

TO: Board of Overseers  
National Election Studies  
Box Z  
Stanford, California

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TOPIC: Memorandum of Interest  
Conference on "Issue Voting"

We suggest the addition of a supplementary sample to the post-election wave of the presidential year national election studies. This supplementary sample would be composed of citizens who participated in both the current and the immediately preceding presidential election and who voted for candidates of different parties for president. This is, in essence, an oversample of "switchers." Such an addition to the cross-sectional sample would permit and encourage analyses of electoral dynamics which are now quite difficult or impossible due to insufficient sample size.

Many scholars are interested in the factors that determine electoral outcomes ---political events, changes in the economy, campaign tactics, propaganda appeals, etc. Cross-section surveys are not generally well suited for the study of such effects. One reason is that interest often focuses on electoral change, that change is often measured from the baseline of how an individual voted in the preceding election, and that there are often rather few such "switchers" included in most election surveys. Further analysis of "switchers," as for example by comparing those who were and those who were not exposed to some stimulus, becomes rather insecure due to the size of the sub-groups.

Below are the number of switchers included in each of the seven CPS cross-section samples from 1952 to 1976.

Presidential Election Year CPS Survey	Number of Switchers Dem to Repub	Number of Switchers Repub to Dem	Total Number of Switchers	Switchers as Percent of Two-Time Major Party Voters	Switchers as Percent of All Citizens with Complete Pre/Post Interviews
1952	165	17	182	20%	11%
1956	67	87	154	15%	9%
1960	31	121	152	20%	13%
1964	73	94	167	18%	11%
1968	172	12	184	24%	12%
1972	140	74	214	19%	8%
1976	45	180	225	21%	12%

NOTE: Figures are unweighted to show actual number of interviews.

The number of self-reported switchers varies from a low of approximately 150 to a high of around 225. This amounts to about 10% of all citizens with complete interviews each year and to approximately 20% of those in each survey who voted in two consecutive presidential elections. These figures include, of course, switchers moving to the current losing candidate as well as switchers moving to the currently winning candidate.

Given this level of switching and given the standard size of most samples, we cannot guarantee that there will be enough switchers interviewed to support any extensive data analysis. One way to overcome this would be to greatly

increase the size of the entire sample of citizens interviewed. Indeed, we came on the idea for the proposal we are now advancing via our own analysis of Gallup and Roper polls taken during the 1930's when, for various reasons, samples were typically in the 3,000 to 5,000 range. Working with these old polls we discovered sub-groups of switchers sufficiently large to permit analysis that would be risky with the smaller, more modern samples we had been used to. But increasing sample size today to the 3,000 to 5,000 range could be prohibitively expensive. A supplementary sample focusing on the sub-group of keenest interest is much more economical.

We suggest a supplementary sample that would double the number of switchers contained in the sample. The sample would be interviewed during the post-election wave of the survey since the act of voting and the direction of the vote are essential pieces of information for admitting individuals to the sample. The respondents might be gathered in neighborhoods in which interviewers are collecting other post-election wave data.

The idea of a supplement or over-sample is not new. The CPS has included such samples in the past in the case of black citizens whose representation in typical surveys also borders on a level unsupportive of much data analysis. Nor is the idea of selecting the respondent on the basis of self-reported behavior new. Some of the earliest surveys in the 1930's were restricted to respondents who reported having registered or actually having voted. Today many election polls done for the mass media as well as strategic polls done for candidates employ sampling designs that focus on some sector of the electorate of particular interest. In such cases

the interviewer opens the session with questions about the relevant behavior or frame of mind and then terminates the interview if the respondent does not meet the specified criteria. A similar procedure could be used here.

By leaving the main cross-sectional sample intact, this design will not affect the comparability of surveys over time. The over-sample can be excluded from analysis at will or else weighted to half their physical representation in the data set. We feel that the proposal is directly in keeping with the central mission of the CPS election surveys. Understanding of switchers and switching would be very useful to our study of electoral outcomes. As the inclusion of a black over-sample in earlier years permitted and stimulated new analysis along racial lines, so this new over-sample would prompt more work on electoral dynamics. Finally, the clientele for this over-sample should be diverse, including students of communications, of campaign tactics, of issue publics, of realignment, as well as scholars who design models of voter decision making and electoral outcomes.

We would welcome the opportunity to shape the proposal further and to discuss the idea with other interested scholars.