Dahl, Robert A. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961.
Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy.* 5th ed. London: Allen and Unwin, 1976.

The theories of democratic elitism and pluralism are discussed in these works.

Goidel, Kirby, ed. *Political Polling in the Digital Age: The Challenge of Measuring and Understanding Public Opinion.* Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2011.

The intriguing essays in this volume discuss how changes in communication technology are influencing both opinion polling and our thoughts about what public opinion is.

Held, David. *Models of Democracy.* 2nd ed. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996.
Macpherson, C. B. *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Macpherson and Held have organized the numerous variants of democratic theory into a manageable number of models (four for Macpherson and nine for Held), some of which we have presented in this chapter. For a description of similarities and differences among theories of democracy or an introduction to specific theorists, these books are recommended.

Shapiro, Robert Y., and Lawrence R. Jacobs, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of American Public Opinion and the Media.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

The chapters in this edited volume summarize the most up-to-date scholarship on a wide variety of public opinion topics. Discussions of both normative and empirical issues are included.

American Association for Public Opinion Research, www.aapor.org

AAPOR is the professional organization for public opinion researchers. This Web site contains information about the organization, statements regarding the misuse of polls and poll results, links to Web sites that contain polling data, a helpful list titled "Fifty Books That Have Significantly Shaped Public Opinion Research," and lists of recently published public opinion books and journal articles.

Appendix
Studying Public Opinion Empirically

IN THIS APPENDIX, we describe a variety of methods for empirically studying public opinion. As you will see, each method has strengths and weaknesses. Further, some methods are better than others at answering particular public opinion questions. As we proceed, we refer to studies examining death penalty attitudes to illustrate how each method works in practice.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS

Today, the most common method for assessing public opinion is via a **survey** or **public opinion poll**. Most of us are familiar with polls or, at the very least, the results of polls. The survey results that we frequently encounter (in the news media, on the Internet, and so on) are based on the responses provided by a **sample** of people to the same list of questions. In scientific surveys, respondents are randomly selected to represent a specific **population** (such as students at the University of Kansas, residents of New Mexico, or citizens of the United States). Survey respondents answer a series of questions, often by selecting one response from a list of options provided by the survey interviewer. For example, to gauge public sentiment on the issue of capital punishment, a survey might include the following question: "Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?" Those being surveyed would respond by selecting "favor" or "oppose" or, in some cases, "no opinion" or "I don't know." These types of questions, with a limited set of response options, are called **closed-ended questions**.

Questions can be worded in a variety of ways, and the choice of which words to include can have important, sometimes even dramatic, effects. To illustrate **question wording effects**, let's examine two ways the Gallup Organization has asked people about their death penalty attitudes. In October 2010, Gallup polled a random sample of 1,025 adults living in the continental United States. About one-half of the respondents were asked whether they support the death penalty for convicted murderers, whereas the other half were asked to indicate which they favor more, the death penalty or life in prison (see Table A-1). When people

Table A-1 Question Wording and Response Options Matter

	Question wording
Response options	Question A: "Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?"
Favor	64%
Oppose	29
No opinion	6
Response options (rotated)	Question B: "If you could choose between the following two approaches, which do you think is the better penalty for murder: the death penalty or life imprisonment with absolutely no possibility of parole?"
Death penalty	49%
Life in prison	46
No opinion	6

Source: Data from Frank Newport, "In U.S., 64% Support Death Penalty in Cases of Murder," Gallup, Washington, D.C., November 8, 2010, http://www.gallup.com/poll/144284/Support-Death-Penalty-Cases-Murder.aspx.

were asked about the death penalty alone (Question A), almost two-thirds of respondents supported the death penalty, yet slightly less than one-half did when they had a choice of punishments for convicted murderers (Question B).[1] This is a substantial difference, and very different conclusions would be drawn about public support for the death penalty depending on which result was referenced. Indeed, the headline of the article Gallup released about this survey mentioned the 64 percent, not the 49 percent.[2]

It is also important to pay attention to what response options are presented to respondents as well as the order in which those options are provided. Take Gallup's Question B, for example. When citizens were asked to choose between the two approaches, one-half of the respondents were read the death penalty option first and the life in prison option second. The other half were read the choices in the reverse order. The choices are rotated because of concerns about **response order effects**.[3] Quite simply, citizens' opinions can be influenced by the order in which responses are presented to them. In addition, note that no middle or undecided categories were provided to respondents. As a result, citizens who were ambivalent or indifferent on the topic were unable to express their views.

