EVALUATION OF SURVEY METHODS

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In 1980 the Social Science Research Council in Britain established six designated research centres to support key growth areas in social science research. One of these was the Survey Methods Centre at Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) formed in association with The City University, London.

The central aim of the Survey Methods Centre reads:

> "to carry out and otherwise stimulate research into the methodological aspects of sample surveys."

That wide brief could have been filled in a variety of different ways. The path that has been followed - to evaluate different aspects of the survey process - was governed partly by the gap in Britain which existed prior to the creation of the Survey Methods Centre, partly also to the characteristics of the host organisation, SCPR.

In some respects SCPR is similar to NORC at Chicago or to the Survey Research Center at Ann Arbor: it is a social research institute that is heavily involved in social policy research, much of which is funded by central government. The organisation handles about 40 to 50 projects each year, most of which involve large scale survey work. Sample sizes are often large (3000 or over); most of these studies involve face-to-face interviewing. Recent projects include Britain's first national crime victimisation survey, the latest British election survey (part of the series started by Butler and Stokes in the 1950s), a two year evaluation of the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) which is a scheme to help school leavers gain work experience, and a national survey of social attitudes, similar to NORC's General Social Survey, the first round in an annual series of social attitude surveys. SCPR is an independent charitable trust - a non profit body - which employs its own research staff to carry out research projects and technical staff to run the survey operations. It has a freelance nationally distributed panel of about 500 interviewers with permanent staff to recruit, train and supervise them. SCPR differs from the main American university survey centres as it is not part of the university sector, although it has informal links with The City University. SCPR's history is also much shorter, it began in 1969.

The methodological programmes

In a keyword library classification the Survey Methods Centre's research effort would come under the heading of Total Survey Error. The programmes include work on sampling errors, non response errors and measurement errors associated with interviewing, question form, coding and the data collection mode. But our interest is a very practical one: we are looking at these survey errors as a consequence of looking for ways to improve our sampling, interviewing, questioning and coding practices. For example, the work on sampling errors has been to see how different levels of clustering at a local level affect the size of the sampling error for different types of questions and for different populations and also to see how the level of clustering affects non response and cost. We are compiling a library of design effects for variables used in SCPR's surveys, and we have incorporated split sample designs into some of those surveys to measure, experimentally, the effect of different cluster sizes.

The other Survey Methods Centre's methodological research programmes, also concerned with key practical issues in survey design and survey operations, are:

i) Minimising non-response. This programme is chiefly concerned with finding ways to reduce non response. This might be achieved by changing interviewer allocation policies, improving interviewers' calling strategies or their doorstep introductions, offering respondents financial or other incentives, using different methods of communication, reducing the respondent burden, improving interviewer morale and motivation, greater perseverence by field staff, more rigorous emergency fail-safe procedures, and so on. Value for money is obviously of prime consideration since many of the procedures required to improve response rates will be expensive to operate. The research programme will need to evaluate the gains in accuracy against the cost. Although chiefly concerned with face to face interviewing the research programme will be extended gradually to include mail and telephone surveys.

ii) Improving interviewer skills. There is overlap between this and the non response programme: part of interviewing skill is securing co-operation of the subject. Mainly, though, this research programme is concerned with the interviewers' conduct of the interviews; their probing, explanations, encouragement, reading of questions, use of interviewing aids, understanding of responses, ability to code and record responses, and so on. Much of the content of an interview - even those based on structured questionnaires - is unscripted and relies on the ability of the interviewer to assist the interview without damaging the quality of the response. Interviewers may need to teach respondents their role, encourage and motivate them, provide explanations and overcome the weaknesses of poor questions. Although there is an implicit model of what constitutes good and bad interviewing practice in the training of interviewers, surprisingly little has been done to evaluate the practices in terms of the quality of responses and to fully understand what takes place during the course of a survey interview in terms of the interactions between respondents and interviewers. The long term aim of this programme is to produce interviewing training material based on the research findings.

