how we make voting decisions?

# Experiments

- ▶ Lab Experiment (example)
- ▶ Is Voting is Contagious: Evidence from Two Field Experiments (Nickerson, 2008)
- ▶ On the Limits of Framing Effects: Who Can Frame? (Druckman, 2001)
- ▶ What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of experiments?

## Micro-Paper 1

- ▶ One-two pages single-spaced, critical analysis of Mutz and Wojcieszak (2009).
- ▶ First paragraph-summarize the article (3-5 sentences).
  - ▶ What is the goal?
  - ▶ Where do the authors get their data?
  - ▶ What methods do the authors use?
  - ▶ What is the main conclusion?
- ▶ Body of the paper should talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the article.
  - ▶ It will be very helpful to draw on Graber's chapter in the Kaid book.
- ▶ The conclusion should propose ways to improve the authors' study.
- ▶ Due Friday, February 4, in class.