To illuminate another concern about question wording and response options, let's discuss a question used by the National Race and Crime Survey to assess

opinion toward the death penalty. The wording is, "Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, somewhat favor, or strongly favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?"[4] Notice that response options from both points of view are provided in the stem of the question, which is what survey researchers call a **balanced question**. In contrast, Gallup's Question A refers only to the pro–death penalty position, which may encourage respondents to answer in that fashion. As a result, balanced questions are considered superior to questions that may lead respondents in one direction or another.

So, when you come across poll results, it is important to know the question wording, the response options, and the order in which those options were presented. Similarly, if you ever report the results of an opinion poll, you also need to provide all that information. Otherwise, it is very easy to mislead, whether intentionally or not, those who are reading your summary of the results.

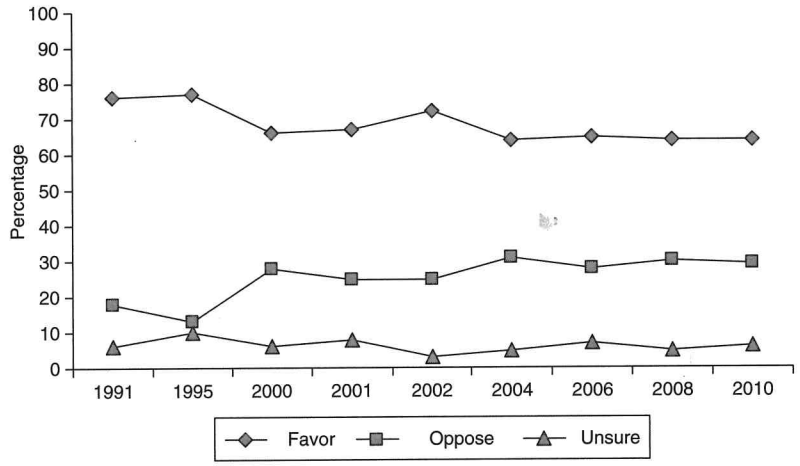
In a perfect world it is also important to know the order in which survey questions are asked. For instance, in the October 2010 Gallup survey, respondents were also asked whether they "believe the death penalty is applied fairly or unfairly in this country today." This was asked *after* respondents received either Question A or Question B about their opinion on the death penalty. But what if this question had been asked *before*? Respondents would have been primed to think about the fairness of the death penalty, which could have influenced their support for the policy. Specifically, respondents concerned about the fairness of the death penalty might be less likely to say they favored the policy when that concern was fresh in their minds, and vice versa. Therefore, when you analyze a public opinion survey, it is best to examine not only the question you are interested in but also the context in which that question is situated. Unfortunately, researchers and especially journalists do not always provide the text of the entire survey, so it is often difficult to evaluate whether **question order effects** are influencing the results.

Public opinion polls have a number of advantages. Randomly sampling people from a specified population allows us to draw conclusions about the opinions of the entire population. Why is that the case? Because a **random sample** is one in which chance alone determines which elements of the population make it into the sample. For example, let's say you want to draw a sample of twenty-five students from a class (or population) of one hundred students, and you want the opinions of the twenty-five students to reflect the opinions of all one hundred students. How would you draw that sample? You could have each student write his or her name on a slip of paper, collect the one hundred names in a hat, give it a good shake to make sure the names are all mixed up, and then draw out twenty-five names. Consequently, it would be chance alone that would determine which twenty-five students ended up in your sample. When respondents are

selected in this manner, and *not* on the basis of their specific characteristics (such as race or political views), we can generalize the results from the sample to the larger population from which the sample was drawn. The ability to draw such conclusions is known as **external validity**. For polls that include only respondents who *opt* to participate, the results are applicable *only* to those people who answered the survey questions. Because such poll results are based on what is called a **convenience sample**, not a random sample, they cannot provide information about a larger population.

Another advantage of surveys is that answering a closed-ended question is not very time consuming, so each respondent can answer many questions without being overly burdened. Also, many individuals can be asked the same questions, again because the time commitment per person is not great. Providing survey respondents the same questions with the same response options facilitates the tallying of results (such as, 64 percent of Americans support the death penalty) and also allows for a comparison of public opinion over time, provided, of course, that the same questions are asked at different times. For instance, as shown in Figure A-1, public support for the death penalty has fluctuated since 1991. In the

Figure A-1 Public Opinion toward the Death Penalty, 1991–2010



Source: Data from Frank Newport, *In U.S., 64% Support Death Penalty in Cases of Murder,* Gallup, Washington, D.C., November 8, 2010, http://www.gallup.com/poll/144284/Support-Death-Penalty-Cases-Murder.aspx.

