

The Polytechnic
of North London



DO-IT-YOURSELF SOCIAL SURVEYS
- A Handbook for Beginners

by

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1. INTRODUCTION TO SOCIAL SURVEYS

1.1 Sample or Census

Social surveys are a method of gathering information by means of personal interviews or postal questionnaires. They are sometimes referred to as 'mass interviews' because they are a way of collecting similar information from a large number of people at the same time. More often they are called sample surveys because the information, which can be on almost any kind of topic, is usually collected from a selected part (the sample) of the whole group (the population). Various procedures are adopted when the sample is selected to ensure that it is representative of the larger population. In this way findings based upon the sample group can be generalised for the population from which the sample comes.

Occasionally information is collected from the population as a whole, and this kind of total survey is known as a census. You will probably know about the National Census which is carried out every ten years for the Registrar General by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The next one will be in 1981. Censuses are a more complete reflection of the population, but of course they involve much more work to carry out and analyse as well as consuming a great deal of time and money. Censuses are not necessarily more accurate - great care must be taken to ensure that the entire population is covered. At the cost of only a slight drop in accuracy, almost as much information can be obtained by a survey of a small representative sample of the total population group.

A Short History

The first social surveys were carried out at the end of the nineteenth century by men like Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree. Deeply concerned at the hardship and brutality of urban working class life they set out to chronicle the simple numerical facts of poverty and unemployment. In 'London Life and Labour', published in 1897, Charles Booth completed a pioneering 17-volume study, in which he quantified the "income, hours and conditions of work, housing, standards of living, number of children, size of family in relation to size and type of dwelling, type and frequency of sickness, leisure activities, club and union membership, etc". Booth assembled his mass of information from people like school visitors and church workers. New ground was broken by Seebohm Rowntree who gathered his information directly from working class families living in York, in 'Poverty, a Study of Town Life', published in 1901. The information from these early influential poverty surveys provided the factual basis for the arguments of social reformers, which led to the eventual creation of the Welfare State.

Properly speaking these early surveys were more like censuses. The pioneer of statistical sampling was A.L. Bowley with his 1912-13 survey of poverty in four English towns, the first of which was Reading. He took a sample of roughly one family in twenty and was able to gain data comparable in accuracy with previous surveys for the expenditure of much less time and money.

Over the years the sample survey has become an established method of social inquiry. The middle thirties saw a big expansion in the use

of survey methods in public opinion polling, pioneered by George Gallup in the United States. During the second world war a group called Mass Observation combined methods of participant observation and more qualitative research with survey methods to produce accounts of the attitudes and wartime experiences of ordinary people. The end of the war saw the expansion of market research and the founding of the Market Research Society in 1946, using survey methods in the promotion and marketing of products.

Nowadays, the increasing role of the state in many areas of life such as health, education, industry, has been accompanied by increasing use of social surveys by official agencies and bodies. The expansion in the social sciences at universities and colleges has further spread the use of social surveys as a method of social inquiry.

The sixties saw the use of social surveys looking once more into the nature and extent of contemporary poverty - books like Willmott and Young's 'Family and Kinship in East London' and Coates and Silburne's 'Poverty - The Forgotten Englishmen' have been influential.

Recent studies of 'Poverty' by Peter Townshend, educational mobility in 'Origins and Destinations' by A.H. Halsey, and 'Social Mobility in Modern Britain' by John Goldthorpe, all make extensive use of sample survey methods.

Arguments and debates about many aspects of public policy and social provision increasingly take place against a background of figures and statistics based on survey material. More and more, if you are involved in this kind of public discussion, it helps if you have a practical understanding of what a sample survey involves, and an

ability to appraise critically the methods that have been used. A recent development in this context is the self-survey, carried out by community groups for their own purposes, to provide numerical backing for a particular campaign or project, or to counter official policy proposals and resist what they feel to be unjustified decisions.

1.3

The Nature of Survey Data

Surveys study social entities (persons, families, local groups, business firms, political parties, clubs etc). The survey data consist of information about each entity in a sample selected from the whole population of such entities. Each entity in the sample is usually known as a case.

Data are obtained by measuring, observing, asking questions about, various characteristics (age, size of family, voting intentions, number of employees) of the members of the sample. The characteristics studied are called variables and the description of the characteristic for each case (height - 64 inches; eyes - blue; vote - SNP; number of employees - 326) is called its value, because it is usually represented by, or coded as, a number.

Thus survey data typically consist of the value of each variable for each case. It is also typical of social surveys that for some cases the value of a particular variable is either irrelevant (e.g. job description of someone who is not working) or unknown. Such missing values need to be coded and included in the data set. The way they are treated in analysis will depend on a variety of factors, but there are ways of handling them.

1.4 Stages of a Survey

What exactly happens in a social survey? What are the basic stages that have to be gone through to carry out a proper survey?

It is not that easy to generalise about surveys as there are a great variety of different techniques and methods available to any potential researcher. These will be discussed in more detail later on. Of course, the choices that you make will depend to a large extent on the particular problem that you want to investigate. But certain basic stages must be gone through when carrying out an effective social survey.

First of all, and not to be underestimated in importance, is the process of defining the problem and planning the research. This involves getting clear just what questions it is you want answering. What sort of information do you want, and what are the most appropriate methods to adopt to obtain it? You can arrive at answers to these questions through discussion and inquiry, looking at books and previous work on the subject, and talking to people who are in a position to help and give advice or who are familiar with the problem area.

Then you can begin to start defining the task ahead, drawing up a provisional timetable for the actual research, tying in what you want to do with the resources that are available to you or your group - particularly the amount of time you can devote to doing the survey, the amount of money, if any, that you can afford to spend on it, and the number of people available to do the actual work.

In defining the problem, you must start to think about who it is you are surveying - the target population. Will there be any problem gaining access to the people you want to question? You may have to seek permission from various official bodies and authorities to get access to the people you want to question. This is a problem with all kinds of social research, and may well prove a source of unforeseen difficulty. It is no good planning a survey of school-children's attitudes to a proposed truancy centre, and then finding that the Education Authority will not let you have access to the list of pupils' names on the school rolls which you had planned to use.

Assuming you resolve successfully the problem of getting into the field, what type of sample are you going to choose? Will it be truly representative of the target population you are concerned with? You will have to consider what sort of sample you want, how large it should be, and what is the best method of selection.

These are only the preliminary steps in carrying out a survey.

Before going out and collecting the information, most of the work will involve deciding what questions you are going to ask and the best way to ask them. Having settled on the questions, the next thing is to design the questionnaire, putting the questions into some kind of order. This involves a lot of work sitting down with pencils, sharpener, eraser, scissors, adhesive tape and plenty of paper.

Later you will need a typewriter and access to a photocopier.

You may think you have a clear idea of what questions you want to ask, but when it comes to writing them down and thinking about the most suitable wording, you will discover there is quite an art to

asking even the most simple questions in such a way that the answers you obtain are capable of reasonably unambiguous interpretation.

Some questions will have to be tested - piloted - on a small number of people, to see if they really do what they are supposed to do.

All kinds of decisions are involved in designing the questionnaire, and you will need to make several drafts before you settle on a final version. How many questions? How long should it be? Do you really need all the information you are getting and will you be able to analyse it all? What kinds of question - do you want to use 'show cards' or visual aids? And you need to aim at a final questionnaire that flows and makes sense - both to preserve the interest of people answering the questions, and to make it as easy as possible for an interviewer to follow and work through.

At an early stage, you must make a basic decision about whether the questionnaire is best answered by self-completion by the respondents themselves, or by using personal interviewers to ask the questions and record the answers. If you are going to gather the information by personal interviews, using a structured questionnaire, the next stage will involve decisions about how many interviewers you will need, and who they are to be. Will they need training in interviewing, before going out with your questionnaire? If they have never interviewed people before, they will need to practise going through the questionnaire, before going out and knocking on people's doors. Many researchers underestimate the errors due to interviewing by assuming it is straightforward, but great care must be taken to ensure accuracy and standardised presentation by all the interviewers.

When these problems have been sorted out you will be ready to go out into the field and collect the answers to your survey questions.

New problems will arise - what to do about non-response, for example? Some people will refuse to be interviewed, others won't be in when you call. There are also many ethical considerations that you must bear in mind when collecting information from people. They have rights to their privacy, and confidentiality must be ensured regarding any information they give you.

Finally, with a pile of successfully completed questionnaires, you face the problem of deciding what sort of analysis you are going to carry out, and then producing some kind of final report or statement on the basis of the information that you have obtained. Again you have to make decisions about the sort of information you want to present and how much, and the use to which it will be put. What are you going to do with the information you have obtained, and where is it to be published?

1.5 Some Misconceptions

With so many different stages involved in carrying out a survey, it should be apparent that there are a great number of decisions that need to be made at various points, and all kinds of problems can crop up at every stage which might invalidate your eventual results.

1.5.1 A common misconception is that surveys are just a matter of common sense. This is not the case. Doing a survey can be a relatively easy and straightforward task, but only if you are adequately prepared and know what you are doing. More often, however, surveys are not easy and involve a lot of hard and painstaking work to avoid the many potential difficulties. Without adequate planning and sufficient understanding of the range of problems involved, you probably won't even realise some of the problems until somebody points them out at the end and demolishes your findings.

1.5.2 An alternative misconception is that surveys are so complicated that they should only be done by experts. Many people are so put off by the jargon used by survey researchers, and the complexity of some of the statistics that are involved, they feel it is something best left to professionals. Well, certainly, there is no substitute for experience, but unless you are very wealthy, there is little chance of being able to employ professionals to carry out research on your behalf. Nevertheless, when it comes to learning some of the basic tricks of the trade, there are plenty of good books on survey methods which you can use, and many sources of help and advice to which you can turn. The Survey Research Unit at PHL will provide advice on all aspects of sample surveys.

1.5.3 Another misconception is that the information which surveys produce is in some way better, more 'factual', than data collected by other methods. The truth is that survey findings are as good as, and no better than, the actual methods which are used to obtain them. The findings will reflect the amount of planning and careful thought that is put into the preparation of the research, formulating the problem, and refining the final questions. And the interpretation you make of the results, and your eventual conclusions, will reflect the whole range of ideas and thinking that lies behind your decision to do a piece of research, and the manner in which you set about defining the particular problem under investigation. There is no royal road to truth when it comes to explaining social phenomena. The idea that the figures and statistics produced by surveys are somehow more reliable than other, perhaps more subjective, material is an illusion, rapidly dispelled by a critical awareness of the many problems that have to be solved when carrying out a survey.

1.5.4 The alternative viewpoint is that survey findings are completely unreliable, and present a manipulative and distorted view of the real life situations of people. This is a more recent misunderstanding of the nature of surveys. Surveys are not precise measuring instruments, and they provide only a surface picture at a single moment in time. They look at social life in the mass, and by necessity oversimplify and underestimate the complexity of human life and subjective experience. There are relative advantages and disadvantages that come into play at every stage of their design. Of course, some surveys do distort the reality of the subject area they investigate, making all kinds of assumptions about the methods

that are used and overambitious claims for the interpretations that can be made of the findings. On the other hand, surveys can give broad and relatively accurate pictures of the conditions in which people are living, and they can also provide a means of expression for the opinions of the unheard.

- 1.5.5 In developing a critical approach towards sample survey methods, it is probably better to talk in terms of specific cases. One should look at the particular questions being asked and examine at every stage the choices made between different methods, in the context of the specific use made of the findings, and the claims made for them. It is often a matter of suiting appropriate research methods to the particular problem. If you are seeking a rich interpretive account of some aspect of people's experience, then a survey is not the most appropriate method to use. On the other hand, social surveys provide a relatively straightforward means of organising a lot of basic information in ways more systematic and comprehensive than can be achieved just by casual observation of the world around us.

1.6 Ethics

There are a number of ethical issues that arise when doing a survey. They concern such things as the rights of people to their privacy, the use that will be made of the information you get from people, their right to anonymity, and the treating of answers in the strictest confidentiality. These are of the greatest importance, since they involve the relationship that exists between you and your respondents - the people answering your questions. You are going to be completely dependent on their trust and cooperation. Failure to pay sufficient attention to these matters will have a crucial bearing upon the outcome of any survey that you undertake. You also have a responsibility to the wider research community. A bad survey will antagonise people and make it more difficult for someone else to do research after you.

1.6.1 Rights of respondents

The people whom you wish to question have an unqualified right to expect that you respect their privacy and autonomy. This includes their right not to answer any question at all. You should endeavour to put respondents fully in the picture about the aims of the survey, the purpose of your questions. But you must remember that people may disagree with your assessment of its importance, or be opposed themselves to your research objectives. Most people lead busy lives and some will not want to devote their time to answering your questions. Others may not like the idea of being questioned at all about what they feel are their own private concerns. The informant's right to withdraw, or to refuse to cooperate at any stage, has to be respected.

1.6.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

It is essential that you assure potential informants that their anonymity will be fully protected, and their answers treated in the strictest confidence. This means that it should be impossible for any informant to be identified individually, when you come to publish your findings. Having made these assurances you are honour bound to put them into effect. And they apply not just to information you obtain from postal questionnaires or while carrying out interviews, but also to anything else you might learn or observe about people while carrying out the survey.

At some point, usually when drawing the sample, you will need to identify the individual respondents, to distinguish one from another, and to draw up a list of addresses to visit if you plan to question people at home. One practice is to allocate a sequential code number to each of the informants. This means a list of the names and addresses of the informants, together with the code number they are allocated. This list does not need to be seen by more than a very few people responsible for carrying out the survey, and certainly not by anyone not involved in the survey. It should be kept in conditions of security, preferably under lock and key, particularly if the survey is into a controversial or politically contentious area. When the survey is completed this list can be destroyed.

Often, people are worried about matters like these. When asked, you should respond openly and sensitively to their concerns and try to reassure them by explaining the reason for code numbers, and the procedures you are adopting to ensure their anonymity.

