

# Survey Research Laboratory

## Spring 1968 Newsletter

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### SUGGESTED READING

In each issue of the newsletter, we will suggest a book or article which we feel would be of value to both interviewers and students of survey methods. For this issue, we recommend:

Robert L. Kahn and Charles F. Cannell,  
The Dynamics of Interviewing--Theory,  
Techniques, and Cases (New York: John  
Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1957), 368 pages,  
hardback, \$6.95.

This book discusses the basic interaction between interviewer and respondent, as well as the theory and principles of interviewing, how to design a questionnaire, and actual tape-recorded interviews, with explanatory comments by Kahn and Cannell.

### NEW PROJECT

Project (025) Study of Entering Freshmen in Illinois Colleges and Universities. This project involves mail or personal interviews with approximately 10,000 college freshmen in schools throughout Illinois. Sponsored by the State Board of Higher Education, the study seeks to determine the characteristics and background of entering freshmen, as well as what factors influenced them to go to college.

The fieldwork and mail questionnaires will be handled by the State Board; SRL will be responsible for the data processing of completed interviews.

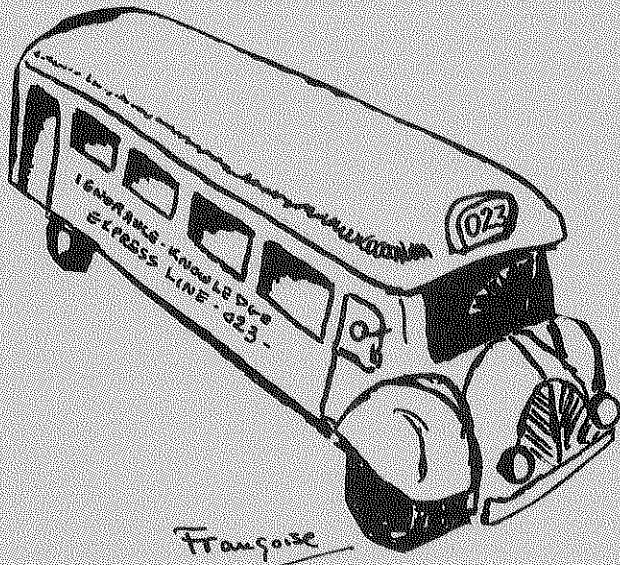
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Mary Kelly Black  
is responsible for  
the preparation of  
this Newsletter.

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## PLANS FOR GROUP SURVEY



A group of University of Illinois researchers and government agencies will be joint-clients in a statewide survey this spring. By pooling questions from various disciplines into a single questionnaire, they will avoid the high costs usually associated with individual surveys. This Interdisciplinary Omnibus Survey (023) will allow researchers to obtain data from a sample of between 1,000 and 3,000 persons in Illinois.

Each of the participants in the survey will submit a question, or set of questions, to be included in the questionnaire and pay part of the overall survey costs on a marginal-cost basis. When the survey is completed, each will receive a deck of verified, machine-cleaned IBM cards with answers to his questions, plus answers to a standard group of socioeconomic questions from each respondent. A duplicate set of cards will be stored in the Data Repository, but would not be available to other scholars for at least three years.

Wally Wilson, Mati Frankel, and Jack Colldeweh are responsible for directing the survey. Presently, their preparations include examination of the various questions submitted and, the master stroke of all, design of a single questionnaire that will be easy to administer and that meaningfully incorporates diverse questions. If this first survey is successful, we plan to conduct one each year.

## NEW FACES AT SRL

Lucy Chao Lee recently joined SRL as a part-time research associate. Lucy received her B.S. in Business Administration from National Taiwan University, Taiwan, in 1963, and her M.A.S. and Ph.D. in Accountancy from the University of Illinois in 1964 and 1968.

Her previous experience has been as a computer programmer and teaching assistant at the University. Presently, she is working on forecasting housing needs for Chicago based on data from our recent Urban Housing Study. She is also employed as a part-time research associate with the Bureau of Economic and Business Research.

Seymour Sudman, currently Director of Sampling and Senior Study Director at the National Opinion Research Center (Chicago), will join SRL in September as head of our Sampling Section. Dr. Sudman will also teach in the Departments of Marketing and Sociology.

He is an excellent acquisition to our professional staff because of his extensive research and practical experience with surveys, especially sampling and interviewing methodology. He has published numerous articles and monographs on survey methods, his most recent being REDUCING THE COST OF SURVEYS, published in 1967.

Suds, as he is known to his colleagues, received his B.S. in mathematics from Roosevelt University and his Ph.D. from the School of Business, University of Chicago.

## STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT SURVEYS

In our previous newsletter we reported on



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a new course, "A Practicum in Survey Methods" offered by the Sociology Department beginning with the spring semester. As part of this course, students receive on-the-job training in survey methods at SRL.