Note: Here is the question wording: "Are you in favor of the death penalty for a person convicted of murder?"

early 1990s, three-quarters (or more) of the public favored the death penalty, but by 2000 only two-thirds did. After 2001, perhaps because of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, support for the death penalty increased somewhat to 72 percent, but since the mid-2000s, support has settled at around two-thirds of the public in favor of the policy.[5]

Surveys also have many uses. News media organizations use polls to measure the public's political and social opinions, and candidates conduct polls to determine which voters support them and why. Public opinion scholars find surveys useful for assessing the content of the public's opinions as well as describing how people's opinions differ. In particular, it is often interesting to examine whether different groups have different attitudes on important issues of the day. Because the 2010 Gallup survey recorded respondents' gender in addition to their death penalty attitudes, it is possible to investigate whether men and women hold different attitudes on this issue. Indeed they do. Seventy-one percent of men favor the death penalty, whereas only 58 percent of women indicate they support capital punishment for convicted murderers.[6]

A specific type of survey, called a **panel study or longitudinal survey**, allows scholars to determine whether people's opinions have stayed the same over time. In a panel study, the *same* people are asked their opinions on the same issues more than once. A study conducted by Robert Bohm and Brenda Vogel illustrates the use of this type of survey to track people's death penalty attitudes across more than a decade.[7] In the late 1980s, Bohm and Vogel surveyed college students at the beginning of the semester during which they were taking a class on the death penalty. They resurveyed the students at the end of the semester and then again a couple of years later. In 1999, Bohm and Vogel surveyed these (now former) students for the fourth time. The researchers were interested in whether students' attitudes changed after becoming more informed about the death penalty during the class and whether that attitude change was lasting. They found that students were less supportive of the death penalty immediately after taking the class, but over time the students reverted to their initial levels of support for the policy. They concluded that information about the death penalty can influence citizens in the short run but that views on the policy are largely driven by personality traits and values, which trump knowledge in the long run.

Panel studies are ideal for tracking changes in opinion across time, but it is important to note that **attrition** is a potential weakness of such studies. Attrition refers to the drop-off in the number of respondents over time. In the Bohm and Vogel study, for example, 120 college students were initially administered the survey, but only 69 were still participating in the study by the fourth wave. If the students who stopped participating were systematically different from the students who continued to participate, we would need to be cautious about drawing

conclusions from the study. Further, this particular panel study did not use a random sample, which limits the external validity of the results; however, many panel studies do rely on random samples, so their results can be generalized to the broader population.

EXPERIMENTS

Another common method used by public opinion researchers is experimentation. Although there are many types of public opinion **experiments**, in the most common form, the researcher manipulates a feature of the study and then assesses individual or group responses. Imagine you wanted to know how individuals respond to different types of news stories on the death penalty. You could assess this experimentally by providing one type of news story to one group of participants in your study and another type of news story to another group. After reading the news stories, these individuals would be asked whether they support the death penalty.

Many news media studies use experimental designs just like that to see whether citizens' opinions are influenced by different news content. For example, Frank Dardis et al. created newspaper stories to frame the death penalty in different ways. [8] One story constructed the death penalty as an affront to moral values (the morality frame), whereas another story emphasized that the policy was fundamentally flawed because innocent people might be executed (the innocence frame).[9] Some subjects read the story with the morality frame, while others read the one with the innocence frame. Subjects then completed a questionnaire that asked them to list the important factors they considered when determining their opinion on the death penalty. Dardis et al. found that subjects exposed to the innocence frame were more likely to mention innocence-related considerations as important factors in determining their attitudes toward the death penalty than subjects presented with the morality frame. Thus, the news frames shaped the ingredients of the subjects' death penalty attitudes.

The two key features of experiments that distinguish them from other methods and that allow for powerful causal conclusions to be drawn are manipulation and random assignment.[10] **Manipulation** involves the researcher varying access to information, events, or whatever is the focus of the research among experimental participants. In the example we have been discussing, the researchers manipulated exposure to news frames. **Random assignment** refers to the process by which people are assigned to experimental groups. With random assignment, it is chance alone that determines which subjects get in which condition. For instance, in the Dardis et al. experiment, subjects were randomly assigned to read a story framed either in terms of innocence or morality. Individuals are randomly assigned to groups, perhaps by flipping a coin to establish the person's assignment, in the expectation that individual characteristics that might be related to the

study's goals are equally likely to appear in all groups. Because men are more supportive of capital punishment than women, for example, it is important that not all men be assigned to the same group in an experiment designed to assess the impact of news stories on how citizens think about capital punishment. Random assignment ensures that chance, rather than a person's characteristics, determines experimental group assignment.