1.6.3 The use made of the information

One area that worries people, especially nowadays with the increasing development of 'data-banks', is the use you intend making of the information they provide. You must expect to have to explain the purpose of your survey, and what it is you hope to get out of it. This includes the use that you intend to make of the findings, and where you plan to publish them. What safeguards will there be to prevent others less scrupulous than yourself from making use of the information? What are your relations with official bodies? People need to feel confident that the answers they give you are not going to get them into trouble with others, such as local authorities and council departments. If the results are to be published in the press, or in some kind of book, then it is doubly important that assurances you give regarding anonymity and confidentiality are honoured. You can make up false names, if you need to use people's names at all; even change the name of the area, the names of the streets or estates if necessary.

1.6.4 Personal questions

If you go about doing a survey in the right way, it is amazing how cooperative and forthcoming most people are. They will answer a great variety of questions, often adding much personal detail. Of course, a lot depends on you creating an atmosphere of trust and being sensitive to their concerns. If people feel that what you are doing is worthwhile then they will help you out. Of course, some people will object to answering certain questions which they feel are none of your business. Some people will refuse to answer questions

about their earnings or their marital status, for instance, especially if they cannot see what relevance they have to the rest of your questions. But most people will try to be helpful, even answering very personal and potentially embarrassing questions.

There are limits, of course. Doing a survey does not give you the right to ask about anything under the sun. If people don't want to answer particular questions, then they shouldn't be pressured to do so. Many people have strong moral, political or religious views - your questions should reflect an awareness of such convictions, rather than ignoring them for the sake of 'scientific' understanding. While interviewing you are a guest in someone else's life - that person has a right to feel that they are not about to be interrogated about their political beliefs, the range of their sexual activities, their personal relationships - at least not without very clear warning from the start. Your questions should reflect an intelligent concern and consideration for the situation of your potential informants.

1.6.5 Good practice

Many of these fears on the part of respondents can be avoided by good survey practices. These are really just an extension of ordinary human courtesy. Far too many surveys have been done in the past which have seemed to treat the informants as nothing more than a convenient source of data fodder, rather than human beings with their own opinions and interests. Nobody likes being treated like an idiot, so it is not surprising that over the years people have grown more reluctant to take part in surveys and to answer questionnaires.

It is often a good idea, where possible at the start of a survey, to write to the people you want to interview. You can explain the purpose of the research, and what you hope to get out of it, explaining along the way just who you are. It also gives you an opportunity to warn people that they may be visited, and to obtain their consent to participating. You can also tell them roughly what to expect - how many questions there will be and how long it will take. After the survey has been carried out, you should always leave or send participants a thank you letter.

If you are planning to follow up any of the interviews and visit people again, you should tell them at the first interview, and get their permission to come back again.

Finally, when you come to report your findings, you should try and provide your informants with a summary of the results. Not everybody will want one, but many will be genuinely interested in sharing the conclusions you reach. They have every right to do so since they provided the information on which the results are based.

- 1.6.6 The Market Research Society publishes a Code of Conduct in its annual yearbook. The Code covers most of the ethical issues which arise when doing surveys, as well as suggesting guidelines for good practice and the maintenance of professional standards. Though geared very much to the situation of market research and professional research agencies, it is well worth looking at, particularly the section on responsibilities to informants. You can obtain a copy from the Market Research Society, 15 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PF - Telephone: 01 235 4709.

1.7 Basic Reading

There is a large amount of published work in the field of survey research, and some of it is very technical. Most of what you need to know can be found within the pages of the following standard texts on survey research.

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moser C A & Kalton G: | SURVEY METHODS IN SOCIAL INVESTIGATION
(Heinemann 1971) |
| Hoinville G, Jowell R
and associates: | SURVEY RESEARCH PRACTICE
(Heinemann 1978) |
| Atkinson J: | A HANDBOOK FOR INTERVIEWERS
(OPCS 1971) |
| Oppenheim A N: | QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND ATTITUDE
MEASUREMENT (Heinemann 1966) |

A further list of reading and information sources appears as an Appendix. Where possible, it is a good idea to have a look at some of these texts, or at least skim through them before planning your research. Moser and Kalton is the standard textbook on survey methods, but it goes into rather more technical detail than you probably need. If you look at only one of these basic texts,

Survey Research Practice by Hoinville, Jowell and Associates is probably the best general introduction to the whole field of survey research. It is the most up to date, and the paperback only costs £2.50 (Autumn 1979). You may also be interested in a more general introduction to research methods in social investigation.

Established standard works are:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Goode W J & Hatt P K: | METHODS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH
(McGraw Hill, New York 1952) |
| Madge J: | THE TOOLS OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
(Longmans 1953) |

PLANNING THE SURVEY

From the start of any research it is important to get clear the precise nature of the research question you intend to ask. You need to do this so that you can begin to plan in detail a programme for the research and to decide on the most appropriate methods of investigation.

2.1 Defining the Problem

It is important to begin by clarifying the precise questions that you intend to ask. What are the basic objectives? Is a survey the most suitable method for your needs? Part of this process will involve reading and investigating around the problem area, looking at any previous work that has been done on similar problems. You will be developing a general theoretical approach to the problem - what are the relevant 'variables' that you want to investigate, and what is the best way to go about it.

2.2 Other Research Methods

At this early stage, one thing you will need to decide is whether you really need to do a survey? It should already be apparent that surveys involve quite a number of different stages, and problems can arise at every step. They involve a considerable amount of work and require careful planning and coordination. They can take up a lot of time and money. And it may be that survey methods are not the most appropriate way of exploring your problem. There are limits to the range and depth of information you can obtain from surveys.

Generally, data obtained by surveys is either very basic factual information, or else rather superficial. Quantitative information about the number of children in a family, the number of rooms in a house, amount of rent, etc., or else statements of opinion by people in a rather unreal situation, isolates individuals being interviewed by strangers. Other methods may be more suitable, particularly if you need to get at more in-depth subjective experience and information. The rest of this section looks at some alternative research methods.

2.2.1 Depth interview

This is where you interview (usually a small sample of people) in a less structured fashion than in a social survey. This enables the informants to say far more and to structure their replies in their own words and ideas. It requires some talent on the part of the interviewer, who would usually be using a cassette tape recorder. The end result is much richer material of greater subjective depth, and many people find the method attractive precisely for this

reason. The major drawback, not apparent until you come to analyse the interviews, is that they involve a great deal of work to summarise and digest. Just 20 interviews of about an hour's duration mean you've got two solid days of just listening to the tapes, longer when you come to analyse and summarise the contents of the interviews. Other problems are that not all people possess great depths, and being interviewed can make people self-conscious and limits the information they give you.

2.2.2 Observation

There aren't many situations where you can just go and observe some social behaviour. But they do occur. You could be doing a survey of the number of lorries using a residential street - all you would need to do is observe the street, recording the traffic according to some pre-arranged checking system or classification scheme. No sample selection procedures, no questionnaires, no interviewing. But relying on observers introduces the possibility of biases being introduced by the individual observers, since everyone sees things in slightly different ways.

2.2.3 Participant observation is an improvement upon simple observation, in that you aim to get closer to the object of study, thus obtaining richer information. It involves you joining or participating in the area of the social problem you are investigating, entering into the life of the community under study. A youth worker working with teenagers might use this method to investigate what the kids need in the way of recreation and play facilities on an estate. The aim is to allow people to behave as though you are not there, so that their

behaviour is natural, more real.

2.2.4 Action research is an extension of participant observation, in that the researcher not only becomes a member of the group being looked at, but also tries to intervene and change the situation being defined as the research problem. This method is used a lot in community research, where workers set out to identify problems of all kinds, and try to solve them at the same time. A lot depends on the specific circumstances and the skills of the action researcher. Much research that is associated with public campaigns of one sort or another is of the action-research type.

2.2.5 Content analysis is primarily a method of analysing documents and information of one sort or another. It can be applied as a method of analysing interviews or the answers to items in a questionnaire. Most frequently it would be used to measure such things as the coverage of a particular issue by the local press, or working out the amount of time allocated to a particular problem in council discussions. You break down the area you are investigating under various headings on the basis of a preliminary analysis of your source material, and then check off the amount of space or coverage devoted to each heading.

2.2.6 Group discussions

Another way of tackling a problem is by group discussions. This method is used a lot in market research, particularly at the preliminary stages of market surveys or launching a product. You select a group of people, by whatever criteria are appropriate, and then lead a discussion around the problem under review - what the

Participants like or dislike about product X, for instance. Your aim is to bring together as full a range of diverse viewpoints as possible, helping the discussion along, and generally noting what is said. This can be a good way of starting a survey, getting a general idea of the full range and diversity of the variables or issues involved.

Most of these other research methods produce material that is richer and more qualitative than that produced by surveys. They usually involve looking at smaller groups of people, sometimes things, in greater depth. A survey enables you to cover a larger number of people systematically, and bring together information on a wider range of subjects and issues. 'Qualitative' research will suggest or identify the presence of influences and relationships, while a survey will go some way towards revealing their extent.

2.2.7 Another method is the inspection of documentary sources, and this may be relevant even if you have decided that the survey method is the most suitable. You can obtain a lot of data and information from a systematic inspection of documents and any other recorded source of information. Combined with content analysis, you could explore the coverage of an issue in council minutes or parliamentary discussions, for example. More usually, this kind of work will be involved in the preliminary stages of any survey - reading the literature, getting an up to date perspective on a particular problem, developing a theoretical approach and building up your background knowledge of the question.

2.2.8 Standard sources

A final source of information relevant to your eventual decision whether to go out and do a survey, is provided by various national standard surveys, and survey archives. Some of this work, other previous surveys, may be of relevance to the work you plan to do. It is worth investigating these sources, unless you are certain that your proposed research is absolutely unique and original. There is a vast amount of previous material - why go to all the trouble of doing a survey, when somebody else might have done a lot of the work already?

- 1 U.K. Census 1971. This was the first national census to be fully computerised, and a range of sub-analyses are available, both in printed form and magnetic tape.
- 2 The General Household Survey is carried out on an annual basis, to keep up to date a general picture of living patterns between the 10-year censuses.
- 3 Information on these 2 sources is available from OPCS, St. Catherine's House, Kingsway, London WC2. They also produce a number of publications, digests of findings from government surveys etc.
- 4 Government statistics. Large range of publications on all sorts of aspects of official policy and official statistics.

'Government Statistics - a brief guide to sources' is published by the Central Statistical Office, CO CSO Section, Great George Street, London SW1P 3AQ. This and other government publications

are available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO)

49, High Holborn, London WC1V GHB (Callers Only)

PO Box 569, London SE1 9NH - Handles Mail and Telephone Orders

- 5 'Social Trends' is published yearly and contains a wide variety of information, drawn from major governmental sources including the Family Expenditure Survey, the New Earnings Survey and others.
- 6 The SSRC Survey Archive at Essex University is a 'data-bank' of various surveys (about 1400 altogether). The data is stored and supplied in computer-readable form, together with the code book which explains how the data-set is organised and coded. So it is possible to carry out secondary analysis of data that has already been collected. You can get details from: SSRC Survey Archive, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SQ.
- 7 There are many other sources of survey material - other data-banks, publications, international statistical digests, international survey archives. You should be able to follow these up through pursuing other sources like the SSRC Survey Archive. At some point you will save yourself a lot of time and trouble if you have a talk with a professional, a survey expert or someone who knows the subject with which you are concerned.

2.3 Different Survey Methods

Assuming you have looked at all the various methods and decided on a survey, how are you going to set about it? When talking about surveys, we are usually thinking of some kind of pre-planned questionnaire, either to be filled in by the respondents themselves OR by someone going out and interviewing the informants. The distinction between self-completion OR personal interviews is most important and making a decision about which approach to use is one of the key decisions you must make when planning a survey. The postal survey is the most common form of self-completion method, and there are other variations on both self-completion and interviews which may be less cumbersome and more appropriate to your needs.

2.3.1 Postal surveys

Instead of using interviewers, the questionnaire is sent to the informants by post, with a covering letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire and asking for their help. They fill in the answers to your questions by self-completion, and then return it to you by post. The main advantage of postal questionnaires is that they by-pass the interviewing stage, perhaps saving time and expense, and avoiding the necessity of finding and training people to act as interviewers. Relying on self-completion, means the information you get is less full and reliable than it would be with an interviewer going out and talking to the respondent. The main drawback with postal questionnaires is the response rate, which can be much lower than the rate of reply which interviewers can achieve. Response rates for postal questionnaires used to be around the 70% mark.

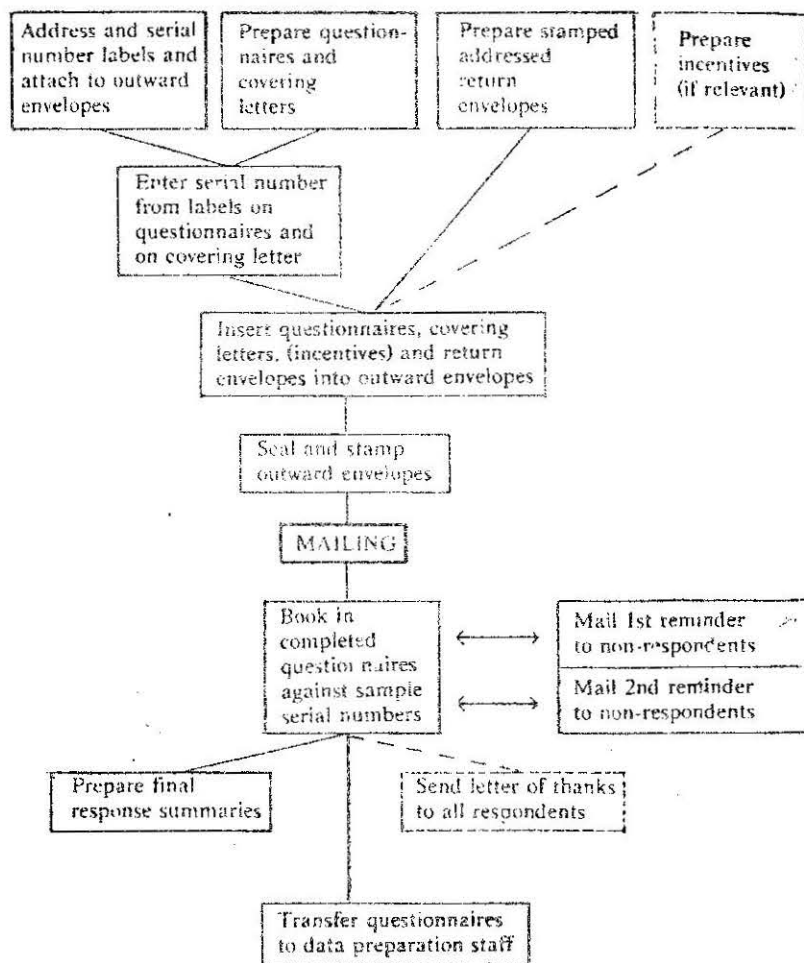
Nowadays, perhaps because people have tired of filling in complicated forms and questionnaires, the response rate is much more likely to be around the 50% mark. Obviously, failing to cover around half your desired sample introduces a considerable level of bias and distortion into your eventual findings. There are one or two things you can do to keep up the response rate - sending reminders and repeat questionnaires after a certain time period and enclosing pre-paid reply envelopes etc - but your success rate will always be limited by the absence of any direct contact with the informants.

