Thinking about Social Phenomena

Constructing Puzzles

Lecture dt. March 30, 2020

Timeline, amended

- March 12, Thu: Submit your puzzle and proposal

- ~~March 16, Mon: Research methods~~
- ~~March 26, Thu: office appointments, group-wise~~

- March 30, Mon: Draft of puzzle (incl. methods), 1,200 w.

- April 13, Mon: Project presentation online, invite comments

- Submission deadline TBC

- April 20: End sem exams begin (as of now)

Survey

- Done to empirically test your theory/theories

  - ✓ Can have a descriptive purpose, e.g. what detergents are people using; how people spend their incomes

  - ✓ Can have a explanatory purpose, e.g. does level of education explain spending habits of people

- **Subject matter of surveys**: demographic characteristics; attitudes and opinions; social environment

Sample survey

- **Historian**: describes what has happened in a particular case
- **Sample survey**: random sampling of cases to facilitate inferences from sample values to finite population values
- <u>Inference from sample to finite population</u>, e.g. % of six-foot tall people in India

Sample survey

Sample should be <u>Representative</u>

- What is the population from which the subjects have been drawn?
- To which population can we generalize the results?

<u>Probabilistic:</u> every element in target population has a non-zero probability of selection; human judgement should not play a part; e.g. simple random sample/stratified random sample
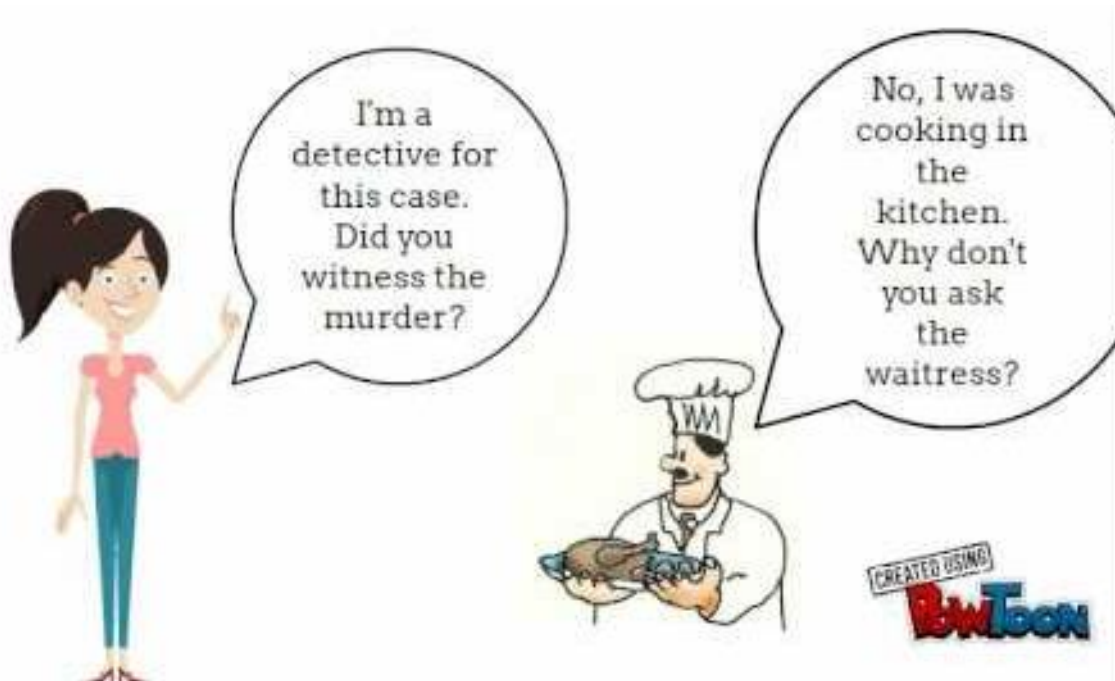
Sample survey

Probability sampling for telephone interviewing, USA procedure:
- Numbers blocked into groups by their first 7 digits
- Block is chosen at random
- Number from the block is dialled at random
- Numbers in block are called until a fixed number of interviews are achieved

Sample survey

Snowball sampling: where participants recruit or refer other participants

- non-probabilistic
- non-representative
- useful in where it's difficult to find participants or participants seek anonymity; sensitive topics

Survey errors

Sampling errors: only probability sampling permits the valid estimation of sampling variability

Measurement errors: bias induced by question wording and mode of delivery—try to minimize when constructing questionnaire

The questionnaire

Question wording effect

A. "Do you think India should allow public speeches against democracy?"
B. "Do you think India should forbid speeches against democracy"?

What % respondents likely to support free speech?

Similar question posed in the US (Rugg 1941) revealed
A. 21% support free speech
B. 39% support free speech

The questionnaire

Questions about attitudes and behaviour

1. Public sector workers should not be allowed to strike (Agree strongly; Agree; Disagree; Disagree strongly)
   - Attitudes are complex, have intensities; sometimes people do not have attitudes about certain aspects

2. Do you have frequent interaction with your next-door neighbours? (Very frequent; occasional; never)
   - Actual behaviour may not correspond to response (social desirability bias)

The questionnaire

What is wrong with the following questions:

1. Do you like to watch cricket matches of India and Australia?
2. How much do you earn?
3. Do you not think that murderers should not be sentenced to death?
4. Do you have a car?
5. When did you last pray?
6. Do you agree that honesty is the best policy?

Courtesy: Colin Mills, Uni of Oxford

The questionnaire

What is wrong with the following questions:

1. How often did you move house in your childhood?
2. In the last thirteen weeks how many times have you bought Kurkure Masala flavour?

The questionnaire: asking embarrassing questions

"Did you kill your wife?"

The questionnaire

Asking the embarrassing question: "Did you kill your wife?"

1. The Casual Approach: "Do you happen to have murdered your wife?"

2. The Numbered Card: "Would you please read off the number on this card which corresponds to what   became of your wife?" (Hand card to respondent)
   1) Natural death 2) I killed her 3) Other (what?)

3. The Everybody Approach: "As you know, many people have been killing their wives these days. Do you happen to have killed yours?"

Courtesy: Colin Mills, Uni of Oxford

The questionnaire

Asking the embarrassing question: "Did you kill your wife?"

4. The Sealed Ballot Technique.
   Don't have to face the interviewer.

5. The Kinsey Technique: Stare straight into respondent's eyes and with an air of assumption that you know everything ask, "When did you kill your wife?"

6. Ask question at the end of the interview.

References and readings

Moser, C.A. and G. Kalton. 1971. *Survey Methods in Social Investigation.* Darthmouth: Ashgate Publishing.

Novick, G. 2008. 'Is There a Bias Against Telephone Interviews in Qualitative Research?' *Research in Nursing and Health* 31: 391-398.

Rugg, D. 1941. 'Experiments in wording questions: II'. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 5: 91–92. https://doi.org/10.1086/265467

To make your own online survey, see www.surveymonkey.com (10 questions per survey free)