

# The Lost Letter Technique

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Topic: Problems with sampling

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# Assigned reading

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- Milgram, S., Mann, L. and Harter, S. (1965). The Lost-letter Technique: A Tool of Social Research. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 29(3), 437–438.

# Outline of presentation

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- Purpose of the experiment
- How this technique works
- The results
- Other examples
- Advantages
- Limitations

# Purpose

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- Assess Community orientations toward:
  1. Political groups
  2. Institutions or Organizations
  3. Social Issues

# How it works

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- 400 stamped, addressed but unmailed letters
- 100 for each organization
- Distributed to 10 districts in 4 types of placements
- People's choice
- The number of returned letters counted
- Return rates were calculated

# The results

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<i>Address</i>	<i>Placement</i>				<i>Per Cent Return</i>
	<i>Shops</i>	<i>Cars</i>	<i>Streets</i>	<i>Phone Booths</i>	
Medical Research Associates	23	19	18	12	72
Personal letter	21	21	16	13	71
Friends of the Communist Party	6	9	6	4	25
Friends of the Nazi Party	7	6	6	6	25
Total	57	55	46	35	48

# Examples

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- Racial integration in North Carolina
- Wealthiness and altruistic behaviour
- Responses of overseas Chinese toward the Peking and Taiwan Governments in Hong Kong
- The presidential election returns

# Advantages

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- Consents from participants are not needed
- An ordinary action is used as the basis of measurement
- Can be used in domains whereby the answers are not clearly known
- Responses can be gathered up conveniently in a post office box
- Randomised and double-blinded experiment



# Limitations

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- Different population size for each district
- Non-random placement areas
- Lack of control
- Confounding factors - wealthiness and altruistic behaviour

# Conclusion

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- Used to assess people's orientation
- Determine existing prejudice
- Reliable technique

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**THANK YOU**