



# Survey Research Lab Newsletter

## Fall 1969

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### NEW PROJECTS

Project 048, BLS Recall. The Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, D.C., is sponsoring this study to supplement SRL Project 039, especially (1) the exploration of the optimum recall period for certain major and recurrent expenditures, and (2) the effect of curtailing the questioning for certain kinds of expenditures now obtained by annual recall. Seymour Sudman is the coordinator and principal investigator.

Project 049, Champaign-Urbana Housing Conditions. The Chancellor's Office at the Urbana campus is sponsoring this project to ascertain housing conditions in the black areas of Champaign-Urbana and comparable white areas. Mati Frankel is coordinating the study.

Project 050, Wood-Using II. The wood-using study, directed by Wallace Wilson, is the first phase of a possible two to three year survey of secondary uses of wood residues. SRL will update lists of Illinois firms, obtain lists of industrial distributors, assist in questionnaire design and conduct the survey, as well as edit and complete some data processing work for the Department of Forestry Economics.

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Survey Research Laboratory  
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Project 051, Hearing Problems of the Aged. This study will determine the prevalence, types, and magnitude of hearing loss and how the loss varies with certain social and demographic characteristics. SRL will interview and administer screening tests to 280 respondents aged 60 and older living in Chicago on their hearing.

Respondents will be asked about the type of hearing problem they have, their understanding of and attitude toward their problem, and what medical care they have obtained and where.

Respondents with possible hearing problems discovered by the screening test will be referred to the Chicago Hearing Society, sponsor of the study, for further testing.

Completion is planned for January 1970. Andrew Montgomery is coordinating the study at the Chicago Branch.

Project 330, Consumer Decision Processes. This study is Wave 3 of Project 030, a study of newly married couples' decisions on financial planning and purchases.

For Wave 3, respondents interviewed for Project 030 in Decatur and Peoria last fall will be reinterviewed to determine any changes (in employment, spending habits, attitudes, etc.) that have occurred since the initial interview.

This study is supported by grants from the Ford Foundation and the Educational Foundation of the American Association of Advertising Agencies. Robert Ferber, Director of SRL, is coordinating the study.

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### NEW FACES AT SRL

Andrew Montgomery is a research assistant at the Chicago Branch who is coordinating the Hearing Problems of the Aged, Project 051.

Raised in New Mexico, Andy started work on his B.S. at the University of New Mexico and transferred to the University of Oregon. He then served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia, South America, working in rural community development.

After the Peace Corps, he came to Chicago to finish work on his B.S. in sociology at the Chicago Circle campus. He is presently studying toward his M.S. in sociology while working at SRL and in the Sociology Department as a teaching assistant.

After he graduates, Andy and his wife (whom he met in Uruguay) hope to return to South America where he would like to teach for a few years.

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The go-go girl with the white boots is Nancy Morrison, the tiniest addition to the SRL staff. She is supervisor of both the Data Archives and the Data Reduction Section.

She came to SRL after six years of experience in survey research at the National Opinion Research Corporation in Chicago. She started working there as a keypunch operator and then became NORC's first librarian. She was then promoted to programmer, having learned all about programming at NORC. With her experience in survey research, Nancy hopes to help SRL (an infant survey organization) lessen some of its growing pains.

Nancy and her husband John both come from small towns in Ohio. John is working toward a Ph.D. in anthropology.

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One of the first tasks Dorothy Nemanich faced at SRL was counting pages. Though she did not feel qualified for this problem in higher math, Dorothy is actually not a page counter; she is a research assistant working with Jo Cobin in Data Reduction. She is also doing follow-up research for the Medical Care Project 041.

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Dorothy came to Urbana this fall because her husband accepted a position on the faculty of the English Department. She studied marketing and marketing research for her B.S. at the University of Nebraska.

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Tony Orum might be called an invisible member of the SRL staff because his office is at 1204 W. Oregon. As faculty advisor for the Data Archives, he will serve as liaison between the Archives and University students and faculty to encourage use of the Archives. He will also suggest ways to popularize and publicize the Archives and select new data holdings. At present most of the data in the Archives focuses on political science, especially voting and election data. Tony plans to expand the holdings to include more material on other social sciences.