iii) Evaluation of the respondent stimulus. The questions which interviewers use provide the stimulus for respondents. Those questions may be open or closed. They may incorporate a prompt card or be reinforced by supplementary definitions. Respondents may be required to answer on a numerical scale or to sort cards to make choices. The questions may provide an opportunity for don't know or no opinion to be recorded or they may force respondents to choose. The different forms of respondent stimuli may elicit different patterns of responses from respondents, partly because they seek different information and partly because some get closer to the true value than others. Some question forms may introduce interviewer errors or errors as the data are coded. This research programme is concerned with understanding how different question forms are used and how they affect the quality and the nature of the responses given. It is looking at the process that begins with an interviewer's reading of the question, the respondent's answer (or his/her request for further information/guidance), through to the interviewer's recording and to the way the answer is coded either by the interviewer or by office coders. The aim is to identify the sources and nature of errors arising from the different respondent stimuli at each stage in this complex process.

iv) Assessment of alternative data collection modes. In Britain most survey interviews are carried out as face to face interviews between a respondent and an interviewer. In the United States telephone interviewing is the dominant mode for many kinds of surveys. Other possible modes include mail surveys and self-completion questionnaires including the most recent development of hand-held computers. Methodological work has occured for each mode in order to improve its performance. There has been little work, however, to assess the efficiency of one mode against the other in terms of quality of responses, the level of coverage and non response, cost and applicability. The Method Centre's programme has begun with an evaluation of telephone versus face to face interviewing which is being extended to computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The aim is to provide survey designers with an assessment of each method and the advisability of a mixed mode approach.

These research programmes began in 1981 although some work had preceded them at SCPR, particularly on question wording and interviewing, funded by a programme grant from the Social Science Research Council. A list of papers summarising the results obtained so far is given at the end of this paper. Some of the more interesting findings to emerge concern the variation in interviewers' skills, both in securing cooperation and in conducting the interview. By allocating interviewers randomly to sampling points, we have been able to separate the interviewer and area effects across a range of surveys. This has shown that interviewers vary in their ability to minimise non contacts and to minimise refusals: some interviewers are using more efficient calling strategies than others and some have a better doorstep technique than others. The interviewers who are good at one aspect are not necessarily good at the other. The research task ahead is to learn more about why this is so and to raise the average standard of both by experimenting with different approaches.

The interviewer variability analyses have also shown that interviewing errors are not the results of a few interviewers making many errors. More commonly, errors occur because different interviewers have trouble with different questions, perhaps with just one or two odd respondents. Often high interviewer variability occurs at just a few questions during the course of an interview; at points which - in hindsight - can be identified as question failures. These are points at which interviewers have had to come to the aid of an inadequate question and have done so in different ways.

A very high proportion of the verbal interaction between interviewers and respondents is unscripted: even in interviews based on structured questionnaires over 50% of the dialogue may be unscripted. Much of this unscripted interaction is a source of interviewer error. The methodological research programme is beginning to identify certain types of questions where failures occur and certain types of unscripted dialogue, or situations, which have a high risk of introducing errors and question failures.

Our work on interactions so far has concentrated only on the verbal and vocal non-verbal behaviour of interviewers and respondents. To develop a technique for the systematic observation of this behaviour it was necessary to identify and classify the range of behaviour which commonly occurs in survey interviews. Four principal sources of information were used: the accepted wisdom of 'good' interviewing behaviour as enshrined in interviewing manuals; the opinions of experienced personnel; tape-recordings of interviews analysed and judged by a number of experienced observers; and discussions with respondents about their experience during the interview.

Using the information obtained from these various sources, a detailed coding system was developed and subsequently tested to provide a classification of all interviewer and respondent verbal behaviour according to its effect on the outcome of the interview. The coding frame was organised hierarchically: the primary classifications of the 'units' of identifiable behaviour (which, in practice, vary in length from one word to several sentences) were grouped, for interviewer and for respondent, in terms of their broad function within the interaction; the function categories were then divided into behaviour conducive to, and behaviour detrimental to the interview (i.e. desirable and undesirable behaviour).

The coding frame is designed to be applied question by question: for each question, the way in which the interviewer asks the question is coded, then the way in which the respondent replies; further behaviour by the interviewer or the respondent in relation to the question is then coded. The analysis can be carried out in terms

of the various stages of the process of asking a question and obtaining the answer and overall, for different types of question or for specific questions; sequences of interviewer-respondent behaviour can also be examined to throw light on the causes and effects of undesirable behaviour.

