

# Discrepancies between Values and Behavior: Online Experimental Survey

Seung-Hyun Kim

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This research employs an online experimental survey to explain discrepancies between values and behavior, usually called social desirability bias. This tendency to respond in a socially desirable way rather than by true intention or feeling is assumed to be serious enough to cause systematic measurement errors in measuring modern or civic values. This research presents results confirming this problem by contrasting two types of values, traditional and civic. Systematic measurement errors in measuring the latter are exposed by an experimental survey. By doing so, it shows the use of online experimental survey for the methodological purpose, which can be utilized more quickly and at lower costs. This online survey demonstrates major potential for future research in social science.

Key words: online experimental survey, values and behavior,  
systematic measurement errors, social desirability bias.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This research aims at explaining discrepancies between values and behavior by an online experimental survey—a major research topic in recent social survey and research. Emphasis on values grows out of an anthropological tradition and measures the normative aspects or what should be (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961). However, in the tradition of psychology and behavioralism, cultures should be studied as they are interpreted by the members of society and are revealed by common behaviors and institutional practices (Segall et al., 1998). Responses based on moral and normative judgment are not useful in this tradition. It is a critical measurement error which should be avoided from the behavioral perspective. Despite this tendency for error, most research relies on these questionnaires assuring their face validity. Instead, the predictive validity, responses reflecting behavior, is usually assumed. However, existing research shows certain discrepancies between values and behavior. For instance, some cultural studies of organizations (House et al., 2004) argue that core cultural dimensions are composed of modal values and practices, thereby distinguishing values from behavior. This research tests this argument with the case of Asian Values through the use of an online experimental survey in Korea.

Generally speaking, qualitative studies except a few present a very negative view on the role of Asian Values. The predominant explanation is that strong familism makes people identify with small circles of personal connection such as family and clan, thereby inducing them not to trust strangers and indifferent to the public interest. However, quantitative studies based on social surveys are usually rejecting the existence of Asian Values, and argue that they have little impact. The results of most quantitative

studies based on social surveys have not shown this strong negative relationship between familism and social trust or the public interest. We can find strong familism with a relatively decent level of social trust. In other words, cultural differences do not seem to affect civic attitudes.

However, there is also some concern with possible measurement problems. This suspicion comes from the inconsistencies in measuring instruments and response distribution. There may be some problems with questionnaire construction and wording caused by inappropriate definition of concept and operationalization. There is also a strong possibility of providing socially desirable responses in terms of normative criteria rather than actual practice. It is called social desirability bias in measurements, reflecting the normative values instilled by education and socialization. An experimental survey will be used to demonstrate if this bias is systematic.

The second purpose of this research is to show the use of online experimental surveys to demonstrate their effectiveness as a rigorous methodology. The experimental survey research is usually inserted into national probability sample surveys. However, since the advent of the Internet survey, this method can rather easily be applied online, and as such can be utilized more quickly and at lower costs. We have seen the explosive growth of online survey companies based on the opt-in panel. Although controversies over the reliability of non-probability samples of online survey have been ongoing, online experimental survey is still considered to be a better method for internal validity than external validity (Baker et al., 2010). Due to this limitation, the online survey is a better tool for methodological tests.

## II. Values and Behavior

### 1. Intriguing Results of Social Surveys

Apparently, familism in Korea is thought to be quite different from the importance of family in Western democracies. In this context, its social effects are also thought to be detrimental. The causal explanation states that strong familism lowers social trust and the public-spirited virtues. However, the researcher faces many problems in empirically testing this argument and needs special efforts. We can understand them by looking at the existing social surveys and research. Inconsistent responses and the various ways of questionnaire construction are readily identifiable. The major source of problems is how to differentiate behavior from values and measure the former.

