Survey experiments

Time: Tuesday, 14 June 2022, 10:00-12:30 and 14:30-17:00, Seminar room 2
                  Wednesday, 15 June 2022, 10:00-12:30 and 14:30-17:00 Seminar room 2

Office hours: 17:30-18:30 both days

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Register online

Short outline

Survey experiments are an essential tool in the kit of any researcher in the broad fields of public opinion and political behaviour. This workshop is designed to provide four services for those looking to begin or advance with this method:

1.   an introduction to the main types and purposes of survey experiments;

2.   a discussion of the methodological issues – not just external validity but also pre-treatment, manipulation checks, mediation, Hawthorne effects – raised by this method;

3.   a thorough introduction to Qualtrics, the leading online survey design platform, and what it offers for experimentation;

4.   practical experience of designing, programming/scripting, pre-registering and evaluating your own experiments.

All participants – either as individuals or in teams – will get detailed feedback on their own experiments. The overall aim is to make participants both more skilled producers and more discerning consumers of survey experimental research.

Organisation

There will be four sessions across the two days. The first two will be a mixture of lecturing and class discussion. The third will be a practical session working with the Qualtrics software. In the fourth, participants will present and evaluate their own and each other's experimental designs. The precise format and balance, especially on Day 2, will depend on the number of students and the variation in their interests.

Each day, following the main sessions, the lecturer will be available for an hour after class to discuss students' own experimental projects or to resolve anything that was unclear.

Readings and syllabus

You are not expected to do a lot of reading prior to or during this course. Those planning to use survey experiments in their own research will already have done (or at least be planning!) plenty of reading in the field anyway. Others can sample from the readings below. For Session 1, there is a short list of general readings and then a few sources illustrating the experimental methods presented. The first in each of those short lists will be the primary example used in class, too, and so is the obvious choice for those who would like to do some prior reading. For Session 2, there is a lengthy list of articles discussing methodological issues, some pretty specific – again, read as you want and need.

There are no readings for the second day: Qualtrics is best covered through its own support platform as well as useful code from other researchers, and links are provided.

Session 1 (Tuesday 10.00-12.30): Survey experiments: introduction and typology

General readings

Mutz, D. C. (2011). *Population-Based Survey Experiments*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Sniderman, P. M. (2018). Some advances in the design of survey experiments. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *21*, 259-275.
Gaines, B. J., Kuklinski, J. H., & Quirk, P. J. (2007). The logic of the survey experiment re-examined. *Political Analysis*, 15(1), 1-20.

Examples

Question wording
Soutter, A. R. B., & Mõttus, R. (2020). "Global warming" versus "climate change": A replication on the association between political self-identification, question wording, and environmental beliefs. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *69*, 101413.
Baker, A., & Renno, L. (2019). Nonpartisans as false negatives: the mismeasurement of party identification in public opinion surveys. *Journal of Politics*, *81*(3), 906-922.
Westwood, S. J., Grimmer, J., Tyler, M., & Nall, C. (2022). Current research overstates American support for political violence. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *119*(12), e2116870119.

Priming and framing
Butler, R., Nyhan, B., Montgomery, J. M., & Torres, M. (2018). Revisiting white backlash: Does race affect death penalty opinion? *Research & Politics*, *5*(1), 2053168017751250.
Busby, E. C., Gubler, J. R., & Hawkins, K. A. (2019). Framing and blame attribution in populist rhetoric. *The Journal of Politics*, *81*(2), 616-630.
Guess, A., & Coppock, A. (2020). Does counter-attitudinal information cause backlash? Results from three large survey experiments. *British Journal of Political Science*, *50*(4), 1497-1515.

Vignette experiments
Tomz, M. R., & Weeks, J. L. (2013). Public opinion and the democratic peace. *American Political Science Review*, *107*(4), 849-865.
Banerjee, A., Green, D. P., McManus, J., & Pande, R. (2014). Are poor voters indifferent to whether elected leaders are criminal or corrupt? A vignette experiment in rural India. *Political Communication*, *31*(3), 391-407.
Johns, R., & Davies, G. A. (2019). Civilian casualties and public support for military action: Experimental evidence. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *63*(1), 251-281.

