

Lecture #12: Public Opinion Polling

(Sidlow, Chap. 8: Checklist)

I. Validity/Accuracy/Methodology of Polls

A. Must be Random!

1. No “self-selection” (Straw Polls)
2. What is the actual population being measured? (re:1936)

B. Sample Size, Accuracy, and “Sampling Error”

1. 800+/1000+/1200+/1500+/5000+
2. Margin of error (“Plus or minus”)

C. Interviewer and Wording of Questions

1. Phone vs. in-person
2. No “leading” questions (Push Polls)
3. How was the question worded, asked and/or presented?
4. Measuring opinion vs. creating it (Push Polls)

D. Informed/”Honest” vs. Uninformed/”Dishonest” Subject

1. Most people don’t like to say “Don’t Know” or “No Opinion”

II. Use of Polling; Interpretation

A. Media

1. Exit Polls
2. Presidential Approval Ratings
3. Specific Issues

B. Incumbents/challengers and their consultants

C. Who gains and loses?

D. Contradictions