Thus, it is necessary to examine a variation of existing surveys in measuring familism and modern values. The questionnaires on familism are relatively standardized. For instance, 94% of the Korean respondents in the 1995 World Values Survey (WVS) agree with the question, “regardless of what the qualities and faults of one’s parents are, one must always love and respect them.” It is also high in the two nations without a Confucian heritage such as the Philippines (95%) and Indonesia (90%) (Dalton and Ong, 2006). The Japanese (70%) are less deferential to parents than the Western average (73%). In the 2003 East Asia Barometer Survey (EAB), nearly 70% are affirmative to the question, “for the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.” A relatively recent survey also shows similar results. According to the 2006 Korean General Social Survey, nearly 75%<sup>1)</sup> agree with the question, “One must put familial well-being and interest before one’s own.” Despite some variation, the

support for the questions asking the priority of family's interest is around or over 70% in Korea.

In the case of social trust, we can also find some variation in the response. For more than half the century, one question item (Rosenberg, 1956) has been used to measure social trust, "Generally speaking, do you believe most people can be trusted or can't you be too careful in dealing with people?" The nations with the highest level of social trust are always the Nordic countries such as Sweden (57% in the 1995 WVS) and Finland (48%). The results for Korea vary from 30% in the same WVS to 66.6% in the 2006 Asia Barometer Survey. However, in the 2003 EAB, 39.3% answered affirmatively to the question. This level of social trust has been most frequently shown in the later social surveys.<sup>2)</sup> We can imagine that the level of social trust is at least around 40%. By these figures, Korea appears to be a relatively trustful society.

Questionnaires measuring public-interest orientation from a comparative perspective are not easy to find. The existing surveys are usually conducted for public- or private-sector employees, not for the general public. Relevant to this concept is the 2004 Citizenship Survey by the International Social Survey Program. As shown in <table 1>, Korea fares well compared to the United States and the United Kingdom. It is quite contrary to what has been known in Korean society. However, the question asks "there are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. As far as you are concerned personally on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important, how important is it?" These types of questions are quite typical and apparently maximize social desirability bias.

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1) These figures are usually calculated from four-point scale or seven-point scale and transformed into the 0-1 scale. The formula for this transformation is (response -1)/(the total number of response categories -1).

2) Confer the 2006 KDI Survey, the 2008 and 2010 International Social Survey Programmes.

When we examine the results of social surveys in Korea, however, the personal support for the sacrificial pursuit of the public interest is not low. For instance, the majority of the respondents (over 50%) answer affirmatively to the questions, “I can sacrifice my interests for the country,” (2006 Gallop Omnibus) or “For the sake of the national community/society, the individual should be prepared to sacrifice his personal interest.” (2003 EAB).

<Table 1> National Averages of Citizenship Values

	US	UK	Japan	Taiwan	Korea
Voting	6.19	5.33	5.79	5.92	<b>6.02</b>
Taxes	6.05	6.31	6.43	6.26	<b>6.24</b>
Obey Laws	6.49	6.46	6.29	6.38	<b>6.19</b>
Watch Gov't	6.17	5.22	5.67	5.61	<b>5.52</b>
Participation	4.62	3.41	3.85	4.10	<b>4.52</b>
Understanding	5.82	5.65	5.31	5.14	<b>5.63</b>
Self-Sacrifice	4.81	4.27	4.33	4.78	<b>5.15</b>
Domestic Poverty	6.02	5.26	5.11	5.71	<b>5.39</b>
World Poverty	4.82	4.65	4.59	4.77	<b>4.01</b>
Military Duty	5.45	4.52	3.08	5.37	<b>5.38</b>

Sources: International Social Survey Program, Citizenship 2004

Questionnaires: There are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. As far as you are concerned personally on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is not at all important and 7 is very important, how important is it?: 1. Always to vote in elections; 2. Never to try to evade taxes; 3. Always to obey laws and regulations; 4. To keep watch on the actions of government; 5. To be active in social or political associations; 6. To try to understand the reasoning of people with other opinions; 7. To choose products for political, ethical or environmental reasons, even if they cost a bit more; 8. To help people in (COUNTRY) who are worse off than yourself; 9. To help people in the rest of the world who are worse off than yourself; 10. To be willing to serve in the military at a time of need

In sum, while the support for familism (the priority of family's interests over personal ones) is approximately over 70%, the level of

social trust and sacrificial pursuit for the public interest are around 40% and 50% respectively. This research tries to show whether these figures reflect the true feelings of the respondents by an experimental survey. First, it proposes hypotheses on discrepancies between values and behavior based on relevant theories. Then, it tests them with an online experimental survey.