With successful random assignment, a researcher can be very certain that any differences in opinions or behaviors found across experimental groups are due to their exposure to the original stimulus (that is, due to the experimenter's manipulated feature). Experiments thus allow researchers to conclude that one factor causes another—a feature of research designs called **internal validity**. The ability to draw such causal conclusions is the primary advantage of experiments over other research methods. For example, you could conduct a survey and ask people if they have read news articles framing the death penalty in terms of innocence and whether they support the death penalty. If those who have read these stories are less likely to favor capital punishment, it would be tempting to conclude that the innocence frame influenced individuals' opinions. But you could not rule out the possibility that those who opposed capital punishment *before* exposure to the news stories were more likely to search out and read such stories. So, a person's political opinions might have influenced her news habits rather than the other way around. If, however, you expose some people to the innocence news story and others to a story framed in a different way, and you still find that those exposed to the innocence frame are less supportive of the death penalty, you can be much more certain that the news frame influenced their opinions.

Although experiments possess internal validity, they often have less external validity. That is, by using convenience samples (such as college students enrolled in introductory mass communications courses, as Dardis et al. did in their study) rather than random samples, experimenters cannot claim their sample is representative of the broader population. One way to address this weakness is to include an experimental design within a nationally representative survey. This method, called a **survey-based experiment** or **split-half survey**, entails randomly assigning survey respondents to experimental conditions. This approach "combine[s] the causal power of the randomized experiment with the representativeness of the general population survey."[11]

Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz used this approach in their national survey of race and death penalty attitudes.[12] They embedded an experiment in their survey by randomly assigning respondents to receive one of three versions of a question about the death penalty (see Table A-2). In the baseline condition, respondents received a death penalty question with no additional information. In the other two conditions, respondents received information either about racial disparities

Table A-2 Support for the Death Penalty in a Survey-Based Experiment

	Baseline with no argument	*Racial argument*	*Innocent argument*
	"Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, somewhat favor, or strongly favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?"	"Some people say that the death penalty is unfair because most of the people who are executed are African Americans. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, somewhat favor, or strongly favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?"	"Some people say that the death penalty is unfair because too many innocent people are being executed. Do you strongly oppose, somewhat oppose, somewhat favor, or strongly favor the death penalty for persons convicted of murder?"
White respondents	65%	77%	64%
Black respondents	50	38	34

Source: Adapted from Table 5.1 of Mark Peffley and Jon Hurwitz, *Justice in America: The Separate Realities of Blacks and Whites* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 158–159.

Note: Figures are the percentage of each group that somewhat or strongly favors the death penalty.

and the death penalty or about innocence and the death penalty. Peffley and Hurwitz's results are fascinating. First, whites were substantially more supportive of the death penalty than blacks across all three conditions. Second, whites and blacks did not respond in the same way to the different arguments. Support for the death penalty fell significantly among blacks when they were exposed to either the racial or the innocence argument. In contrast, whites were not moved by the innocence argument, and they actually became *more* favorable toward the policy when presented with the racial argument. Because respondents were randomly assigned to the conditions, we can conclude with great confidence that the different arguments influence opinion on the death penalty. Moreover, because the respondents were selected randomly from the U.S. population, the results of this study apply to the American public in general.[13] In other words, this study has both internal and external validity.

The Gallup Poll example we discussed earlier to illustrate question wording effects also used a split-half survey design. Specifically, Gallup polled a random

sample of citizens *and* respondents were randomly assigned to receive either the question that asked only about the death penalty or the question that mentioned both the death penalty and life imprisonment. As a result, we can draw strong causal conclusions about the impact of the differential question wordings on public opinion, and we can generalize those conclusions to the broader population.