Well, spring is here and so are the students. Since the start of the semester in mid-February, three students have spent two weeks working in the Sampling Section, and are just completing a five-week training session with the Field Section. After that, they will spend another two weeks each in the Data Processing and Data Repository Sections.

The 8-10 hours a week they spend in the Lab is divided among practical work, discussions, and formal lectures. At the end of their stay in each section, they participate in a Section Seminar which ties together what they have learned and observed. In addition to the two papers they will prepare for their course instructor, these students will participate in a five-day comprehensive seminar on survey methods at the end of the semester.

The only drawback to this first practicum is that the Lab was not engaged in a survey that began when the course started. Thus, the training covers several surveys, rather than one. But we all know how difficult it is to get a survey to conform to our needs.

### RECREATION SURVEYS COMPLETED

Just in time--before the hot weather came--SRL completed the data processing on three recreation surveys conducted by the University's Department of Recreation and Municipal Park Administration. Now perhaps we know more about the summer fun of people in Illinois!

The Water-Based Recreation Survey (019) dealt with the water recreation practices of families in 24 Illinois counties. Of the 2,060 mail questionnaires given to adult sample members, 820 returned completed questionnaires to SRL.

On the Elk Grove Village Recreation Survey (018), which surveyed the recreation habits

of residents in Elk Grove, 850 adults and 370 students were sampled via a mail questionnaire. Of this sample, 498 adults and 358 students responded.

The Lake Forest Recreation Survey (021) included a sample of 800 adults and 500 students in Lake Forest, who were surveyed about their use of and satisfaction with the recreation facilities in their area. Mail questionnaires were returned from 408 adults and 366 students.

The staff of the Department of Recreation is currently analyzing the data from these surveys. As soon as reports are available, we will summarize their findings on the recreation habits and practices of Illinoisians.

### PROFESSIONALS COMMENT ON HEALTH CARE

Medical professionals and community leaders agree the quality of health care in Illinois is good, but the quantity is poor.

This is a major finding in a survey recently conducted by SRL for the Illinois Board of Higher Education. In Health Care in Illinois: Views of Professionals, Wallace Wilson and Robert Ferber discuss the data obtained from a series of six mail surveys with physicians, hospital administrators, heads of county and municipal public health departments, dentists, pharmacists, and community leaders in Illinois.

The medical professionals were asked about the adequacy of present health personnel, the need for additional people, alternative ways of training these people, important health care problems, and present barriers to obtaining care. The community leaders were asked their opinion of the role of various groups in improving health care facilities, and who should be responsible for financing these facilities.

Even though they know that "quality is good, quantity is poor," most medical professionals still want fewer patients and a shorter workday. Thus, it seems that adequate health care in Illinois can only come from a dramatic increase in both medical personnel and facilities. The problem is how to



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substantially increase health care without losing quality.

#### VERIFICATION OF PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Mathew Hauck, Chief  
Field Operations Section

For surveys with personal interviews, a sample of each interviewer's completed interviews are checked to verify they were actually conducted. A thank-you letter to the respondent, with a return postcard seeking specific information on the interview, is a method often used for such a spotcheck. This method assumes the respondents will indicate on the postcard if they were or were not interviewed; this turns out to be a bad assumption.

A recent experiment conducted in the Field Section offers strong evidence that this verification method should not be used as the only form of quality control. From a recently completed statewide survey, done by SRL, 587 respondents were sent a thank-you letter with a return postcard requesting specific information on the interview. At the same time, and in the same area, thank-you letters were sent to 580 people who had not been interviewed on this survey or any other SRL survey.

Of the 587 respondents, 288 returned the postcard, six of whom reported they had not been interviewed. However, when telephoned later, all six reported they had been, and that the information on the postcard was incorrect! Such results certainly don't enhance confidence in this method.

It was also determined that the 288 who returned postcards differed significantly in age, education, and race from the total sample and were thus not representative of all respondents. In addition, the information requested on the postcard (length of interview and sex of respondent) differed from what had been reported on the questionnaire. For instance, almost 40 percent reported either a longer or shorter interview, and almost 10 percent disagreed on the sex of the respondent.

Most interesting of all was, for the 580 people who had never been interviewed, one would expect them to return the cards with this information. However, only 9.5 percent did, and of these only 8 said they had not been interviewed.

Thus, from now on we will verify personal interviews by telephone. If no phone number is available, we will personally contact a sub-sample of respondents for verification. This method should assure more validity on quality spotchecks.

#### WHAT HAPPENS TO SURVEY DATA?

William Klecka, Research Assistant  
Data Repository

After we finish a survey, the responses are keypunched onto IBM cards in accordance with the client's code. These punched cards provide the client with the statistical information he seeks. Once this process is complete, an extra set of data is filed in the Data Repository for possible use at a later time by other researchers qualified to analyze the data: this later use of data is known as secondary analysis.

