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### The (Un)Representativeness of Disaggregated Nationally Representative Surveys at Politically Relevant Sub-National Levels

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THE (UN)REPRESENTATIVENESS OF DISAGGREGATED  
NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEYS AT  
POLITICALLY RELEVANT SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS

*Bradley Mankoff*

*Mentor: Matthew Gabel*

While public opinion surveys, especially around election season, can be useful tools for campaigns interested in gauging public opinion, even the world's finest surveys fail to remain representative at most relevant sub-national levels. Since American elections are won state-by-state and the main American elections survey ANES (American National Election Survey) is only representative at the level of the nation as a whole, various statistical techniques have been employed to attempt to ameliorate this issue. While survey weighting schemes succeed in turning a non-representative sample into a representative one, these schemes are only applied one time, at the national level and toward the goal of making the sample nationally representative. Dr. Matthew Gabel's and my research project was to determine the extent to which this actually is a problem and also to characterize the scope of the problem—how many researchers have fallaciously disaggregated samples to the sub-national level or given up in route? Though the project isn't complete, my role was to conduct a broad review of the efficacy of disaggregated survey data by comparing survey data to the “true” value of the nation's own census. We found that indeed survey weights fail to keep a sample representative at relevant sub-national levels.