The results of the first detailed application of the coding frame were examined to establish the extent to which interviewer and respondent behaviour conformed to the ideal set out in the interviewing model and embodied in the interaction coding frame. It was reassuring to find that the vast majority of interviewer behaviour (88%) was in accordance with the rules of survey interviewing. Not surprisingly, the respondents were somewhat less likely to conform to the role assigned to them, but nonetheless 78% of their verbal behaviour was in accordance with the "rules" of survey interviewing. Most of the failures of the interviewer to perform her task according to the accepted rules occurred in the unscripted part of the interview. When an interviewer failed to perform the task according to the rules, then the respondent also showed a tendency to fail to fulfil the allotted role; this suggests that the accepted wisdom as to what constitutes good interviewing is largely effective.

An examination of the undesirable interviewer behaviour showed that the most common problems were found to be: difficulties in coping with digressions initiated by respondents and/or a tendency amongst some interviewers to digress themselves; bad probing techniques which tended to lead respondents, and/or behaviour which suggested to the respondent that the answer which had been given was in some way inadequate or incomplete; and a tendency, amongst some interviewers, to pass evaluative comments or to give personal opinions on some aspects of the respondent's answers.

An initial examination of sequences of behaviour - the extent to which certain kinds of interviewer behaviour tend to lead to particular kinds of respondent behaviour - showed that undesirable respondent behaviour tends to follow 'bad' question reading, whereas question reading that upholds the rules tends to be followed by desirable respondent behaviour.

A further problem identified was the extent to which respondents interrupt the question reading; this appears to happen particularly when a series of questions using the same form is used; in this situation the interviewer appears to be under some pressure from respondents to curtail the question asking procedure. Consideration should perhaps be given to scripting in permissible shorter versions of the question, rather than leaving it to the interviewers' discretion, as well as to providing guidance in training on how to deal with interruptions.

These early results, if substantiated further, have implications for the modification of training procedures and for questionnaire design.

The methods of evaluation

The Survey Methods Centre at SCPR is located in a survey agency. That provides opportunities for building experiments into real surveys. It also means that we can observe the survey processes, in all their detail, at first hand and routinely

accumulate a lot of evidence about survey methods across a wide range of survey designs and applications.

Our approaches to evaluation can be grouped under five broad headings:

Accumulated routine evidence
Interrogation of specialist staff
Monitoring by direct observation and by
 intervention
Post mortem enquiries
and Testing alternatives.

The use of accumulated routine evidence has occurred on the non-response programme: we have been building up detailed information from interviewers of all their calls, by day of week and time of day, and the outcome of all calls to enable us to look at the success of different calling patterns. This is now monitored routinely for all SCPR surveys. Accumulated routine evidence is also being collected of complex sampling errors, for responses to a wide range of attitudinal and behavioural questions, based on different populations, to see how these relate to the level of clustering used on the surveys.

Interrogation of specialist staff is often overlooked in survey methods research, yet it can be very instructive as a starting point for further research. We interrogated SCPR's field staff - those who allocate, train and supervise interviewers - and interviewers themselves, prior to work on the interviewing skills programme, in order to establish a model of existing practices, and their justifications, which could then be evaluated. A further example of interrogation was in the work on question form: research staff at SCPR were interrogated in order to derive a classification of question types, and the situations in which they are commonly used, prior to an experiment with alternatives.

The third evaluation approach is monitoring the process as it occurs. For some aspects of the survey process this can be done using tape recordings. We have used recorders for both doorstep introductions and for the main part of the interview. The tapes are transcribed, coded and analysed in order to provide a picture of these interviewing processes.

Sometimes direct observation of the survey process, as it occurs, is not sufficient. Analyses of interviewer variability, for example, will confound area effects with interviewer effects. So it is necessary to intervene in the process - in this instance to allocate interviewers in some kind of random design - to disentangle area effects from interviewer effects. Our coder variability studies have made use of this intervention monitoring approach as well. Although often refered to as interviewer variability 'experiments' or coder 'experiments', these intervention monitoring studies are really an attempt to measure what is going on in the existing survey process. They are not a test of alternatives.

Post mortem enquiries have proved useful in following up non respondents to find out more about them and why the non response occurred. We have used the approach, too, to follow up a sample of those who were respondents at a telephone survey (part of a direct comparison between face

to face and telephone interviews) in order to learn more about their reactions to being interviewed by telephone and the quality of responses they gave over the 'phone. Follow up depth interviews have also been used, following face to face structured survey interviews, as a post mortem enquiry to find out how well people understood questions, why they responded in the way they did, their level of motivation and their interest in the study.

