

# International Field Directors & Technologies Conference

## ELECTION 2008: Lessons Learned So Far

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- History of the poll
- Operations
- The 2008 elections: how operations affect results



- The first and the last self-operated media poll
  - Founded in 1975 (but a test run in 1969)
  - Sharing resources with The Times
  - 33 years of adaptations: Mitofsky-Waksberg, CATI, wording and order experiments, cell phone interviewing, web experiments



- **Current organization**

- Telephone polling plus election coverage
- 8-person staff augmented for election year
- Over 100 available interviewers for a 54-place interviewing room
- Exit polls and telephone polls

# Reasons for News Polls

- Access to information previously controlled
- **“Branding”** poll results
  - Media partnerships (CBS News/ New York Times)
  - Media/survey organization partnerships (CNN/USA Today/Gallup; AP/Ipsos)
- Polls as “experts”
  - Adding precision to journalism



## What's Different About 2008?

- First a compressed – but now an extended – primary season
- Too many early pre-primary polls?
- The 2008 campaign: measuring the impact of race and gender on phone polls and exit polls
- New operational issue: cell phones

# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- I. More isn't necessarily better  
(the case of New Hampshire)
- II. Entering less charted territory
  - the role of race and gender
  - Interviewer effects
- III. Adaptation is possible

# I. THE CASE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Timing: January 8, five days after the Iowa Caucuses ... and not long after the holidays
- Everything changed after Iowa
  - A new frontrunner
  - 24-hour media coverage
  - And ad expenditures - \$23 million on TV

# THE N.H. POLLS

- Only 3 of the 24 had Clinton ahead – one was tied; only one outside margin of error
- Pollsters and media focused on what looked like spectacular movement

	Obama	Clinton
• USA Today/Gallup (1/4-6)	41%	28%
• Reuters/C-Span/Zogby (1/5-7)	42%	29%

# THE FLUID ELECTORATE



11/07, Re-interviews 1/5-6/08

11/07: Clinton 39%, Obama 19%, Edwards 9%

1/08: Obama 35%, Clinton 28%, Edwards 19%

- 26% of likely Democratic primary voters had changed preferences since November
- 28% with a choice in January said their minds could still change (2 days before the primary)

# THE FLUID ELECTORATE

 CBS NEWS  
P O L L

11/07, Re-interviews 1/5-6/08

- Many of those who had switched from November had switched from Clinton, suggesting they could change back
- Many of the potential changers were female, and the female potential changers were then supporting Obama and Edwards – just 8% were supporting Clinton

# WHAT HAPPENED IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

What about race and non-response? Were the polls missing the less educated voters? Or were those supporting Clinton unwilling to say so?

## **NOT IN NEW HAMPSHIRE!**

-- Re-interview rates on were the same for those supporting Clinton in November and those supporting Obama

# WAS THERE OTHER INFORMATION?

We were experimenting with concepts borrowed from market research:

- Overall rating
- Repurchase
- Competitive advantage
- Word of mouth (recommendation)

**COULD WE TRANSLATE THAT  
INTO POLITICS?**



## 2008 QUESTIONS

1. **Rating:** BASIC SUPPORT; OVERALL RATING (Favorable-Unfavorable)  
**WHAT POLLSTERS ALREADY GET**
2. **Repurchase:** Probably not an issue when there is no incumbent
3. **Competitive advantage:** How much better is one candidate than another?
4. **Word of mouth:** Would you recommend?



## 2008 QUESTIONS

**Competitive advantage:** How much better is one candidate than another?

**NEW QUESTION:** “Would you say you like ...a great deal better than any other..., somewhat better..., or only a little better...?”



## 2008 QUESTIONS

**Word of mouth:** Would you recommend?

**NEW QUESTION:** “When you have talked with people who are planning to vote in a primary or caucus, have you ever recommended that they support ... or haven’t you done that?”



## 2008 RESULTS-IA

### Competitive advantage

Clinton voters

Obama voters

Great deal	36%	<b>56%</b>
Somewhat	53	34
A little	11	9

### Word of Mouth

Recommended	46%	<b>61%</b>
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# WHAT ABOUT NEW HAMPSHIRE?