Originally from Milwaukee, Tony worked for NORC while getting his M.S. and Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Chicago. Before coming to the U. of I. this year to join the faculty of the Sociology Department, he taught at Emory University in Atlanta for three years.

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Gunter Poser is a research assistant who hopes to get an overview of SRL during his postdoctoral study at the U. of I. He is currently working in the Field Section on the Wood Using Project 050.

Gunter got his M.S. and Ph.D. from Darmstadt Institute of Technology in Germany. His M.S. was in industrial engineering, a combination of business administration and mechanical engineering, and his Ph.D. was in economics with a dissertation on using consumer surveys for predicting and diagnosing business cycles.

He received a postdoctoral scholarship from the German Academic Exchange Service. His studies at the U. of I. will

include statistical methods of analyzing survey data, survey design, sampling, and econometrics--an impressive list for one year of study!

Gunter and his wife Gisela have two children, aged two and a half years and four months. Though Gisela has a law degree, she is presently a full-time mother. After his year at the U. of I., Gunter plans to return to Germany.

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Meredith Scovill is a research assistant in the Data Archives. (It seems a shame to hide a redhead in the SRL catacombs!)

Meredith is from Elmhurst, Illinois, and got her B.S. in economics at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. She then worked for two years as a programmer for the Harris Trust and Savings Bank in Chicago.

She is studying economics at the U. of I., but is unsure whether she will work toward a M.S. or a Ph.D. Her only compliment for Champaign-Urbana is that bicycling is easier here than on the hills of Northampton. So there are advantages to flat countryside!

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Edward Slawski is a research assistant at the Chicago Branch whose primary job will be to set up a Data Archives Section in Chicago.

Originally from Baltimore, Ed came to Chicago to get his M.S. in political science at the University of Chicago. He then worked for a mental health program in Gary, Indiana, for a year.

He returned to Chicago this fall to begin studying toward a Ph.D. in sociology. Through his involvement in a University of Chicago study of the group process on an inpatient psychiatric ward, he hopes to learn about methodology for a study of large groups as his dissertation topic.

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After finishing work on his Ph.D., Ed would like to work in research, especially in the area of social policy such as mental health.

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Steve Vassar is a research assistant at the Chicago Branch. He is presently coordinating the sociology practicum for the Lab.

Originally from Minneapolis, he received his M.S. in sociology from the University of Iowa. He is working on his Ph.D. in sociology at the Chicago Circle campus and plans to do his dissertation on community orientation and participation. After finishing work on his Ph.D., he would like to teach at a university.

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### SRL'S COMPUTER WORKSHOP

SRL is conducting another noncredit workshop at the Urbana campus on analyzing survey data with computers this fall.

Participants must be University staff or graduate students and must have a knowledge of elementary statistics but need no previous experience with computers.

Enrollment for this semester is limited to 60. Tulsi Saral, who is in charge of the workshop, said that a diverse range of University departments, including Psychology, Economics, and Advertising, have expressed an interest in the workshop.

Lectures given by SRL staff and guest lecturers will include such topics as how to prepare data for computer processing, how to enter a job into the IBM 360, how to acquire data from the Social Science Data Archives, and discussions of various computer techniques.

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### A LETTER FROM JUDY\*

Dear Friends at SRL,

Before we left Illinois, I had the chance to say goodbye to some of you, and to thank you for the wonderful time I spent with SRL. Now that we are beginning to get settled in Seattle, I can look back and appreciate all the rewarding and exciting contacts I had in working with you. (Yes, I know some of the times were frustrating and worrisome, but I found every minute of it interesting and enjoyable.)

We moved to Washington this summer when my husband joined the faculty of the University of Washington. We are now living on a large island in Lake Washington, just east of Seattle. With luck, I may have all our curtains made and boxes unpacked before Thanksgiving. The setting is lovely. From our house I can see the Cascades and Mount Rainier whenever the clouds lift. (To be honest, most days so far have been beautiful and clear.) We are only 45 minutes drive from the mountains, and less than that from the sea. Quite a change from Urbana!

But I miss the friends I had at SRL, and the excitement of the work. The University of Washington has no survey organization similar to the Lab. It will be hard for me to find a place that will give me the satisfactions I found in association with you all.