Finally, evaluation can be achieved by testing alternative strategies. The Survey Methods Centre's programmes are at an early stage and other approaches more often must precede any sensible test of alternatives. But on several studies we have looked at sample design effects for alternative sample clusterings, within the same survey, by designing the sample in two parts. We have also used the split ballot approach to test different question forms and different question wordings. In the coding programme we have used the approach to test long and short coding frames. And our most recent test of alternatives has been concerned with data collection mode: a telephone survey was conducted alongside a face to face social attitudes survey to test the receptiveness of the British public to long social interviews by 'phone (20 minute and 40 minute questionnaires were used), which included sensitive questions, and to see how mixed mode responses compared to surveys done entirely by face to face interviewing.

One of the more general conclusions of SCPR's methodological work is to move away from the notion that there are good and bad interviewers, good and bad interviews, good and bad questionnaires, good and bad coders, and so on. Much of the evidence points to failures which occur within an interview, within a questionnaire, within a coding frame. It highlights the need for more systematic evaluation of pilot surveys to remove weaknesses and more systematic evaluation of the main survey to identify those parts which failed despite all the precautions.

In both cases - pilot studies and main surveys - the range of evaluation approaches, that we are using to look more generally at the survey process, can be applied. In pilot surveys, particularly those preceding large and continuous surveys where resources will be greater, specialist staff can be interrogated as part of the survey design, pilot interviews can be tape recorded and interaction coding applied, interviewer variability and coder variability can be measured, split ballot designs can be used to test alternatives and post mortem enquiries can be mounted with respondents, non respondents and interviewers. In the main survey, evaluation can be achieved through tape recordings, interaction coding, interviewer variability and coder variability, analysis of edit corrections, post mortem studies, and so on. Much more evaluation work can and should be done than is currently provided for in survey budgets.

The development of survey methods research in Britain

The remainder of this paper places the work of the Survey Methods Centre at SCPR in the context of methodological research as it has developed in Britain.

Since the 1950s there has been a considerable increase in the use of survey research to assist social policy, to describe and explain social conditions, to aid production, marketing and advertising decisions, to improve civic planning and to help develop and test economic, social and psychological theories.

The Market Research Society, for example, has grown rapidly: from 114 members in 1953 to 1300 by 1963, 2500 by 1973 and 4000 by 1983. The growth in membership reflects the growth in the market and opinion research industry as a whole, much of which is based on survey research. Commissioned survey work has been estimated as growing from about £3m annually in the mid 1950s to well over £100m today. Even allowing for changes in the value of money, that represents a considerable expansion.

Developments in the social policy and public sector domains in the last 20 years have both stimulated and reflected growth in survey activity. The Skeffington report on Public Participation published in 1967 encouraged the notion of public involvement in planning; survey research was seen as one of the means of enabling people to participate. Transport and town planning requirements imposed on local authorities by central government created additional demands for large-scale surveys. In an era of capital investment in roads, new towns and other civic projects, policy makers were eager for data to allow them to monitor urban patterns and to predict growth trends.

Social policy research created additional needs for information, particularly about the disadvantaged groups in society - ethnic minorities, the poor, the handicapped, the unemployed - and about the impact of health, education and other public sector provisions. The Government Statistical Service was much expanded during this period, as were the social services and research departments in local authorities.

The expansion of the social sciences in universities and polytechnics in the 1960s created a corresponding increase in social research. Independent research institutes and university research centres emerged or expanded. The Social Science Research Council, which funded most academic social research, was created in 1965. By 1969, the number of institutes and centres was large enough to warrant the encouragement of informal links through the Association of Social Research Organisations (ASRO).

A flourishing survey research industry has thus evolved during the past 20 years or so, built on foundations laid down chiefly during and immediately after the second world war. It was the wartime information needs of government which provided a major boost to the applications of survey enquiries in Britain at a time when tentative steps forward had been taken in market and media research and opinion polling. But the main growth period in social policy and commercial survey research came much later, in the 1960s.

In the United States, similar wartime information needs came at a time when the use of surveys was much better developed than in Britain: the scale of applications was bigger and the variety of uses was wider. Social policy research was already established there and election and opin-

ion polls, that had been carried out for several decades prior to world war two, had made sampling and surveys more noticeable and more acceptable to the American public.

A distinct contrast between the United States and Britain, arising from the difference in scale and pace of development of surveys between the two countries, was that in Britain no university based survey centres were established comparable to those at the universities of Michigan, Chicago, Princeton and Columbia.

