Syllabus – Survey Research in Anthropology

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The aim of this short course is to introduce researchers to the uses of social survey techniques in ethnographic research. The following topics will be discussed:

- survey research design
- sampling strategies
- linking ethnographic and survey data
- construction of interview schedules
- interviewing techniques in survey research
- training interviewers
- data quality control
- coding and entering data
- data analytic strategies for survey data.

The emphasis in the course will be on the unique applications of various kinds of social survey techniques in anthropology. As such, the focus will be on how to incorporate social survey techniques in ethnographic research, where the principal aim is to test hypotheses of relevance to anthropological theory. The course will consist of readings, seminar discussions, formal presentations, and hands-on, practical experience. Course content will be organized around the instructors’ field experiences in Peru, Brazil, Mexico, the West Indies, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The use of statistical packages (principally ANTHROPAC and SPSS) at home and in the field will be a central component of the course. Participants in the course are required to have laptop computers; versions of ANTHROPAC and SPSS will be supplied. A basic understanding of univariate and bivariate statistics is strongly encouraged. This course will best serve those who are actively engaged in carrying out or developing a project.

Day 1

Morning: Research design – Descriptive and cross-sectional studies


Afternoon: Research design – Case-control and prospective studies


Day 2

Morning: Integrating qualitative and quantitative data in research design


Afternoon: Questionnaire construction (cont.)


**Day 3**

**Morning: Sampling**


**Afternoon: Interviewing**

Plain Language: Writing User-Friendly Documents (http://www.blm.gov/nhp/NPR/pe_toc.html)


**Day 4**

**Morning: Data management**

SPSS (n.d.) Data Coding, Data Cleaning, Missing Data.


Afternoon: Scaling procedures


**Day 5**

Morning: Data analytic strategies


Afternoon: Data analytic strategies (cont.)


**Useful Additional Materials**

Note: As you might expect, there are many, many texts that are either devoted to survey research methods, or cover survey research methods as a part of the presentation of general research methods. The following additional materials are merely a small selection from the many things that are available, but might be useful in several ways. Bernard’s text is of course a classic. Nardi and Fink introduce survey research methods in a way that is highly accessible to undergraduates (especially Fink, which actually might be too simplified). Friedman’s primer on epidemiology is just that, and it gives a really nice overview of what Mervyn Susser called “social science survey research methods applied to medical outcomes.” Spicer’s book is a superb overview of multivariate statistics, but without formulas. Even though he is trying to offer a nontechnical overview of multivariate analyses, he doesn’t shortchange the reader in any way. As much as you might know about stat, you’ll learn some more here. Finally, the collection of papers edited by Sirken represents a synthesis of the cognitive science re-thinking of
what survey research is all about, and includes many thoughtful pieces that will resonate with anthropologists, whether written by anthropologists or not.