Since postal questionnaires have to be completed by the respondents, they must necessarily be kept simple and more straightforward than they might be if you have interviewers to guide people through them. They also assume a comparatively high level of literacy on the part of the people filling them in. Remember that in some inner city areas as many as one person in three will either not be able to read the questionnaire or won't speak English. Nor can you guarantee that it will be completed by the person to whom it is sent.

Postal surveys are worth considering, especially when you don't possess large funds and resources to put into interviewing. If you can get by with a less representative sample, and you can keep your questions short and simple, they are certainly one of the most practical ways to collect information. One variation worth considering is the use of interviewers to deliver and collect self-completion questionnaires which they can help with in cases of difficulty.

The various stages of a postal survey are shown in the accompanying diagram, taken from 'Survey Research Practice' by Gerald Hoinville, Roger Jowell and Associates.

THE STAGES OF A POSTAL SURVEY



(this diagram is taken from Survey Research Practice by Hoinville, G. and Jowell, R. and associates, Heinemann, 1978, page 140)

You can see that postal surveys involve a considerable amount of paperwork and typing. If your sample is a large one, you may have to consider some sort of paid secretarial assistance to cope with all the addressing of labels, matching of code numbers, checking of returns, and general paper work.

2.3.2 A telephone survey is carried out over the telephone. If your sample is not too large, and you can keep your questions short, easy to answer, and few in number, then this can be a very effective method. You simply sit at a desk with a list of prepared questions, and write down the answers as you phone your way through the sample. You could use such a method to survey different views of policy bodies towards a specific issue - for instance, the attitude of different trade union organisations to some policy proposal. The number of questions you can ask will of course be limited by the length and nature of the phone call. Your sample will also be restricted - it has to be people with telephones. You cannot use this method for a general survey of individuals, selecting a sample from the telephone directory as people with phones tend to be better off and poorer people would be under-represented.

It's a good method for surveying opinion leaders, like officials and various organisational representatives, who are paid to answer telephones. It is also appropriate as a rough and ready survey method, especially if representative sampling criteria are not your main concern. You could use the method to survey a group of people in the local community affected by some proposal. You might have difficulty getting hold of the telephone numbers, though one possible sampling method could be to use random 4-digit numbers with

known exchanges in the particular area.

Telephone surveys have been used to survey individual informants, especially to follow-up a previous interview or postal questionnaire. It is rather an intrusive method, giving the informants little warning and no time to prepare themselves to answer questions.

- 2.3.3 Desk research, of which telephone surveys are one type, refers generally to any kind of survey you can carry out just sitting at a desk. This would include surveys of source materials, previous literature and published materials, official bodies you can contact on the phone, and so on. Such inquiries obviously take up much less resources in time and money.

The range of problems that can be tackled is limited and you have very little direct contact with your sources of information. When using documentary sources, or material collected by other researchers, you are dependent on the methods that other people have adopted, and limited by the assumptions they might have made when carrying out their original research. These restrictions apply particularly with official statistics, and you need to consider the purposes behind the collection of information by official bodies.

Government statistics often appear to have an accuracy that is not justified in practice, since the information is collected primarily by agents of official bodies, with particular policies to pursue. Figures on unemployment, for example, are returned by clerks in employment offices and may reflect more a zeal to apply official rules and regulations concerning unemployment benefit, rather than

the disinterested collection of information about levels of employment. Crime statistics reflect only those crimes reported to the police or to insurance companies and cannot be taken as accurate measures of criminal activity.

2.3.4 Omnibus surveys

There are a large number of standard surveys carried out at frequent intervals by market research agencies. They cover various general aspects and are used in the main by commercial firms wanting information about the market size of consumer products. Such surveys can be used, however, for attitude research. Different types of sample are used, but representative national polls are most common. The results of such surveys are made available to whoever is interested and can afford to pay for them - they don't come cheap. If the information you want can be obtained from asking just one or two questions, it is possible to piggy-back your question(s) on to one of these wider surveys. It can prove expensive - typical rates are £100 per question, more for questions requiring 'open-ended' responses.

You could explore questions of opinion - for instance, the extent to which people were in favour of changing the law on abortion or keeping it as it is - by buying space for your question on one of these surveys. The main advantage is that your question can be asked of a much broader sample of informants than you would be able to get with just your own resources. Information on omnibus surveys can be found in the Market Research Society Newsletter.

2.4

Professional Research Agencies

You may be thinking of employing a professional research agency to do all or part of your survey for you. What kind of services do they provide, and how much does it cost?

There are over 200 organisations in Britain which offer some form of survey research service. Many of these are small and mainly active in the commercial or market research area. The larger commercial organisations, such as NOP, Gallup, RSGB, RSL, are able to offer a much wider service. In general terms, they can do almost all your proposed survey - designing the questionnaire, interviewing and fieldwork, processing and analysing the data, and report writing. Often people employ professional research organisations to carry out just one or two stages of a survey.

This means you design and produce the questionnaire. They do the typing and printing, the interviewing, coding of replies, and produce a set of data, usually punched cards, for you to analyse. Sampling can be done by the agency or the client.

There are several advantages in using professional interviewers. They are experienced, they know what they are doing, and you don't have to concern yourself with any of the fieldwork problems. The main disadvantage with using professional interviewers is the cost. At the present time of writing (Autumn 1979) one interviewer day costs £25 for between three and four interviews. This means a sample of just 100 cases, which is small, would cost in the region of £1000. A larger and more representative sample would cost more accordingly.

If you also use research agencies to design the questionnaire, you will be buying what is called 'executive time', and this is costly - around £25 per hour. If you can get the money it's often worth it, provided you are very specific about what you are buying. Many people doing surveys would prefer to do it themselves anyway if they have the capacity, because it gives even more contact with the problem area and the respondents.

The Survey Research Unit at the Polytechnic of North London is particularly well-equipped to advise on research agencies and costing.

2.5 Planning the Research Programme

By now you should have made the basic decisions about whether to do a survey, the type of research method you are going to use, the range of questions you intend asking, and the general scope of the study. You need to start planning a programme, a time table for doing the survey. There are a considerable number of things that need to be done and they will have to be coordinated.

2.5.1 Going over the basic stages, once more:

- (1) defining the research problem
- (2) settling on a target population
- (3) choosing between self-completion OR personal interviews
- (4) selecting a sample
- (5) getting permission
- (6) designing a questionnaire
- (7) selecting methods of measurement
- (8) wording the questions
- (9) piloting
- (10) organising the fieldwork - interviewing
- (11) checking, editing and following up replies
- (12) preparing and processing the data
- (13) analysing the findings
- (14) writing up the results

2.5.2 At the planning stage, it is important to make a number of decisions that will shape the overall scope of the survey.

How many questions are you going to ask? Is it to be a long

interview, or a short one? How many people do you want to interview - how big should the sample be? Is there a deadline for completing the work by a particular date? What sort of results do you want, and how are you going to analyse them? These decisions will be determined by the resources you have at your disposal - the amount of time you have, how much money, if any, you can afford to spend, the number of people to do the work. If you plan carefully, you should end up with a timetable for the research, a list of dates for each stage of the proposed survey. If you have never done a survey before, your timetable will probably be very unrealistic. You ought to seek advice from some experienced source, such as the Survey Research Unit at PNL.

2.6 Getting Permission

It may be difficult to obtain access to the set of people you propose to survey, depending on the nature of your research. You may find that you need the help of an official body - the local town hall, the rating office - to get a list of names from which to select a sample. To carry out the interviewing may require obtaining permission from other authorities and official bodies. This will certainly be the case if you plan to survey people within an institution like a school, a hospital, or a factory. Attempts to cross boundaries into the territories of established professionals such as lawyers, doctors and educationalists will frequently meet resistance and non-cooperation. Dealing with official bodies and getting permission is something you have to start working on right at the start. It is no use leaving it to the last minute. Otherwise you will end up with a brilliant questionnaire, but no-one to use it on.

You should also inform the local police if you are going out to interview the general public. Interviewers should carry identification cards so they can establish their credentials, with fieldwork dates.

Most of the information you collect by survey research will eventually finish up as numbers, even if it is collected as words or sentences. Your results will be mainly in terms of the numbers of people with various characteristics, the proportion of people with a particular characteristic, or holding a specific opinion or attitude. These proportions will usually be expressed in terms of percentages of the total sample - 30% in favour of X, 50% against, and 20% undecided. Sometimes you will want to work out a few basic statistics like averages - average earnings of a group of people, average amount of time spent looking after children etc.

Don't be worried about statistics. Some social surveys produce findings expressed in terms of highly complex statistical analyses. It is most unlikely that you would want to use these high-level statistics. They are sometimes used inappropriately by social scientists, anyway, on data collected with insufficient rigour for the mathematical assumptions on which the tests are based. A good survey can usually present the findings of even the most complicated analyses in simple percentage tables or clearly drawn graphics.

A final word on numerical findings. Nothing is more boring to read than a report consisting entirely of numbers, percentages, graphs and tables. When writing your report, you want to be able to call on plenty of descriptive and interpretive material. When carrying out the survey, you should seek to combine other research methods with the basic survey methods. Keep a diary to note down thoughts

and impressions during the course of the survey. As well as numerical data, use observation to record the impressions of the people conducting the interviews. Use open-ended questions to allow respondents to express themselves - note down any insights, ideas, comments that the informants themselves may have.

2.8 Computers

Most discussions of survey research, including presentations in the standard text-books, assume that you should end up analysing your survey on a computer, either from punched cards or from data typed directly on to a magnetic storage device.

Should you use a computer? The short answer to this question is NO.

At least not unless you have to or have access to people who know what they are doing.

- 1 Computers are extremely expensive to run. The only way of getting free access to a computer is if you are attached to an institution, usually an academic institution, which has its own. Most people are not in this fortunate position and don't have the option.
- 2 You have to learn how to use computers and this all takes time and experience.
- 3 Although there is no doubt that computers, when properly used, can speed up the processing and analysis of survey data, all kinds of things can go wrong. As with all technological wonders, they bring a whole new dimension of problems and possible pitfalls which can involve you in lots of unforeseen work.
- 4 One situation when you might think of using a computer, is when you have a lot of information and a large sample. For practical purposes, this means more than 500 cases, and over 50 variables, when you won't be able to cope with the quantity of

data. It may also make sense to use a computer if you are carrying out 'repeat' surveys, though these are usually confined to large agencies doing commercial research.

- 5 For a community-based survey, the sample size is likely to be less than 500 and it is quite realistic to envisage calculating the basic findings by hand. With a short questionnaire and a sample of 100 to 150, it might take two or three people a couple of weekends to work out the results, just sitting on the floor amidst a heap of questionnaires. It may be boring work, but it will save you the effort of setting out the data to be punched for the machine, drawing up coding frames, travelling backwards and forwards to the computer centre, getting programmers to run analyses for you (which will never be quite what you had in mind anyway), waiting for computer jobs to work, worrying when the computer breaks down.

The extra work involved in data management for computers is only worth the effort in particular circumstances, when there is a large amount of information or when you need to undertake complex statistical analysis. For the majority of small-scale sample surveys a computer is not a necessity.

If you are in doubt about computers and need some advice, talk to the Computing Service or the Survey Research Unit at PNL. If you want to know a little more about what computers involve, a good introduction is:

Hy, R.J. Using the Computer in the Social Sciences - a non-technical introduction (Elsevier, 1977)

SAMPLING

A social survey investigates part of a group (the sample) in order to make inferences about the whole group (the population). You may not need to select a sample. If the group you investigate is small enough, you could collect information from everybody. In this case, you would be carrying out a small-scale census. This might be the case if you were doing a survey of residents of a particular street, for instance, discovering their attitudes to a proposed traffic plan. More commonly, though, you won't be able to question everybody, which means choosing an appropriate sample.

3.1

Defining the Target Population

When we talk about populations in survey research, we do not mean the country's general population, the people inhabiting a given geographical area. The term 'population' refers to the group of people, households, entities of one sort or another, which the researcher is investigating. This group constitutes the 'target' population which the survey is planned to investigate, and from which a suitable sample has to be chosen.

Often the identification of the target population is a straightforward matter. It can be the general population, all the residents in a particular road, the women workers on the payroll of a particular factory. But it is not always easy to identify target populations, especially in practice when it comes to gaining access to them.

A recent survey by students at FET aimed to examine parental

attitudes to proposed changes in secondary school education. So the target population was parents of schoolchildren. But it had to be parents of schoolchildren in the particular area, and the children had to be of the age groups that would actually be affected by the changes. In the end, the target population became the parents of 4th year primary schoolchildren in a particular London borough. When the survey came to be carried out, they still had to decide whether to interview both parents, or just the mother or the father. Putting the survey into practice involved being much more specific than 'schoolchildren's parents'.

The problems are not so great when looking at general populations of individuals and households. But problems of definition invariably crop up when you try to home in on specific groups of people. Groups of workers - are they to be selected by work place or occupation? Should part-time workers be included? Residents in a street - do you include occupants of shop premises? People's use of a children's nursery - just the parents of children attending, or do you include people who would like to be able to send their children to it?

