



# In Search of Alignment between Social Media Posts and Survey Responses

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and online via Zoom (Link)

(Meeting-ID: 683 0699 4223; Password: StatsCol23)

Social media holds promise as a source of data for social research. A precondition for using content from social media in place of survey data is that the two data sources tell the same story, i.e., that the prevalence of posts and survey responses move up and down together over time. When this is the case, the two data sources are aligned. Alignment can be elusive, appearing at one point and later disappearing (e.g., Jungherr, et al., 2012; Conrad et al. 2021). It is also possible that alignment may be hidden due to the diversity of opinion, i.e., noise, in the full set of posts. In the research reported here, we investigate the conditions under which alignment is more and less likely, and whether hidden alignment can be uncovered by selecting just those tweets that express an opinion or stance that corresponds to opinion expressed in the target survey response. We test these ideas by comparing patterns of responses to questions asked on the Census Tracking Survey, conducted during the lead to and data collection period for the 2020 US Census, to the patterns of posts in a corpus of 3.5 million tweets concerning the 2020 Census and related topics, relying on language models to extract meaning and stance of tweets.

## **Biography:**

Frederick Conrad is the director of the Michigan Program in Survey and Data Science (MPSDS). He is a Research Professor in MPSDS and Professor in Psychology. He received a Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Chicago. His research generally applies ideas and methods from cognitive science and human-computer interaction to data collection methods.