

Political Science 146: Mass Media and Public Opinion

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- Commissioned polls often have an interest in the outcomes of certain questions so may try to write questions in ways that support their cause.

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- Problems with wording in straightforward factual questions.
- E.G.: “How many children do you have in your household?” Husband and wife disagree; perhaps question is ambiguous because one respondent thinks of all children (including college age children) as in their household; whereas the other only thinks of those children living at home.

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- What does “few” mean?

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- Response alternatives/answers
- Alternative question wording can make a difference

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Table : Gallup: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Clinton/Bush? vs. CBS: Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Clinton/Bush, are you undecided, or haven't heard enough about the candidate to to have an opinion?"

	Favorable	Unfavorable	DK
Gallup: Clinton	63	25	12
NYT: Clinton	36	24	31

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- Second: 46% Approve, 50% Disapprove

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- Variable then ranges from 1 (Strong Dem) to 7 (Strong GOP)

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- E.G.: Social dominance orientation: personality trait that predicts social and political attitudes. Based on degree to which someone engages in group-based discrimination; a measure of an individual's preference for hierarchy within a social system and the domination of inferior groups

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- Percent agreeing much larger when questions are asked in this order, than when reversed.

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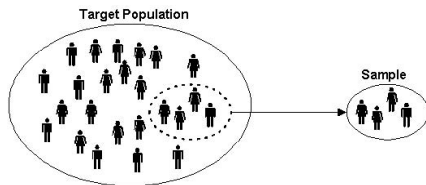
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- Sample must be large enough to make accurate generalizations. For instance, a sample of 100 will be less reliable than a sample of 1,000. However, a sample of 10,000 will not be much more reliable than a sample of 3,000. Rate of diminishing return, based on mathematical equations.

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- Focus Groups: In-depth groups of 10-12 people discussing issues, more qualitative, not generalizable

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- Cluster Sampling: Multiple interviews done within the sample area. Done more out of convenience, not quite as accurate