Becoming clear about the population you are studying is part of the process of defining the question you want to investigate, and is one of the problems to be clarified at the planning stage. The main practical difficulty that will have to be tackled is obtaining the list of names of the people in this population, so that you can select a sample.

3.2

Sampling Frames

These are listings of the total population group which are used as the basis of selection of the individual members of the sample.

If the group you intend surveying is hard to identify, it may prove extremely difficult to get a list of names, or to gain practical access. It depends on the particular problem you face, and your own ingenuity. You may want to do a survey of the housing needs of single homeless people in a particular area. How are you going to find such people? Local housing departments don't keep records of this kind of housing need, certainly not up to date records, and people don't walk around with badges announcing they are single homeless people. In practice, you could end up by doing a survey of visitors to a housing advice agency - not quite the same thing.

With many target groups there are no lists of names available to act as frames for the selection of an appropriate sample. You have to use other methods - questioning every tenth person coming through the door of an advice agency, for instance; stopping individuals in the street possessing certain characteristics that meet pre-determined sampling criteria - eg black teenagers, if you wanted to find out about 'sus laws'.

There are several standard sampling frames which you can use to get a general sample:

- 1 The Electoral Register provides the names of individuals over the age of 18 and their addresses, listed by voting districts - wards and constituencies. The list of voters in a ward is a

good frame for selecting a local area sample. You can usually get a copy of the electoral register from the local town hall. A drawback with electoral rolls is that they are only brought up to date once a year, and even then they are not very accurate. Large numbers of people can get omitted from the register - in some inner city areas with very transient populations, as many as 30% of those entitled to vote get left off for various reasons.

- 2 Rating Records kept by local authority Housing Departments list all separately rated dwellings. They can be used to obtain a sample of households, but you have to remember that some separately rated dwellings contain more than one household.
- 3 National Insurance Records kept by the DHSS provide a national listing of insured workers. Of course these lists are not kept up to date and don't include many people, especially women, who work but do not come under the National Insurance scheme. Useful for tracing people who might have changed their address during the course of a longitudinal survey.
- 4 Other listings. Many institutions, like clubs and factories, keep lists of their members or the people who work there. These provide natural sampling frames, provided you are able to get the cooperation of the people in charge. People in authority do not like releasing the names and addresses of people that they feel 'responsible' for in some way. You will have to be very persuasive and convincing about assurances of confidentiality. Don't expect much help if your research objectives are likely to

threaten such powers-that-be.

- 5 Government departments are a possible source of listings and population frames. A survey of factories could be based on the factory registers kept by the Department of Industry, a survey of schoolchildren on the school rolls kept by local education authorities. But don't rely on these official bodies to provide such lists automatically. If they don't like your research proposals, all kinds of bureaucratic obstacles will be put in your way.

Remember all such lists have various defects. They may be inaccurate because of recording errors and time delays. Some items may be omitted, others duplicated. If you use such lists, you must be prepared to revise them yourself as you go along.

3.3 The Ideas Behind Sampling

When selecting a sample we usually aim to ensure that it is as representative as possible of the wider population group. This is so that findings about the sample group can be generalised to the larger group - within certain limits the results from the sample can be said to hold for the population as a whole.

3.3.1 Representativeness

When you select a small sample from a larger population group, you introduce the possibility of sampling error. The group you select may not be typical of the wider group you are investigating. Perhaps because of the manner of their selection, they may share certain characteristics which involve aspects of the research problem. Your survey could end up producing a very distorted picture. For instance, in a survey of problems of tenants living in a block of flats you might decide to visit every fifth house. But it might happen that because of the physical design of the flats these turned out to be all the flats next to the lift-shaft.

So, surveys strive to ensure that the samples they investigate are as representative as possible of the group being studied. Ideally each individual member of the population should have an equal chance, or probability, of being chosen for the sample. Of course there will always be an arbitrary element in the selection of a sample. But generally speaking, its representativeness will reflect your preparation, the care with which you identify the target group, and the particular method of sample selection you adopt.

3.3.2 Bias

A sample which is not representative of the population is said to be biased. A sample which is known to be biased can sometimes be useful if sufficient is known about the bias to make an allowance for it, or it can be used to set an upper or lower limit to some population value. Sometimes we deliberately select samples which are biased in some way - for instance to compare the opinions of two differing groups on some issue. Biasing the sample in this way should heighten the contrast that we hope to demonstrate.

However, you must be on your guard for bias which arises for unintended reasons. Problems you have overlooked or assumptions you might have made, at this stage of defining the problem and planning the survey, might emerge as eventual bias in your results.

3.3.3 Sampling theory

This is a whole body of complex statistical and mathematical reasoning which aims to quantify the degree of representativeness and error for a particular sample. On the basis of certain sample characteristics, its size, the size of the population, the known ranges of certain population characteristics, it is possible to derive precise mathematical estimates of the accuracy of survey findings and the degree of error involved in generalising such findings to the population group.

You do not need to learn the mathematics of sampling theory. They are complicated, and it is beyond the scope of this handbook to go into detailed explanations of statistical theories. Provided you

have some mathematical skill - have some idea of what algebra involves, for instance - you could look at any basic introductory statistical textbook. Simple and useful is: 'Facts from Figures' by M J Moroney (Penguin, 1962). But you do not have to understand statistics to carry out a simple small-scale survey. Sampling theory is sufficiently complex to leave you feeling very confused. It is sufficient to be aware that the findings of sample surveys are only estimates or approximate measures of population variables. In no way are survey results exact.

A couple of terms from sampling theory, which might be useful to know:

1 Significant levels

Survey findings and results are frequently presented as statistical conclusions, said to apply at particular levels of significance. Usually, it is the 5% level of significance that is mentioned, but sometimes significance levels of 1% or 0.1% are chosen. These measures reflect the level of chance, the probability that the sample-based finding represents a real measure of the population characteristic, and that you didn't get the result by chance.

At 5% significance, you could get the result by chance 5 times out of 100. So 95 times in 100 the finding would be a reliable estimate for the population group.

At 1%, you could get the result by chance 1 time out of 100, so 99 times in 100, the finding would be accurate.

At 0.1%, you could only get the result by chance once in 1000 occurrences, so 999 times in 1000 the finding would be accurate.

- 2 Confidence intervals reflect the degree of approximation involved in survey findings. They attempt to put precise mathematical limits to possible error. You may have noticed recently that Election Polls have started to publish confidence intervals with their forecasts. Usually something like:

CONSERVATIVES	LABOUR	CONFIDENCE INTERVAL (at 5% level of significance)
37%	42%	+ 3% - 3%

What this means is that 95 times in 100 we can be certain that the true figure for the proportion voting Conservative might be anywhere between 37% plus or minus 3%, i.e. between 34% to 40%. Similarly, Labour lies between 39% and 45%. In this case, it seems that Labour has a lead over Conservatives, but in reality it could be the other way round.

Confidence intervals are a measure of the error involved in taking a sample, reflecting the degree of chance involved in selection procedures.

3 Randomness

Sampling theory statistics, like confidence estimates, and significance levels, are based on the fundamental assumption that samples are selected randomly from the population group. The principle of randomness is the mathematical ideal which researchers aim at to ensure representativeness of the sample.

But in practice, real samples are very rarely selected at random, there is usually some other principle involved. Many researchers, even highly reputable academics, do not fully understand the statistical basis of sampling theory. They present precise statistical conclusions and attempt complex statistical analyses which are often totally unjustified by the sampling procedure they have employed. To the extent that samples are not selected randomly there is a greater possibility of error, and statistical findings which are based on tests which assume randomness can be inappropriate and misleading.

3.4 Size of the Sample

How big should the sample be? Given the ideas that lie behind sampling, what criteria should you adopt when producing a sample? What methods are there for choosing a sample?

Sampling is a matter of compromise. There are no hard and fast rules. On one side, you want to be sure that the sample is representative and free of bias. On the other hand, you are constrained by the nature of the problem and the resources you have for doing the survey - time, money, the amount of work you can put into the research. Deciding on the size of the sample is a practical decision, you have to take for yourself. Obviously it shouldn't be too small or it will not be at all representative. If your sample is small, then the size of sub-groups within it will tend to be very small and more likely to be unrepresentative. It shouldn't be too big otherwise you will not be able to handle all the work. Above a certain minimal size the law of diminishing returns sets in. A sample of 400 will be more accurate than a sample of 200, but it won't be twice as accurate, and the extra precision may not be worth a doubling of effort to obtain it.

As a rough guide, general national samples are rarely larger than 1000 cases. It's not very likely that you would attempt that kind of a survey. For a small-scale survey, the sample size depends on the total size of the population. If numbers are small it may be possible to interview everyone, in which case you can forget about sampling. With larger groups, a sample size of between 100 and 200 is not a bad figure to aim at. Large enough to be representative -

not too many to create too much work. Suppose you wanted to survey people living on a housing estate with about 600 dwellings - if you visited every third flat, you would end up with a sample of about 150, allowing for non-response, people being out, etc.

3.5 Sampling Methods

There are a variety of ways of choosing a sample. They rely on different applications of the principles that lie behind sampling, as well as practical considerations. They all have relative advantages and disadvantages. The method you adopt will depend a great deal on your target population, the ease with which its members can be identified, and whether a suitable sampling frame is available.

3.5.1 Simple random sample

Random sampling is that method of choosing a sample so that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. In statistical terms, this is the purest type of sample - randomness maximises the chance of the sample being representative and minimises the possibility of bias entering in to the selection of cases.

It requires a sampling frame which is reliable and up to date. Selection is usually made using a random number table (see the next page). This consists of a series of randomly generated numbers. You start by picking a pin in the table. Suppose you want to select a sample of 100 from a population of 1000 individuals, which you can number in some way. Let's say our first number is 896 (underlined) - reading across we get 896, 527, 843, 092 and so on. The numbers give the members of the sample and you continue until you have a total of 150 cases.

Random Sampling Numbers

2017	4228	2317	5966	3861	0210	8610	5155	9252	4425
7449	0449	0304	1033	5370	1154	4863	9460	9449	5738
9470	4931	3867	2342	2965	4088	7871	3718	4864	0657
2215	7815	6984	3252	3254	1512	5402	0137	3837	1293
9329	1218	2730	3055	9187	6057	5851	4936	1253	9640
4504	7797	3614	9945	5925	6985	0383	5187	8556	2237
4491	9949	8939	9460	4849	0677	6472	5926	0851	2557
1623	9102	1996	4759	8965	2784	3092	6337	2624	2366
0450	6504	6565	8242	7051	5501	6147	8883	9934	8237
3270	1772	9361	6626	2471	2277	8833	1778	0892	7349
0364	5907	4295	8139	0641	2081	9234	5190	3908	2142
6249	9000	6786	9348	3183	1907	6768	4903	2747	5203
6100	9586	9836	1403	4888	5107	3340	0686	2276	6857
8903	9049	2874	2104	0996	6045	2203	5280	0179	3381
0172	3385	5240	6007	0671	8927	1429	5524	8579	3196
2758	4979	3434	3222	6053	9117	3326	4470	9314	9970
4905	7448	1055	3525	2428	2022	3566	6634	2635	9123
4974	3725	9726	3394	4223	0128	5958	9269	0366	7382
2026	2243	8808	1985	0812	4765	6563	5607	9785	5679
4887	7796	4339	7693	0879	2218	5455	9375	9726	9077
0872	8746	7573	0011	2707	0520	3085	2221	0467	1913
9597	9862	1727	3142	6471	4622	3275	1932	2099	9485
3799	5731	7040	4655	4612	2432	3674	6920	7210	9593
0579	5837	8533	7518	8871	2344	5128	0048	9623	6645
5585	6342	0079	9122	2901	4139	5140	3665	2611	7832
6728	9625	6836	2472	0385	4924	0569	6486	0819	9121
8586	9478	3259	5182	8643	7384	4560	8957	0687	0815
4010	6009	0588	7844	6313	5825	3711	1847	7562	5221
9455	8948	9080	7780	2689	8744	2374	6620	2019	2652
1163	7777	2320	3362	6219	2903	9415	5637	1409	4716
6400	2604	5455	3857	9462	6840	2604	2425	0361	0120
5094	1323	7841	6058	1060	8846	3021	4598	7096	3689
6698	3796	4413	4505	3459	7585	4897	2719	1785	4851
6691	4283	6077	9091	6090	7962	5766	7228	0870	9603
3358	1218	0207	1940	2129	3945	9042	5884	8543	9567
5249	4016	7240	7305	5090	0204	9824	0530	2725	2088
7496	9399	7830	7947	9692	4558	4037	0970	8441	7462
5026	5430	0188	6957	5445	6988	2321	0569	9344	0532
4946	6189	3379	9684	2834	1935	2873	3959	5634	9707
1965	1344	7839	7388	6203	3600	2596	8676	6790	2168
6417	4767	8759	8140	7261	1400	2828	5586	2338	1615
1843	9737	6897	5656	5795	0188	1189	4807	4260	1192
6558	6087	5109	9661	1553	6681	6688	4475	3701	2888
7990	3100	9114	8565	3175	4315	4593	6478	3453	8802
0723	0015	5905	1609	9442	2040	6376	6567	3411	9410
9008	1424	0151	9546	3032	3319	0014	1928	4051	9269
5382	6202	2182	3413	4103	1285	6530	0097	5630	1548
9817	2615	0450	7625	2033	5484	3931	2333	5964	9627
0891	1244	8240	3062	4550	6454	6517	8925	5944	9995
3721	4677	8487	6739	8554	9737	3341	1174	9050	2962

Each digit is an independent sample from a population in which the digits 0 to 9 are equally likely that is each has a probability of $\frac{1}{10}$.

It is unlikely that the survey you wish to undertake will require the selection of a purely random sample. The procedures apply more to surveys involving rigorous statistical analysis where the assumption of randomness may be crucial. This might be the procedure adopted for some method of quality control for a factory product.

3.5.2 Systematic Sampling

- 1 This method is the one most commonly used in practice, particularly for general social surveys.
- 2 It is probably the best method to use for selecting samples for most small-scale community surveys.