## Competitive advantage

	Clinton voters	Obama voters
Great deal	<b>36%</b>	26%
Somewhat	50	52
A little	12	22

## Word of Mouth

Recommended	<b>55%</b>	44%
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PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO THIS  
MIGHT HAVE PRODUCED A BETTER  
NEW HAMPSHIRE ESTIMATE.

**THIS SERIES SEEMED LESS  
RELEVANT IN LATER PRIMARIES**

**BUT – WE ARE CONSIDERING ITS  
USE IN THE FALL !**

## II. ASKING ABOUT RACE AND SEX: **Voter demographics vs. issues**

- Sorting out the impact of who the candidates are means looking at questions that date back to the start of scientific polling – and their weaknesses
- Social desirability/impact of interviewer race and gender – when does it matter?

# EARLY POLLS

“Would you vote for a woman for President if she were qualified in every other respect?”

Yes 33%

No 64 (Gallup: 1/37)

“Would you vote for a woman for President of the United States?”

Yes 20%

Disapprove 73 (PRS: 1/40)

# WOMEN'S EXPECTATIONS

GALLUP: "How would you feel about having a woman as President of the United States?"

Approve	28%	
Disapprove	63	(6/62)

VIRGINIA SLIMS: "There won't be a woman President of the U.S. for a long time and that's probably just as well."

Agree	67%	
Disagree	23	(8/70)

# CHANGE IN THE 1970's

TIME MAGAZINE: "Considering the state of the country and the world today, do you think it would be good for the country or bad for the country to have as president someone who was a...."

	Good	Bad	
Business exec	60%	25	
Priest	14%	69	
College professor	40%	43	
Jew	46%	24	
Atheist	19%	60	
<b>Woman</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>20</b>	
<b>Black</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>22</b>	(4/79)

# SOCIAL DESIRABILITY-SEX

Would you personally vote for a candidate who is a woman...? ... Do you think most people you know would....? Do you think America is ready to elect a woman president?

	RVs	DemPVs
YOU	81%	93%
Most people you know	56%	66%
America ready	54%	65%

CBS/NYT POLL, 1/08

# SOCIAL DESIRABILITY-RACE

Would you personally vote for a candidate who is black...? ... Do you think most people you know would....? Do you think America is ready to elect a black president?

	RVs	DemPVs
YOU	90%	94%
Most people you know	65%	71%
America ready	54%	54%

CBS/NYT POLL, 1/08

# PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION

In presidential politics today (2008), who do you think faces more obstacles--a black candidate or a woman candidate?

	Black	Woman
Total	33%	39
Men	40%	32
Women	27%	46
Whites	29%	42
Blacks	55%	18

CBS News Poll 3/08

# 2008 VOTE: ADMITTING BIAS?

**NEP Exit Polls:** “In deciding your vote for president today, was the (race/gender) of the candidate: the single most important factor, one of several important factors, not an important factor.”

- Typically, eight in ten voters say each was NOT a factor
- But that still leaves one in five

# EXIT POLL FINDINGS

- Women are more likely than men to cite gender; blacks more likely than whites to cite race as important
- Vote preference was as expected for each group
- Significance varied: in some cases, those saying race or gender mattered looked no different from those who said it did not

# WHO BENEFITED? March 4

## **GENDER AS A FACTOR: Clinton      Obama**

White men	<b>59%+</b>	41
White women	<b>80%+</b>	20
Black men	9%	91
Black women	<b>20%+</b>	80
Hispanic men	63%	37
Hispanic women	<b>80%+</b>	20

# WHO BENEFITED? March 4

<b>RACE AS A FACTOR:</b>	<b>Clinton</b>	<b>Obama</b>
White men	<b>68%+</b>	29
White women	<b>74%+</b>	26
Black men	6%	<b>94+</b>
Black women	8%	<b>92+</b>
Latino/Hispanic men	63%	37
Latino/Hispanic women	72%	28

