Political Science Scope and Methods

Observation, Measurement, and Political Implications II

Finishing up…

- This week: Measurement, part 2
- Concerns
  - Interviews
  - Verbal Reports of Decision-making
  - Verbal Reports of Behavior
- Examples
  - Butterfly Ballot
  - SATs
  - Your Projects

Interviews

- Systematic Observation
  - Access
  - Data collection
- Example: Fenno
  - Problems?

Verbal Reports: Decision-Making and Behaviors

- Decision-Making
  - Nisbett and Wilson
  - Implications for research
- Reports of Behavior
  - Sensitive questions
  - Faulty memory
  - Solutions?
    - Example: Vote over-reporting

Example 1: Butterfly Ballot

Image courtesy of MIT OpenCourseWare.
Strategy of Analysis

- Simple votes vs. vote for Buchanan graph
  - Could be misleading
  - Palm Beach is a large county
  - Cases; limited to Florida
  - Vote for Buchanan small (<1%)

Strategy of Analysis (continued)

- Look at all counties in the U.S.
  - Expected vote: Palm Beach is an outlier
- Are votes for Buchanan coming from Gore voters?
  - Look to other counties; compare Palm Beach to Broward and Miami-Dade
- Overvotes
  - Compare Gore/Buchanan votes to Gore/Bush
- Absentee Ballots
  - Natural experiment

SATs

- What do they measure?
  - Ability vs. aptitude
  - Questions of validity
    - Berkeley study
    - SAT preparation works: Kaplan
- Implications: University of Michigan Lawsuit

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More Examples

- Your Projects