It requires an adequate sampling frame, but you do not need a random numbers table in order to select the cases. If you wanted a sample of 100 cases from a population of 1000, the principle of selection would be based on the idea that you need to select 1 case in every 10. This gives you your sampling ratio. Starting at the beginning of the sampling frame, you randomly pick an individual from the first 10 cases, perhaps by sticking a pin in the list. This gives you the first case, number 3 for instance. Then you simply proceed down the list systematically selecting every tenth case: 3, 13, 23, 33 etc. This method could be used to select a sample of households on a council estate, or a sample of workers on a factory pay-roll.

The big drawback with this method is that you must be on your guard against any possible ordering effect within the sampling frame which

could lead to systematic bias. A recent survey of the heating requirements of tenants on an Islington estate started by deciding to sample every third flat. Because of the physical layout of the buildings, and the way the flats were numbered, they quickly spotted that in some blocks this meant that only flats of a particular design were being included, and other designs which might be expected to have some influence on heating problems, were being systematically excluded from the sample.

For practical purposes, systematic sampling is the best method to adopt if you are planning a general social survey. You can use a sampling frame like the Electoral Register for a particular locality, and work your way down the list of names.

3.5.3 Stratified sampling

This involves dividing the population into layers, or strata, according to some characteristic related to your research question, and sampling within the strata.

Instead of looking at the total population, you may be more interested at looking at particular groups within it, and base your samples on these smaller groups. For instance, you might want to compare age groups - 10 - 20 years, 30 - 40 years, and over 60's. Surveying workers in a factory, you might select different occupational strata from which to sample - cleaners, supervisors, managers.

Population can be stratified 'proportionately' according to certain characteristics deemed to be important, or to preserve the overall

relative balance of each group. Alternatively they can be 'disproportionate', being selected by some system of 'weighting' that produces a sample distribution related to the objectives of the study.

A problem with stratifying is that some of the sample groups within the strata may become too small for results to be meaningful.

3.5.4 Cluster sampling refers to any sampling procedure in which population numbers are grouped together in clusters of which only a sample are selected for the study. First of all, the clusters are sampled - then from each selected cluster, simple random samples, or systematic samples are drawn.

All kinds of organisations and institutions provide ready-made clusters - hospitals, schools, factories, towns, streets, different types of housing. Political polls study voting intentions during General Elections by drawing their samples from populations clustered in particular wards and constituencies. These are selected according to certain criteria so that they are representative of the overall national picture - class composition, age structure, urban and rural differences, their previous role as predictors of overall voting patterns, are some of the characteristics taken into account. A survey of children in care might select particular types of children's homes as clusters to be sampled.

Cluster samples tend to produce a greater degree of uniformity within each cluster - working class wards and middle class wards, for instance. But there is always the possibility of whole population

groups being excluded from the sample. This can lead to greater sampling error, and your findings have to take account of this increased distortion. The main advantages of cluster sampling are that you do not require a sampling frame for the total population, and it is usually quicker and cheaper than other sampling methods.

3.5.5 Quota sampling is used a lot by market research organisations to test consumer reaction to commercial products. It is based on the selection of the sample by the interviewers, to meet certain specified category requirements. Quota requirements are established by a preliminary analysis of population characteristics which ensure representativeness in respect of certain definitional characteristics considered relevant to the study. The interviewers have to select target numbers of people for the sample (quotas), according to these predetermined criteria.

A typical quota sample might be based on characteristics of sex, age, and social class or occupational level. This 16-cell design would give a sample of 180 cases.

		AGE				
		SEX	UNDER 20	20 - 39	40 - 59	OVER 60
<u>OCCUPATIONAL</u> <u>LEVEL</u>	ABC,	MEN	12	12	10	6
		WOMEN	12	12	10	6
	C ₂ DE	MEN	16	16	12	6
		WOMEN	16	16	12	6

Political polls, after cluster sampling the voting wards, often use quota samples to obtain a given number of people according to socio-economic characteristics such as sex, age and class.

Because people in the samples are selected by the interviewers, selection depends not purely on membership of the population being studied, but will be influenced by the views and prejudices of the interviewer. This can give rise to many kinds of distortion and bias. People who live in isolated houses or remote country areas, people with fierce-looking Alsatian dogs in their gardens, are less likely to be selected. To cut down on leg-work, interviewers are more likely to choose people living in areas with well-defined social class characteristics. People living in these areas will be over-represented in the sample, people living in mixed characteristic areas under-represented.

The advantages of quota sampling are that it is simple, rapid, and cheap. You don't need a sampling frame and once you've settled on the selection criteria, you can forget about sampling and leave the problems to the people doing the interviewing.

Disadvantages are that it can mean a lot of leg-work for interviewers. It is not as easy as it looks to meet quota targets - an interviewer can be left tramping the streets trying to find a single middle-class man over 60, for instance. The statistical concept of 'sampling error' which defines how much confidence you can place in the accuracy of the findings, does not really apply to quota sampling. This means that statistics cannot be used so freely, and it is not possible to produce precise estimates of the amount of error in the

survey findings.

3.5.6 Voluntary samples and snowball samples

Voluntary samples are self-selected. People take part in the survey if they want to. You might survey the use made of an advice agency by leaving a pile of questionnaires on the counter - people could take them home and fill them in, sending them back, if they felt like doing so. The Kinsey Report on sexual behaviour used volunteer couples. Obviously such methods of selection are not at all representative, and it is thought that people who volunteer to take part in surveys may share certain psychological characteristics which lead to further bias.

Snowball samples are used when the target population is difficult to get at, and access is not easy for one reason or another. This would apply to people being victimised or discriminated against, or people with obscure interests - single parent families, transvestites, ex-prisoners, witches, or professional marble players. Here the method of selection is simply by word of mouth. You use your informants to generate a sample - having contacted the first few people to question, you ask them if they can suggest other people for inclusion in the study.

With both these methods, the level of self-selection involved means greater distortion and lower representativeness of the target population. This means there is a much greater chance of your findings being biased. Such samples will not necessarily be less precise than other methods of sample selection, but because the level

of precision is not known it is no longer possible to make precise estimates of error.

3.6 Non-Response

No matter how careful you are to ensure representativeness, bias and distortion can still arise from non-response. It is rarely possible to obtain replies from all those you select for the sample.

Typical response levels in national interview surveys conducted by professional research agencies are around 80%. You are unlikely to be as successful, so you can expect non-response to be at least 20% of your original sample. With postal surveys, the level of non-response will be much higher - usually around 50% of the original sample. This can be a major source of bias, as non-respondents may differ in their characteristics from respondents. Surveying workers at a factory, you might miss the night workers if you don't cover all the shifts. People may be out when you call. Others on your list might have died or moved away. Some people will refuse to be interviewed. To cut down this possible bias, you have to try and reduce it to a minimum, calling back on houses where previous visits have been unsuccessful. Increasing the sample size to make up the numbers will not eliminate the bias as non-response is not random. People who do not respond often differ systematically from people who do - they may be less well off or not so literate, for example. Success at reducing non-response is a matter of practice, experience and ingenuity on the part of the interviewers.

The questionnaire is perhaps the most vital document in the whole survey. It brings together the research objectives, interviewing procedure, different types of question and question wording, aspects to do with coding and punching if a computer is going to be used, and the possibilities for analysis of the eventual findings.

Questionnaires can vary from a simple postcard-sized form to be completed by the respondents, to a large many-paged document to be filled in by interviewers during the course of a one or two-hour interview session. Whatever the size, the same general rules apply when it comes to design. The questionnaire must be clear and unambiguous, easy to understand, so that respondents and interviewers can work their way through without difficulty. It should aim to minimise possible errors from informants and interviewers when they come to complete it. It should also aim to engage the interest of potential informants, since the success of the survey will depend on their voluntary cooperation and willingness to provide full and truthful answers to your questions.

Constructing the questionnaire can be broadly divided into two stages:

- 1 planning the contents and overall layout
- 2 putting the contents into form suitable for interview by using appropriate question wording.

In this section, I will be discussing general design considerations. Different types of question and question wording are discussed in

the following Section 5.

* Read this Section in conjunction with Appendix 1: A Specimen
Questionnaire, and see Section 4.5 (9)

4.1 Planning

At the start, it is essential to list the topics or areas of interest, which you intend to cover in the questionnaire. These areas should be directly related to the research problem and reflect the overall aims of the survey. Failure to do this will result in important areas not being covered or covered insufficiently, or too much information being obtained which will be of little value when it comes to presenting the final results. For each question, you should ask yourself, 'how will this help solve the problem?' If it does not, leave it out.

At the planning stage, it may be necessary to do some preliminary investigative work - perhaps to clarify various issues associated with the overall research problem. This would usually be some limited form of qualitative research. You might conduct a small number of depth interviews, either with a few people from the target population, or a number of 'experts'. Alternatively, you could conduct a group discussion around the problem. The purpose of such an investigation would be to throw new light on the issues involved. Such exploratory methods often produce valuable ideas and insights - perhaps some aspect of the problem is identified that you would otherwise have overlooked, or your attention is drawn to some specific group of people that needs special coverage. No matter how much careful thought and preparation you put into planning a survey, you cannot expect to anticipate every single aspect that might come up. Almost inevitably something will crop up during the survey that you hadn't noticed or planned for.

The process of listing your areas of interest by content will immediately provide you with some idea of the eventual framework of the questionnaire. At this stage, you will also want to consider the target groups, the people you wish to question. Although this has already been dealt with when talking about sampling, it may also have a bearing on the structure of the questionnaire. You may be interested in comparing the views of different groups. For instance, a survey into road provisions for cyclists, would perhaps compare the views of cyclists, as well as car users and pedestrians. It would probably be necessary to allocate different sections of the questionnaire to each of the target population's constituent groups.

Having roughly established the topic areas you want to cover, and the way in which they relate to the groups of people you want to question, you will then have to translate them into a series of questions. Usually, each topic will require a number of specific questions to cover the various aspects. It is at this point that problems of wording will arise. Before examining problems to do with question wording in more depth though, there are a number of other matters which need to be considered which have more of a bearing on the actual physical construction and appearance of the questionnaire.

4.2 Length

The length of your questionnaire will be determined mainly by the subject of the survey. On the basis of your preliminary analysis, there will be a certain number of areas which you will feel are essential to cover. On the other hand, the length will be limited by the resources you have available - you may well not have enough time to ask as many questions as you might want.

Generally speaking, the shorter the questionnaire the better. But where it is interesting and personally relevant, the questionnaire can be longer. Mothers talking about young children and babies, motorists on motor cars, can be very long. But even with interesting subjects care must be taken; if the questionnaire is too long the information obtained particularly at the end will be at best cursory, and at worst useless. The longer the questionnaire the more likely it is that informants and/or interviewers will get tired and bored with the questions.

If the questionnaire is to be filled in by the respondents themselves, it will usually have to be shorter than a questionnaire administered by an interviewer. Interviewers can encourage the informants, clarify questions and help them with difficulties - none of this is possible with self-completion. Interviews can last for two hours or more, but for practical purposes it is probably more realistic to aim at a length of 30-40 minutes at the most. 20-30 minutes is a good length - not too long to become a burden on the respondent, but long enough to cover a number of different areas.

How long the questionnaire takes will depend a lot on how the questions are ordered and whether they flow. A well-designed questionnaire will allow the interviewer to get through the questions quickly and efficiently. Poorly designed - it might take twice as long to answer the same questions.

It is possible to make a questionnaire appear shorter by varying the types of questions asked: some background information, some open-ended questions, then some agree/disagree statements. Avoid asking large numbers of similarly worded questions - answering 100 agree/disagree statements is a very tedious activity.

When it comes to background information and classification data, don't ask for more than you need. Avoid duplicating information.

When you come to wording the questions, try to keep them short and as simple as you can. It all helps to obtain more information without adding to the time.

4.3 Is it Interesting?

It is vital to construct the questionnaire so that it is interesting and personally relevant to the respondents. Answering your questions is a matter of voluntary cooperation, so you want to encourage potential informants to take part.

Some thought has to be given to how the informant will experience the questionnaire. Far too many questionnaires are arranged to suit the interests of the researchers, rather than meeting the needs of the respondents. Common faults in questionnaires: asking too many questions and going on too long; not explaining the purpose of the questionnaire; asking questions which don't appear to have any purpose, or little to do with the stated aims of the survey; jumping about from one topic to another for no apparent reason; plunging into areas of personal questions with no warning.

Ask yourself: 'does the questionnaire make sense?' Does one section follow on from another? Does it flow?

You can make the questionnaire more absorbing by introducing interesting questions as early as possible. Things like 'show cards' and other kinds of visual aid can help to make the questions more interesting to answer.

4.4 The Level of Complexity

To keep down the length of the questionnaire you need to keep the questions simple. Questions that are complicated and difficult to answer are likely to alienate informants and put them off. But if you require information of some complexity you may be able to get it.

You can break down complex questions into a series of simple questions. You can start by asking simple straightforward questions, so that informants get accustomed to the topic. In this way they are more likely to see what is meant when they get to more complex questions, to answer more fully and with greater depth.

4.5 Question Order

The way in which the different topic areas are laid out and the order of the questions will have a big influence. It will affect the interest level of the informants. Questionnaires which are hard to follow, that jump from one topic to another and do not flow, will irritate the respondent. This in turn will affect the quality and amount of the information you will obtain. It will also make the questionnaire more difficult for the interviewer to handle - the interview will take longer, less ground will get covered, there will be more mistakes.

You can avoid these problems by ordering the questions so that they follow some sort of natural sequence, wherever this is possible.

- a Start with easy questions first - perhaps some basic background information - because respondents tend to dislike saying 'don't know'.
- b Questions should go from the general to the specific. Simple facts first - moving on to more complicated items.
- c Avoid referring back to questions on previous pages.

4.5.1 Cross-influences

Remember that questions are influenced or conditioned by previous questions. Decide which are the most important and then decide on their order, with the aim of minimising any possible cross-influences. Generally, you should ask about people's behaviour before going on to their attitudes. There is always the problem that your earlier questions might draw the informant's attention to issues

which otherwise might not be of any great concern to them. Answers to subsequent opinion items might be distorted as a result of your earlier questions.