## 2. Theories and Hypotheses on Discrepancies between Values and Behavior.

The core argument in the discussion of values and behavior is that behavior is not simply the reflection of values, but exists in the interaction of individual values and an actual situation that enables a person to realize these values (Vandenabeele et al. 2006). In this context, societal culture can be regarded as an intervening situational factor (Maio et al., 2001).

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of culture. But its definition usually consists of values, beliefs, norms and behavior patterns. One oft-quoted definition of culture in social science, especially in organization study, is Hofstede's notion of cultural onion (2001). He visualizes the relationship between culture, values and practices as the Onion Diagram. He views values as the invisible part of culture manifested through cultural practices, consisting of symbols, heroes, and rituals. Cultural values drive practices, and the latter is a visible part to the observers. However, nearly all the studies on cultures and behavior measure societal culture through a set of values reflecting what is desirable or important in any culture.

This approach presupposes two untested assumptions. First, it assumes that measuring the member's values of the collective is a sufficient way of measuring cultures. Thus, the sum of individual respondent's values is tantamount to the collective's culture. It can be called the ecological values

assumption (Javidan et al., 2006). Second, the results of the relationship between values and behavior at the individual level can be generalized into those at the level of society or group. Due to this assumption, the usual procedure of measuring cultures is that the respondents are asked what is important and then their responses are summed. However, "cultures are not king size individuals, they are wholes, and their internal logic cannot be understood in the terms used for the personality dynamics of individuals. Eco-logic differs from individual psycho-logic (Hofstede, 2001: 17)."

From this perspective, "measures of values through perceptions of third persons" is expected to have greater behavioral validity than those using self-reports of individuals. Thus, measures ask the respondents how things are done in their societies rather than what should be. In this way, it is also possible to empirically assess that cultural values drive practices or behavior. The comparative study by House et al. (2004)<sup>3)</sup> takes this approach. What is quite surprising in the results is the relationship between values and behavior. While the onion hypothesis assumes the positive correlation between them, the results are quite the contrary. For the seven dimensions employed in this study, they are negatively correlated. Despite the controversy with Hofstede (Javidan et al., 2006; Hofstede, 2006), the in-depth analysis shows that societies with value scores above the GLOBE median usually have lower behavior scores with higher value scores (e.g. uncertainty avoidance). We can observe the general pattern in societies with the highest or the lowest behavior scores. Societies with the lowest behavior scores show higher value scores, whereas those with the highest scores show relatively low value scores. It is called a deprivation hypothesis in their study, people holding views on what should be based on what they

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3) This comparative research of 62 countries is called GLOBE(Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness) and begins to distinguish values from practices or behavior.

observe.

Viewed from research on social desirability, the results of GLOBE imply that the members of societies with a low level of social trust and publicness tend to respond with higher civic values. Thus, it can be inferred from these results that discrepancies between values and behavior are more serious in transitional societies than advanced societies. In other words, while familism is primarily an internalized value, civic values are not easily internalized but highly regarded. One hypothesis can be drawn from this discussion: In transitional societies, measurements of civic values are prone to social desirability bias. To test this hypothesis, an experimental survey is required.

### III. Research Method

#### 1. The Design of the List Experiment

Research on social desirability bias tries to find the respondents' true preferences about socially sensitive issues to which they are reluctant to answer frankly. The survey method based on experimental design (Druckman et al., 2006) has usually been implemented to check the degree of racial prejudice or the real support for a black Presidential candidate in the United States. The first large-scale survey called the list experiment was conducted in the 1991 Race and Politics Survey. The basic design is relatively simple with two randomly divided samples (Kuklinski et al., 1997; Sniderman and Carmines, 1997).

One sample is presented with a list of three or four statements and asked to say how many of items make them angry. This way of asking not which ones, just how many in total is to provide anonymity. The other sample has

one more statement in addition to those for the first sample, such as “a black family moving in next door.” The former is the control group, whereas the latter is the experimental group. Since the respondents are randomly assigned to two groups, they are assumed to be qualitatively the same. What is important in this design is to get two comparable and relatively identical random samples. Then, the difference between the averages of two groups is the true level of anger or racial prejudice. If the baseline items for the control group are four and if the averages for each group are 2.0 and 2.5 respectively, then the true level of anger or racial prejudice is 50%.<sup>4)</sup> This difference is then compared to the results of the existing face-to-face surveys. It is the magnitude of discrepancies between values and behavior or social desirability bias.