INTERVIEWS

Asking people about their political views is also accomplished by **in-depth interviewing**. Unlike surveys in which hundreds (or thousands) of people are asked a series of closed-ended questions, interviewers ask their respondents much broader questions that are often **open-ended**. That is, interviewers typically do not provide their respondents with a list of response options and ask them to select one but, rather, allow the interviewees to answer a question however they want. An interviewer interested in public opinion toward the death penalty might ask the following question: "What do you think about the death penalty?" This question encourages respondents to not just assess their overall opinion on the issue but consider the roots of their opinion and perhaps even grapple with any contradictory thoughts they might have about the policy. Topics such as racial disparities in the application of the death penalty, the deterrent effect of the death penalty, or popular culture references to the death penalty might emerge in response to this question. Note that the question does not provide response options, thus allowing the respondent to answer in multiple ways. The question prompts respondents to explain *why* they hold their opinions, and if respondents do not volunteer such information, interviewers can follow up and ask them directly to explain their perspectives. Such "Why?" questions, because they are open-ended, do not appear frequently on opinion surveys, yet they can provide very useful information about public opinion.

Allowing respondents to decide what is most appropriate when answering questions results in responses that are more likely to reflect their actual thinking (no matter how organized or how messy) on the topic. By forcing respondents to select a preconceived option, surveys might not measure real opinions on an issue. To take an obvious example, survey respondents confronted with the "favor" or "oppose" option to a death penalty question will typically select one of these options even if their real attitude is "I support the death penalty when I am certain that the person convicted of murder did, without a doubt, commit the murder, but often one cannot be certain, beyond a doubt, that the person actually did commit the murder and there are now many examples coming to light when incorrect decisions were made by juries." An in-depth interview is very likely to capture the nuances of this person's view, whereas a public opinion survey with closed-ended questions simply cannot.

In-depth interviews can be especially useful when researchers are interested in understanding the views of a particular group of people. For example, Sandra Jones conducted in-depth interviews with forty-nine people active in the anti–death penalty movement to understand what mobilized them to get involved.[14] Jones found that many activists were motivated by moral outrage but that their outrage was complex and nuanced. To illustrate, an African American male leader of the movement had this to say about the death penalty:

> Not only is it dehumanizing, but everything else that wraps around it is immoral. It's immoral to have another human being strapped down for the purpose of killing them. It is immoral to put the warden in such a conflict. The one thing I've learned from doing this work is when I came to it I had such a clear sense of who was good and who was evil. All that got blurred very quickly. You can't hate a guard who cries over an execution. You can't hate a warden who is shaking during an execution.[15]

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to capture the detailed richness of this person's views about the death penalty using a survey, but in-depth interviewing allowed the researcher to assess the fullness of this activist's perspective.

Because open-ended questions typically take longer to answer, the number of individuals participating in an interview is usually much smaller than the number that responds to a survey. When a researcher spends many hours with his interview subjects, as Robert Lane did when he interviewed fifteen men about their political ideology (see Chapter 5), the volume of respondent comments can be enormous. The transcripts of Lane's questions and his interviewees' responses totaled 3,750 pages! With a smaller number of participants in a study, who have not been randomly selected to participate, it is inappropriate to draw conclusions that can apply to a larger population. Thus, studies using interview respondents are often criticized for not being representative of a larger population, a weakness that does not apply to surveys of randomly selected individuals.

Focus Groups

Focus groups resemble interviews in a number of ways, including that they both are used by researchers to examine how people think about political issues and that they use open-ended questions. The primary differences are that focus group research is conducted on multiple people at once and consists of a group discussion that is moderated and guided by a trained individual. Focus group researchers are often interested in learning how individuals construct political issues in their mind, how people communicate about a particular issue, and how an individual's discussion of a topic responds to communication from others in a group. In this way, focus groups are "a way to observe interaction among people that is important in understanding political behavior that is not possible to observe using more traditional empirical methodology."[16] To examine public opinion on capital punishment, for example, a focus group could be used to assess how people discuss this issue, including which features of it are especially compelling or relevant. Focus group participants could also be asked to read news articles or view movies about capital punishment and then discuss their reactions to determine how a group constructs meaning from such stories.

With the goal of understanding the complexity of citizens' death penalty opinions, Diana Falco and Tina Freiburger conducted six focus groups with twenty participants from Indiana County, Pennsylvania.[17] The researchers asked the participants to brainstorm about their positive and negative beliefs about the death penalty and to indicate their general opinion on the policy. Participants were also asked to read various crime scenarios and evaluate whether they would support the death penalty in each situation. Falco and Freiburger found that many citizens held both positive and negative views of the death penalty and that almost all citizens took characteristics of the offender or the victim into account as they responded to the crime scenarios. The researchers concluded that the twenty citizens in these focus groups have views on the death penalty that are much more complicated than suggested by "favor" or "oppose" responses to a survey question. Because the focus group participants do not constitute a random sample, the results cannot be generalized to the public as a whole. Nevertheless, these results are still very important because they help scholars think more carefully about how to design survey questions to more adequately measure the complexity of citizens' subtle, and sometimes tangled, views on the death penalty.