4.5.2 Filtered questions

You can use this type of question to get information from specific groups about particular issues. Filters usually take the form of a general YES/NO question, followed by more specific questions where appropriate. For example:

1	Do you own a car?	YES	1	Ask (a)
		NO	2	Go to Q.2

(a) What make of car is it?

(SPECIFY)

2 Next question.

Filtered questions enable the interviewer to home in on very specific areas. By starting with these more general questions, the interviewer can quickly move on to more relevant areas where the questions do not apply.

4.5.3 Response set

This is a particular case of questions interfering with each other, and underlines the need to vary questions and maintain the interest of respondents. Response sets tend to arise when you ask large numbers of similarly worded questions, for instance, a long series of agree-disagree items. Some people are natural 'yea' sayers, so

attitude items could be biased if they are all worded positively. If the items appear very similar, there is the possibility of the informant beginning to answer automatically, perhaps just ticking-off the same response for each question, rather than taking in and responding to the particular meaning of each specific item. Be on your guard for this when designing the questionnaire - avoid long repetitive sections with similar items, vary the wording of the questions as much as possible.

Layout

The physical appearance of the questionnaire can be of considerable importance when it comes to designing a questionnaire that flows and is easy to follow. There are a number of points that are worth bearing in mind.

- 1 Make sure that it is printed clearly, and is visually easy to follow. Don't crowd the questions into as few pages as possible - leave plenty of space between each question.
- 2 Leave plenty of room for writing down the answers, especially if you are asking open-ended questions. Where the questions are pre-coded, with a given set of answering categories, make sure that it is clear which codes apply to which response categories. One good idea is to put all the codes in a separate column down the right-hand side of each page (see specimen questionnaire - Appendix 1).
- 3 When you have a lot of questions, it is sometimes helpful to separate each question by drawing horizontal lines between each question right across the page. But you have to be careful not to overdo this - otherwise the questionnaire can look very 'boxy' and be difficult to read.
- 4 Try to keep the different topics separate - distinguish the different content areas in the questionnaire from each other. Sometimes you can use a prominent symbol - like



- to mark the start of each new section. These 'flags' make it easier for the interviewers to find their way about the questionnaire. It's a good idea to have a short preamble at the start of each section. This can be read out by the interviewer. It enables the interviewer to introduce each new area to be explored, rather than jumping straight in to the questions, and it prepares the respondent for the change of topic.

5 Coloured paper.

This sometimes helps to make the questionnaire more organised. You can distinguish different sections by using different coloured paper. If the questionnaire is very long, blank sheets of different coloured paper can be used to separate the various sections. Don't use dark colours - the printing will not show up against a dark background and it will be difficult to read.

6 Interviewer instructions.

These should be clear, unambiguous and easy to follow. The usual convention is to print all the instructions to the interviewer in CAPITAL LETTERS, while the questions to be asked are printed in lower case. This system is simple and straightforward. The interviewer scans the page when going through the questions - anything in capital letters stands out as an instruction, not to be read out to the respondent. When using filtered questions, it is particularly important that the interviewer is given clear directions - otherwise inappropriate parts of the question will get asked.

7 The questionnaire must be laid out so that it is clerically easy for the interviewer to administer. It must be clear where the answer should be written, which codes should be ringed, where answers should be written in boxes. Failure to allow for these sorts of potential difficulties will result in mistakes when the questionnaire comes to be filled in, and further errors when you go through the questionnaires to gather the results together.

8 Coding and punching

If you intend using a computer to analyse the data, the questionnaire design will have to incorporate certain features that will facilitate the process of data preparation.

This usually involves transferring the information from the survey questionnaires onto a set (a 'deck') of computer data cards, or onto some type of electronic storage device.

Sometimes, the figures from the questionnaire are transferred onto coding sheets - these are handed to the card-punch operators who then produce the data cards. They usually check the cards for accuracy to eliminate most of the errors that creep in during punching. Filling in coding sheets can be boring, and is also an additional source of error. You can get around it by designing your questionnaire so that the card-punch operators can read it and punch the cards directly from it. You will need to allocate card/column numbers (80 per card) to each item of information in the questionnaire, and these identify the relevant codes to be punched in that column

field on the card. The codes to be punched must be clearly identified - separate from the question and the answer categories, and prominently ringed where the answers are pre-coded.

Laying out survey data for punched cards requires skill and experience, and you are not advised to attempt it on your own. There are numerous conventions - assigning case code numbers, numbering the cards, ordering the information, handling missing data and multi-punches - which only an expert will know about. If you are going to use punched cards, it is advisable that you consult someone who has experience of computer data handling - either at a computer centre or a survey research organisation. The Survey Research Unit at PNL will be pleased to advise and help with any aspect of data preparation and processing.

9 Specimen questionnaire

At the back of the handbook, in Appendix 1, there is an example of a survey questionnaire. It was prepared by students and staff at PNL's Department of Applied Social Studies in 1979 for a survey of Parents' Views of Secondary Education in a London borough. It is designed to be filled in by an interviewer and takes roughly 30 to 40 minutes to complete. Of course, many questionnaires are shorter than this. But it is well worth looking through - pretend you are doing the interview, if you like. It illustrates many of the points that have been discussed in this section on questionnaire design.

QUESTION WORDING

Social surveys set out to gather particular items of information which the people carrying out the investigation hope their respondents will be able to provide. It is very important, therefore, that the respondent understands a question as the researchers intended it to be understood. When it comes to formulating questions in words, you need to be continually on the watch for possible misunderstandings and confusion. Keep asking yourself what it is that you want to know - will the answers to the questions tell you?

Putting questions into words can be a tricky business, and again this is something which only gets easier with experience. Since the nature of the wording depends so much on the subject of the survey, there are no hard and fast rules. Three points about the wording of questions are easy to remember and should be kept constantly in mind:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Questions should be | 1 | <u>Short and simple</u> |
| | 2 | <u>Clear and precise</u> |
| | 3 | <u>Unambiguous</u> |

Their meaning should be simple and straightforward, not depending on a high level of understanding or interpretation on the part of the respondent. They should refer as precisely as possible to one thing and not be ambiguous, otherwise the respondents will be confused by the questions and you will not be able to interpret the results.

There are many standard questions which have been used before in other surveys. It is a good idea to use them where you can - they have been tried and tested so that potential difficulties are minimised.

5.1 Possible Problems

It is probably easier to explain the difficulties of formulating clearly worded questions by discussing some of the things you should not do. There are numerous problems about question wording which may not be immediately apparent, and certain types of difficulty which you should try to avoid.

5.1.1 Difficulties to look for - questions to avoid

- 1 Ambiguous questions. A good question refers to only one specific thing at a time. It should be open to only one interpretation or meaning, and ambiguous wording should be avoided. Watch out for wording or phrases that can mean more than one thing. Does 'school' mean primary or secondary? 'Country' - is it the countryside or the nation. When 'you' is used does it mean singular or plural, the respondent or the whole household or group?
- 2 Can a change of emphasis change the meaning? 'Why do you say that', can be said in several different ways. Try to avoid questions where their meaning might change depending on the way they are read out.
- 3 Be precise. Don't ask 'catch-all' questions which seek information about many things in one question.

"Do you know about the local authority's policy on juggernaut lorries, and what do you think about it?
How would you like to see the policy changed?"

Break these sort of questions up into the separate parts, so that you don't ask about more than one thing in a question.

- 4 Don't ask long questions. Keep the questions short and to the point. If questions are long and involved, respondents will have difficulty remembering or understanding them. Most likely they will just answer one part of the question, usually the last part which sticks in the mind, while ignoring the rest of the question.
- 5 Avoid questions where the informant is likely to ask the interviewer to qualify or expand the statement, eg the respondent may say 'well it all depends', 'how do you mean?'.
- 6 In 'two choice' questions make sure that both the alternatives are mentioned, do not just imply the alternative. Remember the last of the pair of statements will often be recalled more easily.
- 7 Take care when using words which have emotional or perhaps 'snobbish' prestige associations. Avoid emotive phrases like 'scrounger', an 'eye for an eye', 'trouble-makers'. Ask about 'workers' or 'working people' NOT 'employees', 'labour-force'; 'house' NOT 'residence'; 'cars' NOT 'automobiles'.
- 8 Leading questions which put words into people's mouths should be avoided, as they pre-suppose the answer.

"You are not in favour of abortion, are you?"

- 9 Loaded questions bias the answer by indicating the expected norm and should also be avoided.

"Do you think it is right to change the system for selecting the local M.P., since the present system has worked smoothly for so many years?"

- 10 Don't use difficult, unfamiliar words and phrases which the respondents probably may not understand.
- 11 Similarly, don't ask jargon - keep specialist technical terms to a minimum, and stick to plain English.
- 12 Make sure that pre-coded questions have a series of possible answers that fall into mutually exclusive categories. You don't want to get two answers to the same question.
- 13 Try not to use negatives or double-negatives eg
 "The law on capital punishment should not be changed"
 (Agree/Disagree)
- 14 Don't ask apologetic questions. Either ask the question direct, or don't ask it at all. See section 5.1.2 on embarrassing questions. If you apologise and shilly-shally around -
 "I'm sorry, but I must ask you this very personal question, which you don't have to answer" etc... you just signal the fact that it is a problem and make it more likely that the respondent will refuse to answer.
- 15 Try to avoid abstractions and generalisations; rather, be specific. "Are you satisfied with the general facilities at

your place of work" is not easy to answer if you like the pay but think safety precautions are poor, etc.

- 16 Some respondents like to give socially acceptable answers. Try and avoid questions that might produce this sort of bias, by phrasing the answers in more neutral language.
- 17 Don't ask questions that make excessive demands on the memory of respondents. Everybody's powers of memory are liable to omission and distortion so don't make heavy demands on respondents' powers of recall, and don't assume their memories are accurate.

eg "Can you tell me which party you have voted for in the last four General Elections?"

It is possible to stimulate people's memories if you order the questions carefully. Start with a specific question about the present, and then work your way gradually back, so that the informant's attention is guided back to the past.

5.1.2 Embarrassing questions

When discussing the ethics of social surveys and the rights of respondents, it was pointed out that informants will answer a great variety of personal questions, but that there are of course limits to what can be asked. (See Section 1.6.4)

Sensitive areas that typically come up in surveys concern such matters as income and earnings, personal relations with family and friends, sex, criminal behaviour. Researchers often worry more about asking questions on these sort of subjects than they need.

Often respondents don't mind answering them. The direct approach is often the best - rather than the use of diffident or apologetic wording to soften the blow. Such wording can make simple matters seem more sensitive than they are. 'Would you mind telling me whether or not you are married?' - deserves the answer 'Yes' - better to ask straight out: 'Are you married, single, widowed, divorced, separated or living as a partnership?'

There are a number of techniques for obtaining information on sensitive matters. J.A. Barton, in a paper called 'Asking the Embarrassing Question' (Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol.22, 1958) summarises four established techniques. His satirical example involves the delicate issue of whether the respondent has murdered his wife.

First, there is the casual approach:

'Do you happen to have murdered your wife?'

Then there is the numbered card approach:

'Will you please read off the number of this card which corresponds to what became of your wife?'

Third, is the everybody approach:

'As you know, many people have been killing their wives these days. Do you happen to have killed yours?'

Finally, there is the other people approach:

'Do you know any people who have murdered their wives?'

PAUSE FOR REPLY AND THEN:

'How about yourself?'

These kind of indirect approaches can help to ease the problem of asking sensitive questions. But you need always to bear in mind the respondents' rights to privacy and confidentiality, especially when the information you obtain might lead them into trouble with authorities.

5.2 Literacy and Language Problems

Survey questions often assume a comparatively high degree of literacy and comprehension on the part of respondents. This is especially the case with postal and other forms of questionnaire to be filled in by self-completion. Don't forget that there are many people (15% of the population) who have reading difficulties, and others who may have problems when it comes to writing. These are further reasons for trying to ensure that you keep the wording of your questions as simple as possible. Avoid complicated formulations and wording that will lead to difficulties of comprehension and understanding.

Language is often another source of difficulty. Not everyone speaks English and even if they do, it may not be their natural language and informants may have problems expressing themselves. You are more likely to encounter such problems if you intend selecting your sample from an inner-city population. You may even have to consider translating your questionnaire - using bi-lingual or multi-lingual versions of your questions, in Greek and Turkish, Hindi and Urdu, Chinese, for instance. Occasionally, you might be able to get away with using someone to interpret the questions, acting as translator. But this is not an advisable practice - the presence of a third party may well lead to further confusion and create more barriers to communication, especially when using children as interpreters for their parents.

Where such problems of language or literacy are really difficult - when the informant is completely unable to read or understand English - there may be nothing for it but to abandon the interview.

If such instances are numerous, bear in mind the effect it will have on the validity of your eventual results.

Using interviewers to complete the questionnaire will help to deal with some of these problems. The interviewer can go over the questions, reading them out slowly and explaining what they mean. You can also use techniques like 'show cards' and other forms of visual aids (see Section 5.2.2 part 2).

Other situations in which similar problems can arise are with old people, children, people who are visually handicapped, people with hearing difficulties. An interviewer, or someone to guide the informant through the questionnaire, is really indispensable in these circumstances.

A final word about children. Below a certain age it is not feasible to use children as informants - younger than 11 or 12 it is most unlikely that they will understand what is going on (unless the survey is specifically designed for that age range). With older children, it is most important that you first seek the permission of whoever is responsible for them - usually parents, sometimes schoolteachers or others in a custodial role - before asking them questions.

5.3 Different Types of Questions

There are numerous ways of designing questions to obtain different types of information, and various techniques available, particularly for attitudes and matters of opinion, to gain information which cannot be obtained by careful wording of questions alone.

5.3.1 Pre-coded vs open-ended questions

This is a basic distinction between two types of question which produce qualitatively very different information.

- 1 Pre-coded questions are questions where all the pre-defined answers are listed on the questionnaire. Typically, the question first appears, followed by the possible answers. Almost always the informant is required to endorse only one of the possible answers, so it is important that the categories are mutually exclusive.