With the advent of the Internet, this experimental survey can now be conducted online. Online surveys usually show less SDB, and thus offer significantly different results from off-line surveys (Kreuter, Presser, and Tourangeau, 2008). With respect to concurrent and predictive validity, the report indicates that more accurate results are expected due to lower measurement error in the online surveys (or at least a small difference between the two survey modes) (Baker et al., 2010: 742). If conducted properly, online surveys have significant advantages over other formats (Evans and Mathur, 2005). Most of all, these online experimental surveys are advantageous for methodological studies (Baker et al., 2010: 758–9).

A large-scale experimental survey research has many advantages over the traditional in-class or laboratory experiment. The subjects of the former are

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4) The list experiment has been applied to many issues such as Jewish Presidential candidate and a female president. The survey on a female president has four baseline items: 1) The way gasoline prices keep going up; 2) Professional athletes getting million dollar-plus salaries; 3) Requiring seat belts to be used while driving; 4) Large corporation polluting the environment (Streb et al., 2008).

recruited from the massive panel and the experiment is not conducted under artificial laboratory conditions. Since the demographic characteristics of the panel members are already known in the recruiting process, it is especially advantageous for subgroup-oriented experiments. Contrary to the traditional psychology experiment, more heterogeneous groups are included, which by design implies stronger statistical power (Mutz, 2011).

In addition, researchers should pay attention to the construction of the questionnaire. The selection of control (nonsensitive) items is critical for a successful experiment. If the majority of the respondents agree or disagree with all three baseline statements, it will cause a ceiling or floor effect. In either case, the majority of the respondents in experimental groups would be reluctant to answer frankly because they themselves understand that their responses reveal their preferences on a sensitive issue. With repeated pretests with many control items, these effects can be avoided. Moreover, to avoid the design effect which is caused by the interaction between non-sensitive and sensitive statements, the meaning of the control items should be clear and negatively correlated to each other. The three statements were used as control items in this experiment.<sup>5)</sup> The distribution of responses for these items implies little ceiling or floor effect.<sup>6)</sup>

This research needs four randomly selected samples. Among them, three experimental groups are presented with three control items plus one more sensitive question on familism, social trust or the public interest, respectively. Sample size for each group is about 600. There are some weaknesses caused by the limited number of subjects in an online survey.

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5) It is OK to raise the price of gasoline or diesel.

I think government policy has made the educational situation worse.

The role of government in our society is too big.

6) In addition, the distribution of answers (total number of the respondents in the control group: 623) in the survey: 0, 8.2%; 1, 66.3%; 2, 22.0%; 3, 3.5%.

The well-educated are overrepresented and the respondents over age 60 cannot be sampled. However, it is not difficult to analyze the effects of education and age on the bias since the composition of the samples varies with respect to age and education.

## 2. Construction and Distribution of Questionnaires

Operationalization of three concepts is the primary concern especially because only one statement for each concept is possible in this experimental design. In case of familism, it is hard to say that, if we consider the aforementioned survey results and observations about Southern European countries (e.g. Banfield, 1958), it is an Asian or Confucian value. Rather, closed familism may be generally maintained in nearly all transitional societies. Thus, the negative connotation should be well expressed, but the negative and illegal implication also induces the bias in other direction. In this sense, the question, "For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second," does not express negative meaning very well. Instead, another question, "I will do anything for my family," is more appropriate since it connotes some negativity.

As mentioned above, the efforts to measure and compare social trust across many societies have a long history. Social trust as generalized trust means "trust in people who are likely to be different from ourselves, rather than trust in people like ourselves (Uslaner, 2004: 502)." However, the representative question has a possibility of measuring trust in people with whom individuals are in frequent contact. It is also well known that the meaning of 'most' varies depending on the diversity of societal conflicts. As the study of Eastern Europe shows, this question is not appropriate for transitional societies (Badescu, 2003). In many surveys, the question asks

trust in society in general. However, social trust in the study of social capital means trust in strangers, not in the society in abstract.