Meanwhile, I'd be delighted to hear from you, or see you if you are in this area. Perhaps you can visit us at 7421 92nd Place, S.E., Mercer Island, Washington, and we can talk about some of the funny and fascinating experiences we shared at SRL.

Fondly,

Judy (Sept. 17, 1969)

\*Judy Fiedler was a vital part of the Field Section at SRL in Urbana before moving to Seattle this summer.

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## SRL: AN EXPOSE

Just what is SRL and how does it work? Though we pick up bits of the truth now and then, here is the whole story, an unadulterated expose of SRL, its functions and its parts.

Established in 1964, SRL has six main functions:

1. To plan, conduct, and process surveys for University staff and students.
2. To conduct surveys for other state agencies or outside groups.
3. To promote and conduct research on survey methods.
4. To advise faculty and students in planning and execution of surveys.
5. To help train graduate and undergraduate students.
6. To provide an archive for the storage of survey data.

To perform these functions, SRL is organized into seven sections: Administration, Sampling, Field Operations, Control Desk, Data Reduction, Data Processing, and Data Archives.

The Administration Section coordinates all survey activities at Urbana as well as at the Chicago Circle campus. Robert Ferber is Director of SRL, while Richard McKinlay is the Assistant Director for Chicago.

Those who wish to apply for an SRL survey usually do so at least two or three months before the project is scheduled to begin. Before submitting a project proposal, they discuss the project informally with an SRL senior staff member and are asked:

1. Name of the principal researcher and other staff involved in the study.
2. Statement of research objectives.

3. Statement of the significance of the project in terms of academic or policy considerations.
4. Source of funds, or proposed source of funds.
5. Proposed research design.
6. Type of information sought.
7. Proposed time schedule.
8. Anticipated publications, or other use of the results.

Once a project is accepted by SRL, the sample for the particular study is selected by the Sampling Section which also maintains a master sample of about 40,000 housing units in Illinois, representing the total population of the state. Subsamples can be drawn from the master for surveys in specific areas. The Sampling Section also advises faculty and students on sampling problems.

The Field Operations Section plans, advises, and carries out the data collection for SRL surveys. It includes a staff of about 170 part-time interviewers throughout the state who are called on to gather information as the need arises. Interviewers are apt to be social workers or teachers, although many are housewives.

Interviewers are given background information about the study and are told the purpose of each item on a questionnaire. Supervisors, located in main interviewing regions in Illinois, coordinate the work of the interviewers.

Closely related to the Field Operations Section is the Control Desk which measures and evaluates the quantity and quality of interviews returned to the Lab. Since all interviews must meet a minimum standard for each sample and study, the Control Desk judges interviewer quality on the basis of productivity and accuracy and relates this information to the Field Section.

The Data Reduction Section edits and codes all data collected in SRL surveys.

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It develops data codes consistent with University computers and follows coding procedures used by other survey organizations throughout the world in order to facilitate exchanges of information.

The Data Processing Section handles computer programming and analysis of survey data. It also advises students and faculty on the tabulation and analysis of survey data and makes SRL's programming facilities available at a nominal charge.

The Data Archive Section obtains and maintains survey and related data, particularly on the social, political, and economic aspects of Illinois. The chief sources of data are SRL surveys and the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, University of Michigan.

These data are available for further study to University students and faculty at a nominal service charge. The Archive can provide either entire data sets or selected variables on cards or magnetic tape. It can also help to secure data from other archives.

SRL offers a wide range of services varying from consultations on a particular aspect of a survey, to the handling of the entire survey operation, to the supplying of secondary data for analysis.

Since the survey method has become a major tool of social science research, SRL's goal is to provide the means for University faculty and state and local agencies to take advantage of this tool.

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### SOCIOLOGY PRACTICUM

One of the ongoing projects at the Chicago Branch is the Illinois Training Survey, a practicum on survey methods being conducted in cooperation with the Sociology Department of the Chicago Circle campus.

All first-year sociology graduate students will be required to take this

course. Each student will be able to contribute questions to an omnibus questionnaire. The core of the questions will be on different facets of social and community problems.