'Which political party, if any, do you feel most sympathetic to?' (RING ONE)	None	0
	Conservative	1
	Labour	2
	Liberal	3
	Communist	4
	National Front	5
	Other (specify) _____	6
	Refused	7
	Don't Know	8

The advantages of pre-coded questions are that they are quicker to fill in, quicker to analyse, and they direct answers into a

pre-set form. When designing the questionnaire they enable you to plan the questions with a view to the eventual analysis you want to carry out.

Their disadvantages are that respondents may get forced into categories that are inappropriate and don't reflect the true state of affairs or their actual opinion or view. They also tend to make replies somewhat rigid, and this may inhibit full communication during an interview. With a large number of categories which are not self-evident to the respondent, a show card will normally be required.

When designing pre-coded questions, you need to put a lot of thought into the answer categories, and be on your guard in case you overlook any major category of possible answers. Some of these problems can be anticipated by 'pilot work' (see Section 5.4) before you come to carry out the full survey.

- 2 Open-ended questions are those where the answers are so numerous, or unforeseeable, that they cannot be listed on the questionnaire. Typically, they are used to explore general matters of opinion.

"What sort of things do you like best about living in this particular area?" (WRITE IN)

Advantages are that you obtain a wider variety of responses. They give respondents an opportunity to express themselves in their own words, and are more interesting to answer. They can provide unexpected information, and this can provide useful background material for interpreting other questions. They also provide useful anecdotal information to use in your final report.

The disadvantages are that they assume a relatively high level of awareness and ability to articulate on the part of the respondents. Some people will just answer them monosyllabically, or else just repeat answers that they have given to other questions. Others will answer so fully that it will be impossible to record the complete answer, or do justice to the respondent's eloquence. The other big drawback of the open-ended approach is that it takes much longer to analyse. The answers will have to be coded afterwards, which means you will have to carry out a 'content analysis' of the whole range of replies. This can be very time-consuming.

The general distinction between pre-coded and open-ended questions is one between 'objective' and 'subjective' answers. Pre-coded questions are better for more matter-of-fact questions where the range of likely answers is more or less predictable. Open-ended views are better for exploring the informants' own world of experience, expressed in their own terms. Like 'depth interviews', open-ended views are superficially more attractive because they do give informants greater freedom. But don't assume that respondents will take up this extra freedom, or that the answers you get will be

more interesting.

5.3.2 Different techniques

There are numerous techniques used in questionnaires and interviewing, particularly in the attitude sections of questionnaires. Most common are the use of scales and show cards.

1 Scales

These vary in type, but basically, they set out to get the respondent to indicate his attitude by choosing from two opposites, or to demonstrate the strength of his attitude or opinion along a particular dimension.

In form, scales can be vertical or horizontal, have a line or be a series of boxes. Scales may have words, numbers or phrases. Most common is the 'semantic differential' and many scales are variations on this. Here are some common examples.

(a) Verbal scale

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5

(b) Semantic Differential Scale

Good	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Bad
Very important	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	Not at all important

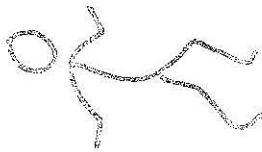
(c) Numeric Scale

Approve	<div><div>1</div><div>2</div><div>3</div><div>4</div><div>5</div><div>6</div><div>7</div></div>	Disapprove
---------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------

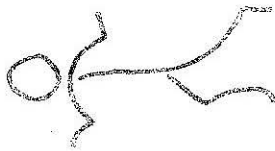
Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree

(d) Spatial scale

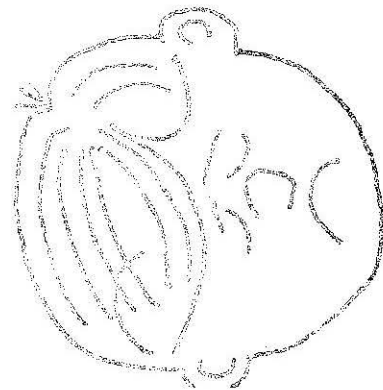
I think areas of old houses should be demolished and new ones put up. This means that better houses and better amenities will result, even though the old residents will have to be moved.



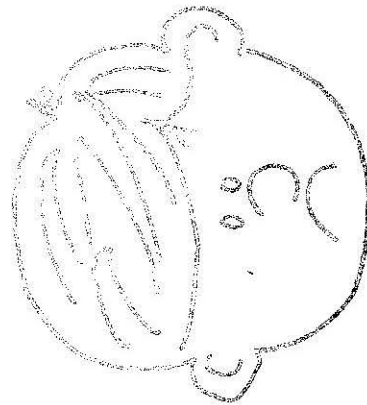
I think old houses should be done up and improved. This means that the people will not have to move, and the character of the area will stay, even though the houses may not be so good as new ones.



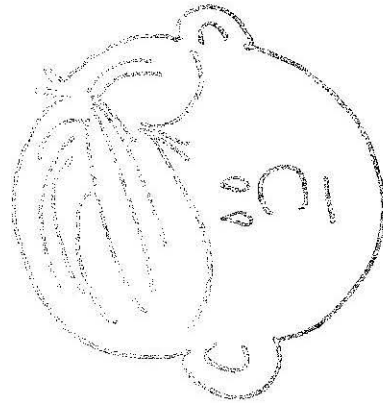
(e) Diagrammatic scale



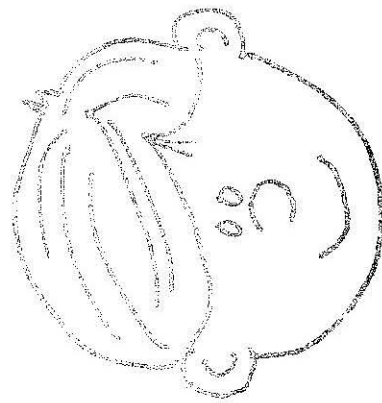
strongly disagree



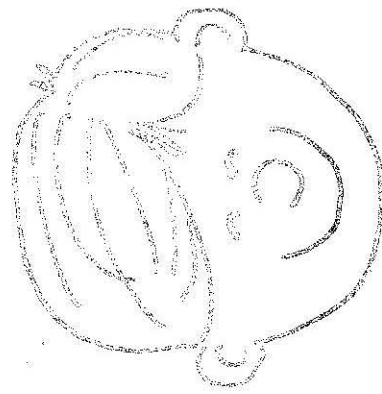
disagree



neither agree nor disagree



agree



strongly agree

Scaling techniques are often complex to analyse and can be misleading. Some scales can be additive - you can combine the scores on a number of measures to produce an overall score. Common problems with scales are that people interpret the answering range differently - some respondents tend to endorse only the extremes on the scale, while others stick to the middle point and the adjacent categories. There is always the danger of 'response set' - automatic answering of the same category for a series of questions. Scales also assume a relatively high level of mental ability on the part of respondents. If you have no experience of scaling, you are advised to keep your scales simple, along the lines of the examples. Used in conjunction with 'show cards' they can be a quick way for interviewers to cover a whole series of opinion questions. They also add variety to the questionnaire.

- Remember
- 1 Don't have too many scales - they get repetitive
 - 2 Words are better than numbers
 - 3 Answer lists should be balanced

2 'Show Cards' and Visual Aids

'Show Cards' are sometimes used in an interview to give the informant a visual 'prompt' or reminder. For instance, with a series of agree/disagree items, the interviewer might hand a card to the person listing the items. The informant can look at the questions and read them for himself, as well as hearing them read out by the interviewer. With the items on show cards, the person answering can give them more consideration and, if the items are complex, will not have to rely on memory of the

question as it is read out.

EXAMPLE 'Which of these statements comes nearest to
describing your interest in politics?'

- | | | |
|------|---|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| SHOW | 1 | I take an active interest in politics |
| CARD | 2 | I am interested in politics but don't take any
active part |
| | 3 | My interest in politics is not greater than
other interests |
| | 4 | I'm not interested in politics at all. |

Show cards can be used in various ways. They can display individual questions or series of questions. Often they have just the range of possible answers to act as a visual 'prompt' or reminder of how the questions are to be answered. Alternative forms of answering can be displayed on cards - for instance, levels of earnings could be printed as either weekly, monthly, or yearly so that informants could answer in the terms to which they are most accustomed.

Other types of visual aid are also used in surveys. Pictures and photographs can be used as subjects for questions, or illustrations of answer ranges. Pictures can help with literacy problems, when people have hearing difficulties, or when interviewing children.

Pictures and show cards can brighten up the interview and make questionnaires more interesting. Make sure that cards are legible and printed clearly, and manageable in size. If you

have more than one show card, print them in different colours so the interviewer can tell them apart. Don't have too many of them or else your interviewer may get in a muddle.

- 3 Projective techniques are sometimes used to get answers to difficult questions, or to measure hidden attitudes. Informants are sometimes asked to give their opinions in apparently indirect fashion.

They may be:

- a given a verbal description of a person or situation and asked questions.
- b shown a picture of a person or situation and asked to interpret it.
- c given a sentence to complete in their own words.

These techniques do produce interesting answers, but they are often difficult to analyse.

5.4 Don't Knows, etc.

When designing questions, especially pre-coded questions, it may be necessary to cater for a number of 'problematical' types of answer. These include:

- a Don't know - (DK) when the informant doesn't know the answer or doesn't have an opinion.
- b Inapplicable - (INAP) when the question doesn't apply to the particular informant. EG A question about car expenses when the informant does not have a car.
- c Refusal, when the informant refuses to give an answer, perhaps because the question is thought to be too intrusive.
- d No Answer - (NA) when the informant says nothing at all, or the interviewer may fail to ask the question.

It is useful to record instances of such responses so categories should be reserved for them where necessary. This can be a valuable source of information in its own right - for example, where voting intentions are being investigated.

5.5 Pilots and Pretests

This is the stage where questionnaires or parts of questionnaires are tested, before doing the actual survey. The aim of piloting is to see if the questionnaire makes sense and that it will 'work'. It gives you a chance to test that new questions, or questions which you have doubts about, can be understood and answered in the way they are intended.

The pilot study can range from trying out the questions on a few of your friends, to systematically developing a long and complicated questionnaire using trained interviewers and carefully selected samples. Usually, it is enough to try out the questions on about 10 - 15 people, so that you get a range of possible reactions.

Piloting does not take long and can be very useful. You may have to make a number of alterations to the questions here and there, perhaps change the order slightly, drop one or two questions that do not seem very meaningful. Quite often, you will pick up some new insight into the problem, perhaps leading to some new questions or additional answer categories for unforeseen responses. The pilot study can also give you a more accurate idea of how long it takes to go through the questions.

5.6

Final Check

- 1 Try the questionnaire out aloud to make sure that the questions sound right and that they are neither too formal nor too colloquial.
- 2 Anything you are still doubtful about should be tested - try out some alternatives.
- 3 At least one other person should read through the questionnaire before it is finalised, preferably someone not involved in its preparation, who will give you an independent point of view.

Ask

Does the questionnaire 'flow'?

Is it interesting?

Does the question order make sense?

Are the questions completely unambiguous?

Are the questions meaningful?

Do the questions produce the intended answers?

Are the pre-codes complete and comprehensive?

Can changes of emphasis change the meaning?

Are self-completion or interviewer instructions clear?

Are filter questions easy to follow?

Is the final document easy to handle?

Are changes of topic clearly marked?

Is every question necessary? AND How will you use the answers?

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

SURVEY RESEARCH UNIT

The Polytechnic
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Applied Social Studies

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1979 North London Area Survey

PARENT'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

This is a survey to find out what kind of secondary education parents in North London want for their children. We're particularly interested in the views of people whose children will be starting secondary school in September 1980.

SERIAL NO

CARD NO

FILL IN FROM QUOTA SHEET AND USE AS A CHECK

Q.1

Child's first name:

(USE THIS THROUGHOUT INTERVIEW)

Q.2

Name of junior school:

Q.3

Age of (CHILD) last birthday

Q.4

Is (CHILD) an only child?

(IF NO) Is he/she the eldest, youngest
or somewhere in between?

Yes - Only

No - Eldest

- Intermediate

- Youngest

NOTE: "CHILDREN" INCLUDES ADOPTED AND STEP-CHILDREN

Q.5

Could you give me the age last birthday of all your children who
are living at home, starting with the eldest?

(a) First Name

(b) Age

(c) Male

Female

First

Second

Third

Fourth

Fifth

(CONTINUE BELOW IF NECESSARY)

CARD 1

(1-3)

(4)

1

(5)

BLANK

(6)

(7)

(8)

1

2

3

4

(9)

Q.6 (a) Apart from the children, who else lives at home as part of the same household? (10)
 Both parents 1
 Father only 2
 Mother only 3
 Other (specify) 4
 (CODE APPROPRIATE HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION)

(11) (12)

(b) So how many people live here altogether, including yourself and (CHILD)? (WRITE IN)

▲ PRESENT SCHOOL

Q.7 Do you know how the children of (CHILD)'s age are put into classes at (PRESENT SCHOOL)...are they put into classes by age, or do they put the quicker ones into one class and the slower into another? (13)

IF GROUPED BY ABILITY	In classes by age	1
WITHIN A CLASS, CODE AS 1	In classes by ability/ streaming	2
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">If classed by age except for occasional 'bright' or 'dull child', code as 1</div>	In classes by both age and ability	3
	Don't know	4
	Other (specify)	5

Q.8 For children of (CHILDS)'s age, could you tell me which of these you think is better...? (14)

PROMPT: (i) For the quick learners and the slow learners to be together in the same class 1 Ask (a)

OR: (ii) For the quick learners to be put in one class and the slow learners in another 2 Ask (b)

Don't know, Depends, etc. 3 Skip to 9

Other answer (specify): _____ 4 Skip to 9

(a) IF MIXED TOGETHER (Code 1) (15) (17)
 What makes you say that? (WRITE IN)
 1 2 3
 4 5 6
 7 8 9
 0 X Y

(b) IF SEPARATE (Code 2) (18) (20)
 What makes you say that? (WRITE IN)
 1 2 3
 4 5 6
 7 8 9
 0 X Y

Q.9 What would you say your feelings are about (PRESENT SCHOOL) now? On the whole are you satisfied with it, or not? (PROMPT)

Very satisfied
Fairly satisfied
Neither/Mixed
Fairly dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

(21)

1 } Skip
2 } to
3 } 10
4 Ask (a)
5 Ask (a)

(a) IF NOT SATISFIED (Code 4 or 5)
Why is that? (WRITE IN)

(22)(24)

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

▲ CHILD'S FUTURE

Q.10 Is there any one particular secondary school you would like (CHILD) to go to?