It is difficult to define the concept of the publicness. Whatever definition it takes, it is multidimensional and hard to reflect all implications. Among the existing studies, one of the most valid definitions and sophisticated measures can be found in the study of public service motivation (PSM) in organization theory. PSM is thought to have three types of motives such as affective, norm-based, and rational. However, considering the fact that PSM is about altruistic motives, rational motives which are associated with an assessment of potential utility maximization are not relevant to PSM (Kim and Vandenberg, 2010). Norm-based motives are related with social values and norms, whereas affective motives are emotional responses to true conviction of willingness to help others, benevolence, and self-sacrifice for the public interest (Kim, 2009). We can see many values as the sub-concept. In essence, however, underlying the public-interest orientation is the concept of self-sacrifice (Kim and Vandenberg, 2010). Thus, the question asking the attitude about self-sacrifice appears to be the most valid one.

## IV. The Results and Discussion

The data was collected in March 2012. The survey is composed of four groups, one control and three experimental groups, and the number of respondents in each group is approximately 600. Since the participation rate in Korea has been nearly one third of the invited respondents, three times the target sample size are invited to complete the survey. About 7,200 individuals were randomly drawn from the panel and invited to complete

this online survey.<sup>7)</sup> When the total number of complete responses reaches the target sample size, the survey is closed. Each respondent is randomly assigned to one of four groups at the time when he or she decides to answer. Since the questionnaire is very short, the completion rate is nearly 97%. The major obstacle for randomization outcomes is the break-offs or drop-outs who quit answering during the process of completing the survey. There were a total of about 2,400 respondents in the survey, who were roughly equally assigned to the control group and three experiment groups.

The results from this online experimental survey are presented in table 2. Each figure represents the true support of the demographic subgroup for each concept. These are calculated by subtracting the average of the control subgroup from that of the matching experimental subgroup. Then the level of statistical significance can be calculated by difference of means tests. These figures reflecting the true feeling are compared with those figures in the face-to-face surveys in section 2. We can see that the support for familism is approximately same in two types of surveys. However, the figures of social trust by experimental survey are nearly the half of the existing social surveys. In the case of the sacrificial support of the public interest, the similar conclusion can be drawn. In sum, it is apparent that modern or civic values are not well internalized by Koreans. This means that there is a strong possibility of systematic measurement errors in measuring these values. These errors in turn may result in invalid causal inferences.

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7) The company, Panelinsight, has a sampling pool of over 800,000 Internet users throughout Korea who have agreed to receive occasional electronic mail asking them to participate in online surveys. Those who fill out a survey questionnaire have a chance to win a gift in the amount of approximately five to ten dollars. We asked the company to select randomly an equal number of male and female Internet users, all of whom were between ages 20 and 59 reflecting the demographic composition of Korea. Those with high school diploma or less are about the half.

&lt;Table 2&gt; True Support for Three Values

	<b>Familism</b>	<b>Social Trust</b>	<b>Public Interest</b>
Male	0.74(0.06)***	0.19(0.06)***	0.35(0.06)***
Female	0.68(0.05)***	0.13(0.05)*	0.20(0.06)***
20's	0.66(0.08)***	0.21(0.09)*	0.34(0.10)***
30's	0.73(0.07)***	0.15(0.07)*	0.14(0.07)*
40's	0.69(0.07)***	0.14(0.07)*	0.29(0.07)***
50's	0.77(0.09)***	0.16(0.09)	0.39(0.09)***
high school	0.77(0.06)***	0.15(0.06)*	0.28(0.06)***
college	0.70(0.05)***	0.18(0.05)***	0.29(0.06)***

Note: Standard errors in parentheses, \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

According to Ganster, Hennessey, and Luthans (1983), this type of bias may mask the relationship between two or more variables (suppressor effect), provide a false correlation between independent and dependent variables (spurious effect), or moderate the relationship between those variables (moderator effect). In this case, when one variable is measured with nonsystematic errors and the other variables with systematic ones, the correlational analysis tends to suffer from a suppressor or moderator effect. Thus, it is possible that systematic measurement errors may have masked the true negative relationship between the traditional and civic values in the quantitative studies of Asian Values.

