

The Polytechnic of North London
School of Applied Social Studies and Sociology
Survey Research Unit

Course 2028: Survey Research Practice (Tuesdays 6pm – 9pm: Feb to June 1986)

Course Tutor: John Hall (Director, Survey Research Unit)

Tue 18th Feb Enrolment from 5.45 p.m.

Introduction and overview of course.

Course tutor and students introduce themselves briefly by background, current activity and expectations.

18 Feb **What is a survey?** (Alan Marsh)

What makes it different from other kinds of research? Who does surveys? How did they develop, especially in U.K.?

25 Feb &
4 March **Sampling** (Barry Hedges)

The lectures will concentrate on random (or "probability") sampling, though other methods will be briefly discussed. The concepts of sampling error and bias will be explored, and sources of bias considered, especially for defective sample designs and non-response.

Other issues to be discussed include sample size, stratification, multi-stage sampling and clustering, the use of different sampling fractions for different parts of the sample, and weighting. The considerations that lead to choice of one design rather than another will be reviewed.

The qualities needed by a sampling frame will be stated, and three well-known frames - Electoral Register, Rating List and Postcode File - will be commented on.

Particular problems that arise in sampling small minority groups within the population will be considered.

11 March &
18 March **Questionnaire Design** (Nick Moon)

The steps involved in designing a workable questionnaire, and the requirements of a good questionnaire. This will involve a practical demonstration of the problems of inadequate design and suggestions for improvements.

Designing 'factual' and behavioural questions is easy or is it? How to cope with problems of memory, precision, perception, motivation and sensitive topics. Also, ways in which the question can affect the answer; the impact of question wording and question form.

[Easter Break]

22 April **Classification** (Jane Ritchie)

The composition and use of widely used classificatory variables for describing: households, individuals, families, accommodation and area.

29 April **Qualitative Research** (Jean Morton-Williams)

Covering the applications and design considerations of undertaking unstructured exploratory research, leading group discussions, depth interviewing techniques and skills, analysis and reporting approaches and the theoretical underpinnings (including a brief introduction to relevant attitude theories).

6 May **Interviewing** (Jean Morton-Williams)

The interviewer's task in obtaining and carrying out structured interviews, the skills involved, training and quality control requirements, the problem of interviewer effects in surveys and analysis of interviewer and respondent roles.

13 &
20 May **Attitudes and Attitude Measurement** (Alan Marsh)

What attitudes are and how researchers measure them. Ways of asking attitude questions appropriate to different kinds of subjects: open questions, closed questions, visual prompts etc. Introduction to scaling: additive and interlocking techniques, multi-dimensional scaling. Attitude and behaviour problems.

How to develop an attitude survey. What is to be explained? How are the main and component attitudes to be recognised? Are they 'real'? Most of the session will be devoted to several examples of attitude surveys of different kinds, working through each from development through questionnaire design, analysis and presentation.

27 May **Postal and Other Methods** (Jean Morton-Williams)

A brief review of methods of data-collection other than personal interview, with particular emphasis on telephone interviewing, self-completion questionnaires and diaries, and postal surveys. Questionnaire design considerations, how to optimise response rates; the uses and limitations of these techniques.

3 Jun **Coding** (Jude England)

The principles of coding. Compiling and operationalising coding frames for open-ended questions, with practical examples for illustration.

10 June **Presenting Results** (Nick Moon)

This session starts with a digression on opinion polling, with particular reference to problems of sample design and question wording. This is followed by coverage of report writing with two main themes: the contents of a technical report, and the presentation of figures and diagrams.

17 June **Commissioning and Costing** (Nick Moon)

The structure of a typical research company is covered with an explanation of the roles of the various departments and the various services that may be required when commissioning an agency to do research. An example job is then costed through to various stages, with a discussion of methods of cost saving when necessary.

24 June **Professional and Ethical Constraints** (Roger Jowell)

Covers the political and other contexts within which survey researchers have to work, including professional codes and guidelines, ethical considerations and privacy. This final session tends to become an open forum for course members, followed by a reception (with wine)