Yes
No
DK Not sure

(25)

1 Ask (a)
2 } Skip
3 } to 11

(IF YES - GET NAME)

(a) Why is that? (WRITE IN)

(26)(28)

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

(b) Do you know anyone who has been to or is at (PREFERRED SCHOOL) - members of your family or friends, for instance?
(PROMPT AS NECESSARY)

No, not as far as R knows
Yes, brothers and sisters of (CHILD)
Yes, parents of (CHILD)
Yes, (CHILD)'s friends
Yes, children of R's friends
Other (specify)

(29)

0
1
2
3
4
5

Q.11 Which school(s) do you actually expect (CHILD) to go to? (WRITE IN)

(30)(31)

(a) IF NOT THE PREFERRED SCHOOL ASK:
What makes you say that? (WRITE IN)

(32)(34)

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

Q.12 Is there any one particular secondary school which you would not like (CHILD) to go to?

Yes
No
DK Not Sure

(35)
1 Ask (a)
2) Skip
3) to 13

(IF YES) Which one? (WRITE IN)

(a) (IF YES, ASK) What are the main things you dislike about that school? (WRITE IN)

(36)(38)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

(b) Do you know anyone who has been to or is at (DISLIKED SCHOOL) - members of your family or friends, for instance? (PROMPT AS NECESSARY)

No, not as far as R knows
Yes, brothers and sisters of (CHILD)
Yes, parents of (CHILD)
Yes, (CHILD)'s friends
Yes, children of R's friends
Other (specify)

(39)
0
1
2
3
4
5



AFTER 16

Now I would like to look a few years ahead, and ask about what you would like for (CHILD).

Q.13 Would you like to see (CHILD) leave school at 16 or stay on longer? (PROBE FOR PARENT'S WISHES)

Leave at 16
Stay on longer
Up to (CHILD)
DK Can't say

(40)
1 Ask (a)
2 Ask (b)
3) Skip
4) to 14

(a) Why would you like him/her to leave then? (WRITE IN)

(41)(43)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

(b) Why would you like him/her to stay on after 16? (WRITE IN)

(44)(46)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

Q.14(a) Would you like (CHILD) to take any examinations before leaving school? (PROBE FOR PARENT'S WISHES)

Yes
No
Up to (CHILD)
DK Don't mind

(47)
1 Ask (b)
2) Skip
3) to
4) 15

(b) IF YES:
What type of Examinations? (IF GCE OR 'O' LEVEL MENTIONED PROMPT FOR 'A' LEVEL. CODE HIGHEST ONLY)

ONE CODE ONLY
GCE 'A' level
GCE 'O' level
CSE
Other (specify)
DK Can't say

(48)
1
2
3
4
9

- Q.15 (a) Would you like (CHILD) to carry on with any kind of studying after he/she leaves school, or do you think he/she will have done enough of that kind of thing? (PROBE FOR PARENT'S WISHES)
- Yes - Carry on
No - Done enough
Up to (CHILD)
DK Too early to say
- (49)
1
2
3
4
- Ask (b)
} Skip
} to
} 16
- (b) What sort of studying would you like him/her to do? (PROMPT AS NECESSARY)
- University/Polytechnic
Teacher training college
F.E. College
Apprenticeship for trade
DK Depends etc.
Other (specify)
- (50)
1
2
3
4
5
6
- Q.16 What job or career would you like (CHILD) to take up? (WRITE IN)
(PROBE FOR PARENT'S WISHES AND GET AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE)
- (51)(52)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y



SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Now I'd like your views on secondary schools...

- Q.17 (a) Which do you think is better...?
- PROMPT (i) For the school to be mixed (boys and girls together) Mixed
- OR (ii) For the school to be single-sex (boys and girls at separate schools) Single-sex
- DK Depends etc
- (53)
1
2
3
- Ask (b)
Ask (b)
Skip to 18
- CODE 1 CODE 2
- (b) What makes you say that? (WRITE IN)
- (54)(56) (57)(59)
1 2 3 1 2 3
4 5 6 4 5 6
7 8 9 7 8 9
0 X Y 0 x 7

Q.18

One of the things that we want to find out is what parents feel that schools should be trying to do for young people.

SHOW CARD 1

(YELLOW)

(a)

Here is a list of different things which schools might do for their pupils. Please look at the card and tell me which three you think are the most important. (Just give me the letters)

(READ OUT LIST IF NECESSARY)

- A. Helping them to develop their personalities and characters.
- B. Helping them to do as well as possible in Exams like CSE or GCE.
- C. Teaching them about right and wrong.
- D. Showing them how to get on with other people.
- E. Teaching them about world affairs.
- F. Keeping them out of trouble.
- G. Helping them to get as good a job as possible.
- H. Helping them with the practical things they need to know when they leave school (e.g. managing money).

IMPT.

NOT
IMPT.

1	2 (60)
1	2 (61)
1	2 (62)
1	2 (63)
1	2 (64)
1	2 (65)
1	2 (66)
1	2 (67)

(b)

Is there anything else which you think it is important that secondary schools should do? (WRITE IN)

(68) (70)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

Q.19

Are you in favour of children of eleven wearing uniform at secondary school, or are you against it?
(PROMPT AS NECESSARY)

Strongly favour
Favour on the whole
Don't mind either way
Against on the whole
Strongly against

(71)

Ask (a)
Ask (a)
Skip to 20
Ask (b)
Ask (b)

(a)

IF IN FAVOUR:
Why are you in favour of it? (WRITE IN)

(72) (73)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

(b)

IF AGAINST:
Why are you against it? (WRITE IN)

(74) (75)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

(76)

BLANK

(77-80)

N L 7 9



GENERAL OPINIONS

SERIAL NO

CARD 2

Q.20

Here are some statements about secondary schools. I'd like you to say whether you agree or disagree with them, or are you somewhere in between?

AGREE MIXED DISAGREE

BLANK

DK/NA

- | | AGREE | MIXED | DISAGREE | BLANK | DK/NA |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
| (a) Larger schools can be run better. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (6) |
| (b) The size of classes makes no difference to how well children learn. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (7) |
| (c) It makes no difference which school a child goes to - they are all the same. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (8) |
| (d) Teachers should not be allowed to hit children. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (9) |
| (e) Smaller schools are easier for parents to contact and deal with. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (10) |
| (f) Children should play a full part in running their school and choosing their subjects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (11) |
| (g) Teaching basics like English and Mathematics is more important than offering a whole range of subjects. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (12) |
| (h) Secondary schools should concentrate on preparing children for particular jobs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | (13) |



FUTURE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Q.21

Have you yourself seen or heard anything recently about any problems or plans relating to the future of secondary education in London?

Yes
No
DK

(14)

Ask (a)
Ask (b)
Ask (b)

IF YES:

(a) What exactly have you heard? (WRITE IN)
(PROBE, INCLUDING SOURCES)

TICK IF R. MENTIONS

(15)(17)

Falling numbers

☐

Closures or mergers

☐

ILEA pamphlet

☐

Local papers

☐

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

IF NO:

(b) There has been a lot of discussion recently about falling numbers of school children in London, and about proposals to merge or close some secondary schools.
Did you know about this, or not?

Yes
No

(18)

1
2

(19) (21)
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

Q.22 What do you think the authorities should do? (WRITE IN)
(PROBE)

▲ ACTIONS

Q.23 I'm going to read out some different suggestions about what should be done. I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with them or are you somewhere in between?

	AGREE	MIXED	DISAGREE	DK/NA	
(a) Some schools should be closed because numbers are falling.	1	2	3	9	(22)
(b) All schools should be kept open and the extra space made available for community use.	1	2	3	9	(23)
(c) Schools should be joined together or closed to save money and reduce costs.	1	2	3	9	(24)
(d) All the teachers should be kept on, so that class sizes can be reduced.	1	2	3	9	(25)

Q.24 This card lists a number of things which have to be considered in deciding whether to close a particular school.

SHOW CARD 2

(LIGHT BLUE)

Can you tell me which one you think is the most important, and which is the least important?
(READ OUT LIST IF NECESSARY)

	MOST	LEAST	REST	DK/NA
(a) The number of children in the school	1	3	2	9 (26)
(b) The age and condition of the school buildings	1	3	2	9 (27)
(c) The wishes of the parents	1	3	2	9 (28)
(d) The number of schools in the area	1	3	2	9 (29)
(e) The standard of education within the school	1	3	2	9 (30)
(f) The effect on teachers' careers	1	3	2	9 (31)
(CODE ITEMS NOT MENTIONED AS REST)				



PARENT'S OWN EDUCATION

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about your own education

- Q.25 What type of school did you last attend full-time? Was it....? (PROMPT)
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Grammar | 1 |
| Secondary Modern | 2 |
| Comprehensive | 3 |
| Technical | 4 |
| Independent/Fee-paying/
public | 5 |
| _____ Other (specify) | 6 |
- (32)
- Q.26 At what age did you leave school? (WRITE IN)
- (33)
- Q.27 Have you had any further education since leaving school? (CODE HIGHEST LEVEL)
- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|--------------|
| No | 0 | } Skip to 29 |
| Evening classes | 1 | |
| Part-time/day release | 2 | |
| Technical College | 3 | |
| Art/Music/Drama College | 4 | |
| University/Polytechnic | 5 | |
| _____ Other (specify) | 6 | } Ask 28 |
- (34)
- Q.28 At what age did you finish your full-time education? (WRITE IN)
- (35)(36)
- Q.29 Do you have any qualifications obtained by examination or training, including any recognised apprenticeship?
- | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------|
| Yes | 1 | } Ask (a) Skip to 30 |
| No | 2 | |
- (37)
- IF YES:
- (a) What is the highest qualification you have? (WRITE IN)
(GET FULL DETAILS OF LEVEL AND AWARDING BODY)
- (38)(39)
- Q.30 On the whole, are you satisfied with your education, or not? (PROMPT AS NECESSARY)
- | | | |
|---------------------|---|--------------|
| Very satisfied | 1 | } Skip to 31 |
| Fairly satisfied | 2 | |
| Neither | 3 | |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 4 | } Ask (a) |
| Very dissatisfied | 5 | |
- (40)
- IF NOT SATISFIED:
- (a) Why is that? (WRITE IN)
- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 0 | X | Y |
- (41)(43)



GENERAL BACKGROUND

Finally, I'd like to ask you some general questions.

Q.31	Does any member of the family belong to the local public library?	Yes No	(44) 1 2
------	-------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------	----------------

Q.32	When it comes to politics and local affairs, how interested would you say you are? Are you (READ OUT)?	Very interested Fairly interested Not very interested Not interested at all	(45) 3 2 1 0
------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------

Q.33	Which political party, if any, do you feel most sympathetic to?	None Conservative Labour Liberal Communist National Front Other (specify) _____ Refused DK	(46) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 8 9
------	-----------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------

Q.34	Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion? IF YES: Which? (WRITE IN)	No	(47) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----	--------------------------------------

Q.35	Are you married, widowed, divorced, separated or have you never married.	Married Widowed Divorced Separated Never married Other (specify) _____	(48) 1 2 3 4 5 6
------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------

Q.36	How old were you on your last birthday? (WRITE IN)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 30px; display: inline-block;"></div>	(49)(50)
------	-------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------

Q.37

Does your household own or rent this house/flat, or do you live here rent free?
(PROBE FOR TYPE OF RENTED ACCOMMODATION)

Own
Rent - unfurnished
Rent - furnished
Rent free/goes with job

(51)

1
2
3
4

Skip to 3
Ask (a)
Ask (a)
Skip to 3

(a)

IF RENTED:
Who is it rented from?

Other (specify)

Council
Housing Association
Private landlord

(52)

1
2
3
4

Q.38

GET BRIEF DETAILS OF MAIN OCCUPATION OF CHILD'S PARENT(S)
(INC. SELF-EMPLOYMENT)

(53)

FATHER

MOTHER

(54)

Q.39

Finally, I would like to ask you a general question about the household's earnings.

SHOW CARD 3

(PINK)

Could you look at this card and tell me roughly in which range the household's net income falls?

(EXPLAIN 'NET' MEANS INCOME AFTER DEDUCTIONS AND TAXES, AS NECESSARY)

less than £ 2000
£ 2000 less than £ 3000
£ 3000 less than £ 4000
£ 4000 less than £ 6000
£ 6000 or more
Refused
DK/NA

(55)

1
2
3
4
5
8
9

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR SPARING YOUR TIME TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS.



OBSERVATION

SECTION TO BE COMPLETED AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE AFTER COMPLETION OF INTERVIEW

CARD 2

(56)

Q.40

Sex of Respondent

Female

Male

1
2

(57)

Q.41

Type of Dwelling

Whole house - detached

- semi-detached/prefab

- terrace

Flat - self-contained,
(inc. maisonette)

Rooms

Other (specify)

1
2
3
4
5
6

(58)

Q.42

Date of interview

Mon 17

Tue 18

Wed 19

Thur 20

Fri 21

Sat 22

Sun 23

Mon 24

Tue 25

Wed 26

Thur 27

Fri 28

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
0
X
Y

(59)

Q.43

Time interview started

Before 1100

1100 - 1259

1300 - 1559

1600 - 1859

1900 or later

1
2
3
4
5

(60) (62)

Q.44

Interview problems (WRITE IN)
(SPECIFY DIFFICULTIES, PARTICULARLY LANGUAGE
OR READING PROBLEMS DURING INTERVIEW)

1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
0 X Y

TO BE REMOVED AFTER PUNCHING

(63-64) Interviewer number

--	--

(65) Ward

(77-80) Survey No.

N	L	7	9
---	---	---	---

1
2
3
4