After the students put together the questionnaire and decide what kind of a sample in the Chicago SMSA they want to use, SRL will assist in drawing the sample, conducting interviews, and coding results.

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### CHICAGO BRANCH ON THE MOVE

SRL's Chicago Branch packed up and moved on October 15 from University Hall to the Behavioral Sciences Building (BSB) at the University's Chicago Circle campus. They now have eleven rooms--four times as much space as before.

The Chicago staff are tripping over each other and the stacks of unpacked boxes, according to Jane Jegerski. But when the confusion is organized, they will settle down to enjoy their new spacious headquarters in the oddly shaped rooms of BSB (as Jane calls it, "a big fun house").

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### THE HUMAN SIDE OF INTERVIEWING

In his article, "The Human Side of Interviewing," Sidney J. Levy of the School of Business, Northwestern University, "expressed informally some ideas stimulated by the problems of understanding the human situation in the field." Here are some excerpts from his article:

"I think about interviewers I have known over the years. Their handwriting ranges from crystal clear to interviews that go unread and wasted--and bless those who type. Interviewers come in every conceivable size, shape, hairdo, and education. It is apparent that there is no one kind of good interviewer. Of course, one may set up optimally desirable qualifications. The field director I rely on the most, Leone Phillips, recently listed the following qualifications for an interviewer:

She should be healthy, active, energetic, intelligent, have a

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sense of humor, be tactful, persistent, adaptable, tolerant, interested in people, with a sense of responsibility, careful attention to details, etc. She should be 25 to 55 years, have 20 hours available including A.M., P.M., and weekends, have high school or better, a car, legible handwriting, stenographic skills, membership in organizations. She should be willing to work on demand for a relatively low hourly rate.

Frankly, I have met such a woman only once in my life, and I married her.

"Interviewers are very eager to impress upon researchers that interviewing is in general impossible, that the questions are poorly worded, and that any new techniques included are an insult to human intelligence. The researcher is restlessly anxious because "God knows what is going on out in the field," while the interviewer is inclined to agree that complex questionnaires developed by brilliant analysts without actual interviewing experience are the biggest problems in interviewing today.

"In short, the interviewer wonders why researchers must be so demanding and unreasonable; and the researcher wonders why this array of individuals, with all their individuality, have to intervene themselves between those lovely respondents and the research report. My favorite field director recently commented that he was continuously amazed at the little awareness and tolerance research people have for the problems interviewers face in the field.

"I mention these issues without offering any solution, since I don't think the situation is going to change readily. I think interviewers must reconcile themselves to the facts that the demands are going to become greater, and that they are just going to become more skillful. That is, I believe they are going to continue to develop as they have in the past.

"Turning from this background to the interviewing situation itself raises the question, why is interviewing so hard?... Interviewing is a special kind of social situation. It usually seems apparent to noninterviewers that it is hard to do, while they simultaneously exaggerate the pleasure they suppose must be in it. Clients are often surprised that people even allow themselves to be interviewed. They are astonished at how long an interview can be, and that people will cooperate without being paid to respond.

"The interviewing situation is potentially (and actually) difficult. People may look poised, but inside they are full of wonderment, questioning, trying to learn quickly, to figure out what is going on--all is in flux.

"The quota calls for a young mother, and can that be a lamp in the living room, and must the dog bark so, and we're doing a study, does she look like she's turning away, who's that coming down the stairs, oh, I almost dropped my clipboard; while on the other side is a disrupted quiet moment at the ironing board, or I was upstairs doing my hair and I thought it was Thelma, do you smell something burning, oops, you've let the cat get out, who me, you want to interview me, how silly, I don't know anything!

"It is fortunate for us all that the negative features of interviewing--the fear of trespassing on someone's privacy, the resentment at having one's secrets or one's ignorance exposed--are more than offset by those factors that answer the question, why is interviewing easy?

"The first plain fact is that most people are willing to be interviewed, regardless of anything. When the interviewer arrives and says in effect, I need you, your views are important to me, tell me more, your opinion is sought by vast sponsoring institutions, the respondent feels a sense of enlargement. Rapport comes about and blossoms when, for a time, in its own peculiar way, the interview means that one has worth."

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