# SOCIAL DESIRABILITY

- Evidence from both in-person and telephone polling
- Respondent-interviewer interactions and expectations can affect responses
  - Studies in voting behavior in racially charged situations and other questions
  - Gender differences on some women's issues
- Direction of non-offense: solidarity or carefulness; differences by year

# WHITE MEN: 2008

## Support for Democratic Nomination

### Gender of Interviewer

	Male		Female
Clinton	42%		37%
Obama	38	(-4)	<b>47 (+ 10)</b>
Undecided	9		9

# WHITE WOMEN: 2008

## Support for Democratic Nomination

### Gender of Interviewer

	Male	Female
Clinton	48%	50%
Obama	35 (-13)	32 (-18)
Undecided	9	10

# WHITES: 2007

## Support for Democratic Nomination

	Race of Interviewer		
	White	Black	
Clinton	45%	44%	
Obama	22	<b>26</b>	<b>+4</b>
Edwards	17	17	
Undecided	3	3	

# BLACKS: 2007

## Support for Democratic Nomination

	Race of Interviewer	
	White	Black
Clinton	48%	50%
Obama	34	<b>41 +7</b>
Edwards	5	4
Undecided	3	2

**BUT...**

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE 2008  
PRIMARIES, THERE IS LITTLE TRACE OF  
INTERVIEWER EFFECT IN THE PHONE  
POLLS ON THE DEMOCRATIC  
HORSERACE

BUT...THERE IS STILL A GENERAL  
ELECTION TO COME

# The Fall Campaign?

## Is it 2007 again?

<b>White</b> Respondents	Race of Interviewer	
	White	Black
Obama	41%	43%
McCain	49	45
Undecided	10	12

Source: 3 CBS News Polls (2/08-4/08)

# The Fall Campaign?

<b>Black Respondents</b>	Race of Interviewer	
	White	Black
Obama	87%	91%
McCain	6	3
Undecided	7	6

Source: 3 CBS News Polls (2/08-4/08)

# The Fall Campaign?

<b>Male Respondents</b>	Gender of Interviewer	
	Male	Female
Clinton	40%	43%
McCain	51	45
DK	9	12

Source: 3 CBS News Polls (2/08-4/08)

# The Fall Campaign?

<b>Female</b> Respondents	Gender of Interviewer	
	Male	Female
Clinton	50%	<b>53%</b>
McCain	43	<b>38</b>
DK	7	9

Source: 3 CBS News Polls (2/08-4/08)

# INTERVIEWER EFFECTS

We learned about the impact of age of interviewers in the 2004 exit polls; this year, race and sex may matter too

**WE CAN MEASURE THIS EFFECT, BUT  
WE MAY NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO  
WITH THE INFORMATION WE RECEIVE!**

# III. ADAPTATIONS

- There have been inadvertent cell phones in our samples for years

QUESTION: Have we been talking on a cell phone, that is, a phone you can use outside your neighborhood?

- Those respondents had been selected based on our usual household selection
- Last fall, we began experimenting with dialing cell phone samples

# CELL PHONE CALLING

- We never switched to automated dialing, so had no legal issues
- We selected only 2-3 interviewers to call the expected cell phone numbers (and they all were cell phones)
- Change in front end: NO selection, person who answered became the selected respondent

# CELL PHONE CALLING

- We included designated cell phone numbers in our last national CBS/NYT poll
- Cell phone sample remains small part of poll
- Respondents who reported also being reachable by landline were weighted down (as we weight down RDD respondents with multiple non-cell telephone numbers)
- Cell phone sample is then included in our regular demographic weighting

# CELL PHONE CALLING

- We expect to include cell phone samples in all our polls this year
- Currently treat it as a separate sample, with only some interviewers dialing
- We expect to treat it as a single survey, and will train all interviewers to deal with the new cell phone front end.
- We now collect cell use information from ALL respondents

# HAVE WE LEARNED MORE?

- Back to basics in election polling
- Methods matter, and there is much more to do this election year
  - Cell phones
  - The changing – and growing – electorate

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**...AND A LITTLE MORE CAUTION  
WOULD HELP, TOO!**

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