Content Analysis

The final method we profile here is content analysis. As its name indicates, **content analysis** is a technique used to analyze the content of communication. More specifically, it has been defined as "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication."[18] Content analysis can be applied to any type of communication, such as a news media story, a speech by a politician, a popular television show, a blog, or a novel. The primary object of content analysis is to systematically summarize the content of the selected source or item. This is done by selecting specific criteria of the communication to analyze and then carefully coding a selection (such as stories or speeches) along these criteria. For example, a speech could be analyzed for the number of times a specific word is used, the number of times a topic is mentioned, and whether the speaker uses any examples from his or her personal life.

In terms of public opinion research, many topics can be examined using content analysis. If a researcher wishes to know how the news media present public opinion on an issue, such as capital punishment, the content of news stories can be analyzed. Is public opinion represented as opinion survey results or as quotations from individual people? Or are elected officials asked what they think the public thinks about this issue?

In studies that seek to determine whether news media coverage is related to public opinion, content analysis is also used to examine this coverage. Recall the Dardis et al. experiment we discussed earlier. In that study, subjects were exposed to news stories about the death penalty framed either in terms of morality or innocence. Dardis et al. did not simply pull those media frames out of thin air; instead, they content analyzed abstracts of capital punishment news articles in the *New York Times Index* between 1960 and 2003 to identify frames. By systematically analyzing what types of arguments were used in these abstracts, the researchers were able to examine common frames used in the *New York Times* coverage. The morality frame, for instance, included arguments about retribution, such as the "eye for an eye" rationale for the death penalty. The innocence frame, in contrast, included arguments about the possibility that a person on death row might be innocent due to a tainted or racist criminal justice system.[19] Dardis et al. found that the innocence frame received little attention prior to the 1980s but that it became a prominent frame in the 2000s. The morality frame received significant attention in the 1970s, but has been less prevalent since then, although it continues to receive meaningful attention in the *New York Times*.

CONCLUSION

These five methods—surveys, experiments, interviews, focus groups, and content analysis—are the most common approaches used to assess public opinion. Surveys are by far the most frequently used approach, whereas focus groups and content analysis are the least common. Each method has advantages and disadvantages, and some methods are more appropriate than others for addressing particular types of public opinion questions, as the chapters in this book further illustrate.

Last, most of these research methods require human participation. Conducting research on people involves a host of ethical considerations. Chief among these concerns are that participants should voluntarily agree to participate, they should offer their informed consent before the study begins, and they should not suffer undue physical or psychological harm while participating in the study or afterward. For a detailed discussion of these and other ethical matters involved when using people as research subjects, refer to The Belmont Report (listed in the Suggested Sources for Further Reading).

KEY CONCEPTS

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closed-ended questions / 27
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SUGGESTED SOURCES FOR FURTHER READING

Aronson, Elliot, Phoebe C. Ellsworth, James Merrill Carlsmith, and Marti Hope Gonzales. *Methods of Research in Social Psychology.* 2nd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1989.
Gilens, Martin. "An Anatomy of Survey-Based Experiments." In *Navigating Public Opinion: Polls, Policy, and the Future of American Democracy*, ed. Jeff Manza, Fay Lomax Cook, and Benjamin I. Page. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
Krueger, Richard A., and Mary Anne Casey. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research.* 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2009.
Rubin, Herbert J., and Irene S. Rubin. *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data.* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2011.
Weber, Robert Philip. *Basic Content Analysis.* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 1990.

Each of these sources provides a detailed overview of one specific research method: experiments, survey-based experiments, focus groups, interviewing, and content analysis.

Asher, Herbert. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know.* 8th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010.
Traugott, Michael W., and Paul J. Lavrakas. *The Voter's Guide to Election Polls.* 4th ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.
Clawson, Rosalee A., and Zoe M. Oxley. *Conducting Empirical Analysis: Public Opinion in Action.* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2011.

The most common method for measuring public opinion is the opinion poll or survey. Asher's book is an informative and readable introduction to all aspects of survey research, while Traugott and Lavrakas focus on interpreting poll results properly. Clawson and Oxley's workbook provides a hands-on introduction to analyzing public opinion survey data.