When a researcher does secondary analysis, most times he is not interested in the same aspects of the data as was the original client. Instead, he may find that a particular study answers a few questions essential to his own research interests.

For example, Study 004 dealt with college attendance of Chicago youth. It was originally conducted for the Office of the Provost to determine how many college-age youths from different backgrounds attend college and which colleges they attended. Since the questionnaire included an item on the parents' educational level, a future investigator might find these data useful for studying the relationship between college attendance and parents' education.

There are, of course, restrictions on the uses for the data in our Repository. In general, a researcher will not be given access to a study for three years after the survey is completed, without permission



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from the original client. This procedure is to enable the client to fully analyze his own data prior to its release to other qualified scholars. In addition, respondent identification is kept confidential by not recording names on the questionnaires or punchcards. In this way, the data, when given to either the original client or a later researcher, represent simply a set of statistics, not facts about specific people.

Thus, with proper restrictions on who receives the data and the uses to which they are put, secondary analysis allows many researchers, who possibly could not afford to conduct comprehensive surveys, to broaden the base of their analysis by drawing on information in data repositories throughout the country.

**MORE ON NONRESPONSE FOR INTERVIEWERS**

Francoise Gaudron, Research Assistant  
Field Operations Section

This article discusses interviewing situations where the sample member has been contacted, and is willing to be interviewed, but is either physically or mentally unable to participate in an interview. The following are examples of nonresponse situations that are unavoidable:

. the sample member does not speak or understand English, and you as an interviewer do not speak his language. In such cases, find out what language he does speak. If permitted for the study, you may use another family member who is present to interpret (if they can). If no one is available to interpret, another interviewer who knows the language may be assigned for a return visit.

. the sample member is drinking or drunk. Here you will have to reply on your own judgment whether he is able to lucidly answer the questions, or whether you should arrange to come back another day. (We suggest you come early in the morning before he can reach for the bottle!) However,

if the sample member seems dangerous (or amorous!), give up the interview and report the situation on the Interviewer Report Form (IRF).

. the sample member is deaf, dumb, or blind. Usually, the person, or someone else, will indicate the disability right away. However, if you have doubts, try to determine the extent of disability in terms of conducting an interview. A blind person can be interviewed if the visual aids (if there are any) can be readily described without too much difficulty in comprehension. A dumb person can record the answers himself. With deaf people it is more difficult to conduct an interview. Many of them are anxious to participate, but they may easily misunderstand the questions. If the sample member is deaf, perhaps someone in the household, who can communicate, can act as an interpreter.

For these disabilities, be sure each question is relevant to the sample member. For instance, in one of our recent surveys, we asked the respondents if they ever went sight-seeing: such a question would have no relevance to a blind person, but the survey itself could. Therefore, in such cases, simply skip the question. However, if the entire survey deals with sight-bound questions, do not attempt an interview.

. the sample member appears mentally ill, retarded, or senile. If you are uncertain about the mental stability of the sample member, but feel you can still communicate lucidly with him, begin the interview. Even if you are told by neighbors that the sample member is mentally ill or senile, attempt an interview anyway. Senile people are often happy to find someone to talk with, and with patience and understanding you may get the best responses from them.

If you begin an interview and are unable to complete it because of the mental state of the respondent, discontinue and note this on the IRF.



. the sample member is ill or hospitalized. If it is only a slight illness, and not contagious, explain that you don't mind interviewing if he doesn't. If the sample member does not feel up to it, try to make an appointment for a later time. If the sample member is hospitalized, find out when he is expected to return. If his return is not within the time schedule of the study, it may be possible to interview in the hospital. However, this is rare and should not be attempted unless the respondent truly wants to be interviewed.

. the sample member has personal problems. These problems might include something like a death in the family, a pending divorce, etc. Some sample members won't mind giving an interview under such circumstances, but some will. Depending on the situation, and your judgment of the sensitivity of the sample member, ask if you might come back another time (if the study's schedule permits).

These are some examples of nonresponse situations that are unavoidable. There are undoubtedly other situations that would prevent you from obtaining an interview. If you have any such incidents to report, make sure you describe them in detail on the IRF--whether they fall into the above categories or not.

#### Interviewers:

In our Winter 1966 newsletter, we included some "Interviewer Incidents" which were well received. We should like to include similar incidents in future newsletters as well.

If you have any experiences or incidents to relate based on work you have done for us, I would be delighted to have them. Unless I receive too many stories for any one issue, there is a good chance yours would be used.

The deadline for such material is March, May, September, and October 15 for the four issues. However, send material at any time, and we will try to include it in the following issue.

If you have any questions about the type of stories to be submitted, or suggestions for the newsletter in general, I shall be happy to hear from you.