In Britain methodological work on the survey process (of the kind described in this paper) was most commonly found in practising survey agencies - Government Social Survey and a few market research companies - which were located outside universities. Government Social Survey took the lead in methodological research on the survey process immediately after the second world war. In 1943 the Government Social Survey carried out 36 surveys, many of them concerned with clothing and clothes rationing, food and food rationing and health education campaigns. By the end of that year it had an interviewing panel of 55 and a technical, administrative and clerical staff of around 40. In spite of its small scale it took a professional approach to surveys and research staff managed to use the research opportunity created by those surveys to do work on methodology in both a practical and scholarly way.

In the early days of market research, survey researchers in agencies such as the British Market Research Bureau, Research Services and Gallup Poll made time for methodological research on the survey process and published results in the form of working papers or journal articles. These organisations were fairly active in the immediate post war government research programmes, working directly for the Ministry of Food and the Board of Trade.

There was collaboration between academics at the London School of Economics and survey practitioners in Government Social Survey, market research agencies and the BBC audience research department. In 1949, a Division of Research Techniques - later to become the Survey Research Centre - was formed under the direction of Professor Maurice Kendall. The division was founded to study the methodology of research into economics and other social sciences. Professor Kendall's strong team of statisticians made the LSE the main university centre for research on survey methods in Britain. The principal difference between the LSE and the key American university centres was that LSE did not develop its own survey capacity. To overcome that weakness the Survey Research Unit was formed as a committee to link the academic researchers at the LSE with survey practitioners. The link produced one of the few continuous programmes of research by British academics on the survey process, and led to many publications on aspects of survey methods.

The LSE unit was later taken over by a psychologist, Dr Belson, who carried out a number of surveys and collaborated with various survey agencies, on readership surveys in particular. He did important pioneering work on recall error, interviewer behaviour, prompted recall and on the respective merits of open and closed questions. He developed the double interview technique, pioneered the use of tape recorders for evaluation and contributed to the analysis of multivariate data. Difficulties between Belson and the LSE resulted in a separation, after which he concentrated more on running training courses in survey methods than on methodological research.

Since these early pioneering days the methodological contribution of academics in Britain to the survey process has been sketchy and largely the work of individuals and not academic centres. An example of individual contribution is the link between Colm O'Muircheartaigh, based at LSE, and the World Fertility Survey (WFS). His collaboration with the WFS has made important contributions to sample design, the calculation of complex sampling errors, and the measurement of response errors, particularly interviewer variability. Another example is the link between Graham Kalton, then at Southampton University, and Social and Community Planning Research. This collaboration yielded important contributions to response errors and to sample design and led to the creation of the Survey Methods Centre at SCPR.

Recognition of the limited contribution of the academic sector to survey methodology was made by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) when it set out the case for its own survey unit in 1970. A background paper drew the following conclusions:

> "The steady increase in the use of the sample survey method by academic researchers and the likelihood of work of this kind expanding very substantially within the next few years have led the Council (of the SSRC) to give special thought to how present and future needs in this respect can best be met. At the moment relatively few students of social science in this country receive any formal training in survey methods. ... The contributions to survey methodology from the academic world in Britain have also been disappointingly sparse ... An SSRC Unit could provide training in survey methods and build up a substantial contribution to survey methodology."

On the basis of advice from American colleagues and because of the cost and funding difficulties involved, the SSRC decided against making the survey unit a survey agency:

> "Careful thought has been given to whether or not the Unit should have its own field force of interviewers ... The cost of this, however, would appear to be prohibitive; at least at the outset."

In setting up the survey unit, the SSRC thus attempted to create an opportunity for methodological work on the survey process, but removed the research staff from the practical and professional environment of a survey agency where they might have used the survey work, in ways similar to SCPR's Survey Methods Centre, to evaluate the survey process. The Unit's main contributions to survey methodology were more project-specific, particularly concerning quality of life measurements.

A distinction can be made between two broad areas of methodological research, that is between project-specific work concerned with a particular substantive topic - usually methodological work

on the measuring instrument for a survey - and more general methodological work on the survey process. There is, of course, overlap and mutual dependence between project specific and general methodological work but the distinction is a useful one for many purposes. The aim of the more general methodological work which forms the Survey Methods Centre's main topics is to find ways to improve the process of survey sampling, interviewing, questionnaire design, coding, and so on. This has been the main thrust of the methodological research work at SCPR.