List and endorsement experiments

Gadarian, S. K., Goodman, S. W., & Pepinsky, T. (2021). Partisan endorsement experiments do not affect mass opinion on COVID-19. Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 31(sup1), 122-131.

Traunmüller, R., Kijewski, S., & Freitag, M. (2019). The silent victims of sexual violence during war: Evidence from a list experiment in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *63*(9), 2015-2042.

Blair, G., Imai, K., & Lyall, J. (2014). Comparing and combining list and endorsement experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4), 1043-1063.

Conjoint experiments

Hainmueller, J., & Hopkins, D. J. (2015). The hidden American immigration consensus: A conjoint analysis of attitudes toward immigrants. *American Journal of Political Science*, *59*(3), 529-548.

Johns, R., & Kölln, A. K. (2020). Moderation and competence: how a party's ideological position shapes its valence reputation. *American Journal of Political Science*, *64*(3), 649-663.

Flores-Macías, G., & Zarkin, J. (2021). Militarization and perceptions of law enforcement in the developing world: Evidence from a conjoint experiment in Mexico. *British Journal of Political Science*, 1-21.

Session 2 (Tuesday 14.30-17.00): Design issues in survey experiments

This session is about the methodological issues raised by survey experiments. Comfortably the most discussed is external validity but there are many more, especially when it comes to drawing causal models going beyond a simple treatment→outcome model. The session will end with a first consideration of students' own experimental projects, for reflection overnight.

General readings

Dafoe, A., Zhang, B., & Caughey, D. (2018). Information equivalence in survey experiments. *Political Analysis*, 26(4), 399-416.

Barabas, J., & Jerit, J. (2010). Are survey experiments externally valid? *American Political Science Review*, 104(2), 226-242.

Mullinix, K. J., Leeper, T. J., Druckman, J. N., & Freese, J. (2015). The generalizability of survey experiments. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, 2(2), 109-138.

Chaudoin, S., Gaines, B. J., & Livny, A. (2021). Survey design, order effects, and causal mediation analysis. *Journal of Politics*, *83*(4), 1851-1856.

Bansak, K., Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D. J., & Yamamoto, T. (2018). The number of choice tasks and survey satisficing in conjoint experiments. *Political Analysis*, *26*(1), 112-119.

Druckman, J. N. and Leeper, T. J. 2012. "Learning More from Political Communication Experiments: Pretreatment and Its Effects." *American Journal of Political Science* 56: 875-896.

Miratrix, L. W., Sekhon, J. S., Theodoridis, A. G., & Campos, L. F. (2018). Worth weighting? How to think about and use weights in survey experiments. *Political Analysis*, *26*(3), 275-291.

Session 3 (Wednesday 10.00-12.30): Programming experiments in Qualtrics

This session introduces Qualtrics, the market-leading online platform for survey design. Beyond the basics, the primary focus will be various methods of randomisation and other design features key for experimentation. However, the session will also cover the inputs to and outputs from the platform: the possibility of scripting more complex designs using html and Java and importing them into Qualtrics, and the ways of exporting the data into more versatile data analysis packages.

Useful resources

Main support site: https://www.qualtrics.com/support/
Crowd-sourced support: https://community.qualtrics.com/XMcommunity
Training videos: https://basecamp.qualtrics.com/
Downloading Qualtrics data straight into R: https://github.com/ropensci/qualtRics
Assorted code for scripting Qualtrics surveys in Java, R and CSS: https://github.com/saberry/qualtrics
Thomas Leeper's code for conjoints in Qualtrics: https://github.com/leeper/conjoint-example

Session 4 (Wednesday 14.30-17.00): Evaluating experimental designs

This session will be based on students' own experimental projects, as discussed in Session 2 and provisionally scripted in Session 3. There are no new readings but the issues raised by Session 1 and 2 readings will be very much in play.