To examine discrepancies between values and behavior, the experimental survey or list experiment has been conducted, and its results confirmed the assumed bias. This means that especially civic values like social trust and self-sacrifice are not fully internalized in Korea. This also implies that the correlational studies on Asian Values and some civic values such as social

trust and democracy may have drawn the wrong conclusion based upon statistical artifacts. Viewed from another angle, they may be regarded as indirect supporting evidence for the logic and conclusions of the qualitative studies. That is, there are considerable discrepancies in civic values and behavior in transitional societies.

However, a modest body of work linking specific values with particular behaviors offers more general descriptions. Based on the Schwartz values theory (1992), it is found that traditional values correlate highly with related behavior; universalism values such as social trust show moderate association, while benevolence and conformity values relate weakly to behavior expressing those values (Bardi and Schwartz, 2003). If these findings are valid in general, then similar results are also expected in advanced societies. To test this hypothesis, a comparable experimental survey in an advanced society is required. The results of this hypothesis testing would have other implications. They will show how unique Asian familism is and whether we need some other social change to internalize modern public values.

The question is whether discrepancies between values and behavior are a universal problem. In other words, is the tendency to offer a socially desirable answer to

civic values questions with an emotional attachment to traditional values only a characteristic of transitional societies? Depending on the results of hypothesis testing from a comparative perspective, we can understand if a social survey of many countries with the same questionnaires and their analysis and comparison are an appropriate approach. Thus, online experimental surveys of comparing advanced and transitional countries can answer the question of whether the comparative studies based on the equivalent social surveys are valid.

## V. Conclusion

This research shows systematic measurement errors in measuring civic values in Korea, which lead to invalid descriptive and causal inferences. Quantitative researchers should be more concerned about the validity of measurements. Several methods to avoid this bias or to measure its extent have been proposed in some social science disciplines such as psychology. Still, they have many limitations, rendering them hard to be employed rigorously. Although the current state of knowledge does not allow us to easily overcome this problem, researchers should be aware of this bias and strive to correct it.

Numerous surveys have been conducted for research on democracy, political culture, and social change in Korea, and many writings drawn from them have been published with a comparative perspective. However, the gap between the positive and negative arguments is as wide as ever. This type of research from a comparative perspective can make a contribution to this long-standing controversy. Its results can help understand measurement errors or social desirability bias and imply the future direction of social survey and quantitative or comparative analysis. By doing so, they can contribute to narrowing the gap between the two camps.

It is also necessary for the development of social science that we understand discrepancies between values and behavior more accurately by this kind of effort. It is directly relevant for the understanding of altruism that many renowned social scientists have emphasized. It has been indicated that, due to the traditional self-interest model since Adam Smith, the explanations of social phenomena have certain limits. For better understanding, the social sciences should encompass moral thought and

behavior beyond our exclusive concentration on self-interest (Hirschman, 1981; Arrow, 1974; Sen, 1987). This research on discrepancies between values and civic behavior is one of many efforts in that direction.

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국문초록

## 가치와 행태의 괴리 : 온라인 실험적 조사

김 승 현

이 연구는, 때로 사회적 소망성 편향이라고 불리는 가치와 행태 간의 괴리를 온라인 실험조사에 의해 밝히고자 한다. 사회조사에서 현대적 또는 시민적 가치에 대한 질문에 응답자가 진정한 의도나 감정을 표현하기 보다는 사회적으로 규범적이거나 소망스러운 답변을 경향이 뚜렷하다. 이 연구에서는 전통적 가치와 시민적 가치를 대칭적으로 비교조사함으로써 이런 경향이 체계적 측정오차로 나타난다는 점을 실험적 조사에 의해 보여주고 있다. 아울러 이런 과정을 통해서 비교적 용이하고 경제적 부담도 적은 온라인 실험조사가 방법론적 연구에 어떻게 이용될 수 있는가를 보여주고자 한다.

키워드: 온라인실험조사, 가치와 행태, 체계적 측정오류, 사회적 소망성편향

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