One of the best examples of project specific methodological work in Britain spread over a very long period has been the work on household budget surveys carried out predominantly, although not exclusively, at Government Social Survey during the 1950s and 1960s. There are many other examples of methodological work on a variety of measuring instruments which have occured within government, commerce and the academic sectors. For example, work on using survey techniques to measure:

poverty	alcohol and cigarette
quality of life	consumption
racial discrimination	readership
travel behaviour	consumer buying
environmental pre-	intentions
ferences	child development
	social mobility

This strand of methodological work on the measuring instrument for a class of surveys often extends to the method of data collection (eg by diary, panel study, self-completion methods) to defining and sampling the population and to the analysis and interpretation of the data. A project specific study of this kind was carried out at SCPR recently concerned with surveys of industrial relations practices at workplaces. The work, financed by a contract from the Department of Employment,was to review the surveys previously undertaken and to recommend sampling, interviewing and questioning procedures for this class of survey. We are looking into the possibility of expanding the Survey Methods Centre's resources to enable us to do more work of this kind.

In contrast to the fairly widespread development of project specific methodological research on measuring instruments, the work on the survey process in Britain has been more limited and patchy. It requires proximity between researchers interested in methodology and the survey operations of an agency; it needs resources released from project work; and it needs an opportunity for continuous, long term research programmes.

Significant contributions to the methodology of the survey process have rarely occurred within a university setting totally removed from the practice of survey work. Conversely, in busy survey agencies the research staff seldom have the opportunity to do more than isolated and fragmented methodological work on the survey process.

Harry Henry, a market research pioneer in Britain, underlined one of the reasons for poor methodological research in commercial agencies in a paper he gave to an ESOMAR conference in 1964.

"Because of rapid expansion of the business of market and opinion research, many of the rather more senior people who would be primarily and essentially concerned with developing and refining their own technical repertoires and with training new generations to assist and succeed them become so heavily involved in matters of administration and selling that the quality of work becomes an almost secondary consideration."

Although those pressures are not as great within public sector agencies they are not absent altogether. Fairly soon after the initial expansion of Government Social Survey, Claus Moser pointed out, in a paper published in the Journal of the American Statistical Association (Vol 44, 1949), that the demands of project research left Social Survey with little scope for general methodological research:

"As it is difficult to experiment with methods in a survey, the results of which have been requested and are to be used by a department, there is not as much methodological research as appears desirable. It is hoped that the Social Survey will be able to spend more and more of its time on research into sampling techniques, interviewing methods, questionnaire biases and all the other problems associated with surveys."

That position changed gradually as Social Survey's work expanded and as more funds became available for general methodological work. During the 1960s and early 1970s there was no formalised structure for methodological research and development, but from 1976 a small unit within Social Survey, now a division of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, has been developing a programme of methodological work aimed at improving the cost effectiveness and quality of survey research. The programme covers a range of survey issues including sampling error methodology, investigation of non response, evaluation of proxy interviews and other aspects of the quality of the data. Social Survey Division publishes the results of this work in its Methodology Bulletin.

Another encouraging recent development is the creation by the Market Research Society of a Research and Development Committee with its own small research budget. The Committee has commissioned reviews of sampling practices and of telephone interviewing procedures among market research agencies, useful first steps in a programme of methodological evaluation. Also, some market research companies have subscribed to a methodological research fund to enable Dr Belson to continue with his research on survey methods.

The Survey Methods Centre at SCPR is only one of the recent initiatives of the Social Science Research Council to develop survey methods research and to foster links between academics and survey research users and practitioners. It has funded, also, a series of survey methods seminars (administered by SCPR in collaboration with the London School of Economics and The City University) since 1980, which regularly brings together about 75 research workers from a wide variety of backgrounds; a group of statisticians based at Edinburgh University has received funds to run a northern series of seminars on survey methods;

Professors Holt and Smith, at Southampton University, have received programme funding to develop survey data analysis models; and links have been forged with the Market Research Society to investigate joint methodology workshops.

The financial climate in Britain for survey research in the public, commercial and academic sectors is distinctly gloomy. Yet the developments at Social Survey, the Market Research Society and SCPR's Survey Methods Centre are encouraging indications that the organisational barriers to methodological research to evaluate survey methods are beginning to break down.

SURVEY METHODS CENTRE PUBLICATIONS

Non response

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